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STARS AND STRIPES

stripes.com

Volume 83 Edition 207 ©SS 2025 THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2025

平成12年4月5日 第三種郵便物認可 日刊(土日除く)
発行所 星条旗新聞社 〒106-0032 東京都港区六本木7丁目23番17号 定価 ¥50

50¢/Free to Deployed Areas



TIMOTHY ORTH/U.S. Navy

Sailors assigned to the USS St. Louis and Coast Guardsmen assigned to U.S. Coast Guard District 7 erect expeditionary shelter tents in support of the Naval Station Guantanamo Bay's Migrant Operations Center expansion on Sunday.

1st deportation flights from US to Gitmo begin

Military could potentially send up to 30K deported migrants to Navy base in Cuba

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

Sailors from a Navy ship moored at Guantanamo Bay are helping Marines set up tents there as the first military flights to deport migrants from the United States to the Navy base in Cuba took off Tuesday.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt announced early Tuesday that the flights to the Navy base were underway. Hours later, U.S. 4th Fleet announced the USS St. Louis, a littoral combat ship homeported at Naval Station Mayport, Fla., was moored at the base to assist in the expansion of the migrant operations center there.

The St. Louis extended its deployment, according to a Jan. 22 message to families that was shared to the ship's Facebook page.

"Due to operational requirements, we have been extended in theater and delayed in returning to homeport. I understand the back and forth over the past week

has been difficult on our families at home, and for that, I sincerely apologize," said Cmdr. TJ Orth, commanding officer of the St. Louis.

The ship has been deployed to the 4th Fleet area of operations to counter maritime drug operations since mid-June.

The arrival of the St. Louis sailors and deported migrants come days after 150 Marines arrived at the Navy base in Cuba to begin preparing migrant detention facilities. Guantanamo Bay has been used primarily for the last two decades to detain those associated with the 9/11 attacks. President Donald Trump said the base has the capacity to hold as many as 30,000 migrants.

The 150 Marines left Saturday and Sunday for Guantanamo. They are assigned to the 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division based at Camp Lejeune, N.C., according to U.S. Southern Command, the comba-

SEE FLIGHTS ON PAGE 5

Trump won't rule out deploying US troops to support rebuilding Gaza

BY AAMER MADHANI,
ZEKE MILLER
AND TIA GOLDENBERG
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump suggested that displaced Palestinians in Gaza be permanently resettled outside the

war-torn territory and proposed the U.S. take "ownership" in redeveloping the area into "the Riviera of the Middle East."

Trump's brazen proposal Tuesday appears certain to roil the next stage of talks meant to extend the tenuous ceasefire be-

tween Israel and Hamas and secure the release of the remaining hostages held in Gaza.

The provocative comments came as talks are ramping up this week with the promise of surging humanitarian aid and reconstruction supplies to help the people of

Gaza recover after more than 15 months of devastating conflict. Now Trump wants to push roughly 1.8 million people to leave the land they have called home and claim it for the U.S., perhaps with

SEE GAZA ON PAGE 10

RELATED

Palestinians decry Trump's proposal for Gaza Strip
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BUSINESS/WEATHER

Apple rebukes iPhone porn app maker, EU rules

Associated Press

LONDON — Apple has chided a newly introduced pornography app available in the European Union, warning that the bloc's digital rules opening the way for third-party app store downloads undermines consumer confidence in the tech giant.

AltStore PAL, an alternative app marketplace made possible under Europe's Digital Markets Act or DMA, this week unveiled the Hot Tub iPhone app, described as an adult content brows-

er.

The digital rulebook forces Big Tech companies to open their services up to more competition, including allowing phone users to download from alternative app stores instead of being limited to the official app stores from Apple and Google, for example.

AltStore PAL said in a social media post on Monday that Hot Tub is "the world's 1st Apple-approved porn app."

Apple rejected that description, saying the availability of such an

app would "undermine consumer trust and confidence" in its mobile ecosystem.

"Contrary to the false statements made by the marketplace developer, we certainly do not approve of this app and would never offer it in our App Store," the company said in a statement.

"The truth is that we are required by the European Commission to allow it to be distributed by marketplace operators like AltStore and Epic who may not share our concerns for user safety."

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Commercial rates	
Euro costs (Feb. 6)	0.94	Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3768
British pound (Feb. 6)	\$1.22	Britain (Pound)	1.2529
Japanese yen (Feb. 6)	151.00	Canada (Dollar)	1.4275
South Korean won (Feb. 6)	1,415.00	China (Yuan)	7.2764
		Denmark (Krone)	7.1473
		Egypt (Pound)	50.2424
		Euro	0.9584
		Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7879
		Hungary (Forint)	389.48
		Israel (Shekel)	3.5437
		Japan (Yen)	152.82
		Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3086
		Norway (Krone)	11.1934
		Philippines (Peso)	57.92
		Poland (Zloty)	4.03
		Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7509
		Singapore (Dollar)	1.3477
		South Korea (Won)	1445.09
		Switzerland (Franc)	0.9007
		Thailand (Baht)	33.55
		Turkey (NewLira)	35.9099

(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.)

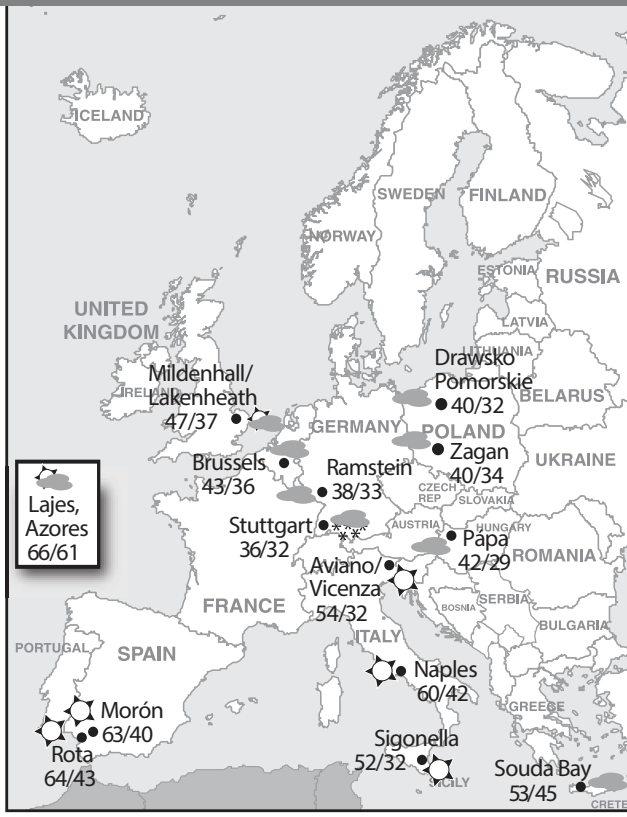
INTEREST RATES	
Prime rate	7.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50
Federal funds market rate	4.33
3-month bill	4.32
30-year bond	4.77

WEATHER OUTLOOK

THURSDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



THURSDAY IN EUROPE



FRIDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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MILITARY

‘We want to optimize their potential’

New 90K-square-foot center at Army’s special warfare school brings holistic health under one roof at Fort Liberty

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

FORT LIBERTY, N.C. — The massive new gym space on Fort Liberty boasts more than 40 weightlifting power racks, state-of-the-art strength and conditioning equipment, an indoor turf field and some 30,000 pounds of weights.

