



U.S. SENATE BYPASSES HOLDS ON MILITARY PROMOTIONS

Three top officers confirmed, including new Navy leader

BY MARY CLARE JALONICK, TARA COPP & LOLITA BALDOR

WASHINGTON

The Senate confirmed three top military officers on Thursday — including the first female member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff — as bipartisan frustration swirled around Republican Sen. Tommy Tuberville for blocking hundreds more nominees.

Republican senators plan to hold a closed-door meeting next week to discuss the Alabama senator's blockade of senior military nominees, which he has been waging over a Pentagon abortion policy. Republicans have tried, unsuccessfully, for almost nine months to quietly persuade Tuberville to drop the holds on almost 400 nominees. Senior military officials have warned repeatedly that the situation threatens readiness and national security.

Anger over Tuberville's tactic spilled out in the Senate on Wednesday evening, when a group of Republican senators held the floor for more than four hours and called up 61 of the nominations for votes, praising each nominee for their military service and challenging the Alabama senator to explain himself. Tuberville showed no signs of letting up, quietly standing and objecting to each one even as his colleagues lashed out at him.

With Tuberville dug in, there are no easy answers on how to move forward.

Republicans said they will continue to try to negotiate with him, hoping to persuade Tuberville to hold up civilian nomi-

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BUSINESS

VIASAT CUTTING WORKFORCE 10%

■ **A9** • The tech company's layoffs include 160 jobs in Carlsbad, where Viasat is based. Viasat is trying to streamline operations following its \$6.1 billion acquisition of Inmarsat.

SPORTS

PRELLER FACING LONG TO-DO LIST

■ **D1** • With the World Series over, A.J. Preller, the Padres' president of baseball operations, can begin to find a manager, figure out what to do with Juan Soto and fill out the rotation.



ABED KHALED AP

Smoke rises following Israeli strikes in Gaza City on Thursday. The Israelis are continuing their advance in the enclave.

ISRAELI MILITARY: TROOPS HAVE ENCIRCLED GAZA CITY

U.S. calling for Israel to periodically 'pause' siege to allow aid to flow and foreign nationals to leave

BY WAFAA SHURAF, JACK JEFFERY & LEE KEATH

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip

Israeli troops battling Hamas militants encircled Gaza City on Thursday, the military said, as the Palestinian death toll rose above 9,000. U.S. and Arab leaders raised pressure on Israel to ease its siege of Gaza and at least briefly halt its attacks in order to aid civilians.

Nearly four weeks after Hamas' deadly rampage in Is-

rael sparked the war, Secretary of State Antony Blinken was heading to the region for talks today in Israel and Jordan following President Joe Biden's suggestion for a humanitarian "pause" in the fighting. The aim would be to let in aid for Palestinians and let out more foreign nationals and wounded. Around 800 people left over the past two days.

Israel did not respond to Biden's suggestion. But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu,

who has previously ruled out a cease-fire, said Thursday: "We are advancing. ... Nothing will stop us." He vowed to destroy Hamas rule in the Gaza Strip.

An airstrike Thursday smashed a residential building to rubble in the Bureij refugee camp several miles south of Gaza City.

One boy, his face covered in blood, cried as workers dug him out of the dirt and wreckage. Others rushed wounded men and women, covered in dust,

away on stretchers or wrapped in blankets. At a nearby hospital, doctors tried to stanch the flow of blood from the head of a child laid out on the floor.

At least 15 people were killed, Gaza's Civil Defense spokesperson said, and residents said dozens more were believed buried. The strike took place in the southern zone where Israel has told residents of the north to flee, but which has also faced repeated bom-

SEE **GAZA** • A5

HOUSE PASSES AID FOR ISRAEL, BUT NOT FOR UKRAINE

\$14.3 billion package tied to IRS cuts faces opposition in Senate

BY CATIE EDMONDSON

WASHINGTON

A divided House on Thursday passed a Republican-written bill that would tie \$14.3 billion in military aid to Israel for its war with Hamas to domestic spending cuts, defying a veto threat from President Joe Bid-

en and bipartisan opposition in the Senate.

Republicans pushed through the measure on a mostly party-line vote of 226-196, a rare occurrence because aid packages for Israel normally enjoy broad bipartisan support.

But the legislation, put forward by the newly elected Republican Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., alienated Democrats because it would slash a tax enforcement initiative at the IRS, a part of the Inflation Reduction Act that is a key

piece of Biden's agenda.

Only a dozen Democrats voted in favor, among them Rep. Juan Vargas, D-San Diego.

Among other local House members, Reps. Darrell Issa, R-Bonsall, joined nearly all Repub-

licans in voting in favor of the bill. Rep. Sara Jacobs, D-San Diego, Rep. Mike Levin, D-San

Juan Capistrano, and Rep. Scott Peters, D-San Diego, voted against it.

