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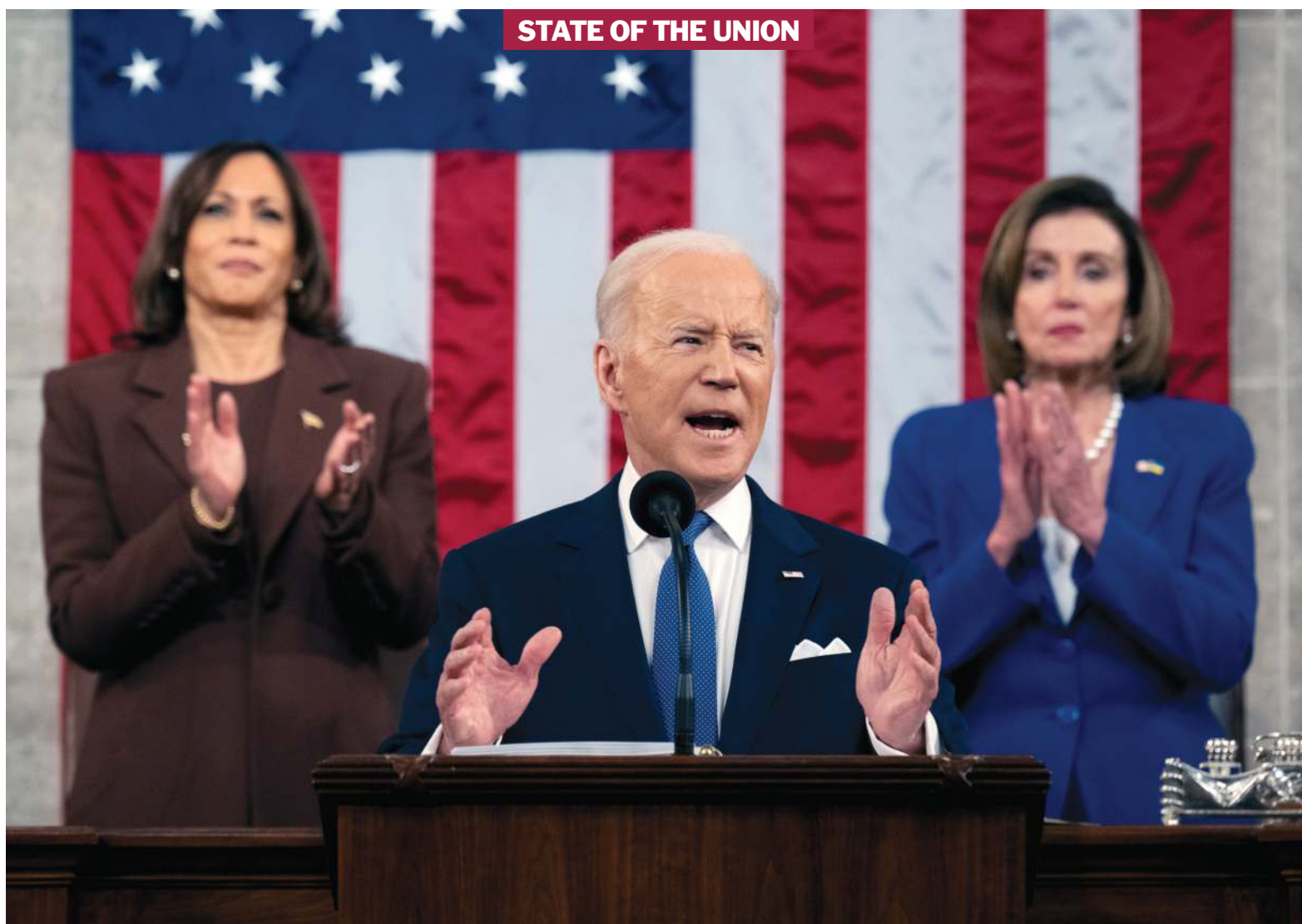
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STATE OF THE UNION



SAUL LOEB, POOL/AP

President Joe Biden delivers his State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress at the Capitol on Tuesday in Washington.

'Freedom will always triumph'

Biden vows to halt Russian aggression in Ukraine, hit inflation and handle coronavirus

BY ZEKE MILLER
AND COLLEEN LONG
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Addressing a concerned nation and anxious world, President Joe Biden vowed in his first State of the Union address Tuesday night to check Russian aggression in Ukraine, tame soaring U.S. inflation and deal with the fading but still dangerous coronavirus.

Biden declared that he and all members of Congress, whatever their political differences, are joined "with an unwavering resolve that freedom will always triumph over tyranny." He asked lawmakers crowding the House chamber to stand and salute the Ukrainians as he began his speech. They stood and cheered.

It was a notable show of unity after a long year of bitter acrimony

between Biden's Democratic coalition and the Republican opposition.

Biden's 62-minute speech, which was split between attention to war abroad and worries at home — reflected the same balancing act he now faces in his presidency. He must marshal allied resolve against Russia's aggression while tending to inflation, COVID-19 fatigue and sagging approval rat-

ings heading into the midterm elections.

Aiming to build on momentum from the speech, Biden will head to Wisconsin on Wednesday in an effort to show Americans that his domestic agenda is working. His vice president and Cabinet members will fan out around the country to amplify the message.

SEE BIDEN ON PAGE 10

WAR IN UKRAINE

Most of world sides against Moscow as attacks rage

BY JIM HEINTZ,
YURAS KARMAU,
VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV
AND DASHA LITVINOVA
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Most of the world lined up against Moscow in the United Nations on Wednesday to demand it withdraw from Ukraine, as invading Russian forces renewed their bombardment of the country's second-biggest city, menaced its capital and besieged its strategic ports.

Russia reported its military casualties for the first time since the invasion began last week, saying nearly 500 of its troops had been killed and almost 1,600 wounded. Ukraine insisted Russia's losses were far higher but did not immediately disclose its own.

Envoy from Ukraine and Russia are expected to meet Thursday in Belarus for a second round of talks aimed at ending the fighting. But there appeared to be little common ground between the two sides.

SEE UKRAINE ON PAGE 7



EMILIO MORENATTI/AP

Local militiaman Valery carries a child as he helps a fleeing family across a bridge on the outskirts of Kyiv, Ukraine, on Wednesday.

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Inflation hits record 5.8% in 19 nations using euro

Associated Press

LONDON — Surging energy costs have driven inflation in Europe to another record high, raising questions about when the central bank should step in to ease the pain to people's wallets while Russia's invasion of Ukraine rattles the global economy.

Consumer prices in the 19 countries that use the euro currency increased by an annual 5.8% in February, the European Union statistics agency, Eurostat, reported Wednesday.

The inflation reading smashed the record of 5.1% set last month — the fourth straight month it has hit an all-time peak — to reach the highest level since recordkeeping for the euro started in 1997.

The latest numbers underscore continuing pain for the Continent's consumers and pile more pressure on the European Central Bank as it grapples with when to raise interest rates to ease high prices.

Inflation in Europe, as in other major economies, has been fueled by surging energy prices, and the

problem will be complicated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Russia, a major oil and gas producer, has been hit with sanctions and export restrictions that have raised worries that supplies could be cut off, though that hasn't yet materialized.

Energy costs rose even faster last month, up by 31.7% compared with 28.8% in January, Eurostat said. In contrast, other categories saw smaller gains. Food costs rose 4.1%, durable goods rose 3% and service prices rose 2.5%.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		So. Korea (Won)	1,206.27
Euro costs (March 3)	\$1.08	Switzerland (Franc)	.9215
Dollar buys (March 3)	0.8769	Thailand (Baht)	32.51
British pound (March 3)	\$1.30	Turkey (New Lira)	14.1036
Japanese yen (March 3)	113.00	(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)	
South Korean won (March 3)	1,174.00	INTEREST RATES	
Commercial rates		Prime rate	3.25
Bahrain (Dinar)	.3770	Interest Rates Discount rate	0.75
Britain (Pound)	1.3338	Federal funds market rate	0.09
Canada (Dollar)	1.2674	3-month bill	0.32
China (Yuan)	6.3218	30-year bond	2.11
Denmark (Krone)	6.7058		
Egypt (Pound)	15.7329		
Euro	.9015		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8131		
Hungary (Forint)	344.77		
Israel (Shekel)	3.2372		
Japan (Yen)	115.49		
Kuwait (Dinar)	.3031		
Norway (Krone)	8.8850		
Philippines (Peso)	51.54		
Poland (Zloty)	4.31		
Saudi Arab (Riyal)	3.7523		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3573		

WEATHER OUTLOOK

THURSDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



THURSDAY IN EUROPE



FRIDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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MILITARY



DIOLANDA CABALLERO/U.S. Coast Guard

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star transits away from the ice shelf near the Bay of Whales, Antarctica, last month. The service says it set a record for the southernmost transit for a ship.

Coast Guard cutter’s southerly sail said to be record-breaker

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

A Coast Guard icebreaker is laying claim to a world record, with crew members saying they sailed a little farther south than anyone else before them.

On Friday, the USCGC Polar Star reached a southern latitude of 78 degrees, 44 minutes and 1.32 seconds in Antarctica’s Bay of Whales, according to a Coast Guard statement Tuesday.

The crew of the Polar Star is working with Guinness World Records to get official confirmation of the achievement, the statement said, without stipulating how long the process would take.

The current mark was set in 2017, when the Russian expedition vessel Spirit of Enderby reached a latitude of 78 degrees, 44 minutes. A second of latitude equals 101 feet. The Spirit of Enderby also is sometimes referred to as the Professor Khromov.

The purported new world record was made possible because of a gradual melting of the Ross Ice Shelf. The Polar Star came within 500 yards of the shelf during its voyage, the Coast Guard statement said.

The ship’s crew of about 160 sailed in waters that were previously part of the ice shelf and therefore were not navigable, the Coast Guard said.

Officials added that parts of the ice mass are as much as 12 nautical miles from the positions depicted on offi-

cial charts because of the melting.

A survey by the Polar Star of nearly 400 nautical miles of the area will likely result in updates to those charts, the Coast Guard statement said.

In 1908, the British explorer Ernest Shackleton gave the Bay of Whales its name because of the numerous whales he and his crew saw there.

Three years later, Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen established a base camp in the bay, from which he set out on his successful endeavor to become the first person to reach the South Pole.

Years later, U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Richard Byrd established Little America in the Bay of Whales and went on to explore more than 60% of Antarctica.

“The crew of Polar Star is proud to follow in the footsteps of legendary Antarctic explorers like Shackleton, Amundsen and Byrd,” Capt. William Woityra, commanding officer of Polar Star, said in a statement.

The Polar Star, the United States’ only active heavy icebreaker, arrived in Antarctica last month after a nearly three-month journey from Seattle. It was there to support Operation Deep Freeze, an annual mission to resupply American scientists doing research near the South Pole.

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Sea trials done, USS Ford set for training

By DAVE RESS
(Newport News, Va.) Daily Press

The carrier USS Gerald R. Ford has completed sea trials that tested recently-completed modernization and maintenance work done at Newport News Shipbuilding in Virginia.

The milestone kicks off a period of training and intensive exercise to prepare the Navy’s newest aircraft carrier for deployment. That deployment is scheduled for the fall.

The Ford went into the yard in September, after completing shock trials — at-sea tests that see how it weathers nearby explosions — during the summer. The last such tests with a carrier were on USS Theodore Roosevelt in 1987.

“Ford required only 20% of the repair work we saw with TR,” said Rear Adm. James P. Downey,

program executive officer for aircraft carriers.

A key design change on Ford class carriers, including reconfigured command and control spaces, also sped modernization work at the yard, Downey said.

“Historically, about 40% of modernization work on Nimitz-class carriers goes into rip out, which involves cutting and welding,” he said. “The Navy specifically designed Ford with a flexible infrastructure, so you can build in new capabilities.”

In the months ahead, Ford will embark its air wing and begin system qualification tests, flight deck certification, three phases of air warfare training and evaluation of its combat systems readiness.

Newport News Shipbuilding did the modernization and maintenance work on the Ford under a \$687 million contract awarded in 2019.

Hawaii objects to Navy influence in defueling effort

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The Navy is out of compliance with a state emergency order to drain fuel from its Red Hill facility because the firm contracted to oversee the work is not free of Navy influence, the Hawaii Department of Health said Monday.

“It is critical that the work to defuel Red Hill is done safely and that the third-party contractor hired to oversee that work will operate in the interests of the people and environment of Hawaii,” Kathleen Ho, the health department’s deputy director of environmental health, said in a news release.

The Health Department issued the emergency order on Dec. 6 in the wake of widespread petroleum contamination found in the Navy’s water distribution system used by more than two dozen military housing communities on and near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

The Navy chose Simpson Gumpertz & Heger, a privately held firm based in Waltham, Mass., to drain the fuel tanks. The Health Department in a letter to the Navy and Simpson Gumpertz on Friday contested the parameters of the contracting relationship between the service and firm.

The Navy notified the state that it only considered “engineering firms with limited to no Navy contracts,” the Health Department letter states.

“While the Navy’s effort to engage a contractor with little or no prior connection to the Navy is critical to preserve the contractor’s independence, this independence can only be maintained if that contractor remains free from overriding direction and control by the Navy,” the letter states.

The department is primarily concerned that the contractor’s work will be solely based on information provided by the Navy and that state health officials will not be included in discussions and site visits, according to the letter.

The Navy began complying with most of the provisions of the order, but contested the mandate to drain all fuel from the vast, underground storage facility built during World War II. It now holds roughly 150 million gallons of fuel.

The Navy has traced the contamination of one of its wells to jet

fuel stored at the facility.

The Navy will “work cooperatively” with the Hawaii Health Department to address its concerns over contracting so that the assessment can proceed, Rear Adm. Charlie Brown, the Navy’s chief of information, said in a statement Tuesday.

“The Navy is focused on ensuring the safety and health of those impacted from the November 2021 contamination,” he said. “The Navy continues to take proactive measures that will position it to make informed and environmentally-protective longer-term decisions.”

Under the emergency order finalized on Jan. 3, the Navy was required to “submit a workplan and implementation schedule, prepared by a qualified independent third party approved by the Department to assess the facility operations and system integrity to safely defuel the Bulk Fuel Storage Tanks.”

The Health Department laid out its objections to the Navy contract in its letter.

“The contract language does not describe any structure or protections necessary to establish the independence of the contractor,” the letter states.

The Health Department objected to “frequent close oversight by the Navy” of the contracted work.

“For example: the proposed evaluation will only be based on information provided by the Navy, the DOH is not included in any discussions or site visits to ensure that our concerns will be addressed, and the number of opportunities (weekly meetings) that the Navy will have to provide comment on the progress or findings from the work being performed suggests the Navy will have a great deal of influence over the work in progress,” the letter said.

Because Simpson Gumpertz is not able to act independently, “the Navy is in violation of the Emergency Order,” the Health Department said in its news release.

“According to the timeline submitted by [Simpson Gumpertz] and the Navy, work has already begun,” the news release said. “The Navy is proceeding at its own risk and without DOH approval.”

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MILITARY

Leadership panel gives voice to minorities

BY JAZZMIN SPAIN
Stars and Stripes

OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — Air Force Staff Sgt. Taylesha McGee said she found encouragement in men and women of higher rank sharing their experiences during the Black Leadership Panel last week at this base south of Seoul.

“I’ve always had this conception in my mind that once I’ve reached this rank, it stops,” said McGee, the panel host. “By hearing senior leaders who look like me speak today, it shows me there can be end-

less possibilities in the military.”

About 55 people attended the 90-minute panel discussion Thursday at Osan’s enlisted club. The base’s African American Heritage Council sponsored the event that was broadcast to a larger, interactive audience in South Korea via Zoom.

The nine panelists, Black officers and noncommissioned officers from the Army, Air Force, Marines and Space Force fielded questions from younger service members that are familiar to people of color. Those questions are as

old as their respective services. But they were raised again by the highest leaders of the Air Force following the murder of George Floyd by a white police officer in Minneapolis in May 2020.

One panelist, Master Sgt. Kori Trimble, the first Black woman in her Air Force unit to make first sergeant, said she rarely gets credit outright for her rank but feels she must first demonstrate her proficiency.

“Many times, I have been the only Black person in the room, especially Black female, at my lev-

el,” Trimble said. “That’s why I am where I am today; I needed to see people who look like me in this position.”

Her experience echoed statements by Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., who recalled being the only African American in his squadron, the only African American among other senior leaders and as a pilot being questioned whether he was a pilot, according to a Washington Post report in August 2020.

All the nine panelists agreed they had to prove themselves in

their leadership roles to an extent that others were not expected to.

Their advice to younger service members: Do what you have to do to get where they are and change the dynamic for people of color in the military.

“Don’t be afraid to stand up for what’s right,” said Army Sgt. 1st Class Latoya Greene, a panelist. “Don’t be afraid to be that voice for your soldiers, especially the ones that look like you.”

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Police arrest barefoot man caught climbing fence on Camp Foster

BY FRANK ANDREWS
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The provost marshal’s office arrested a 46-year-old man Wednesday on suspicion of trespassing onto this Marine Corps base.

The unidentified man, barefoot and muddy in a black and white track suit, attempted to climb a black, steel fence within the base grounds and apparently injured himself.

He was spotted climbing into a fenced-off area opposite the 3rd Dental Battalion building on Foster, a Marine Corps base, at about noon Wednesday.

“We do not have his name. He was spotted by a person that was working at a building and looked out the window and saw him and stopped him,” Cpl. Chandler Schmidt of the provost marshal told Stars and Stripes by phone

Wednesday.

A spokesman for the Okinawa police said the officers on scene had not yet filed a report on the incident.

“I don’t think his act was based on political beliefs or anything like that,” the spokesman said Wednesday. Government spokespeople in Japan typically speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

In October, Toshiko Taira, 49, of Uruma city, was arrested while riding a bicycle around Foster. She hopped a fence to get on base, a spokesman from Okinawa Police Station told Stars and Stripes at the time.

Taira had no valid reason for being on the base in Ginowan, according to police. “She hasn’t told us why she entered,” the spokesman said.

A conviction for trespassing on



FRANK ANDREWS/Stars and Stripes

An unidentified man, barefoot and muddy in a black and white track suit, attempted to climb a steel fence within the grounds of Camp Foster, Okinawa, on Wednesday.

a U.S. military installation in Japan carries up to a year in prison or a fine of less than \$18, according to Japanese law.

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Army veterinarians, also food safety experts, can extend expired food

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE AND FRANK ANDREWS
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Shoppers looking for yogurt at the Foster commissary one day in late January were met with a notice posted above the Greek Gods brand in the dairy case.

The shelf life for the honey strawberry flavor in 24-ounce plastic containers was about to expire.

“This item has been inspected by veterinary personnel and is of wholesome quality, flavor and appearance,” the paper read.

Veterinary personnel? The notice caused a minor stir on social media. Army veterinarians care for military pets and working dogs, but they are also food safety experts capable of extending the life



Officers in the Army Veterinary Corps are trained and licensed food safety experts.

of food products on commissary shelves. A veterinary food inspector extended the expiring yogurt’s shelf life at the Foster commissary by one week.