But the \$43 million facility is for far more than working out, officials at the Army base said.

“It’s really cool. It’s actually incredible,” Lt. Col. Michael Handlan said as he looked out at the 43,000 square feet of gym space inside the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School’s new Human Performance Force Generation building on Jan. 23, a day after officials on the North Carolina post officially opened the facility.

Handlan, the Special Forces officer who directs the human performance program for the Special Warfare Center, known as SWCS, said the opening of the 90,000-square-foot building known as HP Forge marks a new step in his program’s efforts to build soldiers best suited for special operations. SWCS is responsible for running the courses that produce Green Berets and psychological operations soldiers. It also provides advanced military education for experienced special operators.

HP Forge “is a place where we have a wide range of human performance and wellness resources housed in one place so that we can synchronize our efforts and provide a holistic approach to training and supporting our service members,” Handlan said.

The human performance program dates back roughly 15 years and was essentially a precursor to the Army’s Holistic Health and Fitness — or H2F — program the service adopted for its conventional forces in 2018.

The program aims to provide its forces with the opportunity to improve their mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing, while also training them in ways that would aid them in completing the grueling courses to enter the Special Forces or psyops fields and on the front lines in combat, Handlan said. HP Forge provides those troops access to strength coaches, physical therapists, mental performance coaches, nutritionists and behavioral health specialists all within the building.

The access to that team of professionals for SWCS soldiers in the training pipelines and the cadre that runs those programs, Handlan said, is the key for ensuring the service produces elite special operators.

“This building, this facility is



PHOTOS BY COREY DICKSTEIN/Stars and Stripes

A soldier assigned to the Army’s John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School works out in its new 90,000 holistic health and fitness center known as the Human Performance Force Generation facility, or HP Forge, on Jan. 23.



The new center houses a 43,000-square-foot gym and access to physical therapists, nutritionists, behavioral health specialists and mental coaches. The center and school is responsible for training future Green Berets and Army psychological operations soldiers.

incredible,” the lieutenant colonel said. “But the resource is the people, the experts that we hire — the people that we bring who are willing to do this ... for our folks.”

The human performance program has come a long way since its beginnings a few years into the Global War on Terror, when the command founded the program to focus on rehabilitating soldiers wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, said Command Sgt. Maj. Lionel Strong, the SWCS senior enlisted leader, who is a Green Beret.

The program began in makeshift gyms — about 500-square-foot repurposed supply rooms, he said. Units within SWCS each had one strength coach and one physical therapist who shared space in those facilities, instead of the large teams of coaches that they

have access to now.

“You would literally be tripping over each other working out with one strength coach while the teammate was 10 feet away being worked on by the one and only sole physical therapist,” Strong said. “It’s important to understand where we came from and evolve to where we are.”

The HP Forge facility now includes a physical therapy facility with more than a dozen beds and a host of specialized recovery equipment designed to get injured troops back into the field as quickly and safely as possible, Handlan said. The facility also has digital tools that can help troops understand their physical makeup including muscle and fat tissue and their bone density.

The program seems to be work-

ing. Mike Fields, the deputy director of the SWCS human performance program, said the command is gathering data on injury prevention and return to duty times among its population. Recently, SWCS saw 149 of 170 candidates who trained with its human performance program after failing a training stage in the Special Forces pipeline return to their course, often after an injury, and complete it.

“That saves a lot of money,” Fields said. “Horses are not cheap.”

Handlan is also focused on preventing injury and maximizing performance for SWCS’ troops. That includes focusing on proper sleep and proper nutrition — two of the areas that he said SWCS officials have long struggled to convince young soldiers to embrace.

“Getting everyone to buy in on the nutrition and the sleep is really tough,” he said. “What we’re learning is those are the things that ultimately affect us the most significantly long term. If your sleep and your food are horrible for years, no matter what you do in the gym, you’re not going to be able to continue to perform because all the other things are falling off.”

Nutritionists opened a “performance kitchen” in the HP Forge facility where they are focused on providing troops with knowledge about food and the tools to prepare it properly.

“Our dietitians are teaching people how to fuel with the right things at the right time to perform

at max level on the objective,” he said. “So, if you’re carrying a ruck for 12 hours through the woods and you know you’re getting ready to hit an objective at [3 a.m.], it’s when do I need the fuel so that my body and my mind are functioning in the right place?”

SWCS has long been great at physically training its soldiers, Handlan said, but its coaches are really working now to develop proper lifestyle habits the troops can adopt for their entire careers.

Another aspect of the human performance program is designed to set baseline understandings of troops’ bodies, which can be measured as they progress forward in their careers, Handlan said.

For Special Forces hopefuls, that process starts when they arrive at SWCS before going into the Green Beret qualification pipeline, he said. Officials gather metrics on every new soldier coming into the command, including identifying muscle imbalances or other musculoskeletal issues that have long plagued soldiers in strenuous physical training programs.

“If we can identify that you are weaker on your left shoulder or your ratio of strength on your left side versus right side is off balance, then we can come up with a dedicated program to fix that [before beginning] training so that you are more successful in your effort to get through an [assessment and selection] program and through a qualification course,” Handlan said.

For the Green Beret community, those early efforts at SWCS mean more Special Forces troops getting to units, he said. The program’s success has meant producing each year an extra five or more operational detachments — the 12-person Green Beret teams that form the base of Special Forces units, Handlan said.

Strong credited the human performance program with improving what the special warfare school can accomplish with its students, and he said the holistic health approaches that they learn at that early stage of their special operations careers should set a baseline for them as they move forward in the Army and even after they leave the military.

“We want to meet them where we’re at, and we want to optimize their potential across these physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional domains throughout their career,” the command sergeant major said. “And on the other side of that service, whether it’s a five-year career or 20-year career, we want to push a healthy veteran back into society.”

MILITARY

Air Force halts career training amid DEI scrub

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force has temporarily halted career development courses as part of a broader effort to remove diversity, equity and inclusion-related content from military training and education.