The measure is headed for a bipartisan bloc of opposition in the Senate, where lawmakers favor packaging aid for Israel with money to help Ukraine fend off Russia's invasion, as well as for other global crises. Biden has requested such a package, totaling \$105 billion, and White House officials said Tuesday that he would veto the House bill because it was limited to Israel and

SEE **CONGRESS** • A5



LUIS SINCO TNS

Avery Hill was part of the research team that found "zombie forests" now make up about a fifth of the conifer forests in the Sierra Nevada.

CLIMATE CHANGE TRANSFORMING SWATHS OF CALIFORNIA'S MOUNTAINS INTO 'ZOMBIE FORESTS'

BY ALEX WIGGLESWORTH & IAN JAMES

SHAVER LAKE

There's something eerie about this forest in the southern Sierra Nevada. Tangles of bony branches obscure the ground. Dead trees stand gray and bristly. An aura of doom hangs over the green conifers that remain.

The expanse of Sierra National Forest near Shaver Lake is a relic of the climate before global warming. Scientists believe that the conifers won't be able to survive the current conditions. Researchers at Stanford University found in a re-

cent study that roughly one-fifth of all conifer forests in the Sierra are mismatched with the warmer climate and have become "zombie forests."

"The name 'zombie forest' is kind of kitschy, but I've come to find that it is haunting," said ecologist Avery Hill, who co-wrote the study while pursuing a doctorate at Stanford.

Hill combed his way through a thicket one afternoon and paused at a clearing overlooking a valley, its pine-studded slopes dotted with boulders ringed by patches of shrubby chaparral.

"That's what we think will spread out and eventually cover

this whole area," he said.

The findings indicate that these lower-elevation Sierra conifer forests, which include ponderosa pine, sugar pine and Douglas fir, are no longer able to successfully reproduce. Conditions have become too warm and dry to support conifer saplings, whose shallow roots require plenty of water if they are to survive into adulthood, Hill said. Giant sequoias also grow in lower-elevation areas of the Sierra Nevada, but the researchers didn't analyze the risks specific to those trees.

When these forests burn in high-severity wildfires — or are

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Benjamin Rinenbach's career route was not direct, even though photography has been a lifelong passion.

"I've always been fascinated by photography," said Rinenbach, 46, an award-winning Rancho Bernardo photographer. "Since I was a kid, before I could read, I was looking at National Geographic magazines, fascinated by the pictures."

Throughout his life, in the military, working in construction and as a firefighter/paramedic, Rinenbach said he always took photos with whatever camera he had, be it a point-and-shoot or smartphone. But it was not until six years ago that on a whim he decided to pursue photography seriously.

"A spinal fusion and a drunken late night camera purchase on eBay changed his path forever," he wrote on his website, rinenbachphotography.com.

That path is taking him this weekend to the San Diego Convention Center, where Rinenbach will be among 95 exhibitors representing hundreds of artists from around world at the 15th annual Art San Diego fair.

Rinenbach plans to exhibit around 20 photos, ranging from 12-inch square to 30-by-40-inch images. Last year, he won Art San Diego's Best Solo Exhibitor award during his debut at the event.

"It was a nice shot in the arm, overwhelming," Rinenbach said of the award. "I am extremely humbled and appreciative of it."

Art San Diego is organized by the Redwood Art Group, which holds contemporary art and design fairs across the United States. In addition to the exhibits, the event will feature art labs that provide interactive experiences. The fair has also partnered with Monarch School, Humble Design and Arts District Liberty Station. Artwork purchased through this partnership will benefit downtown San Diego's Monarch School, which educates elementary through high school students who are homeless.

A self-taught photographer, Rinenbach's inspirations are photographers Edward Curtis and Ansel Adams, along with film directors John Ford and Sergio Leone.

The Chicago native said that during the early parts of his life he lived "a predominately left-brain existence." This included being a skateboarder, gymnast and "secretly" writing poems while serv-



S.D. PHOTOGRAPHER'S LIFE OF CONTRASTS

BENJAMIN RINENBACH, WHOSE WORK IS FEATURED AT ART SAN DIEGO, FOUND A NEW CAREER IN SHOOTING BLACK AND WHITE IMAGES



BENJAMIN RINENBACH PHOTOS

Rancho Bernardo resident Benjamin Rinenbach is an award-winning photographer who will exhibit his work at Art San Diego this weekend at the San Diego Convention Center.

Art San Diego

Hours: Noon to 5 p.m. today;
11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday;
11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday

Where: San Diego Convention Center, Hall E, 111 W. Harbor Drive, downtown

Tickets: \$10-\$30
(parking not included)

Online: redwoodartgroup.com/art-san-diego

ing as an Army infantryman and working in construction. A back injury six years ago while firefighting in Chicago ended his 12-year career as a firefighter/paramedic.