Enlisted personnel are generally split between animal care and food safety, but officers in the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps are trained and licensed to do both and often

take on supervisory roles at their installations.

“Veterinary Services only extend the shelf life of food products that are safe and of the highest quality,” Col. Matthew Levine, commander of Public Health Activity-Japan, told Stars and Stripes in an email Monday. “Our stringent inspection and assessment programs only allow us to extend the shelf-life if it poses no health risks to our community.”

Food inspections have been routine duty for the Veterinary Corps in Japan since World War II. Army veterinary food inspectors came ashore in the invasion force, according to a unit history on the health activity website.

Veterinary inspectors — U.S. soldiers and Japanese employees overseen by Army warrant offi-

cers — are involved with Defense Department food supplies from the warehouse to the commissary. They check product temperatures, food handling practices, cleanliness, expiration dates and product recalls, senior food safety officer Chief Warrant Officer 3 Marques Walker wrote in the same email.

They inspect imported food at Defense Department warehouses before it reaches commissary shelves. Then they make food safety and quality assurance inspections and daily walk-throughs in those commissaries.

Enlisted veterinary food inspectors receive eight weeks of advanced training at the U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence in San Antonio, Walker said. They also study food microbiology, chemistry, deterioration, preservation

and packaging technology.

Levine did not say how often an inspector has extended a product’s shelf life in Japan, but he said the practice is routine. Still, some shoppers won’t touch expired food.

“No, I would not feed my children anything that’s shelf life has been extended,” Marine Cpl. Bryannah Gray, a California native and mother of two infants, told Stars and Stripes while shopping at Foster on Friday.

Petty Officer 1st Class Patrick Glenn, 25, of Tenino, Wash., said Tuesday he doesn’t really buy much dairy except for coffee creamer, which lasts “months,” but if a product still tastes good, he is not going to let it go to waste.

“Being a fleet sailor, sometimes, what we got is what we got, right?” Glenn said.

EUROPE

Russian weapons shift signals siege war pivot

By DAN LAMOTHE
The Washington Post

The Russian military is branching out from relying heavily on guided missiles in its bombardment of Ukraine, firing more artillery, rockets and other weapons that can be difficult to aim precisely and cause devastating carnage in civilian areas, military experts said.

The shift comes as the Pentagon assesses that Russia is pivoting to siege warfare in the cities of Kharkiv and Chernihiv, and could do so in the capital, Kyiv. Such tactics are notoriously horrifying, trapping civilians under fire as an invading force encircles a city and prevents food, ammunition and medical supplies from entering.

Military analysts said that Russia's initial battle plan appeared nonsensical and haphazard, with Russian soldiers launching a ground invasion after a brief bombardment that primarily struck military targets but failed to knock out all Ukrainian air defenses. Invading forces, operating with little logistical support and air cover, appeared to expect little resistance, but instead have clashed with Ukrainians in bloody fights.

Russian commanders appear to be reconsidering their approach, analysts and U.S. government officials said.

"I'm seeing reorganization," said Michael Kofman, the director of Russian studies at CNA, a Virginia-based think tank. "They're coalescing into larger units, they're pulling up logistics and they're starting to use more artillery and air power."

A senior U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the Pentagon's current assessments, affirmed Tuesday that it does appear Russia is "regrouping."

Russian forces have begun frequent use of a multiple rocket-



SERHII NUZHNIENKO/AP

People look at the gutted remains of Russian military vehicles on a road in the town of Bucha, close to the capital Kyiv, Ukraine, on Tuesday.

launch system that can employ unguided cluster munitions and thermobaric rounds, made at least one flight with a Su-34 bomber, and built a 40 mile-long column comprising hundreds of tanks and other armored vehicles north of the capital, Kyiv, Russia's primary objective.

When Russia launched its invasion Thursday, it fired more than 100 missiles into Ukraine, primarily at airfields and other military targets.

The initial salvo included a mix of cruise missiles fired from ships and Iskander ballistic missiles that are reasonably accurate, said Rob Lee, a former Marine Corps infantry officer who is now a senior fellow with the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

As of Tuesday, the Russians had

launched a total of about 400 missiles — which have guidance systems and are relatively precise, experts have said. But as they have faced stiff resistance from Ukrainian forces, Russia has begun to employ rocket systems and other methods in the northeastern city of Kharkiv, around which some of the heaviest fighting has occurred. On Tuesday, an explosion appeared to a rock a government center and nearby intersection as cars sat in traffic, according to video of the attack. It wasn't clear what caused it.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has condemned the shelling, calling it a war crime.

The rocket launcher fires rapid volleys of unguided munitions, and can carry cluster munitions, which indiscriminately disperse

small "bomblets" upon detonation to inflict maximum casualties. Amnesty International accused the Russian military on Monday of killing civilians, including children, with the rounds, which are condemned by the majority of the international community.

Oksana Markarova, Ukraine's ambassador to the United States, told reporters Tuesday that Russia has also used a "vacuum bomb," a colloquial name given to thermobaric weapons due to the way they suck in oxygen from the surrounding air upon detonation to produce a larger explosion.

The Pentagon has stopped short of confirming reports about the specific types of ordnance being used by Russian forces in Ukraine, while acknowledging it is assessing the situation.

Lee said that Russian President Vladimir Putin and his advisers will have difficult days ahead if they cause major destruction. While Russia leveled residential areas in Syria and Chechnya in earlier conflicts, it is not clear that Putin is comfortable doing so in a nation whose history is closely intertwined with Russia's when it could have political fallout for him, he said.

"If you're going to go into cities, you have to be prepared to destroy them, and that's going to mean that a lot of Russians die, and a lot of civilians die," Lee said. "I don't know if they're really going to be willing to massacre all these civilians."

It's been challenging for the Pentagon and independent observers to thoroughly assess what weapons and tactics Russian commanders are employing, even as imagery of battle damage and explosions circulate widely online. In one example, a video of a missile hitting a high-rise apartment building drew international attention, but it now appears the damage may not have been caused by Russia.

Jeffrey Lewis, who studies missile warfare in California at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, said his team assessed it was most likely an errant surface-to-air missile.

"We can't tell whether it is Ukrainian or Russian, but the former would be more likely," Lewis said, given the strike's location.

Lewis said Russia's initial strikes "looked pretty accurate." He predicted that Russia will shift next to using more rocket artillery.

Kofman said the Russian plan so far has "not made any sense," putting rank-and-file soldiers in combat with few resources as the Russian air force is largely "missing in action."

80% of Russian forces now in Ukraine as supply issues slow advance

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Roughly 80% of the more than 170,000 troops Russia had surrounding Ukraine for months before invading are now inside the country, though the Ukrainian resistance and supply issues have slowed their advance, a senior U.S. defense official said Tuesday.

Russian forces advancing toward Ukraine's capital of Kyiv "has made no appreciable movement" since Monday when they were approximately 15.5 miles from the center of the city, said the official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Ukrainian resistance and Russian supply issues with fuel

have been slowing movement for days, though the official said the United States is now "picking up signs that [Russia is] having problems feeding their troops."

"Not only are they running out of gas, but they are running out of food," the official told reporters at the Pentagon.

The U.S. also believes Russia has exhibited a certain "risk aversion" for its troops, the official said, noting Russia is "not necessarily willing to take high risks with their own aircraft and their own pilots" or their ground forces.

"Take the amphibious assault for instance, they put those troops ashore a good [43 miles] away from Mariupol because they

knew Mariupol was going to be defended and they [couldn't] put them ashore in an uncontested environment. And they still haven't reached Mariupol," the official said.

The U.S. has seen significant numbers of Russian troops — some of whom are Russian draftees — surrendering in Ukraine "sometimes without a fight," the official said. "A lot of these [Russian] soldiers are conscripts [who have] never been in combat before. Some of them, we believe, weren't even told they were going to be in combat."

The pause Tuesday toward Kyiv could partially be deliberate, however, as Russian troops "are possibly regrouping, rethinking

and reevaluating" their approach, the official said.

"We don't know exactly why [Russia is] having the logistics and sustainment problems," the official said. "Was it a failure of planning and pre-positioning or has it been a failure in the execution? There could be lots of reasons for this, not to mention the [Ukrainian] resistance."

Though the Russian forces have not advanced as fast as the U.S. believes Russia intended, the official urged the public to remain "pragmatic" and mindful that Russia still has "a lot of power available to them."

The Russian Defense Ministry on Tuesday warned civilians to leave Kyiv as it plans strikes on

Ukrainian military and security facilities in the capital city, according to the Russian state-owned TASS media outlet.

The announcement could indicate a hardened Russian military strategy to come, the U.S. official said.

"This is war. It's dynamic. We can expect to see them change their approach," the official said. "In fact, I would argue that the Russian Defense Ministry's threatening statement today that they're going to start going and attacking government infrastructure in Kyiv is indicative of a change here."

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EUROPE

Lawmakers call for urgent Ukraine aid package of \$6.4B

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Congressional lawmakers on Tuesday called for the immediate passage of a multibillion-dollar emergency spending package to aid Ukraine, and warned time was running out to deliver security and humanitarian assistance as Russian forces closed in on the country's capital city of Kyiv.

Frustrated by plans to fold the aid to Ukraine into a larger government funding bill next week, Rep. Doug Lamborn, R-Colo., urged his fellow lawmakers to move faster on the request from the White House to send at least \$6.4 billion to the war-torn country.

"What I've heard is that we're going to wait a week and deal with it," Lamborn said during a House Armed Services Committee hearing about U.S. national security objectives. "Aren't there civilians who are going to be dying in Ukraine? Aren't there soldiers who are taking up arms who are going to die? Isn't there property that's going to be destroyed? Isn't there going to be hunger in Ukraine? Why in the world can we wait a week to deal with this?"

During the hearing Tuesday, Lamborn pressed Mara Karlin, the assistant secretary of defense for strategy, plans and capabilities, to help push other lawmakers into swift action on the bill.

"We could have passed this last night on a voice vote," he said. "It's wrong for us to wait a week to do this. Do you have any influence? Can you talk to anybody and say, 'Let's bring this up today?' Let's get this going. There are people dying in Ukraine right now. There's a 40-mile convoy of Russian tanks and armor going to Kyiv."

Karlin said officials at the State and Defense departments are moving quickly to deliver supplies and support to Ukraine, including \$350 million in ammunition, Javelin anti-tank missiles, Stinger air-defense systems and other emergency military aid that the White House authorized last weekend.

The emergency spending package for Ukraine awaiting congressional approval would provide \$3.5 billion to the Pentagon and \$2.9 billion to the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development for humanitarian assistance.

In the Senate, Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., a member of the Senate

Armed Services Committee, also urged his fellow senators to begin immediate consideration of the emergency aid bill and detach it from long-term government funding legislation still being drafted. The larger bill needs to pass by March 11 to keep federal agencies open and avoid a shutdown.

"Russia's blatant act of war demands a strong and immediate response in the form of aid for Ukraine from the United States," Scott said in a statement Tuesday. "While some may find it convenient to just stitch these issues together, doing so needlessly delays delivery of critical aid and military resources to the people of Ukraine as they fight for the survival of their democracy."

Much of the requested assistance for the Defense Department would fund increased operating costs for the growing number of American troops in Europe, which has surged from about 80,000 to about 100,000 during the Ukraine crisis, Karlin said. Some of the aid money will also be used to replenish U.S. weapons stocks that the Biden administration has tapped into three times to supply Ukraine since last fall, she said.

Rep. Elissa Slotkin, D-Mich., told Karlin to seize a rare time of bipartisan unity to demand more military assistance for Ukraine and specify what the Pentagon needs to bolster Ukraine's ability to defend itself against the Russian assault.

"You have an absolutely unique moment where the U.S. Congress has bipartisan agreement on giving you what you need and we're not getting an ask. Ask us for things," she said.

Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, defended the pace of congressional deliberations, noting "a ton of money is flowing out of the United States of America right now to help the people of Ukraine" that does not require congressional action.

"Congress needs to look at whether or not we need to send more money, whether or not we need to give [the Biden administration] authority to do that. And that's perhaps why we're waiting to make sure that we do this right," he said. "But while we're waiting to pass congressional legislation, it is not the case that nothing is happening."

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TORSTEIN BOEE/AP

Members of the Russian cross-country national team try to remove a Ukrainian flag and writing reading "Glory to Ukraine" from the side of the team trailer in Holmenkollen near Oslo on Wednesday.

Russians face continued sports sanctions, but not at Paralympics

Associated Press

DÜSSELDORF, Germany — With the exception of the upcoming Paralympics, Russian athletes were restricted from competing in more sporting events around the world on Wednesday.

Sports including biathlon and table tennis were among those to join more than a dozen other Olympic sports in excluding competitors from Russia and Belarus because of the invasion of Ukraine. The International Paralympic Committee, however, said Russians and Belarusians would be able to compete in Beijing as "neutral athletes" without national symbols.

Blanket bans have been imposed in soccer, track, basketball and hockey, among other sports, following an appeal from the Inter-

national Olympic Committee to exclude Russians and Belarusians from international events.

The IOC, however, left open the possibility of allowing them to compete as neutral athletes if expulsion was not possible because of short notice.

The Winter Paralympics open Friday and numerous Russian athletes are already in the Chinese capital. The IPC has said it is working to get the Ukrainian team there, too.

Other sports bodies which have so far let Russians and Belarusians keep competing as neutral athletes include FINA, which governs swimming and other aquatic sports, and the federations for boxing, gymnastics, fencing and judo.

The governing body for British motorsports on Wednesday

banned Russians from competing at events in the country, throwing into doubt Formula One driver Nikita Mazepin's ability to race in the British Grand Prix in July.

The sport's international governing body, known as FIA, had said Tuesday that Russian drivers like Mazepin can still compete, but a block on having cars in national colors would stop his team, Haas, from bringing back the Russian flag-stripe livery it removed during last week's testing.

Motorsport UK went further, with sanctions barring drivers and teams from Russia and Belarus from competing anywhere in Britain. The FIA didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on what it would do when its rules conflict with those of national governing bodies.

Cultural backlash grows against Russia

Associated Press

ROME — The cultural backlash against Russia's invasion of Ukraine intensified Tuesday as the Cannes Film Festival said no Russian delegations would be welcome this year, and the Venice festival announced free screenings of a film about the 2014 conflict in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region.

The announcements by Europe's two premier film festivals came on the heels of other high-profile protests in the arts, including Hollywood's decision to pull films scheduled for release in Russia and the Munich Philharmonic's decision to fire chief conductor Valery Gergiev. The orchestra,

joined by other orchestras and festivals linked to Gergiev, cited his support for Russian President Vladimir Putin and his refusal to reject the invasion.

Cannes, which is scheduled for May, is the most global of film festivals and its international village of flag-waving pavilions annually hosts more than 80 countries from around the world.

In a statement, festival organizers said the ban on any official Russian delegation or individuals linked to the Kremlin would remain "unless the war of assault ends in conditions that will satisfy the Ukrainian people."

Hollywood continued pulling its

films out of Russian theaters. After the Walt Disney Co., Warner Bros. and Sony announced they would halt distributing films in Russia, including Warner's highly anticipated "The Batman," Paramount Pictures announced likewise on Tuesday. That includes upcoming releases like "Sonic the Hedgehog 2" and "The Lost City."

The Venice Film Festival, meanwhile, said it was organizing free screenings of the film "Reflection," about the conflict in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region as a sign of solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

The screenings are scheduled for next week in Rome, Milan and Venice.

EUROPE

Ukraine: As Russian offensive worsens, both sides ready for more talks

FROM PAGE 1

The U.N. General Assembly voted to demand that Russia stop its offensive and immediately withdraw all troops, with world powers and tiny island states alike condemning Moscow. The vote was 141 to 5, with 35 abstentions.

Assembly resolutions aren't legally binding but can have influence as a reflection of international opinion.

The vote came after the 193-member assembly convened its first emergency session since 1997. Countries that spoke up for Russia included Belarus, Cuba, North Korea and Syria.

Meanwhile, Russia pounded Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city with about 1.5 million people, with another round of aerial attacks that shattered buildings and lit up the skyline with balls of fire. At least 21 people were killed and 112 injured over the past day, said Oleg Sinehubov, head of the Kharkiv regional administration.

Several Russian planes were shot down over Kharkiv, according to Oleksiy Arestovich, a top adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

"Kharkiv today is the Stalingrad of the 21st century," Arestovich said, invoking what is considered one of the most heroic moments in Russian history, the five-month defense of the city from the Nazis during World War II.

From his basement bunker, Kharkiv Mayor Igor Terekhov told the BBC: "The city is united and we shall stand fast."

Russian attacks, many with missiles, blew the roof off Kharkiv's five-story regional police building and set the top floor on fire, and also hit the intelligence headquarters and a university building, according to officials and videos and photos released by Ukraine's State Emergency Service. Officials said residential buildings were also hit, but gave no details.

Ukraine found itself under threat on other fronts as well: A huge, 40-mile-long column of Russian tanks and other military vehicles stood outside Kyiv, the capital, and Russian invaders pressed their assault on the strategic port cities of Kherson and Mariupol.

Seven days into Russia's invasion, a refugee crisis unfolded on the European continent, with the U.N. saying that more than



VADIM GHIRDA/AP

Andrey Goncharuk, 68, a member of territorial defense wipes his face in the backyard of a house that was damaged by a Russian airstrike in Gorenka, outside the capital Kyiv, Ukraine, on Wednesday.



SERHII NUZHNEKO/AP

An armed man stands by the remains of a Russian military vehicle in Bucha, close to the capital Kyiv, Ukraine, on Tuesday.

870,000 people have fled Ukraine and that the number could soon hit 1 million.

The State Emergency Service reported that more than 2,000 civilians have been killed, but that could not be independently verified.

A spokesman for the Russian Defense Ministry, Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, gave his side's mil-

itary casualty figures, disputing as "disinformation" reports of much higher losses. Ukraine's leader claimed almost 6,000 Russian soldiers have been killed.

Konashenkov also said more than 2,870 Ukrainian troops have been killed and about 3,700 wounded, while over 570 others have been captured.

Russia ramped up its rhetoric,

with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov reminding the world about the country's vast nuclear arsenal. In an interview with Al-Jazeera, he said: "A third world war will be nuclear, and devastating," according to Russian news sites.

In the northern city of Chernihiv, two cruise missiles hit a hospital, according to the Ukrainian UNIAN news agency, which quoted the health administration chief, Serhiy Pivovarov, as saying authorities were working to determine the casualty toll.

In besieged Mariupol, at least one teenager died and two more were wounded by apparent Russian shelling. The boys' families told The Associated Press the attack came while they were playing soccer near a school.

Britain's Defense Ministry said Kharkiv and Mariupol were encircled. Kherson was also under pressure, but there were conflicting reports as to who was in control.

Mariupol Mayor Vadym Boychenko said the attacks there had been relentless.

