

As the Pentagon pushes for battlefield AI, some military leaders urge caution

BY KONSTANTIN TOROPIN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Trump administration is pushing to unleash the power of artificial intelligence for the U.S. military while facing calls to put up guardrails around the rapidly developing technology from some companies — and even notes of caution from top leaders in uniform.

Adm. Frank Bradley, head of U.S. Special Operations Command, told attendees of a recent annual special forces conference in Tampa, Florida, that troops “have to be very careful about how we come to (AI’s) employment and its inspiration into the delivery of lethality.”

Bradley said he can see a future where AI determines what targets to hit but that “we, as humans, have to have the confidence that ... it’s going to deliver violence only where we intend it to be delivered.”

The remarks from Bradley, who oversees the units that handle the military’s most difficult and dangerous operations, about the need to ensure safeguards come as his boss, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, is pushing to rapidly evolve the military through AI. It is a push that has led to clashes with some tech companies worried about safety measures.



Patrick Sison / AP Photo

Pages from the Anthropic website and the company's logo are displayed on a computer screen in New York, Feb. 26.

Hegseth has insisted that the Pentagon be allowed to use the technology any legal way it sees fit. He told an audience of SpaceX employees in January he would reject any AI models “that won’t allow you to fight wars” and that his vision for the technology was systems that operate “without ideological constraints that limit lawful military applications.”

AI’s use in the military is part of the Republican administration’s larger push to grow the capability it sees as a unique American advantage even as it faces pressure to ensure responsible safeguards.

President Donald Trump abruptly called off plans to

sign a new AI executive order hours before an expected White House ceremony over concerns the measure could dull America’s edge on AI technology.

“We’re leading China, we’re leading everybody, and I don’t want to do anything that’s going to get in the way of that lead,” Trump told reporters.

TWO DIFFERING AI WORLDS WITHIN THE MILITARY

When asked about Bradley’s remarks, a Pentagon official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said efforts are focused on using AI to create “functional battlefield tools” that can help

troops come up with and identify targets more quickly and, as a result, speed up strikes on those targets.

Officials at U.S. Special Operations Command talked about AI not as something that will help eliminate targets but rather as a tool that can offer troops more time to focus on their mission.

Sgt. Maj. Andrew Krogman, the top enlisted official for U.S. Special Operations Command, said at the conference that he sees AI handling administrative tasks to free up operators or helping modernize how the command does business.

Melissa Johnson, the top acquisition official for the command, said AI should be “reducing the cognitive workload on mundane tasks.”

“We’re leveraging AI more and more, but it’s not to replace operator judgment, it’s to enhance it,” she added. Helen Toner, interim executive director at Georgetown University’s Center for Security and Emerging Technology, said those differing descriptions about AI in the military are both true.

“There are a huge number of potential uses for AI in these kinds of bureaucratic settings, which the U.S. military is actively exploring,” Toner said.



KODEE BRINEGAR/The News-Enterprise

Jonathan Tomes, of Van Winkle & the Spirits, performs for a large crowd Thursday at the first Tavern in the Garden of the season at the Brown-Pusey House in Elizabethtown. The event is held every Thursday evening in the summer, weather permitting



KODEE BRINEGAR/The News-Enterprise

Eric Flanagan pours a cup of wine Thursday evening for many attendees of the Tavern in the Garden’s opening of the summer season in Cunningham Garden at the Brown-Pusey House in Elizabethtown.



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Liz Hartlage, from left, Marianne Sheroan and Kelly Daniel played a game of Mahjong Thursday while attending the Brown-Pusey’s annual Tavern in the Garden summer concert series.

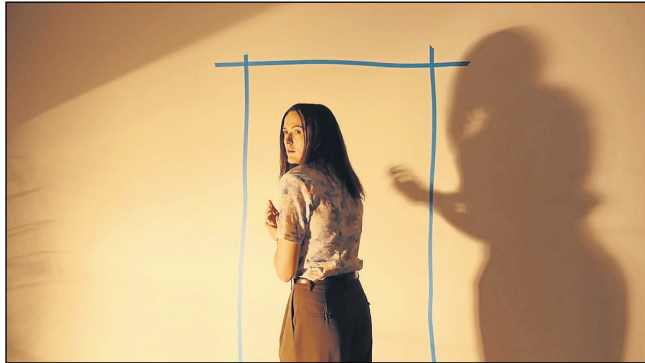
YouTuber box office boom: 'Backrooms' and 'Obsession' draw Gen Z to theaters

BY LINDSEY BAHR
AP FILM WRITER

Young audiences turned out in droves to movie theaters around the country this weekend. It wasn’t for the big budget “Star Wars” movie, “The Mandalorian and Grogu,” which fell sharply in its second weekend, however, but for a small budget horror from a 20-year-old first-time filmmaker that began on the internet.

“Backrooms,” released by A24 in 3,442 locations in the U.S. and Canada, made an astonishing \$81.5 million in its first three days in theaters, according to studio estimates on Sunday. That’s just a few hundred thousand dollars shy of what “The Mandalorian and Grogu” earned in its first three days last weekend; and “Backrooms,” which was directed and co-written by YouTube creator Kane Parsons, cost only \$10 million to produce.