The Army, Navy and Marine Corps are also reviewing instructional materials to ensure compliance with President Donald Trump's executive orders that mandate the elimination of DEI content and gender ideology from federal programs.

Within the Air Force, the review has led to a pause in career development courses that teach airmen technical skills, along with an evaluation of the service's "brown book," which outlines enlisted

standards, according to internal emails obtained by Stars and Stripes.

An Air Force spokeswoman said the service is assessing all training courses to ensure they align with "optimizing operational readiness, lethality and warfighter innovation," in accordance with a Jan. 29 memorandum from the Office of Personnel Management.

"This is a temporary pause while we work our way through guidance associated with the executive orders, but it will take some time to identify and make changes," she said Monday.

The memo directs federal agencies to review training programs and "cancel any trainings that inculcate or promote gender ideology or have done so in the past."



MONTALVO VELEZ/U.S. Air Force

Diversity, equity and inclusion training, such as this seminar given to airmen with the Puerto Rico National Guard on May 31, is being scrubbed following executive orders from President Donald Trump.

Two of the four military spokespeople reached by Stars and Stripes would speak only on background about the DEI reviews. None addressed requests for examples of removed content or potential operational impacts.

In the Marine Corps, there is no "service-level DEI-mandated training," but senior leadership courses for newly selected lieutenant colonels, colonels, brigadier generals and senior executives have had DEI-related content re-

moved, said Maj. Hector Infante, a spokesman for the service's Training and Education Command.

"All other courses in Marine Corps Education Command are currently being assessed to ensure compliance with current policies," he said by email Tuesday.

The Army is taking "immediate steps to comply with all executive orders related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) personnel, programs, and policies," service spokeswoman

Heather Hagan said by email Tuesday.

The Navy is still evaluating the potential impact of its review, a service spokeswoman said Monday.

"We're kind of still assessing and figuring out exactly what that's going to look like in the Navy," the spokeswoman said.

Spokespeople for the Space Force and Coast Guard did not respond to email requests for comment this week.

New bill would offer troops annual physicals with expanded testing

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The heart of 32-year-old Army Spc. Joey Lenz was three times the normal size for a man his age when he died of a heart attack in 2022.

Now Rep. Morgan Luttrell, R-Texas, a former Navy SEAL, is hoping to prevent similar deaths with legislation introduced Wednesday that would require troops to undergo a battery of medical tests on an annual basis.

His bill, named the Specialist Joey Lenz Act of 2025, directs the defense secretary to offer service members a yearly sports physical alongside an electrocardiogram and blood work that includes a comprehensive metabolic panel and complete blood count.

The legislation also mandates a thyroid test and another that measures protein levels that can indicate heart failure as part of the blood work, if they are deemed necessary.

"Our service members dedicate their lives to defend us, and in return, we have a responsibility to ensure their health is protected," Luttrell said. "By enhancing routine health assessments, the Specialist Joey Lenz Act honors Spc. Lenz's legacy and takes a proac-

tive approach to support the well-being of all who serve."

Margie Taylor, Lenz's mother, lobbied lawmakers for the legislation in the aftermath of her son's death. She filed a \$32 million wrongful death claim against the Army in 2022, claiming the service overmedicated her son after identifying and ignoring his heart condition.

Lenz, a generator mechanic assigned to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Cavazos in Texas, died in his sleep in barracks on base. Lenz experienced health problems in the year before his death, spending a night in intensive care due to heart issues.

He was prescribed nine different drugs for various medical conditions, including one for heart problems, and died of mixed drug intoxication, according to the final cause of death listed on his death certificate.

Taylor said her son was not required by the Army to undergo annual physicals and instead did online health care assessments. She described the proposed bill as desperately needed and potentially lifesaving.

"These are men and women who volunteer to serve our coun-



JONATHON ALDERMAN/U.S. Air Force

A former Navy SEAL is pushing new legislation to require troops to undergo medical tests on an annual basis.

try, put their life on the line, and we're not even going to give them a damn physical? Are you kidding me?" she said. "Their weapon has to be inspected every 30 days, but we don't care about the person pulling the trigger, if they're healthy? It's just unacceptable."

One of the benefits of the legislation is that it will allow the Defense Department to properly document service members' pre-existing conditions and treat them, Taylor said.

She said she visited more than 50 congressional offices to press lawmakers to enact changes that she believes would have saved her son's life. Luttrell's bill does not have a Senate counterpart yet, but Taylor said she is confident it will pass into law this year.

"I am not stopping until I can do something," she said. "I believe that if you know something is wrong, do something about it, even if it makes a difference to one person. Or you're part of the problem."

Army lieutenant colonel sentenced to 10 months for beating former wife

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

An Army officer assigned to Fort Leavenworth in Kansas will spend 10 months in prison after beating his former wife so severely that he broke eight of her ribs, requiring her to spend five days in the hospital, according to prosecutors.

Lt. Col. Greg Pasquantonio, 42, an aviation trainer assigned to the Mission Command Training Program, pleaded guilty last month before military judge Lt. Col. Gregory Bockin at Fort Leavenworth. He was sentenced to the maximum amount allowed through his plea agreement and will serve the 10 months at Midwest Joint Regional Correctional Facility, also at Fort Leavenworth, according to the Office of Special Trial Counsel, which prosecuted the case.

Pasquantonio did not receive a dismissal from the Army, which left him eligible for his retirement benefits.

Pasquantonio and his wife have since divorced and he has remarried, according to county court records.

The Lansing Police Department responded to a call at about 3:38 p.m. on Dec. 1, 2022, to a home in Leavenworth County, where offi-

cers found Pasquantonio and his then-wife, who was 39 at the time. She was on the floor of their bedroom and appeared disoriented, according to court records in Leavenworth County, where the case was first prosecuted and Pasquantonio was convicted.

"She was unable to communicate with me at first but mumbled that her husband did it to her," the police officer wrote in the report.

Pasquantonio first told police that he found his wife in this state, then said they had been going through a "rough time," and she was lying and unfaithful to him. He then said he pushed her during a verbal argument.

"The last thing I remember is him coming in and raising his voice and started screaming, and then he was punching me in my stomach," the former wife said during the August 2023 civilian trial.

She next remembered waking up in the emergency room, she said.

Her injuries included eight broken ribs and a head injury, according to Army prosecutors. She spent five days in the hospital.

In the civilian trial, Pasquantonio was not sentenced to any time in prison, only probation.

MILITARY

Flights: Navy sends aircraft to patrol border

FROM PAGE 1

tant command that oversees operations in the region. Additional troops from SOUTHCOM and Army South also deployed.