"We cannot even take the wounded from the streets, from houses and apartments today, since the shelling does not stop," he was quoted by the Interfax

news agency as saying.

On the far edges of Kyiv, volunteer fighters well into their 60s manned a checkpoint to block the Russian advance.

"In my old age, I had to take up arms," said Andrey Goncharuk, 68. He said the fighters needed more weapons, but "we'll kill the enemy and take their weapons."

On Tuesday, Russia, intensifying its attacks on cities, bombed Kharkiv's central square — where at least six people were reported killed — and struck Kyiv's main TV tower, where authorities said five died. Kyiv's nearby Babi Yar Holocaust memorial also came under fire, but the main monument was not damaged.

The announced talks inspired hope, though it remained unclear what they could yield. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said Russia's demands have not changed and that he wouldn't accept any ultimatums.

In other developments:

■ The price of oil continued to soar, reaching \$112 per barrel, the highest since 2014.

■ Russia found itself even more isolated economically as Airbus and Boeing said they would cut off spare parts and technical support to the country's airlines, a major blow. Airbus and Boeing jets account for the vast majority of Russia's passenger fleet.

Dmitry Peskov, the Kremlin spokesman, acknowledged the global economic punishment hitting Russia is unprecedented, but said that Moscow had been prepared for all manner of sanctions and that the potential damage had been taken into account before launching the invasion.

"We have experience with this. We have been through several crises," he said.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, warned that the fighting poses a danger to Ukraine's 15 nuclear reactors.

"When there is a conflict ongoing, there is of course a risk of attack or the possibility of an accidental hit," Rafael Mariano Grossi, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said in Vienna.

Russia already seized control of the decommissioned Chernobyl power plant, the scene in 1986 of the world's worst nuclear disaster.

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EUROPE

Bavaria leader, US soldiers have brunch plans

BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Soldiers of the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division were scheduled by Bavaria’s governor to receive a traditional white sausage brunch following their arrival in Nuremberg, Germany.

Bavarian governor Markus Soeder exchanged fist bumps with 200 soldiers as they disembarked from their plane Tuesday. On the tarmac, he delivered a welcome speech in which he thanked troops for their commitment to NATO’s defense.

“NATO is a guarantor of security and peace in the world,” Soeder said. “We are thankful for the close friendship. God bless you.”

Soeder ordered 4,000 sausages to be served at the Grafenwoehr Training Area, where the soldiers will be housed, the Bavarian Broadcasting Channel reported. The training area is the U.S. Army’s largest in Europe.

It wasn’t immediately clear what day the brunch would be

served.

The short, plump sausage known as weisswurst is a Bavarian specialty, traditionally made from a mixture of finely minced veal and back bacon. It is usually served with stone-ground mustard, a large salted pretzel and a Bavarian wheat beer.

The brigade, based at Fort Stewart, Ga., is expected to provide 3,800 of the 7,000 service members deployed to reassure allies and bolster NATO’s defensive posture following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The temporary deployments add to the more than 80,000 U.S. troops already in Europe on rotational or permanent orders, U.S. Army Europe and Africa said Wednesday.

The soldiers will train with the 7th Army Training Command at Grafenwoehr. More than 20 additional aircraft with reinforcement personnel are slated to follow in the coming weeks.

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TWITTER/Markus Soeder

Bavarian governor Markus Soeder, second from left, welcomes U.S. soldiers of 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, at the Nuremberg Airport in Germany, on Tuesday. The unit is slated to provide the most of the 7,000 service members ordered to deploy on a mission to support NATO allies.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The Japanese-owned cargo ship Namura Queen was struck by a projectile in the Black Sea off Ukraine’s coast on Feb. 25.

Repairs begin for cargo ship hit by projectile off Ukraine

BY HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — A Japanese-owned cargo ship is undergoing repairs in Turkey days after a rocket attack in the Black Sea off Ukraine’s coast, according to a Cabinet minister in Japan.

One of the 20 Filipino crewmen aboard was injured but the bulk carrier Namura Queen left the area under its own steam after Friday’s attack. The ship is the property of an overseas subsidiary of a Japanese firm but flies a Panamanian flag, Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Tetsuo Saito told reporters Tuesday.

The Ukraine Infrastructure Ministry attributed the strike to Russia, Reuters reported Friday.

Nikko Kisen, a firm based in Ehime prefecture in western Japan, is the ship’s registered owner,

according to VesselFinder.com. A company representative declined comment when reached by phone Tuesday by Stars and Stripes.

The vessel, built in 2020, is in port at Yalova, Turkey, east of Istanbul on the Sea of Marmara, according to MarineTraffic.com. It was anchored east of Odesa, Ukraine, when the projectile slammed into the aft portion of its superstructure, according to FleetMon.com. Both sites specialize in tracking ships.

The Namura Queen was struck while its crew waited to load corn, TV Asahi reported on Saturday.

The Yasa Jupiter, a Turkish bulk carrier flagged by the Marshall Islands, was struck Feb. 24 off Odesa and slightly damaged, according to Reuters and Splash247.com.

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Japan and Russia feud over Ukraine invasion, WWII-era territorial dispute

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Japan and Russia, sparring publicly over Russia’s week-old invasion of Ukraine, have revived a dispute over Pacific territory left over from World War II.

A Japanese Foreign Ministry official on Monday compared the Russian invasion to its occupation of four islands north of Hokkaido that Japan calls the Northern Territories and Russia the Southern Kuriles.

“I understand that Russia occupying Northern Territories and Russian military’s invasion happening in Ukraine now are both against international law,” Hideki Uyama, director-general of the European Affairs Bureau of Ja-

pan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told the House of Councilors Budget Committee, the Asahi newspaper reported Tuesday.

Japan joined other nations Monday in sanctioning Russia’s central bank over the war in Ukraine. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced the sanctions after telling Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that Japan would stand by his country.

In response to Uyama’s comments, Russia’s Embassy in Tokyo tweeted Monday that Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs had forgotten history.

“The Kuril Islands, including the Southern Kuriles, were transferred to our country as a result of World War II on legal grounds in accordance with the Allied deci-

sions,” the embassy wrote.

The embassy followed up with another tweet that its possession of the islands was punishment for Japan’s aggression and its alliance with Nazi Germany.

“Japan has come to support the Nazi government twice in less than 100 years,” the embassy wrote. “They once supported the Hitler administration, and this time the Ukrainian administration.”

Japan and Russia never signed a peace treaty after World War II. The status of the islands, which were captured by the Soviets at the end of the war, has been a sticking point for more than seven decades.

Stars and Stripes reporter Hana Kusumoto contributed to this report
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N. Korea: US policy led to invasion of Ukraine

BY DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

North Korea identified “the hegemonic policy” of the United States and its allies as the “root cause” of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, according to a Monday statement from the communist regime’s Foreign Ministry.

North Korea through public statements defended Russia’s motives throughout the weeks leading up to the large-scale operation on Feb. 24. Its pronouncement

Monday came five days after Russian President Vladimir Putin sent Russian troops into Ukraine.

“The U.S. and the West, in defiance of Russia’s reasonable and just demand to provide it with legal guarantee for security, have systematically undermined the security environment of Europe by becoming more blatant in their attempts to deploy attack weapon system while defiantly pursuing NATO’s eastward expansion,” said the Foreign Ministry state-

ment published by the state-run Korean Central News Agency.

The “greatest danger the world faces now is high-handedness and arbitrariness” from the U.S., whose “unilateral and double-dealing policy” remains a barrier to world peace, the statement said.

Russia aligns itself with North Korea and lends diplomatic influence to the regime.

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

USFK sees cases uptick; S. Korea tops 219K

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — New COVID-19 cases among the U.S. military in South Korea are on the rise as the daily number of new cases in the country itself surpassed 200,000 Wednesday for the first time during the pandemic.

U.S. Forces Korea counted 164 new cases over a seven-day period ending Monday. Of those, 28 were recent arrivals in South Korea and 136 were infections acquired locally, according to an update Wednesday on the command's website.

USFK's weekly total is 45 cases more than the previous week and two more than it confirmed between Feb. 8-14. The command is responsible for approximately 28,500 U.S. troops.

Meanwhile, South Korean health officials recorded 219,241 new cases across the country Wednesday.

The new record exceeds Tuesday's 138,989 infections and the previous daily record of 171,451 cases on Feb. 23.

Gyeonggi, South Korea's most populous province, accounted for over 68,600 of Wednesday's cases. Seoul, the capital city, reported

the second-highest number, 46,933.

USFK has banned off-duty travel to Seoul, as well as trips to saunas, bathhouses, clubs and bars.

Around 86.5% of the country's population of 51 million people is fully vaccinated, and 61.4% received a booster shot as of Tuesday.

South Korean Prime Minister Kim Boo-kyum described March as a likely "turning point" for the pandemic.

"This month is a very critical period," Kim said Wednesday during a meeting at the Central Disaster and Safety Countermea-

sure Headquarters. "The government will continue to keep faith sent by the people toward the government's anti-epidemic prevention measures."

There is a chance for more positive cases during spring, when people are expected to gather in groups, Kim said.

The medical system is capable of handling more cases in the days ahead with around 50% of the country's hospital beds occupied, he said.

"We recently saw that the number of confirmed cases have been about doubling every week while the coronavirus's spread is getting

fast toward a tipping point," Kim said. "The fact is that the number of severe cases and deaths have been increasing in accordance with it."

South Korean President Moon Jae-in in a public speech Tuesday lauded the country's economic growth of 4% last year as the pandemic raged.

"The mature civic awareness of our people was a key factor in our ability to pass through the COVID-19 tunnel," he said.

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US military reports 82 new positive cases in Japan

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Japan's capital city reported nearly 2,000 fewer COVID-19 cases on Wednesday than a week prior, resuming a pattern of week-over-week declines after two days.

Tokyo confirmed 12,693 new infections Wednesday, 880 more than the previous day but 1,874 less than Feb. 23, according to public broadcaster NHK and metropolitan government data.

Another 31 people in Tokyo died of causes related to COVID-19, NHK reported.

U.S. Forces Japan on Tuesday evening reported 82 new COVID-19 cases, including three awaiting confirmation, at 10 installations over the previous 24 hours. None are hospitalized or considered serious, according to the command's daily update. USFJ last reported 102 new cases on Friday.

USFJ on Tuesday followed the government of Japan's lead and relaxed the quarantine period to three days for new arrivals or travelers returning to Japan, provided they are fully vaccinated, including a booster shot, and test negative three times — prior to arrival, at the airport and three days later.



KELLY AGEE/Stars and Stripes

U.S. Forces Japan on Tuesday reported 82 new COVID-19 cases, including three awaiting confirmation, at 10 installations over the previous 24 hours.

USFJ also relaxed the mask mandate on U.S. military installations for fully vaccinated personnel who may go without a mask outdoors while maintaining social distance, according to USFJ spo-

keswoman Lt. Col. Brooke Brander. Masks are required for the entire U.S. military population while off base in Japan.

Yokosuka Naval Base, homeport of the U.S. 7th Fleet south of

Tokyo, accounted for most of USFJ's new infections, 38, followed by 11 at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni near Hiroshima and 10 at Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo. Another 11 installa-

tions reported zero new cases, including nine on Okinawa.

MCAS Iwakuni reported 20 new infections Tuesday, according to a base news release on Wednesday. The air station reported 156 cases in February, about 16% of the 987 cases it announced in January.

U.S. Army Japan, headquartered at Camp Zama southwest of Tokyo, reported 16 people tested positive for COVID-19 between Feb. 23 and Wednesday, according to an Army news release.

Six were close contacts of another infected person and 10 developed COVID-19 symptoms, according to the release.

Kadena Air Base on Okinawa reported 120 total cases on Wednesday, according to an update of its website. It last reported 76 total on Tuesday.

Okinawa prefecture reported 966 new cases Wednesday, down from 1,029 the previous day, according to the prefectural Department of Public Health and Medical Care.

The department reported another 19 new cases in the U.S. military population.

Stars and Stripes reporter Mari Higa contributed to this report.
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Pfizer shots protect kids from severe COVID, even with omicron

Associated Press

Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine gave children 5 and older strong protection against hospitalization and death even during the omicron surge that hit youngsters especially hard, U.S. health officials reported Tuesday.

New data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention come a day after a study of New York children suggested the vaccine may not be as effective in 5- to 11-year-olds as in older kids — especially at blocking milder infec-

tions. That data raised the question of whether kid-sized doses given to those under 12 might be too low.

But the CDC said data from multiple other states suggests the issue isn't children's ages or dose size — it's omicron. Vaccination is generally less effective against the hugely contagious omicron variant than earlier versions of the coronavirus — and vaccinations for 5- to 11-year-olds began just weeks before omicron began circulating.

"As a parent of a very young

child, I think I would do everything to keep them out of the emergency department in the middle of the night," said CDC epidemiologist Ruth Link-Gelles. "What we see from the data that we have is that the vaccine continues to provide good protection against more severe outcomes."

Pediatricians have said the back-and-forth results may seem confusing, but that parents need to understand the shots are still the best way to prevent serious illness.

"If you're vaccinated, you may get a mild infection and we're just going to have to learn to live with that," said Dr. Paul Offit of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. He said the New York study was too small to draw conclusions and also can't account for variables such as infections going uncounted in kids tested at home instead of a clinic.

He said youngsters admitted to his hospital with severe COVID-19 are the unvaccinated "and it's hard to watch."

The CDC reported Tuesday that between April and early January, there were nine deaths related to COVID-19 among vaccinated children ages 5 to 17 — compared to 121 deaths among unvaccinated children that age.

The Pfizer shots are the only vaccine available to U.S. children, and those ages 5 to 11 receive one-third of the dose given to everyone 12 and older. Also, everyone 12 and older is urged to get a booster dose. Pfizer is currently testing a booster dose for 5- to 11-year-olds.

NATION

Biden: Speech usually for national audience had the world watching

FROM PAGE 1

Biden heads again to an old bridge set to be repaired — increasingly a symbol for his administration, tangible evidence of the nation that he's working to update. This time, it's a wrought-iron bridge that connects Duluth, Minn., and Superior, Wis., across the St. Louis Bay.

The bridge will be replaced using funds from the massive infrastructure plan signed into law last year, a signature piece of bipartisan legislation and proof — Biden says — that the GOP and Democrats can still work together.

In Tuesday's speech, Biden highlighted the bravery of Ukrainian defenders and a newly reinvigorated Western alliance that has worked to rearm the Ukrainian military and cripple Russia's economy through sanctions. He acknowledged costs to the American economy, as well, but warned ominously that without consequences, Russian President Vladimir Putin's aggression wouldn't be contained to Ukraine.

"Throughout our history we've learned this lesson — when dictators do not pay a price for their aggression, they cause more chaos," Biden said. "They keep moving. And, the costs and threats to America and the world keep rising."

As Biden spoke, Russian forces were escalating their attacks in Ukraine, having bombarded the central square of country's second-biggest city and Kyiv's main TV tower, killing at least five people. The Babi Yar Holocaust memorial was also damaged.

Biden announced that the U.S. is following Canada and the European Union in banning Russian planes from its airspace in retaliation for the invasion of Ukraine. He also said the Justice Department was launching a task force to go after Russian oligarchs, whom he called "corrupt leaders who have bilked billions of dollars off this violent regime."

"We are coming for your ill-begotten gains," he said, pledging that the U.S. and European allies were after their yachts, luxury apartments and private jets.

Biden pivoted in his speech from the troubles abroad to those at home. Even before the Russian invasion sent energy costs skyrocketing, prices for American families had been rising, and the COVID-19 pandemic continues to hurt families and the country's economy.

Biden outlined plans to address inflation by reinvesting in American manufacturing capacity, speeding supply chains and reducing the burden of child care

"It's time for Americans to get back to work and fill our great downtowns again."

President Joe Biden

and elder care on workers.

"Too many families are struggling to keep up with the bills," Biden said. "Inflation is robbing them of the gains they might otherwise feel. I get it. That's why my top priority is getting prices under control."

In one sign of national progress on the pandemic, Biden entered the House chamber without a mask, as coronavirus cases decline and new federal guidance tries to nudge the public back to pre-pandemic activities. But there was evidence of ongoing tension as well: The Capitol was newly fenced due to security concerns after last year's insurrection.

Set against disquiet at home and danger abroad, the White House had conceived Tuesday night's speech as an opportunity to highlight the improving coronavirus outlook, rebrand Biden's domestic policy priorities and show a path to lower costs for families grappling with soaring inflation. But events took a turn toward world affairs with last week's Russian invasion of Ukraine and nuclear saber-rattling by Putin.

As is customary, one Cabinet secretary, in this case Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, was kept in a secure location during the address, ready to take over the government in the event of a catastrophe.

The State of the Union is typically an address targeted to a national audience, but this year's had the world watching. In an interview with CNN and Reuters, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged Biden to deliver a strong and "useful" message about Russia's invasion. In a show of unity, Ukrainian Ambassador to the U.S. Oksana Markarova joined first lady Jill Biden in the House gallery for the speech.

In a rare discordant moment, Rep. Lauren Boebert, R-Colo., yelled that Biden was to blame for the 13 troops who were killed during August's chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

"You put them in. Thirteen of them," Boebert yelled as Biden mentioned his late son Beau, a veteran who died from brain cancer and served near toxic military

burn pits, used in Iraq and Afghanistan. Biden is pursuing legislation to help veterans suffering exposure and other injuries.

While the crisis in Eastern Europe may have helped to cool partisan tensions in Washington, it didn't erase the political and cultural discord that is casting doubt on Biden's ability to deliver.

A February AP-NORC poll found that more people disapproved than approved of how Biden is handling his job, 55% to 44%. That's down from a 60% favorable rating last July.

Biden used his remarks to highlight the progress from a year ago — with the majority of the U.S. population now vaccinated and millions more people at work — but also acknowledged that the job is not yet done, a recognition of American discontent.

"I have come to report on the state of the union," Biden said. "And my report is this: The state of the union is strong — because you, the American people, are strong. We are stronger today than we were a year ago. And we will be stronger a year from now than we are today."

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, selected to give the Republican response, said Biden's address came as a blast from the past with rising inflation, rising crime and a resurgent Russia making it feel more like the 1980s than today.

"Even before taking the oath of office, the president said that he wanted to — quote — make America respected around the world again, and to unite us here. He's failed on both fronts," she said.

Biden used his speech to nudge the country back "to more normal routines" after the coronavirus reshaped American life.

"It's time for Americans to get back to work and fill our great downtowns again," he declared. He said people will be able to order another round of free tests from the government and that his administration was launching a "test to treat" initiative to provide free antiviral pills to those who test positive for the virus.

Where his speech to Congress last year saw the rollout of a massive social spending package, Biden this year largely repackaged past proposals in search of achievable measures he hopes can win bipartisan support in Congress before the elections.

Biden called for lowering health care costs, pitching his plan to authorize Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices, as well as an extension of more generous health insurance subsidies now temporarily available through the Affordable Care Act marketplaces where 14.5 million people get coverage.