During his recovery he started pursuing his right-brain creative side.

"I wanted to explore and experiment with the artistic side of myself," Rinenbach said. "I have fallen in love with it."

His preference is for black-and-white photography: "I find color to be distracting. I like shadows, shapes, contours and contrasts. It is interesting to my eyes."

Three years ago Rinenbach moved to Rancho Bernardo with his wife, Christa, who grew up in Scripps Ranch, and their now-teenage children, Ben and Cam.

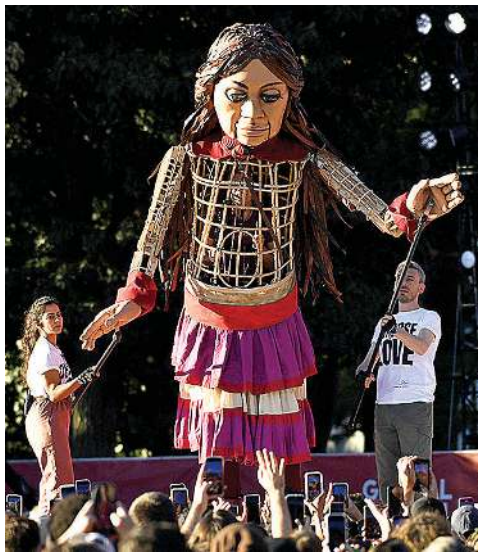
Rinenbach said he has found lots of creative inspiration. He calls most of his photos "desert and coastal noir," so he has many options within a short drive. Taking photos of the Pacific Ocean and San Diego's coastal areas is a given for local photographers, he said, but some of his favorite spots are in San Diego's desert.

"For me, to have the ability to be in a place where I can look at the horizon in any direction and there is nobody between in that chunk of the world, but yourself, the critters and clouds ... there is great peace. It is humbling. There is nothing man-made. It is just mother nature in any direction."

He did not start out doing landscape photography. Initially, he took whatever jobs he could get. He started working with a ballet company in Chicago, which led to him photographing not only the dancers but their families.

"I loved it," Rinenbach said of working with the dancers. "I figured that work was not too far astray, very emotive and high contrast. ... It was a good fit for my style."

Himchak writes for the U-T Community Press.



Theater

Among the 37 women whose plights are recounted in activist Anne Hoiberg's book "Tears of War: Stories of Refugee Women," seven will have their tales told in a performance piece Saturday at 3 p.m. at La Jolla Library.

The production created by Vantage Theatre will dramatize the courage of these women who fled troubled homes around the world in search of dignity and a better life. Suggested donations are \$20, with proceeds going to Casa Cornelia Law Center, which advocates for the immigrant community in Southern California.

The "Tears of War" reading is part of several surrounding events taking place this weekend with the arrival of Little Amal, a 12-foot puppet of a Syrian refugee girl now completing a cross-country, 35-city tour in San Diego. vantage theatre.com/wordpress



Film

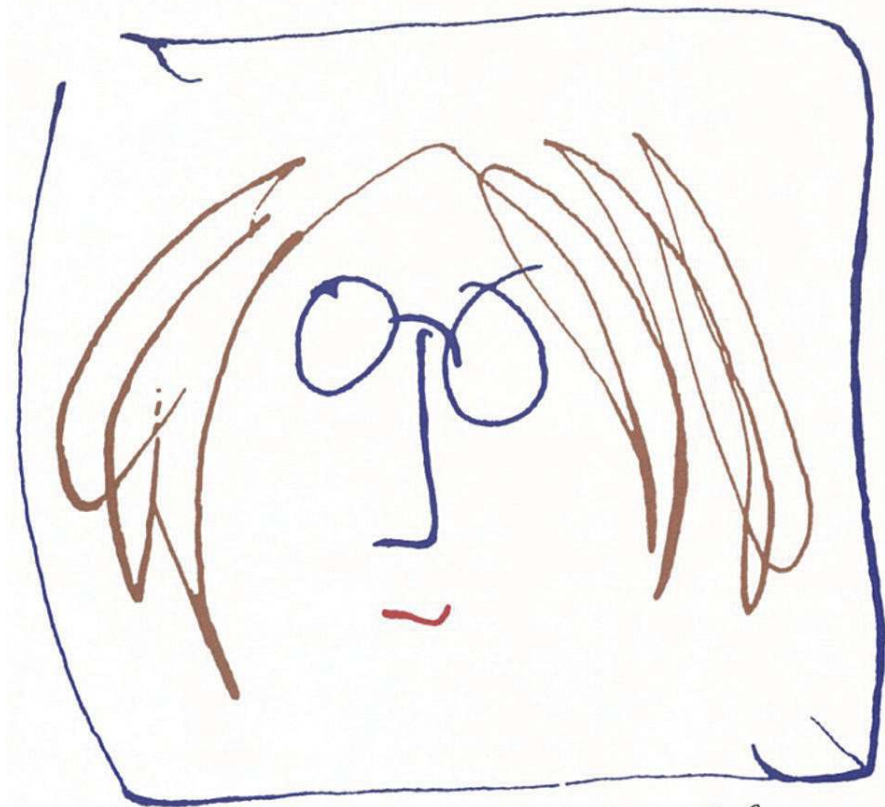
In the wake of what we hope was the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, artists in many mediums are expressing through their works the emotional catharsis of our shared experience. One of them, filmmaker Zeinabu Irene Davis, is doing so through "Pandemic Bread," which she adapted from a story written by local author Marivi Soliven for the San Diego Public Library's Decameron Project.