There had been seven deportation flights prior to this to Ecuador, Guam, Honduras and Peru. In addition, Colombian officials flew to the U.S. and took two flights of migrants back to their country, The Associated Press reported.

Meanwhile, Navy crews flying reconnaissance planes have helped monitor the southern border, the sea service shared on social media.

Two P-8A Poseidon reconnaissance squadrons have conducted flights in support of increased efforts from the Pentagon to assist the Department of Homeland Security with border security. Planes from Patrol Squadron 40, the "Fighting Marlins," and Patrol Squadron 45, the "Pelicans," monitored the U.S.-Mexico border last week. The planes are multimission, maritime aircraft that conduct anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and

humanitarian response. Squadron 40 is based at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Wash., and Squadron 45 is based at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Fla.

Both are supporting the border security efforts from their home base, according to U.S. Northern Command, the combatant command responsible for all military work at the border.

The Navy assets join about 2,500 National Guard troops and 1,600 active-duty service members — 1,000 from the Army and 500 Marines — at the southern border deployed in support of Customs and Border Protection. The services are working under NORTHCOM alongside the Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection.

Up to 1,000 additional troops will soon join the effort, according to the AP. That will include 500 soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum in New York, and another 500 Marines slated to work at Guantanamo.

Stars and Stripes reporter Rose L. Thayer contributed to this report.

West Point disbands 12 cadet groups following DEI directives

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Military Academy has banned organizations centered primarily on ethnic and gender affiliation as part of what it says is compliance with the effort to end diversity, equity and inclusion programs in government.

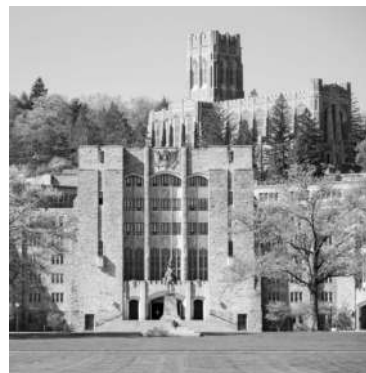
The move, outlined in a memorandum issued Tuesday by West Point, told 12 campus clubs to immediately shut down all activities, formal and informal.

Soon after being issued, the memo was posted on Reddit and circulated elsewhere on social media.

Academy officials weren't immediately available for comment. The Washington Post on Wednesday said it had verified the memo's authenticity.

The West Point directive canceled all trips, meetings and activities associated with the designated clubs.

"Moreover, these clubs are not authorized to continue informal activities using Government time, resources, or facilities," the directive stated.



U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY/Facebook

The U.S. Military Academy has banned "affinity organizations" ranging from the Asian-Pacific Forum Club to the Society of Women Engineers Club.

The decision comes amid a Pentagon push to strip away activities and events unrelated to fostering what it deems to be warfighting readiness.

On Friday, the Pentagon also announced that it was ending identity month celebrations, such as Black History Month in February.

"Our unity and purpose are instrumental to meeting the Depart-

ment's warfighting mission. Efforts to divide the force — to put one group ahead of another — erode camaraderie and threaten mission execution," the Pentagon said in a statement announcing the decision.

The clubs disbanded by the academy are the Asian-Pacific Forum Club; Contemporary Cultural Affairs Seminar Club; Corbin Forum, a group for female cadets founded in 1976; Japanese Forum Club; Korean-American Relations Seminar; Latin Cultural Club; National Society of Black Engineers; Native American Heritage Forum; Society for Hispanic Professional Engineers; Society of Women Engineers Club; the Vietnamese-American Cadet Association; and Spectrum, which served LGBTQ cadets.

The web pages for several of the disbanded clubs displayed error messages Wednesday.

The memo also calls on the Directorate of Cadet Activities to review of all other extracurricular and social clubs to make sure they comply with presidential executive orders and Pentagon policy.



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EUROPE

Ukraine open to trade for military support

BY ISABELLE KHURSHUDYAN
AND ELLEN FRANCIS
The Washington Post

KYIV, Ukraine — As Ukrainian officials considered how to sway a skeptical President Donald Trump to continue supporting their country, one strategy was to appeal to Trump's businesslike approach and offer him a deal — say, rare earth minerals — to get something in return.

Now Trump says he's interested.

Speaking to reporters in the

Oval Office on Monday, Trump said the United States wants Ukrainian rare earth minerals in exchange for the security assistance that Ukraine depends on for its defense against Russia's invasion.

With continued U.S. support for Ukraine in doubt since Trump's election, officials in Kyiv regarded Trump's interest in Ukraine's rare earth commodities as a positive development that could get him invested in the country's future. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy first suggested

providing the United States with the materials during his meeting with Trump ahead of the November election.

A senior Ukrainian official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive matter, said earlier Tuesday that Zelenskyy's administration is "ready to sign documents about joint agreements" and that "having a strategic U.S. interest in Ukraine is a key component to our security in the future."

Trump's interest in Ukraine's

offer of a barter for military aid could serve as a road map for how countries negotiate with his administration going forward. While repeatedly criticizing past U.S. spending on support for Ukraine, Trump has promised to soon broker a deal to end the three-year war with Russia. But that left some Ukrainian officials uneasy over whether the United States — by far the biggest supplier of weapons to Ukraine — would continue sending critical aid in the event a ceasefire isn't reached this

year.

Trump's comments Monday offered an indication that he is willing to continue arming Kyiv — as long as there is something in it for Washington.

And with many of Ukraine's rare earth minerals concentrated in the country's east, where Russia has occupied the most land and continues gaining ground, Trump might be more incentivized to help Ukraine push back the invading forces, the senior Ukrainian official said.



LOCKHEED MARTIN AERONAUTICS

Bulgarian Defense Minister Atanas Zapryanov delivers remarks at a ceremony in Greenville, S.C., on Jan. 31, marking the delivery of the first F-16 Block 70 jet to Bulgaria.

Bulgaria upgrades airpower with handover of first US-made F-16s

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

Bulgaria will soon be flying American-made F-16s as it transitions from Soviet-era aircraft to modern jets, with some help from U.S. airmen based in Italy.

At a ceremony Friday in Greenville, S.C., an F-16 Block 70 was handed over to Bulgarian officials, according to a statement this week by manufacturer Lockheed Martin.

The delivery is a precursor for 15 more of the fourth-generation fighter jets.

The F-16 Block 70 represents a significant upgrade from the Russian-made MiG-29s and Su-25s that have long served the country in specialized roles in air combat and close air support.

Bulgaria ordered eight of the planes from the U.S. in 2019 and another eight in 2022 after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The jet delivered Friday as well as a second from the order are slated to arrive by April, Bulgarian Defense Minister Atanas Zapryanov said Saturday.