JABIN BOTSFORD/AP

Danielle Robinson waves as she is recognized during President Joe Biden's State of the Union address on Tuesday. Robinson's husband, Sgt. 1st Class Heath Robinson, was diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder and lung cancer after serving in Kosovo and Iraq, where he experienced prolonged exposure to burn pits. He died in 2020.

Vets part of Biden's new 'unity agenda'

BY NIKKI WENTLING

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Tuesday night unveiled a new "unity agenda" that includes veterans as one of four areas of policymaking in which he believes Congress can come to a consensus.

Biden, facing a stalled domestic agenda, used his State of the Union address to try to reignite debate on some of his highest priorities, which has been stalled in Congress. Separate from those priorities, Biden introduced an agenda that includes four seemingly uncontroversial issues on which he believes Congress can agree. The agenda addresses veterans, as well as the opioid epidemic, mental health care and cancer treatment.

"Tonight, I'm offering a unity agenda for the nation," Biden said. "Four big things we can do together."

The Department of Veterans Affairs plans to extend benefits and health care to a small number of veterans suffering from nine rare respiratory cancers caused by toxic burn pits, Biden announced. The VA said Tuesday that it would begin the federal rulemaking process to add the conditions to its presumptive list, which lowers the amount of evidence that a veteran must provide to receive benefits.

Biden also urged lawmakers to come to an agreement on legislation to expand health care and disability compensation to millions of veterans who were exposed to burn pits.

After presenting his unity

agenda, Biden said: "I don't see a partisan edge to any of those four things."

However, House and Senate lawmakers disagree about the best strategy to secure health care and benefits for veterans exposed to burn pits. While the Senate is attempting an incremental approach with an initial phase at a cost of \$1 billion, House Democrats want to pass a sweeping bill — one that comes with a cost of \$208 billion for the next 10 years.

Some Republicans in the House have balked at the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, describing it as fiscally irresponsible.

Biden said Tuesday night that he would sign any bill that would expand health care and disability compensation to the affected veterans.

Danielle Robinson, a military widow from Ohio, attended the State of the Union as a guest of first lady Jill Biden. Robinson's husband, Sgt. 1st Class Heath Robinson, was diagnosed with a rare autoimmune disorder and lung cancer after serving with the Army National Guard in Kosovo and Iraq, where he experienced prolonged exposure to burn pits. He died in 2020. Danielle Robinson has since become an advocate for other service members and veterans exposed to burn pits.

"Danielle says Heath was a fighter to the very end," Biden said. "He didn't know how to stop fighting, and neither did she. Through her pain she found purpose to demand we do better."

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Man smeared woman with feces

NY NEW YORK — A man was arrested for smearing human feces on a woman inside a Bronx subway station, New York City police said in a news release.

The 43-year-old victim was sitting on a bench when a man approached her without warning and struck her in the face and the back of her head with feces, police said. Surveillance video released by police shows the assailant fleeing after the attack.

The 37-year-old suspected attacker was arrested on charges including forcible touching, menacing and harassment.

Papers: Man hid in attic, had tracking device

NH SOMERSWORTH — A Pennsylvania man traveled to New Hampshire to meet a woman he met online, hid in her attic, photographed her while sleeping, stole some of her underwear, and attempted to place a tracking device on her car, according to prosecutors.

Court documents indicate the man, who was arrested after police found him on the roof of the woman's home in February, met the victim on the paid subscription website OnlyFans.

Somersworth police said he broke into the woman's home, stole her house key and had a duplicate key made. He came and went from the home several times, once photographing the woman while asleep, and spent time in the attic where police found personal items including a tracking device he intended to place in the woman's vehicle, police said. He's charged with four counts of burglary.

Bill bans 'Carolina Squat' truck modification

SC COLUMBIA — A bill making it illegal to significantly raise the front end of a truck or other vehicle while lowering the back end passed the South Carolina Senate.

Senators voted 33-1 to ban what is commonly called the "Carolina Squat."

The bill bans having the front fender of a truck 4 inches or more above the rear fender. The first offense would be a \$100 fine, but by the third offense the fine rises to \$300 and includes a one-year driver's license suspension.

The bill now heads to the House. If it becomes law, it wouldn't go into effect for six months, and police would write warning tickets for six months after that.

7 hurt when race car crashes into pit row

GA COCHRAN — Seven people were hurt after a race car veered off the track at a Georgia speedway and crashed



JAKE MAY, THE FLINT (MICH.) JOURNAL/ AP

Celebration dance

Kindergartener Khalil Kuykendall dances as he celebrates his classmates receiving certificates for perfect attendance at Freeman Elementary School in Flint, Mich. In an effort to promote attendance among the student population, the school hosted an NBA (Never Been Absent) draft, honoring the 24 elementary students that never missed a day of school in the first semester of the 2021-22 school year.

into a pit area, authorities said.

The wreck at the Cochran Motor Speedway happened last weekend as track crews were getting the track ready for an open practice, the track said in a news release.

Video from the track showed the car knocked down a wall before ending up in the pits.

All seven people were taken to area hospitals, and only two remained hospitalized earlier this week.

Alcohol sales limited during spring break

FL MIAMI BEACH — An alcohol ban designed to curb heavy late night drinking among spring breakers in Miami Beach will be in effect for two weeks in March, officials said.

Miami Beach City Commissioners voted to prohibit the sale and consumption of alcohol after 2 a.m. between March 7 and March 21 along the city's entertainment district, commonly referred to as South Beach, the Miami Herald reported. The current last call is 6 a.m. for alcohol sales throughout much of the city.

Miami Beach Mayor Dan Gelber and commissioners favoring

THE CENSUS

468 The amount in thousands of dollars that an unused ticket to Michael Jordan's Bulls debut sold for. Michael Cole, as a college student at Northwestern University in 1984, spent \$8.50 apiece for a pair of tickets to Jordan's NBA debut with the Chicago Bulls. He couldn't find anyone to join him for the Oct. 26, 1984, game, so one of the tickets went unused. It wasn't the largest amount paid for a sporting event ticket at the auction, according to Robert Wilonsky of Heritage Auctions.. That distinction went to the sale of a ticket to Jackie Robinson's 1947 debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers, which fetched \$480,000.

the ban said it is necessary to free up police resources and ensure public safety during the height of spring break.

Man charged after 'Bean' sculpture vandalized

IL CHICAGO — A young man was charged for allegedly vandalizing a popular Chicago sculpture known as "The Bean" by spray-painting it with graffiti last week, police said.

The 18-year-old man was arrested and charged with criminal damage to public property under \$500 and battery, the Chicago Sun-Times reported.

Chicago police said the man was spraying graffiti onto the sculpture at Millennium Park when a 20-year-old man confronted him. The suspect ran from the scene

but the man followed him before the suspect allegedly kicked the 20-year-old, police said.

The bean-shaped sculpture by artist Anish Kapoor is formally known as "Cloud Gate" and weighs 110 tons.

Police officer arrested in casino robbery

NV LAS VEGAS — Las Vegas police said one of their own officers was arrested for attempting to rob a casino.

Authorities said they received a report about a robbery at a casino but that security had detained a suspect.

Responding officers identified the suspect as Caleb Rogers, 33, an officer who was off duty.

Rogers was booked into jail for burglary with a firearm, assault

with a deadly weapon and two counts of robbery with a deadly weapon.

Authorities said Rogers, who has been with the Las Vegas Police since 2015, was suspended without pay pending a criminal and an internal investigation.

County to have dedicated courthouse therapy dog

ME HOULTON — An Aroostook County courthouse is poised to be the first in the state to have a dedicated therapy dog to provide emotional support for people dealing with traumatic experiences.

A yellow Labrador puppy named Holiday has begun up to two years of training with Purpose Pups, with a goal of becoming a calming presence in a stressful environment.

Aroostook County District Attorney Todd Collins told the Bangor Daily News that courthouse dogs can help traumatized children and victims of crime. They can also provide emotional support for law enforcement officers, first responders and others, too.

NATION

Texas primary sets up governor race as midterms begin

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Republican Gov. Greg Abbott will face Democrat Beto O'Rourke after voters in Texas opened what could be a lengthy, bruising primary season poised to reshape political power from state capitals to Washington.

Both easily won their party's nomination for governor Tuesday. Abbott is now in a commanding position as he seeks a third term, beginning his run with more than \$50 million and campaigning on a strongly conservative agenda in America's largest Republican state. That leaves O'Rourke facing an uphill effort to recapture the magic of his 2018 Senate campaign, when he nearly ousted Ted Cruz.

"This group of people, and then some, are going to make me the first Democrat to be governor of the state of Texas since 1994," O'Rourke told supporters in Fort Worth, where in 2018 he flipped Texas' largest red county. "This is on us. This is on all of us."

Abbott said, "Republicans sent a message."

"They want to keep Texas on the extraordinary path of opportunity that we have provided over the past eight years," his campaign said in a statement.

The GOP primary for state attorney general was more competitive. Former President Donald Trump's endorsement wasn't enough to prevent incumbent Ken Paxton from being forced into a May runoff. He'll face Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush, the nephew of one president and grandson of another, after neither captured a majority of the votes cast. While Paxton won more

votes than Bush on Tuesday, his failure to win outright could raise questions about the power of Trump's endorsement as he seeks to reshape the party in his image in other primaries later this year.

Democrats faced challenges of their own. Nine-term U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar was trying to avoid becoming the first Democratic member of Congress to lose a primary this year. He will instead head into a runoff against progressive Jessica Cisneros.

The primary season, which picks up speed in the summer, determines which candidates from each party advance to the fall campaign. The midterms will ultimately serve as a referendum on the first half of President Joe Biden's administration, which has been dominated by a pandemic that has proven unpredictable, along with rising inflation and a series of foreign policy crises. The GOP, meanwhile, is grappling with its future as many candidates seeking to emerge from primaries, including a sizable number in Texas, tie themselves to Trump and his lie that the 2020 election was stolen.

Tuesday marked the state's first election under its tighter new voting laws that, among other changes muscled through by the GOP-controlled Legislature, require mail ballots to now include identification — a mandate that counties blamed for thousands of rejected mail ballots even before Election Day. More than 10,000 mail ballots around Houston alone were flagged for not complying. Technical issues also caused problems in Texas' largest county: Paper jams and paper tears in voting ma-



ERIC GAY/AP

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott visits with supporters during a primary election night event on Tuesday in Corpus Christi, Texas.



LM OTERO/AP

Texas Democrat gubernatorial candidate Beto O'Rourke speaks during a primary election night gathering with supporters in Fort Worth, Texas, on Tuesday.

chines would take a couple days to work through while counting, said Isabel Longoria, Harris County's elections administrator.

Several voting sites around Houston were also short-staffed, she said, causing tensions in some

locations.

"Democrats and Republicans bickering with each other, stealing each other's machines, hiding each other's paper," Longoria said. "At the end of the day, they were able to help voters."

Texas investigating parents of transgender kids for child abuse

The Dallas Morning News

DALLAS — The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services has begun investigating parents of transgender adolescents seeking gender-affirming medical care for potential child abuse, according to a lawsuit filed Tuesday in Travis County court.

The investigations follow a directive from Gov. Greg Abbott to state agencies to investigate reports of transgender youth receiving gender-affirming care as child abuse. He warned that educators, medical professionals and others who don't report alleged abuse could face consequences.

One day prior to Abbott's order,

Attorney General Ken Paxton released a nonbinding opinion that said certain types of medical care for trans adolescents — including hormone therapy and puberty blockers — are a form of child abuse.

Lambda Legal and the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas went to court in Travis County to try to halt an inquiry into a DFPS employee who has a 16-year-old transgender child.

The unnamed employee was put on administrative leave last week, according to the lawsuit. DFPS, which sent an investigator to visit the employee on Friday, is reportedly seeking medical records for

the child, referred to as Mary Doe in the court filings.

Megan Mooney, a licensed psychologist in Houston who is considered a mandatory reporter under Texas law, joined the family as a plaintiff in the suit. Mooney cannot comply with Abbott's directive without "harming her clients and violating her ethical obligations," according to a statement from Lambda Legal.

Transgender youth and their families could face harm "when they're subjected to an investigation that is completely baseless and unwarranted and could have really serious consequences," Currey Cook, senior council for Lambda Legal,

said in an interview.

"For this family, it means that they could ultimately have a finding of abuse or neglect against them, be put on the state registry — and that has serious implications for employment," he said.

Abbott's and Paxton's orders do not change Texas law, so it's unclear whether they will hold up in court.

The office of Travis County District Attorney José Garza confirmed that they will not take legal action against abuse allegations based on Paxton's opinion. Dallas County District Attorney John Creuzot also said he will not prosecute families whose children receive gender-affirming care.

Woman gets 5 years for cop car fires amid protest

Associated Press

SEATTLE — A woman who torched five Seattle police cars during a tumultuous protest that heralded a summer of unrest after George Floyd's murder in 2020 was sentenced Tuesday to five years in prison.

Margaret Channon, 26, of Tacoma, used an aerosol can and a lighter as a makeshift flame-thrower to burn the unoccupied, parked police vehicles in downtown Seattle on May 30, soon after officers sprayed tear gas to disperse a massive crowd. She ran back and forth between the cars for 25 minutes, adding fire as necessary to destroy them.

The burning police cars became some of the most indelible images of Seattle's unrest — overshadowing the thousands who demonstrated for racial justice with justifiable anger, but who were nevertheless peaceful, Assistant U.S. Attorney Todd Greenberg told U.S. District Judge John C. Coughenour.

"She wasn't alone, but Ms. Channon set the tone for what that protest became moving forward," Assistant U.S. Attorney Todd Greenberg said. "Ms. Channon left downtown Seattle in flames and in billowing smoke."

Channon, who also acknowledged smashing a store window and busting the cash register at a sandwich shop, was the fifth and final defendant sentenced in federal court for actions related to the civil unrest in Seattle.

Channon apologized in a letter to the court and through a sentencing memo filed by her lawyer, acknowledging that the Black Lives Matter movement does not condone illegal acts and that as a white woman, it was not her place to co-opt the cause.

"I apologize to the many workers and activists — who have given decades of their lives to building a countermeasure to police violence — that did not want to see fire," Channon wrote. "I had intended to effect positive change, but my attempt was misguided."



MEGAN FARMER, KUOW/AP

A Seattle police car burns on May 30, 2020, in downtown Seattle during protests over the police killing of George Floyd.

WORLD

Mullen touts stability across Taiwan Strait

Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan — Maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is “not just a U.S. interest, but also a global one,” former Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen said Wednesday during a visit to Taiwan that comes amid the backdrop of Russia’s war against Ukraine.

The Ukraine conflict has drawn some parallels to China’s threat to use force to annex Taiwan, a self-governing island democracy it considers its own territory.

China has sought to diplomatically isolate President Tsai Ing-wen’s administration, sent military aircraft into the island’s buffer zone and held threatening exercises nearby. Mullen said that peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region have “never been more important.”

“We come to Taiwan at a very difficult and critical moment in world history. As President [Joe]

Biden has said, democracy is facing sustained and alarming challenges, most recently in Ukraine,” he said in remarks to Tsai. “Now more than ever, democracy needs champions.”

Taiwan and mainland China are separated by the 100 mile-wide Taiwan Strait, and any Chinese attempt to attack or invade would entail considerable risk, along with the possibility of involving the U.S. and other regional powers in the conflict.

The U.S. provides Taiwan with defensive arms and is legally bound to ensure the island can defend itself and treat all threats to it as matters of “grave concern.”

Mullen said the visit by his delegation “reflects the bipartisan nature of support for the United States’ strong partnership with Taiwan.”

In her remarks, Tsai emphasized that Taiwan would continue to bolster its defenses against China and said the resistance of the



TAIWAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS/AP

Taiwan’s Foreign Minister Joseph Wu, right, greets former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Adm. Mike Mullen as he arrives at Taipei Songshan Airport in Taipei, Taiwan, on Tuesday.

Ukrainian people was an inspiration.

“As a member of the international community, Taiwan not only expresses severe condemnation, but also participates in international sanctions against Russia and initiates humanitarian assistance to Ukraine,” she said. “Now is the time for democracies in the world to unite, and Taiwan cannot be absent.”

Separately, former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrived

in Taiwan Wednesday evening and was met by the Foreign Ministry’s chief of North American affairs. Pompeo, who earlier led the Central Intelligence Agency, will also meet with Tsai on Thursday and address a forum, according to the Foreign Ministry.

Pompeo has drawn attention for his recent flattering comments about Vladimir Putin, in which he called the Russian president “very capable” and said he has “enormous respect for him.”

Cargo ship sinks after weeks on fire

The Washington Post

A two-week transatlantic saga ended Tuesday with a massive ship — and thousands of luxury cars aboard — sinking about 250 miles off a Portuguese archipelago after catching fire.

Despite efforts to salvage what remained of the *Felicity Ace*, the ship and its nearly 4,000-vehicle cargo went down near the Azores Islands about 9 a.m. local time Tuesday, the Portuguese navy said in a statement.

“This morning, during the towing process, which had begun on Feb. 24, the ship ‘Felicity Ace’ lost stability and sank some 25 nautical miles outside of the limits of Portugal’s exclusive economic zone, in an area with a depth of about [9,842 feet],” the navy wrote in Portuguese.

The 650-foot-long vessel, operated by Japanese shipping line Mitsui O.S.K. Lines (MOL), was traveling from Germany to Rhode Island when a fire started in the ship on Feb. 16.

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OPINION

Putin’s bluff has been called. Don’t waver now.

BY DAVID VON DREHLE
The Washington Post
 Russian President Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine went sideways within hours because he misjudged the stubborn independence of the Ukrainian people. He is a small man afraid to be in a room with his own supporters. How would he understand people afraid of nothing?

Still, given the dominance of blowhards in this incipient century, Putin wasn’t the only one surprised to see the world changed by six short words. Asked if he wished to be evacuated to safety, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy replied: “I need ammunition, not a ride.”

Winston Churchill’s ghost is sick with envy. With six words, Zelenskyy jolted the decadent democracies awake: Either they help this man and his people, or they give the world up to the likes of Mad Vlad.

During a panel convened by the American Academy in Berlin on Tuesday, veteran German diplomat Wolfgang Ischinger marveled at Putin’s strong dose of unintended consequences: “NATO strengthened... the European Union united... the idea of the West reaffirmed.” Yet, in a crisis likely to grow much worse before it gets better, he warned: “I’m not sure how solid these are in the long term.”

Well. Putin has crossed his Rubicon and burned his boats. He has shown in Chechnya and Syria that he will bomb civilian centers to rubble. But a nation with Stalingrad in its past should know that grandmothers who shoulder rifles and youths who fashion gasoline bombs will fight even in rubble. Western allies can supply Ukraine’s resistance indefinitely, but Russia is a third-rate economy, already overstretched. Inevitably, the time will come,

whether slowly or quickly, when Russian soldiers grow tired of dying for a germophobic mob boss in Moscow.

If, that is, the West remains solid. Putin’s bluff has been called. Now let’s look at his cards.

