

Roger Craig's induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame is a nod to Huskers, and a close friend.

Sports



SammyStrong event helps families in battle against pediatric cancer.

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Omaha World-Herald



CHRIS MACHIAN PHOTOS, THE WORLD-HERALD

Looking east toward the intersection of Nebraska Highways 50 and 62, NioCorp's Elk Creek critical minerals project is to the bottom right as seen in December 2025.

Nebraska rare earth project gets buy-in from contractor

OLIVIA MOODY
World-Herald Staff Writer

The potential Elk Creek rare earth minerals mine is one step closer to operation, with developer NioCorp entering a memorandum of understanding this week with Lockheed Martin, the world's largest defense contractor.

The non-binding agreement, announced Tuesday, outlines a 10-year purchase agreement for up to 15 tons of scandium oxide from the mine, to be used for "American defense technology," according to a press release from NioCorp.

Scandium, which is currently not produced in the U.S., is used with aluminum to create stronger, corrosion-resistant alloys that aid U.S. air defense, which could be used in missiles and missile defense. NioCorp intends to produce 100 tons of scandium oxide a year from the Elk Creek Project once construction is complete. The mine will also extract niobium and titanium.

While the agreement is non-binding, NioCorp President and CEO Mark Smith said the agreement "sends a message of confidence" about the importance of scandium. He said the MOU is



A "No Trespassing" sign hangs at the edge of NioCorp's Elk Creek critical minerals project in 2025.

a call for both companies to sit down and have detailed conversations about a potential future deal.

NioCorp has three additional investors for the project.

"You get a name like Lockheed Martin, you know they have some of the best engineers and the best scientists in the world, and they see something really special with that little element called scandium," Smith said. "They want to alloy that into some aluminum,

and they want to do some magical things for the defense of our country, utilizing that aluminum-scandium alloy."

Smith added that having a well-known investor increases NioCorp's chances of acquiring a \$780 million loan from the Export-Import Bank of the U.S. He said the company has been working with the lender for three years.

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5 people arrested in petition fraud case

CHRIS DUNKER, PETER BREEN
AND LORI PILGER
Lincoln Journal Star

LINCOLN — Five people who circulated petitions on behalf of a campaign to amend Lincoln's city charter were arrested this week after thousands of signatures they submitted were flagged as fraudulent.

The Lancaster County Sheriff's Office said the five individuals who gathered signatures for Good Government Lincoln were taken into custody outside the state, Chief Deputy Ben Houchin said Friday.

According to court filings, the five were identified as David A. Johnson, 25, of Irvington, New Jersey; Jessica Davis, 23, of Boynton Beach, Florida; Nathan Kirschbaum, 32, and Jason Luciano, 32, both of Las Vegas; and Ryan McKinney, 41, of St. Louis.

All have been charged with false swearing to circulators' affidavits.

McKinney was arrested in Missouri on Friday. The others were arrested Thursday by law enforcement agencies partnered with the

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Ed Board delays vote on school in North Omaha

LUNA STEPHENS
World-Herald Bureau

LINCOLN — The Nebraska State Board of Education nearly derailed approval for a Black-founded school in North Omaha after some members expressed concerns that the school's website had previously referenced using an "abolitionist" framework.

The board instead delayed voting until Tuesday at 1 p.m. after hearing from the founder of Identity Preparatory Academy on Friday.

Identity Prep is seeking approval as a new school under Rule 14, an approval process for nonpublic schools.

Located at the Hope Center for Kids at 2200 N. 20th St., the school is set to welcome approximately 30 fourth- and fifth-graders this month. The school plans to eventually span fourth through eighth grade.

The school would be Nebraska's first state-approved Black-founded school. Though it is open to all girls, it is focused on

Please see IDENTITY, Page A6

Offutt air show returns this weekend

On-base parking will be available for two-day event

DAN CRISLER
World-Herald Staff Writer

For the first time since the 2019 floods, Offutt Air Force Base will offer on-base public parking for this weekend's Defenders of Freedom Air & Space Show.

It's the first time the Air Force base near Bellevue has offered on-base parking for the two-day air show since flooding along the Missouri River seven years ago devastated much of the base's infrastructure. In the interim, air show attendees were required to park off-site and catch shuttles to the base.

The show, which will be held Saturday and Sunday, will celebrate the United States' 250th



LIZ RYMAREV, THE WORLD-HERALD

People line up to walk through a KC-46 Pegasus during the Defenders of Freedom Air and Space Show in Offutt Air Force Base in 2024.

anniversary and highlight the military's role in defending freedom, supporting national

security and serving the American people, according to a press release from the Air Force's 55th

Wing at Offutt.

Aircraft set to be featured in the air show include the World War II-era Douglas C-47 Skytrain and North American P-51 Mustang planes, the modern-day F-35A fighter jet and the supersonic F-4D Phantom.

Anyone who wishes to park on the base must download a base pass for their vehicle at no cost online at [defendersoffreedomairshow.com](#). Optional premium-seating tickets can also be purchased.

Each base pass will include a QR code with directions to a specific entry gate, according to the press release. Gates will include the Flag Gate, Meyer Gate or StratCom Gate.

Parking opens at 8:30 a.m. Saturday and Sunday. Planes will fly from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on those days.

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