By year's end, Bulgaria figures to have eight F-16s in service and expects the other eight to arrive sometime next year or thereafter, Zapryanov said.

The U.S. Air Force's 31st Fighter Wing, headquartered in Aviano, Italy, has been working with the Bulgarians to facilitate the transition to modern NATO fighter jets.

Last summer, airmen from the wing were at Bezmer Air Base in east-central Bulgaria for Thracian

Viper, an exercise "specifically designed to help the Bulgarian air force prepare for the acquisition of eight F-16s in 2025," according to a wing statement in July.

And in September, Brig. Gen. Tad Clark, the 31st Fighter Wing commander, took Bulgarian President Rumen Radev on a flight in an F-16 assigned to the 510th Fighter Squadron.

"Events like this highlight the future of Bulgaria's air defense," the wing said in a statement at the time.

Bulgaria spent about 2.2% of its gross domestic product on defense last year, slightly surpassing NATO's target of 2%, according to alliance figures. Bulgarian officials said Monday that the F-16 purchases would push defense spending above 3% of GDP.

US Navy helping build schools, business relationships in Serbia

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The Navy is reaching out to businesses about American-led construction projects in Serbia, as the U.S. works to build and maintain a presence in a country historically tied to Russia.

Next month, Navy officials will host a half-day conference in Belgrade for businesses to learn about upcoming design and contracting opportunities, Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Europe-Africa, which is headquartered in Naples, said in a statement last month.

The forum, the first held in Serbia, is a chance for business owners to gain familiarity with NAVFAC and the U.S. government, Don Maconi, director of NAVFAC and Navy Region Europe Africa Central's expeditionary section, said in the Jan. 29 statement.

He added that it also allows the command to support the fleet "and our nation's strategic goals."

U.S. relations with Serbia, a landlocked southeastern European country on the Balkan Peninsula, have fluctuated over several decades.

That's due in part to U.S. interventions in Bosnia and in Kosovo, which America recognizes as independent and Serbia considers its own.

But relations have improved, with the U.S. providing more than \$1 billion in aid to Serbia since 1998 to help it develop into "a prosperous democracy, at peace with itself and its neighbors, and integrated into regional and Western institutions," according to the State Department.

It's unclear whether similar aid packages will continue following a freeze on most foreign aid ahead of reviews by the Trump administration.

However, military efforts are ongoing, such as an Ohio National Guard-led partnership that in-

cludes training and other activities with the Serbian armed forces.

The Navy's March 4 informational meeting will include familiarizing Serbian business owners with potential projects and how to participate in bidding, said Paul Cage, a NAVFAC spokesman.

The program, part of a Defense Security Cooperation Agency initiative, is focused on humanitarian work, such as building schools and other infrastructure, with the Navy acting as a project manager and local contractors doing the work, Cage said.

For example, the Navy is overseeing the construction of multiple school buildings in the southeastern town of Prokuplje, the \$999,000 contract for which was awarded last September, according to sam.gov.

It was unclear Wednesday whether the project and others like it already awarded were affected by the White House aid review.

Navy endeavors in Serbia are consistent with the service's decades-long efforts to build relationships through humanitarian assistance and other activities, said Bradley Martin, a retired Navy surface warfare officer and director of the Rand Corp. National Security Supply Chain Institute.

Such projects create influence, maintain access and promote cooperation, Martin said.

The goodwill created is an inexpensive way to reach countries that might not be immediately important but collectively would be significant if the U.S. was dealing with a crisis, he said.

"Any one country might not be completely essential to U.S. national security," Martin said. "But collectively, having good relations with countries throughout the region is important. ... And being able to call on them if we were dealing with a crisis is valuable."

PACIFIC

Dental clinic planned for civilians at Yokota

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A new dental clinic is in the works to serve American civilians at the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo.

“The Army & Air Force Exchange Service is in the initial planning stages of bringing a dental office to Yokota Air Base,” AAFES spokesman Travis Day confirmed Tuesday in an email to Stars and Stripes.

The timeline for the project is still being planned, he said, of the clinic, which could be housed on

Yokota’s east side.

“The addition of this service will be a significant Quality-of-Life improvement, bringing high-quality professional dental care to dependents, family members, retirees and civilian employees at Yokota,” Day said.

The 374th Airlift Wing’s dental clinic at Yokota was once available to civilians on a space-available basis, but appointments for many years have been limited to uniformed personnel.

“While active-duty service members have a dedicated medical facility, their families, retirees

and civilian employees typically need to seek care off base,” Day wrote. “The Exchange’s dental office will provide convenient and quality care consistent with services throughout the United States.”

American-style dental care appeals to mother of three Chelsea Morrison, whose husband, a former airman, works as a contractor at Yokota.

The family has had checkups at off-base dental clinics since arriving in Japan in 2020, she said.

“I don’t want to say they aren’t as advanced in their dental care,

but there is a difference,” Morrison said.

A checkup and cleaning at a Japanese clinic seem much shorter than similar care in the United States, she said.

The family hasn’t claimed reimbursement from insurers for the off-base dental visits, Morrison said, due to the hassle of filing paperwork and the low cost of their care, so far.

An on-base clinic that billed insurers directly would be welcome, she added.

The Defense Health Agency in 2022 reduced DOD civilians’ ac-

cess to military health care facilities, saying federal law prioritizes service members’ care at those sites.

The agency limited civilians to space-available appointments and directed them instead to seek care in the local area.

A pilot program began Jan. 1 to help DOD civilians obtain care from Japanese providers, which typically do not accept U.S. health coverage.

It complements their existing insurance plans and aims to help them avoid paying large, upfront fees.

Japan bolsters anti-air defense with \$900 million purchase of US missiles

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — The United States has approved a \$900 million missile sale to Japan, the third major arms purchase of its kind by the American ally in a little over a year.

The State Department on Friday notified Congress that it had OK’d the sale of 150 Standard Missile 6 Block I weapons to Tokyo, according to a notice that day on the Defense Security Cooperation Agency’s website.

The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force could deploy the missiles on its warships equipped with the Aegis Weapon System, according to the notice.

“The proposed sale will further enhance Japan’s capability to protect Japan and local allied land forces and will significantly improve Japan’s contribution to integrated air missile defense in the Indo-Pacific region,” the notice states.

The sale includes vehicle launch system canisters; parts and support equipment; engineering, integration and test support to produce the missiles; test and handling equipment; training aids; technical publications and data; and logistics support.

The missiles are built by aerospace company RTX, formerly Raytheon, with final testing and assembly at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Ala., according to the company’s website.