Though rising commodity prices recently improved Russia’s cash position, in broader terms the country is an economic basket case. This was true even before the developed world imposed drastic sanctions. Russia’s 144 million people together generate less gross domestic product than the roughly 19.5 million residents of New York state. Spain, not exactly a dynamo, has twice the nominal productivity of Russia.

The capacity of the West to produce tank-killing missiles is virtually unlimited; Russia’s capacity to replace burned tanks is paltry. Russia is a Potemkin power. It has zero seaworthy aircraft carriers — fewer than Thailand. The only one it owns has been out of commission for years and might not survive Russian “repairs.” A 70-ton crane fell on it. It caught fire in dry dock. Then the dry dock sank during a power outage.

As for his nukes: Putin loves to talk about them. But nuclear weapons are of no practical use except as defensive shields. Contrary to Putin’s paranoid ravings, no one has offensive designs against Russia.

But there is a scenario by which Putin escapes the noose he has placed around his neck. By escalating the violence in Ukraine, he might yet force the Zelenskyy government into an insurgency and install a de facto regime. Though fierce resistance would continue, Putin would gain control of the original Nord Stream natural gas pipeline that runs overland from Russia through Ukraine. Germany — and others in Europe — would be offered

Ukraine’s stirring self-defense was well-planned

BY MIKE REPASS
Special to The Washington Post

Russia has committed a strategic blunder and is getting punished by the Ukrainian people and their armed forces for its aggression. The Ukrainian response is not a coincidence. Rather, it is the result of widespread preparations undertaken since 2014.

Over the past seven years, the Ukrainian leadership has been very clear-eyed about reforming its government to prepare for this moment. The Ukrainians have reshaped their national defense structures to cooperate with NATO militaries more easily and have made important leadership, doctrinal and tactical changes. They have also built Territorial Defense forces and instituted programs to involve others in the common defense.

The Ukrainian armed forces are well-led by combat-proven leaders from the most senior level down to the tactical units, all of which have shared the hardships of fighting the Russians and separatists in the Donbas region. The tactical units have been well-prepared by Western trainers. Their training systems have been reformed with the assistance of NATO countries; their forces are in the final stages of moving away from Soviet-style, field doctrine.

What has surprised many Western observers is the massive efforts by everyday Ukrainians to defend the nation. Office workers, beauty queens, the elderly and veterans have all turned out to take up arms against the Russian invaders. This volunteer corps didn’t just happen by accident, either. Ukrainians share

a patriotic zeal to defend their homes and way of life from Russian ruin. The result is a national response that has, at least so far, been admirably resilient. That’s partly because Kyiv saw this coming and prepared its people. Ukraine passed a law in July of 2021 authorizing the creation of the Territorial Defense forces and laying out a structure for integrating local militias in each of the 25 oblasts, or regions, and in the largest cities. That law also made provisions for the formation of a resistance force in the event of Russian occupation.

The Territorial Defense forces were largely in place when Russia invaded this past week. When more than 130,000 citizens volunteered to take up arms, there was a designed structure in place for them to step into.

Against this force, Russia has fielded a technologically superior army of more than 160,000 troops operating in approximately 100 tactical groups, plus its long-range missile strike forces and air force. The maritime forces from the Black Sea fleet and the Caspian flotilla have sealed off the Black Sea coastline. Moscow has added troops from its southern, northwestern and far eastern military districts to create two echelons of assault forces. We have seen the first echelon in the first four days of fighting, followed by the operational pause to bring in the second echelon forces to continue the assaults.

What comes next? Little of consequence will come out of this first set of negotiations. Putin will not bargain in good faith and will use the time to resupply and reposition his forces for the next, possibly final, offensive. We should

the seductive chance to buy Putin’s gas while hiding behind the fig leaf of the Nord Stream 2 sanctions.

That could be a fatal crack in the strong allied response to Putin’s rape of Ukraine. Zelenskyy’s courage has thrown open a window of opportunity to be free of Putin and Putinism. But the window will slam shut if the West fails to make hard choices. Europe must be more energy independent, starting with Germany. Step 1: Keep the remaining nuclear power plants going. Step 2: Accelerate capacity to import liquid natural gas.

The U.S. must revive its fracking industry to produce more natural gas and should encourage Qatar to increase production as well.

Another challenge will be weaning the West from the laundered spoils of Russian oligarchs. The glamour and luxury of places such as London and South Florida are propped up by Putin and his friends. Without them, property values are likely to fall. Switzerland might find bank profits squeezed when it purges itself of secret Russian accounts.

Putin has one remaining superpower: He is shameless. He does the West’s dirty work, and it has taught him to hold the West in contempt. He pumps oil and gas so that Westerners can stay warm while pretending to go green. He steals billions and diverts the money into Western cities so that developers can build more luxury condos and aircraft manufacturers can sell more private jets.

Six words from Zelenskyy have revived the spirit of the world’s allied democracies. But the temptation to vice always creeps back. Putin will be beaten, unless we defeat ourselves.

Washington Post columnist David Von Drehle is the author of four books, including “Triangle: The Fire That Changed America.”

expect Putin to escalate and intensify operations to close this campaign on his terms. Yes, there will be widespread destruction in the cities. This will horrify Western observers, as it is intended to do. Putin wants to put his boot on Ukraine’s neck, then use the urgency of the moment to restructure the global security arrangements to his liking.

Confounding his strategy are the resilient Ukrainians, who are outsmarting him tactically and making deep strikes on Putin’s pride and power via social media. The object of their defense is to make Ukraine too painful to consume or control, which has worked well so far.

Time and mass, however, are on the Russians’ side. The West must act immediately to rearm the Ukrainian defenders. President Joe Biden’s \$600 million in military aid was enough to get things moving. But these transfers take time, which Ukraine does not have. Congress is contemplating a \$6.4 billion Ukraine supplemental package that will be rolled into a defense measure set for a Senate vote later this month. Ukraine can’t wait that long, and the Russians certainly won’t wait.

Ukraine is in an existential fight and could very well send a defeated Russia back inside its borders, speeding Moscow’s decline into irrelevance. Ukraine is the vanguard of the defense of Western liberal order. We — the U.S. government and people — need to do our part to help the Ukrainians succeed — and soon.

Army Maj. Gen. Mike Repass retired in 2013 after serving 33 years. He commanded the U.S. Special Operations Command Europe until 2013 and has been directly involved with Ukraine security matters since 2016.

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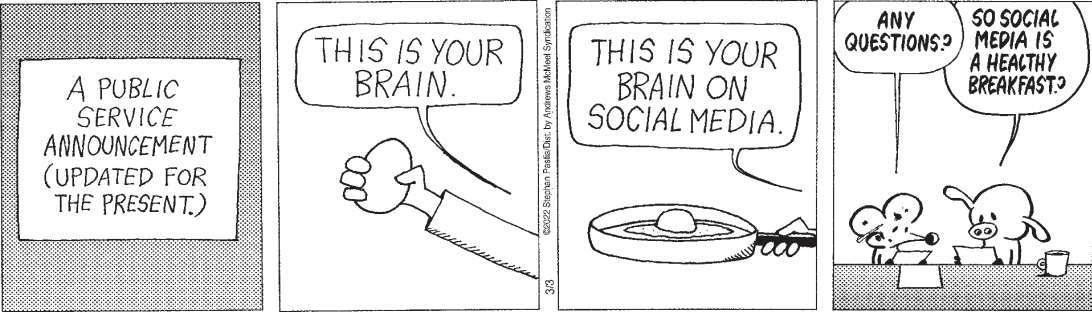
Frazz



Dilbert



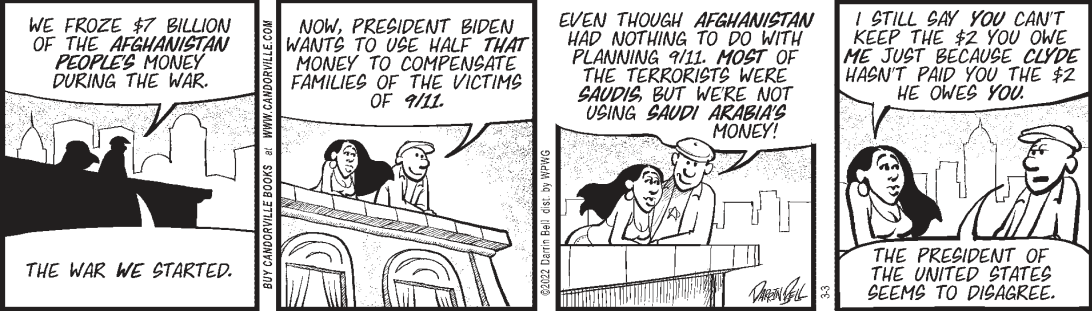
Pearls Before Swine



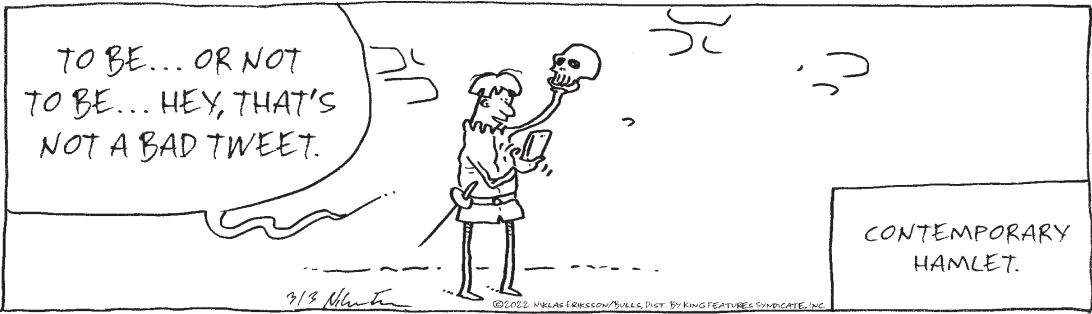
Non Sequitur



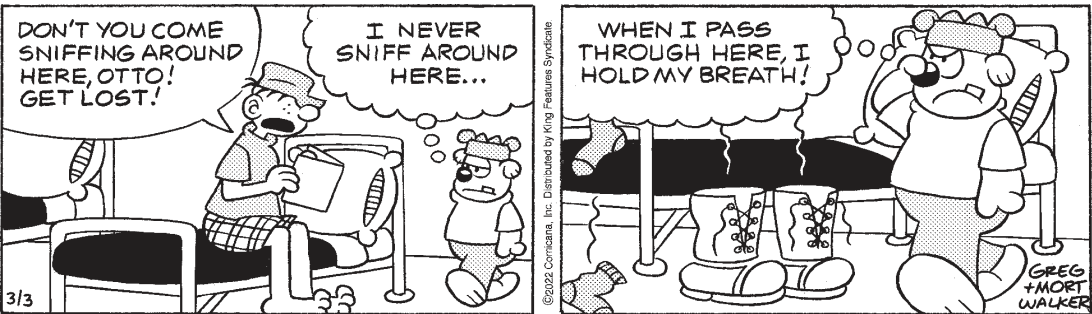
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
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15			16						17			
		18				19		20				
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59					60					61		

ACROSS

- 1 "Lion" star Patel
4 Panorama
8 Corvette roof option
12 Glass of public radio
13 Novelist Brontë
14 Cod cousin
15 Orange variety
17 Hibernia
18 — polloi
19 Succumbed to gravity
21 Flora
24 California's Big —
25 Squeak stopper
26 Candied veggie
28 Equip anew
32 Pretzel topper
34 Morning moisture
36 Viral video, e.g.
37 Cybermessage
39 — Royal Highness
41 Airline to Sweden
42 Speck
44 Repair a roof
46 Dry white wine
50 Brit. record label
51 Mata —
52 Consent
56 Oodles
57 Grate
58 Turkish title

- 59 Some wines
60 China setting
61 Journal

DOWN

- 1 Mil. group
2 Mound stat
3 Odin's realm
4 Dressing table
5 Business mag
6 Oklahoma city
7 Dons
8 Math proof
9 Rain-delay cover
10 Tom Joad, for one
11 Hang in the balance
16 A gazillion years
20 Couple's pronoun
21 Stance
22 Actor Hemsworth
23 Feeling down
27 "I'm not impressed"
29 Word with film or music
30 Apple desktop computer
31 New Age pianist John
33 Morsels
35 Humorist
38 Online guffaw
40 Everest guide
43 Pageant crown
45 Latin 101 word
46 Scorch
47 Robust
48 Yankee nickname
49 Hot tubs
53 Omega preceder
54 Previously
55 Trail the pack

Answer to Previous Puzzle

E	T	A		S	P	A	S		E	R	G	S
R	O	M		C	O	L	T		M	O	O	T
I	D	O		R	I	S	E		A	B	O	V
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G	A	R	B		R	E	A	R	A	X	L	E
A	D	M	I	T		D	I	A	S			
			N	E	W			M	S	N	B	C
R	U	R	A	L	A	R	E	A		O	R	O
A	F	A	R		R	A	V	I		T	I	N
T	O	N	Y		S	P	E	C		E	E	K

3-3

CRYPTOQUIP

OYZK XNQRFPSPFGSJKXAND
CAJKRJKISPAZOZCPZMZASIZ
MSAJZGV, DJIYG GYZV PZ
GZS - GNGSQJKI?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT ARE POLITICIAN SARAH'S PREFERRED TYPES OF WORDPLAY SENTENCES TO COMPOSE? PALIN-DROMES.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Z equals E

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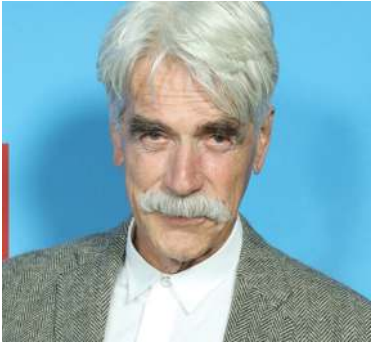
FACES

Elliott rips gay themes in ‘Power of the Dog’

BY CHRISTIE D’ZURILLA
Los Angeles Times

Sam Elliott took “The Power of the Dog” personally. And not in a good way.

Calling the Jane Campion movie “a piece of s—” on comic Marc Maron’s podcast Monday, the 77-year-old “A Star Is Born” actor — who has been doing Westerns for the bulk of his career — pulled no punches and gave quite a few f—s as he discussed the most-nominated film at this year’s Oscars.



AP
Sam Elliott, an actor familiar with Westerns, pulled no punches in his criticism of Oscar contender “The Power of the Dog” while on Marc Maron’s podcast.

Elliott said he hadn’t liked the film anyway, but then saw a full-page ad in the Los Angeles Times with a review blurb that said “The Power of the Dog” was — in the actor’s words — “an evisceration of the American myth.” That comment really fried him.

“I thought, what the f—?,” Elliott said. “This is a guy who’s done Westerns his entire life. ‘The evisceration of the American myth.’ It looked like — what are all those dancers, those guys in New York that wear bow ties and not much else? Remember them from back in the day?”

“Oh, the Chippendales?,” Maron said.

Twitter folk took Elliott’s opinions personally as well. Though some said he spoke the truth, and that Oscar favorite “The Power of the Dog” was lousy, others were critical.

“That’s what all these f— cowboys in that movie looked like. They’re all running around in chaps and no shirts. There’s all these allusions to homosexuality throughout the f— movie,” Elliott said.

“Yeah. I think that’s what the movie’s about,” Maron replied.

The ad that blew the mustachioed actor’s mind actually quoted Manohla Dargis of the New York Times (and an L.A. Times alumna). She wrote in her review that “The Power of the Dog” was “a great American story and a dazzling evisceration of one of the country’s foundational myths.”

“I’m very sad to take Sam Elliott out of my crush rotation for being a wizened, rusted toolbag, but also very amused that he doesn’t realize ROAD HOUSE was extremely homosexual. See also: TOMBSTONE,” Suleikha Snyder tweeted Tuesday.

Elliott also called Campion a brilliant director and noted that he loved her previous work.

“But what the f— does this woman from [New Zealand] know about the American West?” he asked. “And why in the f— did she shoot this movie in New Zealand and call it Montana? And say, ‘This is the way it was?’ ... That f— rubbed me the wrong way.”

“Sam Elliott being a homophobe is bumming me out, but him thinking Kodi Smit-McPhee looks like a chippendale is definitely pretty funny,” Paul McCallion wrote.

“Is it possible that the nation of origin is not Sam Elliott’s main issue with highly acclaimed female filmmaker Jane Campion?,” writer Ben Stephens tweeted, capping a long thread that called out how many classic Westerns have been written and directed by people not affiliated with the West and shot in other locations.

Social-justice activist Tami Sawyer, a county commissioner and chair of education in Memphis, Tenn., chimed in as well.

“I mean most movies about the American West don’t know anything about the American West including the ones Sam Elliott has been a part of,” she tweeted. “They erase the presence of anyone who isn’t white or male when the west was mostly built by Indigenous, Black, Mexican & Chinese people.”

The Chicks ready to get back on tour

The Chicks are heading back out on tour, their first major outing since 2017 and first shows since releasing their fifth studio album, “Gaslighter.”

The multiplatinum female trio behind hits like “Wide Open Spaces” announced Monday that The Chicks Tour will hit 27 North American cities starting in June and running through August.

“While we were recording the ‘Gaslighter’ album, I was con-

stantly picturing performing all of those songs on tour,” said Martie Maguire, who together with her sister Emily Strayer and Natalie Maines make up The Chicks, in a statement. “The ultimate payoff is always the live show for us.”

The Chicks released “Gaslighter” in 2020, their first studio album in 14 years, but the pandemic derailed plans for a tour.

From The Associated Press



HBO MAX
Rhys Darby, left, and Samson Kayo are pictured in a scene from “Our Flag Means Death,” premiering Thursday on HBO Max. Darby is Stede Bonnet, the so-called “Gentleman Pirate” who was hanged in 1718.

Charting a course for plundering, blundering

‘Our Flag Means Death,’ a ‘workplace comedy’ from HBO Max, takes to the seas on a pirate’s midlife crisis

BY KATE FELDMAN
New York Daily News

Stede Bonnet’s midlife crisis didn’t involve a trophy wife or a red convertible. He became a pirate.

“Our Flag Means Death,” premiering Thursday on HBO Max, follows real-life pirate Bonnet, the 1700s so-called “Gentleman Pirate,” a wealthy aristocrat in Barbados who ditches his family, buys a ship and hires his own crew of misfits. Bonnet also draws the attention of Blackbeard.

It’s a muddled story, much lost to time. For creator David Jenkins, that was part of the appeal: he got to fill in the blanks.

“It’s an impossibly decadent midlife crisis,” Jenkins said. “Someone who feels so stuck in their life that they do something unbelievable.”

Born into a wealthy English family, Bonnet turned to piracy in 1717. He bought a sailing vessel, called it Revenge, and went on his plundering ways. Bonnet was arrested and charged with two acts of piracy, then sentenced to death and hanged in 1718.

Jenkins compared “Our Flag Means Death” to “Breaking Bad,” the story of high school chemistry teacher Walter White who started manufacturing meth only to blow it all up as a last resort.

