



Nightengale: Verlander’s retirement marks end of an era we’ll never see again

SPORTS, 1B

Rockford Register Star

SATURDAY, JULY 11, 2026 | RRSTAR.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK



Speaking to reporters aboard the Qatari-gifted Air Force One after leaving England, President Donald Trump denied security concerns. JONATHAN ERNST/REUTERS

Trump switches planes after summit in Turkey

President flies on old Air Force One amid tensions

Joey Garrison and Josh Meyer
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump swapped planes, taking the old Air Force One for part of his return from the NATO summit in Turkey, as a security precaution amid renewed hostilities between the United States and Iran, according to a source familiar with the decision.

Trump traveled to Ankara, Turkey, on the controversial, newly retrofitted plane gifted by Qatar. But the Secret Service urged the White House to depart on the old plane, the source told USA TODAY, speaking on the condition

of anonymity to discuss sensitive security matters.

Trump, White House officials and the traveling press corps flew the old Boeing 747-200 Air Force One, painted baby blue, to a military base in Suffolk, England. There, Trump and the crew switched back to the new red, white and blue plane, a Boeing 747-B, which they flew across the Atlantic.

“The new Air Force One is a state-of-the-art aircraft that has been fitted with high-level security protocols that ensure the safety of the President and his staff,” Steven Cheung, White House communications director, said in a statement. “As the President has said recently, there are many enemies of America who have their sights on him, and we use every tool at our disposal—including distraction and misdirection—to address those threats.”

The New York Times first reported that security concerns prompted the plane swap. The Secret Service declined to comment.

The move raised new questions about Trump’s use of the Qatar-gifted Air Force One, an unprecedented \$400 million donation from a foreign country. Extensive work over an accelerated one-year period was required for the craft to meet Air Force One security and technical standards, costing an unspecified amount of U.S. dollars.

But a source who confirmed the Secret Service’s concerns described the new Air Force One as still essentially a civilian plane with upgrades. It is not a U.S. military aircraft that has been

tion—to address those threats.”

The New York Times first reported that security concerns prompted the plane swap. The Secret Service declined to comment.

The move raised new questions about Trump’s use of the Qatar-gifted Air Force One, an unprecedented \$400 million donation from a foreign country. Extensive work over an accelerated one-year period was required for the craft to meet Air Force One security and technical standards, costing an unspecified amount of U.S. dollars.

But a source who confirmed the Secret Service’s concerns described the new Air Force One as still essentially a civilian plane with upgrades. It is not a U.S. military aircraft that has been

See PLANE, Page 6A

GOP push for answers on McConnell

Absence revives debate about age, health in Congress

Phillip M. Bailey
USA TODAY

It’s no longer just Democrats who are demanding answers about Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell’s status nearly a month after the 84-year-old lawmaker was hospitalized in Washington, DC.

The senator’s office still has not disclosed why McConnell was admitted. But the Kentucky lawmaker’s staff sought to quell further speculation July 7 by releasing statements from allies who said they’d spoken with him.

That wasn’t enough for at least two

GOP House members who took to social media this week to air their concerns, saying U.S. officials should be more forthcoming with voters if they go missing for weeks.

Rep. Nancy Mace, R-South Carolina, drew comparisons to the public’s health concerns about former President Joe Biden, whose mental acuity became a focal point in the final months of the 2024 election, ultimately forcing him to leave the race.

“If McConnell is in as bad a shape as Biden ever was – or worse – he needs to step aside,” Mace said in a July 9 post on X. “This charade can’t continue. We can’t demand of others what we won’t demand of ourselves.”

In a separate post, Rep. Marlin Stutzman, R-Indiana, also evoked Biden in pressing for answers about McConnell’s

health. He specifically mentioned Biden’s now infamous 2024 debate performance, which resulted in his startling exit from the race.

Biden was three years younger at that time than McConnell is now.

“We are now witnessing a similar scenario on our side, and Republicans should be holding our own party accountable instead of tiptoeing around the truth,” Stutzman said.

“Mitch McConnell’s constituents deserve to know where he is at, the fact they don’t is discouraging and concerning,” he added. “There is too much at stake for America in the Senate not to know.”

The senator’s office did not immediately respond to USA TODAY’s inquiry

See MCCONNELL, Page 6A

Some cities more prone to bed bug infestations

Anthony Thompson
USA TODAY

Summer vacations are in full swing, but travelers heading to some of the nation’s busiest destinations may want to pack an extra dose of caution.

Orkin’s 2026 Bed Bug Cities List has been released ranking the U.S. cities with the highest rate of bed bug infestations, marking another year for the pest control company’s annual rankings.

Orkin said increased travel and high turnover at hotels, apartments and other accommodations can create more opportunities for bed bugs to spread by hitchhiking on luggage and personal belongings.

Orkin’s rankings are based on residential and commercial bed bug treatments performed between May 12, 2025, and May 12, 2026.

Several popular vacation destinations climbed the rankings or made their debut in the top 50, including Tampa, Florida, and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

Ohio was the most heavily represented state on the list, with six cities appearing in the top 50, including Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Youngstown, Dayton and Toledo.

Among the biggest movers in the rankings,

The 5 cities ranked:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| No. 1: Chicago | Nashville and Oklahoma City each climbed 10 spots, while |
| No. 2: Los Angeles | Tampa, Kansas City and Myrtle Beach entered the |
| No. 3: Detroit | top 50 for the first time. |
| No. 4: Cleveland | |
| No. 5: Indianapolis | |

Orkin’s report comes as another recent analysis suggests travelers may be more likely to encounter bed bugs in some states than others.

A recent USA TODAY report, citing a Casino.ca analysis, found Michigan had the nation’s highest estimated risk of bed bugs for travelers, followed by Ohio, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Texas, Illinois, New York and Washington, DC.

Researchers compared bed bug rankings from Orkin and Terminix with social media posts and TripAdvisor hotel reviews in each state’s three largest cities. They concluded that popular tourist destinations often carry greater risk because of high visitor turnover, not because hotels are necessarily less clean or well maintained.

“Travel season brings excitement, but it also makes awareness especially important,” said Dr. Shannon Sked, Orkin entomologist and national technical director.

Orkin recommends inspecting hotel rooms before unpacking by checking mattresses and furniture for live bugs, shed skins, tiny eggs or dark, ink-like stains. Travelers should also keep luggage on elevated racks away from beds, inspect bags before returning home and place dryer-safe clothing in a high-heat dryer for 30 to 45 minutes after traveling.

Sked said bed bugs rarely disappear on their own, making early detection and prompt professional treatment the best way to prevent infestations from spreading.

Subscriber-only eNewspaper

The eNewspaper is an electronic copy of your print newspaper. Enjoy every page by going to rrstar.com/enewspaper or scan this code on your mobile device. You will also find late news and sports in the bonus sections. Check it out today!



Volume 171 | No. 162
To subscribe 815-987-1400
©2026 \$3.00



0 40901 07101 3