RTX describes the SM-6 as “three missiles in one” and “the only weapon that can perform anti-air warfare, anti-surface warfare and ballistic missile defense or sea-based terminal missions.”

The SM-6 can engage manned and unmanned aircraft and cruise missiles as well as ballistic missiles in their final phase of flight, according to RTX.

“The SM-6 missile has demonstrated the ability to hit a surface



ARTHUR ROSEN/U.S. Navy

The guided-missile destroyer USS Benfold launches a Standard Missile 6 during the Valiant Shield exercise near Guam in 2022.

target, and it can strike from any ship or location, supporting the Navy’s pursuit of sea control,” the company website states.

The missile is deployable on 60 surface ships, and the company has already delivered more than 500 missiles to the Navy.

Japan’s Ministry of Defense did not respond to emailed queries Tuesday about the sale.

Last month, the State Department approved a \$39 million sale of 16 joint air-to-surface standoff missiles with extended range, or JASSM-ER, for Japan’s F-15J and F-35 fighters.

Tokyo has in recent years reinterpreted its pacifist constitution to allow its forces counterstrike capability in times of war, in response to Beijing’s rapid military expansion and its assertive claims on Taiwan and in the South and East China seas.

China has more than 1,900 bal-

listic missiles that can reach Japan, according to a 2022 Pentagon report on Beijing’s military capabilities.

Approvals for the missile purchases come just over a year after the U.S. approved a \$2.35 billion sale of 400 Tomahawk missiles, also made by RTX, to Japan.

Military hardware sales to foreign governments are approved by the State Department and carried out by the Defense Department, unless Congress, once notified, moves to block them.

The Tomahawks, also used by the U.S. Navy, can also be launched from Aegis destroyers in the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force.

A Tomahawk can strike targets at a range of 1,000 miles, according to RTX.

Stars and Stripes reporter Hana Kusumoto contributed to this report.

Growler’s arrested landing diverts Navy flights in Japan

By **BRIAN MCELHINEY**
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

Several U.S. Navy aircraft were diverted to other airfields in Japan on Wednesday after an E/A-18G Growler made a precautionary arrested landing that temporarily closed the runway at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, according to the Marine Corps.

The runway was shut down around noon for about 30 minutes to recover the Growler, which is assigned to Electronic Attack Squadron 141, Carrier Air Wing 5, base spokesman Maj. Gerard Farao said in an email Wednesday.

He did not provide details on what prompted the Growler pilot to make the precautionary landing.

The closure forced “multiple U.S. Navy aircraft to divert to refuel,” he said, without specifying how many planes were affected by the diversions.

Some aircraft landed at Matsuyama Airport in Ehime prefecture on Shikoku, while others touched down at Nyutabaru Air Base in Miyazaki prefecture on Kyushu, Farao said.

Two F-35 Lightning II fighters landed at Matsuyama Airport at 12:03 p.m. after the runway closure, according to a spokesman for the Chugoku-Shikoku Defense Bureau.

The airport was notified at 11:55 a.m. that the aircraft needed to land because they were low on fuel, a spokesman for the airport’s office said by phone.

As of 2:15 p.m., the airport was still determining whether it could refuel the jets, he said.

Four F-35s and one F-18 Hornet landed at Nyutabaru Air Base between 12:10 and 12:30 p.m., a spokesperson for the Kyushu Defense Bureau, part of Japan’s Ministry of Defense, said. They all left the base by around 2:15 p.m.

An arrested landing — a routine maneuver on aircraft carriers — occurs when a plane’s tailhook snags one of several cables on the deck, bringing it to a rapid stop.

The procedure is also performed at MCAS Iwakuni when necessary, Farao said by phone Wednesday.

Closing the runway for an arrested landing is “routine,” he added.



DAVID GETZ/U.S. Marine Corps

A U.S. Navy E/A-18G Growler lands at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, in 2024.

NATION

Tulsi Gabbard passes Senate committee

BY ABIGAIL HAUSLOHNER
The Washington Post

Tulsi Gabbard, President Donald Trump's controversial pick to serve as director of national intelligence, cleared a procedural vote Tuesday, paving the way toward a wider Senate vote on her confirmation.

The Republican-led Senate Select Committee on Intelligence approved Gabbard's nomination in a closed committee vote of 9-8, along party lines, Senate aides said. The full Senate is expected to vote on her confirmation as early as next week.

Gabbard, 43, an outspoken former Democratic congresswoman from Hawaii, had faced bipartisan skepticism about her suitability for overseeing the full roster of the United States' intelligence agencies. A tense confirmation hearing before the committee last week — that saw Gabbard parry tough

questions from members of both parties — fueled pessimism about her ability to garner the majority vote she needs to be confirmed, even in a Republican-controlled Senate.

During the hearing, Gabbard refused senators' entreaties to declare former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden a "traitor" for exposing sensitive U.S. surveillance programs more than a decade ago, and she bristled as they prodded her to explain — and express regret for — meeting with then-dictator Bashar Assad in Syria.

Gabbard told Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., that she was "offended" when he questioned her sympathies for Russia, referring to past statements in which Gabbard echoed Kremlin rhetoric.

Several senators also left the hearing frustrated by Gabbard's refusal to condemn Snowden.

"I think it would befit you and be helpful to the way you are perceived by members of the intelligence community if you would at least acknowledge" that Snowden "harmed national security," Sen. Todd Young, R-Ind., told her at one point.

By Tuesday, however, those concerns appeared to have melted away, after the critical senators said they either got the answers they were seeking from Gabbard or opted to defer to Trump's right to seat his desired Cabinet.

Trump's supporters and associates had harassed Young and other members of the committee on social media in the days that followed Gabbard's confirmation hearing, threatening to unseat them in their next primary elections if they voted against her. And Roseanne Barr, the pro-Trump television star and comedian, urged her 1.4 million X followers



DEMETRIUS FREEMAN/The Washington Post

Former Rep. Tulsi Gabbard testifies Thursday at a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing on her nomination to be director of national intelligence.

to call the offices of Young, Moran and Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, who also had a tense exchange

with Gabbard during the hearing. All three voted in favor of Gabbard's confirmation Tuesday.

Senate confirms Doug Collins as VA secretary

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Tuesday confirmed Doug Collins, an Air Force Reserve chaplain and former Republican House representative, to serve as the next secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Collins, 58, was confirmed in a 77-23 vote that saw sizable opposition from Democrats. He has pledged to protect veterans benefits from potential funding cuts and expressed support for expanding veterans' access to medical care



Doug Collins

outside the VA system.

Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., the chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, said Collins has demonstrated a "significant understanding" of the policies that he will be expected to administer at the VA and "proved to me and to others that he is prepared to lead the VA into the future."