The problem, though, is that Bonnet is remarkably

bad at being a pirate.

At its heart, Jenkins said, “Our Flag Means Death” is a workplace comedy, if you just swap out cubicles for a pirate ship. There’s an incompetent boss in Bonnet, played by New Zealand comedian Rhys Darby; employees who really should just find new jobs but are similarly too incompetent to leave; and a literal feeling of being adrift in an endless sea.

And then there’s Blackbeard.

“He’s an idiot, but also there’s something that he’s doing that’s subversive and revolutionary.”

David Jenkins
creator of “Our Flag Means Death,” on main character Stede Bonnet

The notorious English pirate’s involvement was more of a mystery, an unfathomable friendship between the most feared pirate on the seas and a relative newcomer searching for excitement. This iteration of Blackbeard, played by New Zealand filmmaker and actor Taika Waititi, is more intrigued than impressed, like watching a monkey at the zoo rather than a colleague to learn from.

“He’s an idiot, but also there’s something that he’s doing that’s subversive and revolutionary,” Jenkins said.

At the same time, Bonnet’s newfound passion is a cowardly escape from his family.

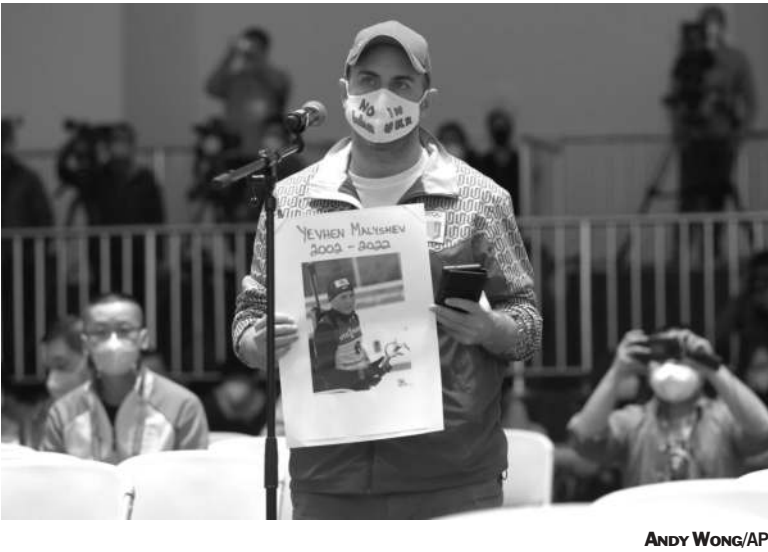
“He’s a benign narcissist,” Jenkins said. “You’re trying to find a way to like him after what he did to his family, and you’re rooting for a midlife crisis on some level, which is weird, but there’s a price to pay for these things. Nothing goes unrewarded or unpunished.”

SCOREBOARD/OLYMPICS

COLLEGE BASKETBALL	
Tuesday's men's scores	
EAST	
American 69, Holy Cross 63	
Bucknell 82, Lafayette 81	
Duke 86, Pittsburgh 56	
Hartford 67, Albany (NY) 55	
New Hampshire 64, Mass.-Lowell 48	
St. Peter's 73, Manhattan 51	
Stony Brook 87, NJIT 68	
Toledo 92, Buffalo 76	
UMBC 78, Binghamton 68	
Vermont 75, Maine 56	
Villanova 76, Providence 74	
SOUTH	
Dayton 55, Richmond 53	
Florida 82, Vanderbilt 78	
Florida Gulf Coast 81, North Alabama 72	
Kennesaw St. 82, E. Kentucky 73	
Kentucky 83, Mississippi 72	
Lipscomb 74, North Florida 65	
South Carolina 73, Missouri 69	
Tennessee 75, Georgia 68	
VCU 74, St. Bonaventure 51	
Virginia Tech 75, Louisville 43	
MIDWEST	
Akron 79, Ball St. 60	
Bowling Green 80, Ohio 77	
Detroit 79, Green Bay 62	
Ill.-Chicago 80, Milwaukee 69	
Kent St. 63, N. Illinois 55	
Miami (Ohio) 75, Cent. Michigan 61	
Michigan 87, Michigan St. 70	
Nebraska 78, Ohio St. 70	
Oakland 70, IUPUI 58	
Robert Morris 77, Youngstown St. 73	
W. Michigan 71, E. Michigan 60	
Wisconsin 70, Purdue 67	
SOUTHWEST	
Cent. Arkansas 74, Stetson 73	
Houston 71, Cincinnati 53	
Oklahoma 72, West Virginia 59	
TCU 74, Kansas 64	
FAR WEST	
Air Force 58, San Jose St. 54	
Arizona 91, Southern Cal 71	
Boise St. 73, Nevada 67	
Montana St. 69, S. Utah 53	
UC Santa Barbara 70, CS Northridge 61	
Tuesday's women's scores	
MIDWEST	
Seton Hall 74, Xavier 53	
FAR WEST	
UC Santa Barbara 63, CS Northridge 51	
Women's conference tournaments	
Atlantic 10 Conference	
At Wilmington, Del.	
First Round	
Wednesday, March 2	
George Washington vs. St. Bonaventure	
Saint Louis vs. George Mason	
Second Round	
Thursday, March 3	
Richmond vs. Davidson	
La Salle vs. George Washington-St. Bonaventure-winner	
Saint Joseph's vs. Duquesne	
Fordham vs. Saint Louis-George Mason-winner	
Atlantic Coast Conference	
At Greensboro, N.C.	
First Round	
Wednesday, March 2	
Syracuse vs. Clemson	
Duke vs. Pittsburgh	
Wake Forest vs. Virginia	
Second Round	
Thursday, March 3	
Virginia Tech vs. Wake Forest-Virginia-winner	
Boston College vs. Florida St.	
Miami vs. Duke-Pittsburgh-winner	
Georgia Tech vs. Wake Forest-Virginia-winner	
Atlantic Sun Conference	
At Higher-Seeded Schools	
First Round	
Wednesday, March 2	
Lipscomb vs. North Florida	
Stetson vs. Bellarmine Knights	
E. Kentucky vs. Kennesaw St.	
Jacksonville vs. Cent. Arkansas	

TENNIS	
Monterrey Open	
Tuesday	
At Club Sonoma	
Monterrey, Mexico	
Purse: \$276,750	
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor	
Women's Singles	
Round of 32	
Qinwen Zheng, China, def. Lucia Bronzetti, Italy, 6-2, 6-3.	
Wang Qiang, China, def. Dalma Galfi, Hungary, 6-7 (0), 6-1, 6-4.	
Marie Bouzkova, Czech Republic, def. Sara Errani, Italy, 4-6, 6-2, 6-4.	
Xinyu Wang, China, def. Ann Li (8), United States, 6-2, 6-1.	
Nuria Parrizas Diaz (6), Spain, def. Misaki Doi, Japan, 6-2, 6-1.	
Petra Martic, Croatia, def. Madison Keys (3), United States, 5-7, 7-6 (3), 6-3.	
Elina Svitolina (1), Ukraine, def. Anastasia Potapova, Russia, 6-2, 6-1.	
Mayar Sherif, Egypt, def. Seone Mendez, Australia, 6-1, 6-7 (2), 6-4.	
Women's Doubles	
Round of 16	
Elixane Lechemia, France, and Ingrid Neel (1), United States, def. Leylah Annie Fernandez and Bianca Jolie Fernandez, Canada, 6-3, 6-4.	
Sara Errani, Italy, and Sara Sorribes Tormo, Spain, def. Camilo Osorio, Colombia, and Panna Udvardy, Hungary, 6-1, 6-1.	
Sabrina Santamaria and Catherine Harrison, United States, def. Paula Kania-Chodun, Poland, and Renata Zarazua, Mexico, 6-3, 6-4.	
Lyon Open	
Tuesday	
At Palais des Sports Gerland	
Lyon, France	
Purse: \$262,727	
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor	
Women's Singles	
Round of 32	
Sorana Cirstea (2), Romania, def. Mariaam Bolkvadze, Georgia, 6-3, 6-1.	
Alison van Uytvanck (7), Belgium, def. Vera Zvonareva, Russia, 6-0, 6-3.	
Zhang Shuai (8), China, def. Kristina Mladenovic, France, 7-6 (3), 7-5.	
Arantxa Rus, Netherlands, def. Danka Kovinic, Montenegro, 6-2, 6-0.	
Caroline Garcia, France, def. Camila Giorgi (1), Italy, 5-7, 6-4, 6-0.	
Martina Trevisan, Italy, def. Elisabetta Cocciaretto, Italy, 6-3, 6-2.	
Dayana Yastremska, Ukraine, def. Ana Bogdan, Romania, 3-6, 7-6 (7), 7-6 (7).	
Tamara Korpatsch, Germany, def. Oceane Dodin, France, 6-3, 1-6, 6-2.	
Women's Doubles	
Round of 16	
Nicola Geuer and Anna-Lena Friedsam, Germany, def. Oksana Kalashnikova, Georgia, and Cristina-Andreea Mitu, Romania, 6-3, 6-2.	
Monica Niculescu, Romania, and Alexandra Panova (4), Russia, def. Tatjana Maria, Germany, and Elsa Jacquemot, France, 2-6, 7-5, 10-7.	
Alicia Barnett and Olivia Nicholls, Britain, def. Ekaterine Gorgodze, Georgia, and Irina Bara (3), Romania, 6-3, 6-4.	

DEALS	
Tuesday's transactions	
BASEBALL	
Major League Baseball	
American League	
HOUSTON ASTROS — Named Mickey Storer manager, Erick Abreu pitching coach, Rafael Pena hitting coach, Vladimir Sutil development coach, Brandon Zumbach trainer and Zach Reding strength coach of Sugar Land (Triple-A West); Gregorio Petit manager, Thomas Whitsett pitching coach, Aaron Westlake hitting coach, Dylan Mazzo development coach, Takeaki Ando trainer and Mike Hoffman strength coach of Corpus Christi (Double-A Central); Nate Shaver manager, Jose Rada pitching coach, Rene Rojas hitting coach, Mike Ramazzotti development coach, A.J. Smith trainer and Sam Knox strength coach of Asheville (High-A East); Joe Thon manager, John Kovalik pitching coach, Jose Puentes hitting coach, Vincent Blue development coach, Erik Braun trainer and Matt Jones strength coach. Fayetteville (Low-A East) Named Ricky Rivera manager, Sean Buchanan pitching coach, Bryan Muniz hitting coach, Dai Dai Itaki development coach, Jennifer Bardales trainer and Kevin Rivera strength coach of Complex League Blue; Carlos Lugo manager, Arquimede Caminero pitching coach, Luis Reynosa and Andrew Cresci hitting coaches, Toshiaki Magahara and Eric Pimentel trainers and Shea Connell and Nick LaRue strength coaches. Complex League Orange: Ezra Bye rehab pitching coach and Alex Serrano mental skills coach. FL Complex: Marcelo Alfonsin manager, Rick Aponte pitching coach, Kyle Brennan hitting coach, Joan Segura trainer and Cesar Vina strength coach of Dominican League Blue; Manuel Martinez manager, Starlyng Sanchez pitching coach, Elvis Rodriguez hitting coach, Kily Gilbert trainer and Faustino Ramirez and Geremias Guzman strength coaches of Dominican League Orange; Julio Linares advisor, Erik Acevedo catching instructor and Selin Aquino program support of Dominican Complex.	
BASKETBALL	
National Basketball Association	
NBA — Named Kyle J. Cavanaugh president, administration.	
LOS ANGELES LAKERS — Waived D DeAndre Jordan and F Sekou Doumbouya. Signed F Wenyen Gabriel to a two-way contract. Signed G D.J. Augustin to a rest-of-season contract.	
Women's National Basketball Association	
PHOENIX MERCURY — Signed G Kiana Williams to a training camp contract.	
FOOTBALL	
National Football League	
CHICAGO BEARS — Signed LB Joe Thomas to a futures contract.	
CINCINNATI BENGALS — Re-signed CB Jalen Davis to a one-year contract extension.	
HOUSTON TEXANS — Signed LB Tae Davis and LS Jon Weeks to contract extensions.	
MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Named Ryan Cordell pass game specialist/game management coordinator, Steve Donatelli quality control/defense, Greg Manusky inside linebackers coach, Derron Montgomery quality control/offense, Tony Sorrentino assistant wide receivers coach/quality control/offense and A'Lique Terry assistant defensive line coach.	
TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Named Joey Fitzgerald assistant defensive quality control coach, Jeff Kastl assistant offensive quality control coach, Bob Sanders assistant outside linebackers coach, Larry Foote as inside linebackers coach, Tim Atkins defensive/special team assistant coach. John Van Dam tight end coach and Rick Christophel senior offensive assistant coach.	
HOCKEY	
National Hockey League	
ANAHEIM DUCKS — Reassigned G Lukas Dostal to San Diego (AHL) on loan.	
BUFFALO SABRES — Reassigned F Jack Quinn to Rochester (AHL).	
CALGARY FLAMES — Agreed to terms with C Rory Kerins on a three-year, entry-level contract.	
CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS — Reassigned G Cale Morris from Rockford (AHL) to Indy (ECHL).	
DALLAS STARS — Signed F Antonio Stranges to a three-year, entry-level contract.	
EDMONTON OILERS — Activated D Duncan Keith from injured reserve. Reassigned D Philip Broberg and LW Brendan Pelini to Bakersfield (AHL).	
FLORIDA PANTHERS — Agreed to terms with D Petteri Lindbohm on a one-year contract.	
LOS ANGELES KINGS — Recalled C Jaret Anderson-Dolan from Ontario (AHL) from loan.	
NASHVILLE PREDATORS — Reassigned D Matt Tennison to Milwaukee (AHL).	
NEW YORK RANGERS — Recalled RW Jonny Brodzinski from Hartford (AHL) from loan. Reassigned D Zac Jones to Hartford on loan.	
OTTAWA SENATORS — Promoted D Dillon Heatherington from Belleville (AHL).	
SEATTLE KRAKEN — Signed Tye Kartye to an entry-level contract.	
TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Signed F Bennett MacArthur to a three-year, entry-level contract.	
VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS — Promoted C Jake Leschyshyn from Henderson (AHL). Reassigned G Jiri Patera from Henderson (AHL) to Fort Wayne (ECHL).	
WASHINGTON CAPITALS — Signed F Henry Rybinski to a three-year, entry-level contract.	
SOCCER	
Major League Soccer	
PORTLAND TIMBERS — Signed D Pablo Bonilla to a two-year contract extension.	



ANDY WONG/AP

Lee Reaney, a Canadian journalist working for the Kyiv Post, holds a photo of Yevhen Malyshev, a 19-year-old former athlete on Ukraine's junior biathlon team who, according to the International Biathlon Union, was killed this week serving in the Ukrainian military.

Russian athletes will be allowed in Paralympics

By STEPHEN WADE
Associated Press

A decision by the International Paralympic Committee on Wednesday to allow Russians and Belarusians to compete as “neutrals athletes” generated a heart-wrenching reply only hours after it was announced.

Russian athletes had already been slated to compete as RPC, short for Russian Paralympic Committee, as punishment for the state-sponsored doping scandal at the 2014 Sochi Olympics and a subsequent cover-up.

The IPC added more restrictions on the Russians when the Paralympics open on Friday. Belarus was sanctioned for its part in aiding Russia with the invasion and war against Ukraine.

But there was no expulsion. And that hit a nerve.

At a news conference in Beijing hours after the decision, a reporter who said he worked for the Kyiv Post asked IPC president Andrew Parsons what he would say to the family of young biathlete Yevhen Malyshev.

Malyshev was killed this week in Ukraine, but the exact circumstances of his death are unclear. The International Biathlon Union said Wednesday he “died this week serving in the Ukrainian military.”

The Kyiv Post reporter held up the young man’s photograph as he questioned Parsons.

“I cannot even start to imagine the pain that his family is feeling at the moment,” Parsons said. “I can only tell them that my deepest thoughts are with them. This is absolutely not fair. It is disgusting. It

is against humanity.” Parsons repeatedly defended the decision not to expel Russian and Belarusian athletes, saying the rules of the IPC did not allow it. The IPC is based in Germany, and he said any expulsion “would be overturned in the German court of law.” “The principle of political neutrality and the genuine belief in the transformative power of sport must be our North Star, our strength or perhaps our lifeboat,” Parsons added.

The Ukraine-based reporter said he was the only journalist from the country that had managed to reach Beijing, and he pressed Parsons again to explain why Russians and Belarusians should be allowed to compete — even as neutral athletes. He repeatedly identified them as being from the “aggressor nations.” “I cannot even imagine how painful it is to be a Ukrainian right now,” said Parsons, a Brazilian. “I try to sympathize and try to empathize. It’s difficult. My country is not at war and my family is not hiding themselves in the subways of the capital of my nation.”

Nadine Dorries, a British minister who is responsible for sports, called it “the wrong decision.” “They (IPC) must join the rest of the world in condemning this barbaric invasion by banning Russian and Belarusian athletes from competing,” she said.

Parsons said the decision was not unanimous among his dozen board members, but he said the majority favored it. He did not give a voting breakdown.

NHL

DeBoer’s 500th win has extra meaning

By W.G. RAMIREZ
Associated Press
LAS VEGAS — Milestone wins are nice, but in 14 years of coaching in the NHL, Peter DeBoer has come to appreciate the monumental victories a bit more.

Tuesday night he enjoyed both. DeBoer earned his 500th career coaching win as the Vegas Golden Knights beat the San Jose Sharks 3-1.

San Jose was one of DeBoer’s coaching stops.

The Sharks fired DeBoer on Dec. 11, 2019. The Golden Knights hired him on Jan. 15, 2020.

The first move was rather abrupt. The second a bit shocking considering the teams’ established and heated rivalry immediately upon Vegas’ entry into the NHL in 2017.

“I think anytime you get to beat your own team, I would put that on the monumental lists,” said DeBoer, whose Golden Knights also beat the Sharks for his 499th victory on Feb. 20. “San Jose, that experience is fresh enough with me that that still gets the juices flowing.”

DeBoer is 500-368-119 over 14 seasons with the Florida Panthers, New Jersey Devils, San Jose and the Golden Knights. He coached the Devils (2012) and Sharks (2016) to the Stanley Cup Final.

And with nearly 40 years in hockey, it’s not surprising DeBoer said even after hitting the century mark milestone five times, some of his most memorable moments are off the ice.

“What you remember when you’re talking numbers like that are the people, the players you got to coach over that time, the trainers you got to work with, the other coaching staffs that you’ve had,” the 53-year-old DeBoer said. “You remember the laughs that you had along the way, enjoying those wins after a game.”



Vegas Golden Knights coach Peter DeBoer earned his 500th win Tuesday against the San Jose Sharks, who fired him in 2019.



Flames left wing Matthew Tkachuk, center, celebrates his goal against the Minnesota Wild with teammates Elias Lindholm (28), Rasmus Andersson, back right, Tyler Toffoli (73) and Johnny Gaudreau.