The 22-minute film by Davis, a professor in UC San Diego's Department of Communication, is about a Filipina phone interpreter working an end-of-life call during the pandemic in 2020. It's screening Saturday at 2:55 p.m. at Edwards Cinema Mira Mesa as part of the ongoing San Diego Asian Film Festival. sdaff.org/2023

BY DAVID L. CODDON

ARTFULLY SPEAKING

WHAT'S NEW IN THE ARTS THIS WEEK



JOHN LENNON ART COLLECTION

Screen prints of "Self Portrait" by John Lennon will be for sale.

JOHN LENNON'S DRAWINGS FEATURED AT ART SAN DIEGO FESTIVAL

For all his musical genius, John Lennon was more than just a dabbler at visual art. In his youth he was a student at the prestigious Liverpool College of Art. He maintained throughout a life that was cut short that art was a passion of his, and he famously observed that "Life doesn't imitate art. It is art."

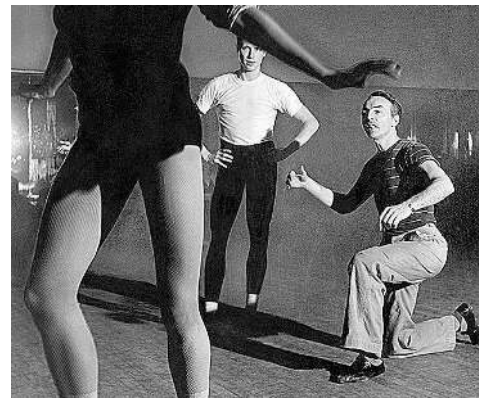
Lennon's art from his post-Beatles days is well known, but you may never have seen the works in person. Now you can.

Part of the 15th annual **Art San Diego** festival this weekend at the downtown Convention Center, **The John Lennon Art Collection** of lithographs, prints and originals will be on display and, the festival folks tell us, available for purchase.

Titled "Give Peace a Chance," the exhibition is reflective of John Lennon the man, who believed fiercely in our living in the kind of world he envisioned in "Imagine" — "as one." Lennon was certainly no saint, and he would tell you that. But he was, as the song went, "a dreamer," and he dreamed of peace. Given the state of the warring globe these days, that's never seemed more elusive and more needed.

"Give Peace a Chance" is one of five art labs that are part of this festival of artwork and design. Another of especially local interest is **"Hide and Seek: A Surrealistic Celebration of Colors and Dreams."** This exhibit features works created by students from San Diego's Monarch School who collaborated with Humble Design and artists from Arts District Liberty Station.

Festival tickets are \$10-\$30. redwoodartgroup.com/art-san-diego



Dance

When I interviewed **City Ballet of San Diego** Artistic Director Steven Wistrich last year, he said of the legendary George Balanchine: "When you're dancing to his choreography you feel as though it was made for you, that no other steps could be better to the music you're dancing to."

This was in advance of City Ballet's program "From Balanchine to Martins: 20th Century Masterworks." Almost exactly a year later, the City Ballet company is celebrating Balanchine again, this time with a program it's calling **"Balanchine Extravaganza."**

Taking place Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon at the Balboa Theatre downtown, the program includes three beloved Balanchine works: "Serenade" to music by Tchaikovsky, "Donizetti Variations" to music from the opera "Don Sebastien," and "The Four Temperaments" to music by Paul Hindemith. cityballet.org



More theater

The holidays must be here because once again it's time to go green. The Old Globe Theatre's **"Dr. Seuss's How The Grinch Stole Christmas!"** begins performances on Wednesday, continuing through Dec. 31.

This is the 26th year that the Globe and the Grinch have teamed up, meaning that some people who saw the show years ago as children may now have kids of their own to bring to the theater. That is the Grinchy gift that keeps on giving.

Andrew Polec is back for the third year as the Grinch. Among the cast members you might have seen this year in other roles are Ariella Klashny and Berto Fernandez (from "Evita" at Cygnet Theatre) and Lance Arthur Smith, who just wound up his star turn in the Theatre at the Welk's "Spamalot." theoldglobe.org

Coddon is a freelance writer.