"I want a VA secretary who understands the VA's mission. I want a secretary who will put veterans first. I want a secretary who recognizes the VA's importance in serving veterans and contributing to a safe and successful future for our nation. The success they had in uniform — I want them to have that success as a veteran, as a civilian, as a citizen," he said.

Some Democrats opposed Col-

lins' nomination over concerns that steering veterans to outside health care could divert taxpayer money from VA medical centers to private companies. Collins' vocal anti-abortion stance also cost him support.

At his confirmation hearing last month, Collins did not directly answer senators who asked him whether he would overturn regulations that allow the VA to provide abortion care to veterans in cases of rape, incest or to protect the life of the mother.

Collins said his mission at the VA will be "to take care of our veterans," including improving outreach to veterans vulnerable to suicide and homelessness and smoothing the transition from active-duty to veteran status.

Collins joined the military in 2002 and is now a colonel who continues to serve as a chaplain in the Air Force Reserve.

The duty of a military chaplain is to "help guide the hearts and minds of the soldiers that he serves with or she serves with and that comes from a perspective of a background of their own faith but also the respect of the faiths of others that they serve with," Collins once explained.

He also served as a chaplain in the Navy for two years in the 1980s and deployed to Iraq in 2008 with the 94th Air Wing at Dobbins Air Reserve Base in Marietta, Ga.

His confirmation as VA secretary marks the first time that a member of the military chaplain corps will oversee the VA and it's

\$369 billion budget and 400,000-person workforce.

In 2012, Collins won a seat in the House representing Georgia's 9th congressional district. As a lawmaker, Collins supported bills to give veterans more leeway to seek non-VA health services.

He was also one of 126 House Republicans who backed a lawsuit contesting the results of the 2020 presidential election.

He will take over the secretary post as the VA increasingly comes under fire for fiscal mismanagement. The agency last fall pushed Congress for funds to cover a multibillion-dollar shortfall that did not exist and continues to struggle to implement a \$16 billion overhaul of its electronic health records.

Pam Bondi confirmed as new US attorney general

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate confirmed Pam Bondi as U.S. attorney general Tuesday evening, putting a longtime ally of Donald Trump at the helm of a Justice Department that has already been rattled by the firings of career employees seen as disloyal to the Republican president.

The vote fell almost entirely along party lines, with only Sen. John Fetterman, a Pennsylvania Democrat, joining with all Republicans to pass her confirmation 54-46.

Bondi, a former Florida attorney general and corporate lobbyist, is expected to oversee a radical

reshaping of the department that has been the target of Trump's ire over the criminal cases it brought against him. She enters with the FBI, which she will oversee, in turmoil over the scrutiny of agents involved in investigations related to the president, who has made clear his desire to seek revenge on his perceived adversaries.

Republicans have praised Bondi as a highly qualified leader they contend will bring much-needed change to a department they believe unfairly pursued Trump through investigations resulting in two indictments.

"Pam Bondi has promised to get the department back to its core

mission: prosecuting crime and protecting Americans from threats to their safety and their freedoms," said Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D.

But Bondi has faced intense scrutiny over her close relationship with the president, who during his term fired an FBI director who refused to pledge loyalty to him and forced out an attorney general who recused himself from the Justice Department's investigation into potential ties between Russia and his 2016 presidential campaign.

While Bondi has sought to reassure Democrats that politics would play no part in her decision-

making, she also refused at her confirmation hearing last month to rule potential investigations into Trump's adversaries. And she has repeated Trump's claims that the prosecutions against him amounted to political persecution, saying the Justice Department "had been weaponized for years and years and years, and it's got to stop."

Sen. Peter Welch, D-Vt., praised Bondi as "accomplished and competent" but said his "grave concern is really about President Trump and what he is clearly demanding."

Bondi's confirmation vote came just hours after FBI agents sued

the Justice Department over efforts to develop a list of employees involved in the Jan. 6 prosecutions, which agents fear could be a precursor to mass firings.

Acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove last week ordered the acting FBI director to provide the names, titles and offices of all FBI employees who worked on the Jan. 6 cases — which Trump has described as a "grave national injustice."

Trump nominated Bondi for attorney general after it became clear that his initial pick, former Rep. Matt Gaetz, could not win enough support from Republican senators to be confirmed.

NATION

USAID workers pulled off the job worldwide

Associated Press

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Wednesday the original intention was to keep the U.S. Agency for International Development running while reviewing how money was being spent. But he said the government received no cooperation and employees were acting in “contravention” and “insubordination.”

He was speaking about the major upheaval at USAID. Almost all the agency’s workers overseas are being pulled off the job and out of the field under a sudden Trump administration order.

“It is not the direction I wanted it. It’s not the way we wanted to do it initially, but it is the way we will have to do it now,” Rubio said at a news conference with the Guatemalan president in the country’s capital.

“What would be a gift to our geopolitical rivals is billions of dollars in foreign aid that is not aligned to the national interests in the foreign policy of the United States,” Rubio said.

The administration notified USAID workers in emails and a notice posted online, the latest in a sudden dismantling of the aid agency by returning political appointees from President Donald Trump’s first term and billionaire Elon Musk’s government-efficiency teams who call much of the spending on programs overseas wasteful.

The order takes effect just before midnight Friday and gives direct hires of the agency overseas — many of whom have been frantically packing up households in expectation of the announcement — 30 days to return home unless they are deemed essential. Contractors not determined to be essential also would be fired, the notice said.

The move had been rumored for several days and was the most extreme of several proposals considered for consolidating the agency into the State Department. Other options had included closures of smaller USAID missions and partial closures of larger ones.

Thousands of USAID employees already had been laid off and programs worldwide shut down after Trump, a Republican, imposed a sweeping freeze on foreign assistance. Despite outcry from Democratic lawmakers, the aid agency has been a special target as the new administration and Musk’s budget-slashing Department of Government Efficiency look to shrink the federal government.

They have ordered a spending stop that has paralyzed U.S.-funded aid and development work around the world, gutted the senior leadership and workforce with furloughs and firings, and closed the Washington headquarters to staffers Monday. Lawmakers said the agency’s computer servers were carted away.

“Spent the weekend feeding USAID into the wood chipper,” Musk boasted on X.

The mass removal of thousands of staffers overseas and in Washington would doom billions of dollars in projects in some 120 countries, including security assistance to partners such as Ukraine as well as development work for clean water, job training and education, including for schoolgirls under Taliban rule in Afghanistan.

The U.S. is the world’s largest humanitarian donor by far. It spends less than 1% of its budget on foreign assistance, a smaller share of its budget than some countries.