ROUNDUP

Flames down Wild again for 12th win in 13 games

Associated Press
ST. PAUL, Minn. — Matthew Tkachuk scored 72 seconds into the game and the streaking Calgary Flames beat Minnesota 5-1 on Tuesday night for their second consecutive victory over the Wild.

Andrew Mangiapane, Elias Lindholm, Tyler Toffoli and Mikael Backlund also scored for the Flames, who have won 12 of 13. Johnny Gaudreau had two assists to add to his team-leading point total.

Jacob Markstrom made 32 saves for the win. He was also in net when Calgary routed Minnesota 7-3 at home on Saturday.

“We knew they were going to come out strong tonight,” Mangiapane said. “Obviously they’re a good team. We just had to worry about ourselves and be prepared and build off our game.”

Red Wings 4, Hurricanes 3 (OT): Lucas Raymond scored a power-play goal with eight seconds remaining in overtime and host Detroit ended Carolina’s five-game winning streak.

Raymond’s 16th goal came on a rebound of Tyler Bertuzzi’s shot. Carter Rowney, Michael Rasmussen and Dylan Larkin scored in regulation for the Red Wings. Alex Nedeljkovic made 27 saves.

Sebastian Aho, Jesper Fast and Jordan Staal scored for the Hurricanes. Antti Raanta stopped 38 shots.

Avalanche 5, Islanders 3: Andre Burakovsky scored the third-period tiebreaker for host Colorado just 59 seconds after New York had a go-ahead goal reversed.

Burakovsky has scored in three consecutive games and also added an assist for the Avalanche, who have won four straight. Nathan MacKinnon, Gabriel Landeskog and Devon Toews also had goals for Colorado, and Darcy Kuemper made 28 saves.

Toews added two assists against his former team. **Lightning 5, Senators 2:** Brayden Point had a goal and three assists, Steven Stamkos extended his goal streak to five games and host Tampa Bay rebounded from an early two-goal deficit to beat Ottawa.

Point has five goals and 11 points during a seven-game point streak, and has a goal in three straight games. Stamkos has scored six times and added a pair of assists during his run.

Nikita Kucherov, Corey Perry and Mikhail Sergachev also scored for the Lightning, who moved past Florida into first place in the Atlantic Division. Andrei Vasilevskiy made 25 saves.

Ducks 4, Bruins 3: Trevor Ziegler scored a power-play goal with 21.6 seconds remaining to lift host Anaheim over Boston.

Rickard Rakell, Isac Lundestrom and Adam Henrique scored in the first period, and John Gibson made 31 saves for the Ducks, who had lost their last two games and five of the past seven in regulation.

Nick Foligno and Brandon Carlo each had a goal and an assist for the Bruins, who had their five-game winning streak halted. David Pastrnak also scored, and Linus Ullmark allowed four goals on 28 shots.

Oilers 3, Flyers 0: Leon Draisaitl had a goal and two assists, Connor McDavid added a goal and an assist and Mikko Koskinen made 39 saves to lead Edmonton to a win at Philadelphia.

Kailer Yamamoto also scored for the Oilers, who improved to 17-0-0 when scoring first. Draisaitl and McDavid are tied for the NHL lead with 77 points.

Blue Jackets 4, Devils 3: Boone Jenner and Patrik Laine both scored and had an assist, Jake Christiansen got his first career goal and Columbus came from behind to beat visiting New Jersey.

Oliver Bjorkstrand added a goal and Jakub Voracek had two assists for the Blue Jackets, who beat the Devils at home for the seventh straight time dating to 2018. Elvis Merzlikins stopped 30 shots in his 19th win.

Jets 8, Canadiens 4: Mark Scheifele scored twice and added an assist to help host Winnipeg spoil a spirited Montreal comeback.

Pierre-Luc Dubois had a goal and two assists, and Paul Stastny, Andrew Copp, Adam Lowry, Nate Schmidt and Evgeny Svechnikov also scored for the Jets. Connor Hellebuyck made 31 saves.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference								
Atlantic Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Tampa Bay	52	35	11	6	76	182	146	
Florida	53	35	13	5	75	218	161	
Toronto	53	35	14	4	74	197	152	
Boston	54	32	18	4	68	161	146	
Detroit	54	24	24	6	54	160	194	
Ottawa	52	19	28	5	43	137	166	
Buffalo	54	16	30	8	40	143	195	
Montreal	54	13	34	7	33	127	206	
Metropolitan Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Carolina	53	37	11	5	79	185	126	
Pittsburgh	55	33	14	8	74	178	148	
N.Y. Rangers	53	33	15	5	71	157	134	
Washington	55	28	18	9	65	176	156	
Columbus	54	28	25	1	57	179	196	
N.Y. Islanders	50	20	22	8	48	128	142	
New Jersey	54	19	30	5	43	167	197	
Philadelphia	53	16	27	10	42	131	184	
Western Conference								
Central Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Colorado	54	40	10	4	84	218	153	
St. Louis	52	32	14	6	70	188	141	
Minnesota	51	31	17	3	65	191	162	
Nashville	53	30	19	4	64	163	151	
Dallas	52	29	20	3	61	151	151	
Winnipeg	54	24	21	9	57	163	166	
Chicago	54	19	27	8	46	134	185	
Arizona	53	14	35	4	32	122	195	
Pacific Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Calgary	52	32	14	6	70	182	125	
Los Angeles	54	29	18	7	65	159	153	
Vegas	54	30	20	4	64	175	157	
Edmonton	54	30	21	3	63	179	171	
Anaheim	56	26	21	9	61	165	172	
Vancouver	55	26	23	6	58	154	158	
San Jose	54	24	24	6	54	143	168	
Seattle	55	16	34	5	37	140	196	

Tuesday's games

Edmonton 3, Philadelphia 0
Columbus 4, New Jersey 3
Tampa Bay 5, Ottawa 2
Detroit 4, Carolina 3, OT
Calgary 5, Minnesota 1
Winnipeg 8, Montreal 4
Colorado 5, N.Y. Islanders 3
Vegas 3, San Jose 1
Anaheim 4, Boston 3

Wednesday's games

Buffalo at Toronto
St. Louis at N.Y. Rangers
Los Angeles at Dallas
Nashville at Seattle

Thursday's games

Carolina at Washington
Minnesota at Philadelphia
Ottawa at Florida
Pittsburgh at Tampa Bay
Vancouver at N.Y. Islanders
Edmonton at Chicago
Boston at Vegas
Colorado at Arizona
Montreal at Calgary

Friday's games

Detroit at Tampa Bay
Los Angeles at Columbus
Minnesota at Buffalo
New Jersey at N.Y. Rangers
Pittsburgh at Carolina
Dallas at Winnipeg
Vegas at Anaheim

Saturday's games

St. Louis at N.Y. Islanders
Chicago at Philadelphia
Ottawa at Arizona
Detroit at Florida
Boston at Columbus
Montreal at Edmonton
Seattle at Washington
Vancouver at Toronto
Nashville at San Jose
Calgary at Colorado

Scoring leaders

Through Tuesday

	GP	G	A	PS
Connor McDavid, EDM	53	29	48	77
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	54	37	39	76
J. Huberdeau, FLA	53	18	57	75
Nazem Kadri, COL	51	22	46	68
Auston Matthews, TOR	50	37	31	68
Johnny Gaudreau, CGY	52	20	47	67
Mikko Rantanen, COL	51	26	39	65
Kirill Kaprizov, MIN	50	24	40	64
Alex Ovechkin, WSH	53	32	32	64
M. Tkachuk, CGY	52	27	34	61
Kyle Connor, WPG	54	32	29	61
J.T. Miller, VAN	53	20	40	60
Steven Stamkos, TB	51	26	34	60
Cale Makar, COL	50	18	40	58

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

ROUNDUP

No. 4 Duke tops Pitt in Coach K's final road game

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Mike Krzyzewski is attempting to stay in the present, even as the days slip by and the going-away presents and “last” milestones keep piling up. Even as retirement looms whenever Duke’s season — and Krzyzewski’s remarkable coaching career — ends at some point over the next five weeks.

So Krzyzewski didn’t bother to tell his players he was walking onto the court as the visitor for the final time when the fourth-ranked Blue Devils faced Pittsburgh on Tuesday night. Doing so would make it about him. And that is the one thing Krzyzewski is trying to avoid above all else.

“I didn’t talk to them about ‘it’s my last road game, guys win it for me,’” Krzyzewski said. “I want it to be their moment.”

Freshman guard Trevor Keels scored a career-high 27 points, Paolo Banchero added 21 and Duke clinched at least a share of its 13th Atlantic Coast Conference regular-season title under Krzyzewski with an 86-56 win over the Panthers.

The Blue Devils (26-4, 16-3)

wasted little time making sure Krzyzewski would pick up his ACC-record 201st road win, taking a 13-point lead before the game was four minutes old and cruising.

No. 2 Arizona 91, No. 16 Southern California 71: Bennedict Mathurin scored 19 points and Kerr Kriisa added 18 to help the visiting Wildcats wrap up their first Pac-12 Conference regular-season title in four seasons with a rout of the Trojans.

Justin Kier scored 12 points as Arizona (26-3, 16-2) rebounded from a double-digit loss at Colorado over the weekend.

TCU 74, No. 6 Kansas 64: Mike Miles Jr. had 19 points and six assists as the host Horned Frogs solidified their once-shaky NCAA Tournament résumé with a second consecutive win over a top-10 team.

TCU (19-9, 8-8 Big 12) secured the game during a stretch when Miles made a strong move around KJ Adams Jr. for a layup, and then made a three-pointer to extend the lead to 59-49 with 7:44 left.

No. 7 Kentucky 83, Mississippi 72: Oscar Tshiebwe had 18 points and 15 rebounds, Sahvir Wheeler added 16 points and the Wildcats



Pittsburgh coach Jeff Capel, left, embraces Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski after presenting him with a trophy before their game Tuesday in Pittsburgh. Capel played for and coached under Krzyzewski.

won their home finale over the Rebels.

TyTy Washington Jr. added 14 points off the bench for Kentucky (24-6, 13-4 Southeastern Conference), which shot 60% from the field. The Wildcats finished unbeaten at home.

No. 10 Wisconsin 70, No. 8 Purdue 67: Chucky Hepburn banked in a tiebreaking three-pointer with 1.5 seconds left and finished with a career-high 17 points as the host Badgers beat the Boilermakers and clinched a share of the Big Ten regular-season title.

Wisconsin (24-5, 15-4 Big Ten) has won five straight and now has at least a share of its 20th Big Ten regular-season title. A victory Sunday at home against Nebraska would give the Badgers their first outright conference title since 2015.

No. 11 Villanova 76, No. 9

Providence 74: Caleb Daniels scored 20 points, Eric Dixon scored 15 and Collin Gillespie had 14 as the Wildcats beat the visiting Friars in a fantastic Big East matchup.

Justin Minaya buried a three-pointer with 32 seconds left that pulled Providence within 69-68. But Villanova (22-7, 15-4) survived the Friars’ press and sealed the win from the free-throw line.

No. 13 Tennessee 75, Georgia 68: Josiah-Jordan James scored a career-high 23 points, including back-to-back three-pointers that gave the Vols the lead early in the second half, and they overcame a slow start to defeat the host Bulldogs.

Kennedy Chandler had 16 points for Tennessee (22-7, 13-4 Southeastern Conference).

No. 14 Houston 71, Cincinnati 53: Fabian White Jr. had a career-

high 28 points and 10 rebounds as Houston beat visiting Cincinnati and clinched the American Athletic Conference regular-season title.

Josh Carlton had 15 points and nine rebounds for the Cougars (25-4, 14-2 AAC).

Nebraska 78, No. 23 Ohio State 70: Bryce McGowens scored 26 points, Alonzo Verge Jr. had 13 points and 11 assists, and the Cornhuskers defeated the host Buckeyes.

Nebraska (9-21, 3-16 Big Ten) bested a ranked opponent for the first time under third-year coach Fred Hoiberg.

Air Force 58, San Jose State 54: Lucas Moerman recorded 10 points and 12 rebounds to help the host Falcons snap a nine-game losing streak.

A.J. Walker had 15 points for Air Force (11-17, 4-13 Mountain West Conference).

Scoreboard

Atlantic Sun Conference At Higher-Seeded Schools First Round Tuesday, March 1 Kennesaw St. 82, E. Kentucky 73 Cent. Arkansas 74, Stetson 73 Florida Gulf Coast 81, North Alabama 72 Lipscomb 74, North Florida 65
Quarterfinals Thursday, March 3 Jacksonville St. vs. Kennesaw St. Jacksonville vs. Cent. Arkansas Liberty vs. Lipscomb Bellarmine Knights vs. Florida Gulf Coast
Semifinals Saturday, March 5
Championship Tuesday, March 8
Big South Conference At Charlotte, N.C. First Round Wednesday, March 2 Radford vs. NC A&T UNC-Asheville vs. Charleston Southern High Point vs. Hampton Campbell vs. Presbyterian
Quarterfinals Friday, March 4 Longwood vs. Radford-NC A&T-winner SC-Upstate vs. UNC-Asheville-Charleston Southern-winner Winthrop vs. High Point-Hampton-winner Gardner-Webb vs. Campbell-Presbyterian-winner
Semifinals Saturday, March 5
Championship Sunday, March 6
Colonial Athletic Conference

At Washington, D.C. First Round Saturday, March 5 William & Mary vs. Northeastern
Quarterfinals Sunday, March 6 Towson vs. W&M-Northeastern-winner Drexel vs. Delaware UNC-Wilmington vs. Elon Hofstra vs. Coll. of Charleston
Horizon League Conference At Higher-Seeded Schools First Round Tuesday, March 1 Detroit 79, Green Bay 62 Robert Morris 77, Youngstown St. 73 UIC 80, Milwaukee 69 Oakland 69, IUPUI 58
Quarterfinals Thursday, March 3 Wright St. vs. Oakland Fort Wayne vs. Robert Morris N. Kentucky vs. Detroit Cleveland St. vs. UIC
Missouri Valley Conference At St. Louis, Mo. First Round Thursday, March 3 Illinois St. vs. Indiana St. Valparaiso vs. Evansville
Quarterfinals Friday, March 4 N. Iowa vs. Illinois St.-Indiana St.-winner Loyola Chicago vs. Bradley Missouri St. vs. Valp.-Evansville-winner Drake vs. S. Illinois
Semifinals Saturday, March 5
Championship Sunday, March 6
Northeast Conference

At Higher-Seeded Schools First Round Monday, Feb. 28 CCSU 67, Fairleigh Dickinson 66
Quarterfinals Wednesday, March 2 Wagner vs. St. Francis (Pa.) Bryant vs. CCSU LIU Sharks vs. Sacred Heart Mount St. Mary's vs. St. Francis (NY)
Semifinals Saturday, March 5
Championship Tuesday, March 8
Ohio Valley Conference At Evansville, Ind. First Round Wednesday, March 2 Tennessee St. vs. SIU-Edwardsville Austin Peay vs. Tennessee Tech
Quarterfinals Thursday, March 3 SE Missouri vs. Tennessee St.-SIU-Edwardsville-winner Morehead St. vs. Austin Peay-Tennessee Tech-winner
Semifinals Friday, March 4 Murray St. vs. TBD Belmont vs. TBD
Championship Saturday, March 5
Patriot League Conference At Higher-Seeded Schools First Round Tuesday, March 1 American 69, Holy Cross 63 Bucknell 82, Lafayette 81
Quarterfinals

Thursday, March 3 Navy vs. American Lehigh vs. Army Colgate vs. Bucknell Boston U. vs. Loyola (Md.)
Southern Conference At Asheville, N.C. First Round Friday, March 4 ETSU vs. The Citadel Mercer vs. W. Carolina
Quarterfinals Saturday, March 5 Chattanooga vs. ETSU-Citadel-winner Wofford vs. VMI Furman vs. Mercer-W. Carolina-winner Samford vs. UNC-Greensboro
Semifinals Sunday, March 6
Championship Monday, March 7
Summit League Conference At Sioux Falls, S.D. First Round Saturday, March 5 S. Dakota St. vs. Omaha N. Dakota St. vs. Denver
Sunday, March 6 UMKC vs. South Dakota Oral Roberts vs. W. Illinois
Semifinals Monday, March 7
Championship Tuesday, March 8
Sun Belt Conference At Pensacola, Fla. First Round Thursday, March 3 Louisiana-Lafayette vs. Texas-Arlington

South Alabama vs. UALR Arkansas St. vs. Louisiana-Monroe Coastal Carolina vs. Georgia Southern
Quarterfinals Saturday, March 5 Texas St. vs. Louisiana-Lafayette-Texas-Arlington-winner Troy vs. South Alabama-UALR-winner Georgia St. vs. Arkansas St.-Louisiana-Monroe-winner Appalachian St. vs. Coastal Carolina-Georgia Southern-winner
Semifinals Sunday, March 6
Championship Monday, March 7
West Coast Conference At Las Vegas, Nev. First Round Thursday, March 3 Loyola Marymount vs. Pacific San Diego vs. Pepperdine
Second Round Friday, March 4 BYU vs. Loyola Marymount-Pacific-winner Portland vs. San Diego-Pepperdine-winner
Quarterfinals Saturday, March 5 San Francisco vs. TBD
Sunday, March 6 Santa Clara vs. TBD
Semifinals Monday, March 7 Gonzaga vs. TBD Saint Mary's (Cal.) vs. TBD
Championship Tuesday, March 8

MLB

Fans dismayed by labor dispute

Emotions run gamut over season delay

BY DAVID BRANDT
Associated Press

PHOENIX — Nathan Rueckert's personal finances are loosely tied to Major League Baseball, thanks to the 20 years or so he has spent building his company that produces handcrafted artwork catered to fans.

That's not why Tuesday was a very bad day.

At heart, Rueckert simply loves baseball. And like most baseball fans, he reacted with a mix of resignation, dismay, sadness and anger when MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred announced that opening day on March 31 was canceled because the players' union and management couldn't strike a labor deal in time to end a 90-day lockout.

"I just think of all the father-son moments that are going to be missed," said Rueckert, who operates Baseball Seams Co. from his home in South Dakota. "All those opportunities that are robbed by a season that might not even exist. Especially with the state of the country and the world, baseball is such a great distraction."

"People want to go to the ballpark, have a hot dog and get rid of stress."

For fans, MLB's decision to cancel games only adds to their stress. And anger. Or, maybe most con-

cerning — apathy.

It's the latest setback for a sport that's had arguably the worst luck of the biggest U.S. sports leagues — which include the NFL, NBA, NHL and MLB — when it comes to COVID-19. The pandemic started in mid-March of 2020, immediately shutting down spring training less than three weeks before opening day and causing the season to be shortened by more than 100 games.

No other league lost a bigger chunk of its schedule.

There wasn't much that could be done about a pandemic. Labor squabbles over how to allocate money in a \$10 billion industry are a different story. Now, for the second time in three seasons, at least some regular-season games won't be played.