The wild success of



This image released by A24 shows Renate Reinsve in a scene from “Backrooms.”

“Backrooms” didn’t even hurt “Obsession,” which is also the directorial debut of a YouTuber, Curry Barker, who is only 26. Three weekends in, “Obsession,” a movie that cost less than \$1 million to make, still hasn’t dropped below its opening weekend earnings. This weekend, it was up 10% with another \$26.4 million for a second-place finish, leaving Star Wars, the legacy franchise movie from the veteran filmmaker and the Walt Disney Studios, in third with \$25 million.

YouTube might not be the death of movie theaters after all. If this weekend is any indication, it could be the industry’s new great hope.

This is a weekend where theaters also hosted the debuts of “The Breadwinner,” a PG-rated family comedy starring the popular comedian Nate Bargatze, and “Pressure,” a solid World War II drama about the tense 72 hours before D-Day with Oscar-winner Brendan Fraser.

But it was the 20-something YouTubers that drew

the most crowds. And both “Backrooms” and “Obsession” were produced by Blumhouse-Atomic Monster.

Abhijay Prakash, the president of Blumhouse-Atomic Monster said that the weekend is both staggering and validation of their business, which has from the beginning championed original horror movies that appeal to younger audiences, and generated over \$10 billion in box office to date.

He noted that they’ve made a point of looking for up and coming talent on YouTube and, knowing how Hollywood works, this weekend likely will inspire a wave of copycats. But beyond that, he’s encouraged by the fact that the young creators who’ve already had enormous success online still value the cultural currency of theatrical movies.

“It’s a great sign of relevance for us,” Prakash said. “With some distance, we’ll probably look back at this as a real turning point.”

FALLEN

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by Elizabethtown Fire Department personnel, Hardin County Sheriff’s Office, and Kentucky State Police, en route to Brooks Funeral Home in Munfordville.

“Ryan was known for the pride he took in the fire service and for the time he invested into the next generation of firefighters,” Inman said. “He poured countless hours of training, truck knowledge, and real-world experience into fellow firefighters.”

Druen’s desire was to be certain others were prepared and confident on the job every time they were called out, no matter where dispatch would send them and to what they were being called to.

“His willingness to teach left a lasting impact on everyone who had the privilege of serving alongside him,” she said.

Multiple departments from across the region, including Louisville, Bullitt County, all Hardin County departments, Munfordville Fire Department, as well as others, positioned themselves on overpasses and along the route displaying their respect and support for one of their own.



GREG THOMPSON/The News-Enterprise

Firefighters from Elizabethtown Fire Department wait patiently on the overpass of I65 Saturday. They’re waiting for Firefighter Ryan Druen, who died Friday from undisclosed reasons. The 24 year veteran is being taken to Brooks Funeral Home in Munfordville.



GREG THOMPSON/The News-Enterprise

Trucks from Elizabethtown Fire Department join in the procession Saturday along Interstate 65 south of Brooks one of their own, Firefighter Ryan Druen, to Brooks Funeral Home in Munfordville. Druen was a 24-year veteran of the department.

As Elizabethtown’s firefighters, and friends and family of Druen, stood shoulder to shoulder and side by side, awaiting their brother to pass by, the

firefighters of Shepherdsville Fire Department graciously agreed to provide any coverage needed until the procession reached its destination.

An avid outdoorsman, among his survivors are his wife, Melinda, and two children, Ashley Reynolds of Horse Cave and Riley Druen of Munfordville, and his parents, Rodney and Joyce Druen of Sonora.

Visitation is Tuesday from 10 a.m.-7 p.m. CDT at Central Hardin High School and again from 10 a.m.-8 p.m. CDT Wednesday at Brooks Funeral Home in Munfordville.

Visitation is 9-11 a.m. CDT Thursday at Brooks Funeral Home with funeral services at 11 a.m. CDT with Bro. Joey Sexton officiating.

Burial with Masonic Rights will follow in the Munfordville Municipal Cemetery.



GREG THOMPSON/The News-Enterprise

A couple of Elizabethtown firefighters drape an American flag on the side of Engine 10 Saturday as they wait for a procession from Louisville bringing Firefighter Ryan Druen, who died Friday. Druen, a 24-year veteran of the department is being taken to Brooks Funeral Home in Munfordville.

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INVITATION FOR BID

The Lincoln Trail Area Development District (LTADD) is accepting bids for TWO (2) NEW NEVER TITLED VEHICLES located at 750 S Provident Way, Elizabethtown. The invitation for Bid packets can be downloaded from the home page of our website at www.ltadd.org. Proposals should be returned to by 10:00 AM EST, on Wednesday, June 10, 2026 and sent to: Daniel London, Executive Director, Lincoln Trail ADD 750 S. Provident Way, Elizabethtown, KY 42701. Proposals received after this time shall not be considered for review. LTADD is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages responses from all qualified Contractors.