"The people need the games after getting through COVID-19 to lift our spirits and get back to normal," said Toronto Blue Jays fan Bill Farina, who lives in Palm Harbor, Fla., and was watching a Senators-Lightning NHL game. "I am disappointed in baseball. They don't care about the fans, and fans are going to leave them behind."

"Why would they stay and support these guys just to get burned?"

St. Louis Cardinals fan Hunter Kniffin is among many who wonder if the game can survive a leng-



WILFREDO LEE/AP

Baseball fans watch as Major League Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred speaks during a news conference Tuesday at Roger Dean Stadium in Jupiter, Fla.

thy work stoppage. He was a teenager during the 1994-95 strike that wiped out a World Series and about 70 regular-season games for each team.

He remembers the fan apathy that followed and the way the sport was eventually energized by the Mark McGwire-Sammy Sosa home run race that captivated the country in 1998. He's not sure baseball will be as fortunate this time. It's a different world than the mid-to-late 1990s and there are more options for entertainment than ever.

"It could be a lot harder to bounce back this time," said Kniffin, who goes to about 10 games each year. "I just don't see how

baseball can afford to lose any more exposure to the other major sports."

Pittsburgh Pirates fan Anthony Margiotta has two sons who play youth baseball. He's a diehard who said the lockout won't affect his plans to attend games when and if they're played, especially if there's good weather on a summer night.

But he also knows many fans aren't like him. If baseball's out of sight, it's out of mind, and it's certainly not attracting any younger fans when games are canceled.

"I'm sure this isn't helping things, let's just say that," the 45-year-old Margiotta said.

The scariest part for MLB could

be that many fans seemed resigned to baseball's popularity fade. Joe Hart was wearing a Detroit Tigers hat on Tuesday night but watching another sport, taking in a Pistons-Wizards NBA game in Washington.

He said the decision to cancel baseball's opening day is "not a surprise" and blames the owners slightly more than the players for the current fiasco.

But more than the desire to place blame, there's simply disgust. Being a baseball fan isn't easy these days.

AP baseball writers Ronald Blum and Noah Trister along with AP sports writers Fred Goodall and Will Graves contributed to this story.

Scrapped: Manfred insists canceled games can't be rescheduled

FROM PAGE 24

ger of the roughly 1,200 players locked into a contest of will against 30 controlling owners. Manfred maintained daily interleague play made rescheduling impossible.

"To say they won't reschedule games if games are canceled or they won't pay players for those games that are canceled is solely their position," Meyer said. "We would have a different position."

Talks that began last April went nowhere, and MLB locked out players Dec. 2 in the sport's first work stoppage since 1995. There were just six economic negotiating sessions over the next 2½ months in New York, but more intensive talks began Feb. 21 in Florida.

After 13 negotiating sessions over 16½ hours Monday, the sides recessed at 2:30 a.m. having made progress but still far apart on key economic issues.

Tone changed with the daylight, and the league sent the players what it termed a "best offer" on



WILFREDO LEE/AP

New York Mets pitcher Max Scherzer, right, speaks as Bruce Meyer, chief union negotiator, listens Tuesday in Jupiter, Fla.

the ninth straight day of talks. The union held a Zoom call of 30-40 players and reacted angrily with a rejection. Both sides said they were leaving town, and there was no date scheduled for bargaining to resume.

At 5:07 p.m. of the lockout's 90th

day, Manfred declared the opposite of "play ball!"

"Against that backdrop of growing revenues and record profits for owners of the league," Clark said, "players seek and deserve nothing more than fundamental fairness."

Baseball's ninth work stoppage will be the fourth causing regular-season games to be canceled, leaving ballparks quiet from Fenway Park to Dodger Stadium.

Caught in the crossfire of the money fight, players said they would only discuss — but not commit to — possible on-field changes that Manfred says are needed, such as pitch clocks and the elimination of defensive shifts. An expanded postseason was another casualty — for now.

"Manfred gotta go," tweeted Chicago Cubs pitcher Marcus Stroman.

The bulk of fan ire on social media was aimed at Manfred, who was spotted practicing his golf swing between bargaining sessions by an Associated Press photographer Tuesday. Others were upset that Manfred was laughing and jovial with reporters at his news conference announcing the cancellation.

"Have no clue how he has the ability to laugh about anything

right now," Los Angeles Angels pitcher Michael Lorenzen tweeted. "Mind is blown."

Players are angry payrolls decreased by 4% from 2015 through last year and many teams jettisoned a portion of high-priced veteran journeymen in favor of lower-priced youth.

"The game has suffered damage for a while now. ... The game has been manipulated," Clark said. "The value inherent and how players are respected and viewed has changed. Players have been commoditized, monetized in a way that is really hard to explain."

Some clubs gave up on competing in the short term to better position themselves for future seasons.

"We have been screaming for years about competition issues," Miller said.

The sport will be upended by its second shortened season in three years following a 2020 schedule cut to 60 games because of the pandemic.

NBA

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference					
Atlantic Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Philadelphia	37	23	.617	—	
Boston	37	27	.578	2	
Toronto	34	27	.557	3½	
Brooklyn	32	31	.508	6½	
New York	25	36	.410	12½	
Southeast Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Miami	41	21	.661	—	
Charlotte	30	33	.476	11½	
Atlanta	29	32	.475	11½	
Washington	28	33	.459	12½	
Orlando	15	47	.242	26	
Central Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Chicago	39	23	.629	—	
Milwaukee	37	25	.597	2	
Cleveland	36	25	.590	2½	
Indiana	21	42	.333	18½	
Detroit	15	47	.242	24	
Western Conference					
Southwest Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Memphis	43	20	.683	—	
Dallas	37	25	.597	5½	
New Orleans	25	36	.410	17	
San Antonio	24	38	.387	18½	
Houston	15	46	.246	27	
Northwest Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Utah	38	22	.633	—	
Denver	36	25	.590	2½	
Minnesota	34	29	.540	5½	
Portland	25	36	.410	13½	
Oklahoma City	19	42	.311	19½	
Pacific Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Phoenix	49	12	.803	—	
Golden State	43	19	.694	6½	
L.A. Clippers	33	31	.516	17½	
L.A. Lakers	27	34	.443	22	
Sacramento	23	40	.365	27	
Monday's games					
Orlando 119, Indiana 103					
Minnesota 127, Cleveland 122					
Toronto 133, Brooklyn 97					
Miami 112, Chicago 99					
Memphis 118, San Antonio 105					
Sacramento 131, Oklahoma City 110					
Milwaukee 130, Charlotte 106					
Tuesday's games					
Washington 116, Detroit 113					
Toronto 109, Brooklyn 108					
Boston 107, Atlanta 98					
L.A. Clippers 113, Houston 100					
Minnesota 129, Golden State 114					
Dallas 109, L.A. Lakers 104					
Wednesday's games					
Charlotte at Cleveland					
Indiana at Orlando					
New York at Philadelphia					
Miami at Milwaukee					
Sacramento at New Orleans					
Utah at Houston					
Oklahoma City at Denver					
Portland at Phoenix					
Thursday's games					
Chicago at Atlanta					
Detroit at Toronto					
Memphis at Boston					
Miami at Brooklyn					
Golden State at Dallas					
Sacramento at San Antonio					
L.A. Lakers at L.A. Clippers					
Friday's games					
Atlanta at Washington					
Cleveland at Philadelphia					
Indiana at Detroit					
Milwaukee at Chicago					
Orlando at Toronto					
Minnesota at Oklahoma City					
Utah at New Orleans					
Houston at Denver					
New York at Phoenix					
Scoring leaders					
Through Tuesday					
	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Embiid, PHI	48	456	455	1432	29.8
Anttknmpo, MIL	51	510	419	1498	29.4
James, LAL	44	482	187	1271	28.9
DeRozan, CHI	58	598	399	1633	28.2
Young, ATL	56	527	346	1561	27.9
Morant, MEM	49	504	267	1351	27.6
Doncic, DAL	47	455	256	1294	27.5
Tatum, BOS	60	537	311	1552	25.9
Mitchell, UTA	48	445	187	1243	25.9
Curry, GS	57	478	255	1472	25.8
Booker, PHO	54	504	236	1385	25.6
Jokic, DEN	55	534	249	1403	25.5
LaVine, CHI	50	435	214	1226	24.5

ROUNDUP

Barnes lifts Raptors past Nets

Associated Press

TORONTO — Scottie Barnes had 18 points and 10 rebounds, Gary Trent Jr. scored 24 and the Toronto Raptors rallied to beat Brooklyn 109-108 on Tuesday night for their second win over the struggling Nets in two days.

Pascal Siakam fouled out with 18 points and Malachi Flynn scored 15 for the Raptors, who were coming off a 133-97 victory in Brooklyn on Monday.

Thaddeus Young and Khem Birch each had 11 points for Toronto. Trent went 9-for-9 at the free-throw line.

James Johnson scored 19 points, Seth Curry had 18 and LaMarcus Aldridge added 16 for the Nets. Cam Thomas had 11 and Goran Dragic scored 10.

Mavericks 109, Lakers 104: Luka Doncic scored seven of his 25 points in the fourth quarter, Jalen Brunson added 22 points and Dallas rallied to win at Los Angeles.

Dorian Finney-Smith had 16 points and nine rebounds for the Mavericks, who hung on for their eighth win in 10 games after blowing a huge early lead on the struggling Lakers.

Dallas trailed 100-94 with seven minutes to play before scoring 11 consecutive points in a rally kicked off by Brunson's fourth three-pointer. Doncic went 9-



NATHAN DENETTE, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Brooklyn Nets guard Goran Dragic, center, squeezes past Toronto Raptors guard Malachi Flynn, left, and forward Thaddeus Young during the Raptors' 109-108 win Tuesday in Toronto.

for-21 and looked less sharp than in most previous games during his monthlong scoring tear, but made enough big baskets to win it.

Celtics 107, Hawks 98: Jayson Tatum had 33 points, eight rebounds and seven assists to help Boston rally in the second half and beat visiting Atlanta.

Derrick White and Grant Wil-

liams each added 18 points off the bench. Marcus Smart finished with 16 points and four assists.

Timberwolves 129, Warriors 114: Karl-Anthony Towns had 39 points and nine rebounds for host Minnesota, which had its offense humming inside and out in a victory over sputtering Golden State in a potential playoff series preview.

Clippers 113, Rockets 100: Ivica Zubac had 22 points and 12 rebounds, and Los Angeles pulled away in the third quarter and cruised to a win at Houston.

Wizards 116, Pistons 113: Kyle Kuzma scored 21 points and Thomas Bryant added 16, and Washington won its 14th straight home meeting with Detroit.

Beard is here: Philly hypes Harden's home debut

By DAN GELSTON

Associated Press

CAMDEN, N.J. — James Harden wrapped a resistance band around his upper torso and took off. He sprinted the length of the basketball court and repeated the drill designed to build strength and endurance.

With the 76ers in championship-or-bust mode, Harden needs both traits if he wants to carry the team into June.

But parade talk can wait: Philly is in a tizzy over Harden's impending home debut. Almost three weeks since he was acquired in a trade, two road games, billboards welcoming his arrival, and a spawning cottage industry of "Beard" T-shirts later, Harden will finally play in Philadelphia for the Sixers on Wednesday night against the New York Knicks.

Much like the beard that's as synonymous with Harden as his skillful scoring, anticipation is growing. So are ticket prices.

The cheap seats start at \$100 on the secondary market and the Wells Fargo Center will surely have a playoff feel for what would have been an otherwise routine weeknight game without Harden.

"It's going to be turnt in there," Harden said over the weekend, "and I'm ready for it."

Harden was the last Sixer off the court after Tuesday's practice, sharing laughs with All-Star center Joel Embiid and jamming to music during shooting drills with assistant coach Sam Cassell.



MATT ROURKE/AP

James Harden practices Tuesday at the Philadelphia 76ers' facility in Camden, N.J. He averaged 28 points and 14 assists in his first two road games with the team.

"The city's excited. We're excited," coach Doc Rivers said.

Harden, the 2018 NBA MVP, in his short sample size, has impressed as expected. He had 27 points, 12 assists and eight rebounds in his debut against Minnesota and followed with 29 points, 16 assists and 10 rebounds against the Knicks. The number that matters most: 2-0. The issue that matters most: Philly is free of the Ben Simmons saga that weighed on the

franchise until the All-Stars were traded for each other.

"This is not a forced-together team. This is a want-to-be-together team," Rivers said. "We get to be together and we want to be together. I think that's a good thing."

Tobias Harris' production dipped in those two games — he went 5-for-18 combined after taking 20 shots in the 76ers' last game without Harden. Tyrese Maxey, meanwhile, has benefited the most from Harden's arrival. He went 12-for-16 against the Timberwolves, thanks in large part to fastbreak points instigated by Harden and catch-and-shoot threes against the Knicks off Harden kick-outs. Embiid, Harden and Maxey combined for 176 points in their first two games together, the most for any debuting trio in the NBA since 1961.

"It is fun," Harris said. "We're going into full arenas. The hype is there for our group, our team. That always brings excitement to it. What's not to like about it?"

Harden seems recovered from the left hamstring issue that sidelined him his final games in Brooklyn and his first games in Philadelphia (37-23, third in the Eastern Conference).

Teamed with Embiid, already an MVP frontrunner, they might be the most punishing duo in the NBA. Harden, who joked over the weekend he was still "winging it" on offense, is getting his teammates involved while still having the ball in his hands enough to dominate.

SPORTS



One for the road

No. 4 Duke downs Pitt in Krzyzewski's last away game » College basketball, Page 21

MLB

Season openers scrapped



WILFREDO LEE, ABOVE, AND GENE J. PUSKAR, BELOW/AP

Above: Major League Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred speaks during a news conference Tuesday announcing the cancellation of the first two series of the season that was set to begin March 31. Below: LECOM Park, the spring training home of the Pittsburgh Pirates, sits empty Sunday in Bradenton, Fla.

After sides fail to end lockout, league cancels first two series

BY RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

JUPITER, Fla. — Major League Baseball's financial fight cost regular-season games for the first time in 27 years when often acrimonious talks to end a management lockout collapsed Tuesday and Commissioner Rob Manfred scrapped March 31 openers.

With owners and players unable to agree on a contract to replace the collective bargaining agreement that expired Dec. 1, Manfred canceled the first two series for each of the 30 teams, cutting each club's schedule from 162 games to likely 156 at most. A total of 91 games were erased.

"We exhausted every possibility of reaching an agreement before the cancellation of games," Manfred said during a news conference in the left-field corner of Roger Dean Stadium as fans outside the spring training home of the Miami Marlins and St.

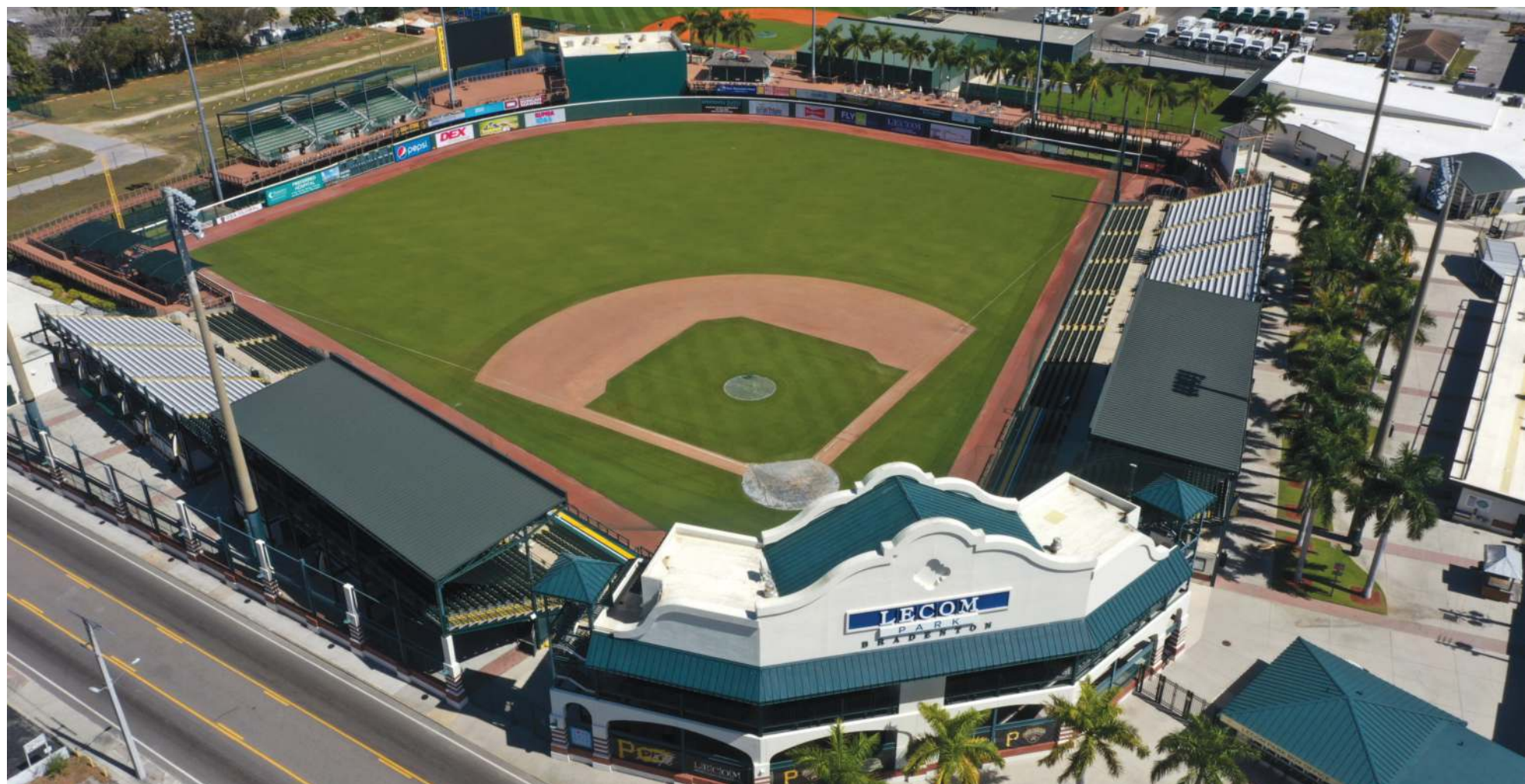
Louis Cardinals chanted: "We want baseball!"

Five miles away and 90 minutes later, the players' association held its own news conference at a hotel, with union head Tony Clark and chief negotiator Bruce Meyer flanked by pitchers Max Scherzer and Andrew Miller — both members of the union's eight-man executive subcommittee — and Noah Syndergaard seated among about a dozen players in the audience.

"This has been making in the years, seeing things that have happened over the course specifically of this last CBA," Scherzer said, "things that have happened to different players in certain situations, that we absolutely have to have corrections."

Manfred vowed players will not receive salary or major league service for games missed, exacerbating already visceral an-

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Vegas' DeBoer earns 500th career victory » NHL, Page 20