MANUEL BALCE CENETA/AP

Flowers are left outside the U.S. Agency for International Development office in Washington on Monday.

Iran praises US cuts to foreign aid funding

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran’s government seems to be welcoming some recent decisions by the United States — even though they happen to come from a man Iranian operatives have allegedly been plotting to assassinate.

President Donald Trump’s moves to freeze spending on foreign aid and overhaul, maybe even end, the U.S. Agency for International Development have been lauded in Iranian state media.

The reports say the decisions will halt funding for opponents of

the country’s Shiite theocracy — pro-democracy activists and others supported through programs as part of U.S. government’s efforts to help democracy worldwide.

At the same time, Iranian officials appear to be signaling that they are waiting for a message from Trump on whether he wants to negotiate over Tehran’s rapidly advancing nuclear program. At stake are potentially billions of dollars withheld from Iran through crushing sanctions and the future of a program on the pre-

cipice of enriching weapons-grade uranium.

And even when signing an executive order to reimpose his “maximum pressure on Iran” on Tuesday, Trump suggested he wanted to deal with Tehran.

Meanwhile, ordinary Iranians worry what all this could mean for them. On Wednesday, Iran’s currency, the rial, plunged to a record low of 850,000 to \$1 after Trump’s order, showing the ongoing economic volatility they face. A decade ago, it stood at 32,000 rials to \$1.

Trump weighs sending jailed US criminals to other countries

BY MATTHEW LEE

Associated Press

GUATEMALA CITY — President Donald Trump said Tuesday that he was exploring whether he can move forward with El Salvador’s offer to accept and jail violent American criminals in the “most severe cases” even as he and Secretary of State Marco Rubio both say it raises clear legal issues.

Rubio reached an unusual agreement with Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele a day earlier that the Central American country would accept U.S. deportees of any nationality, including American citizens and legal residents who are imprisoned for violent crimes.

“I’m just saying if we had a legal right to do it, I would do it in a heartbeat,” Trump told reporters Tuesday in the Oval Office. “I

don’t know if we do or not, we’re looking at that right now.”

At a news conference earlier in San Jose with Costa Rican President Rodrigo Chaves, Rubio said there were “obviously legalities involved. We have a Constitution.”

But Rubio noted that it was “a very generous offer. No one’s ever made an offer like that — and to outsource, at a fraction of the cost, at least some of the most dangerous and violent criminals that we have in the United States.”

While in Guatemala on Wednesday, Rubio reached an agreement on accepting deportees with the country’s president. President Bernardo Arevalo said Wednesday after meeting with Rubio that his country will accept migrants from other countries being deported from the United States.

Under the “safe third country”

agreement announced by Arevalo, the deportees would then be returned to their home countries at U.S. expense.

Guatemala has been cooperating in receiving deportees from the United States, accepting both civilian and military flights.

Immigration — a Trump administration priority — was again the topic of the day during Rubio’s first foreign trip as America’s top diplomat.

On his five-country Central America tour, he has faced major upheaval at the U.S. Agency for International Development, leaving many at the aid agency and the State Department fearful for their jobs.

While Rubio has been overseas this week, USAID staffers and Democratic lawmakers were blocked from its Washington



MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/AP

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio waves Tuesday as he boards a plane at Juan Santamaria International Airport in Costa Rica.

headquarters after Elon Musk, who is running a budget-slashing Department of Government Efficiency, announced Trump had agreed with him to shut the aid agency.

Thousands of USAID employees already had been laid off and programs worldwide shut

down after Trump imposed a sweeping freeze on foreign assistance after taking office. Rubio later offered a waiver for life-saving programs, but confusion over what is exempt from stop-work orders — and fear of losing U.S. aid permanently — is still freezing aid and development work globally.

NATION

Allies, adversaries reject Trump's Gaza plan

By DAVID RISING
AND JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — President Donald Trump's proposal that the United States "take over" the Gaza Strip and permanently resettle its Palestinian residents was swiftly rejected and denounced on Wednesday by American allies and adversaries alike.

Trump's suggestion came at a White House news conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who smiled several times as the president detailed a plan to build new settlements for Palestinians outside the Gaza Strip, and for the U.S. to take "ownership" in redeveloping the war-torn territory into "the Riviera of the Middle East."

"The U.S. will take over the Gaza Strip, and we will do a job with it too," Trump said. "We'll own it and be responsible for dismantling all of the dangerous unexploded bombs and other weapons on the site, level the site, and get rid of the destroyed buildings, level it out, create an economic development that will supply unlimited numbers of jobs."

The comments came amid a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, during which the militant group has been turning over hostages in exchange for the release of prisoners held by Israel.

Egypt, Jordan and other American allies in the Middle East have already rejected the idea of relo-



NASSER NASSER/AP

Palestinians carry defaced pictures of President Donald Trump, Wednesday, while protesting against his latest statements regarding the transfer of Palestinians from Gaza, in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

cating more than 2 million Palestinians from Gaza elsewhere in the region. Following Trump's remarks, Egypt's Foreign Ministry issued a statement stressing the need for rebuilding "without moving the Palestinians out of the Gaza Strip."

Saudi Arabia, an important American ally, weighed in quickly on Trump's expanded idea to take over the Gaza Strip in a sharply worded statement, noting that its long call for an independent Palestinian state was a "firm, stead-

fast and unwavering position."

"The kingdom of Saudi Arabia also stresses what it had previously announced regarding its absolute rejection of infringement on the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, whether through Israeli settlement policies, annexation of Palestinian lands or efforts to displace the Palestinian people from their land," the statement said.

The prime ministers of Australia and Ireland, foreign ministries from China, New Zealand and

Germany, and a Kremlin spokesman all reiterated support for a two-state solution.

"Australia's position is the same as it was this morning, as it was last year, as it was 10 years ago," Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said.

Trump has already made waves — and upset longtime allies — suggesting the purchase of Greenland, the annexation of Canada and the possible takeover of the Panama Canal. It was not immediately clear whether the idea of tak-

ing over the Gaza Strip was a well thought out plan, or an opening gambit in negotiations.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan told state-run Anadolu Agency that Trump's proposal on "deportations from Gaza is not something that either the region or we would accept."

"Even thinking about it, in my opinion, is wrong and absurd," Fidan said.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called for the United Nations to "protect the Palestinian people and their inalienable rights," saying that what Trump wanted to do would be "a serious violation of international law."

Representatives of Palestinian refugee groups in Mar Elias refugee camp in Beirut rejected the proposal and said it was doomed to fail. Lebanon hosts about 200,000 refugees, many of whom live in camps set up after 1948, when their parents or grandparents fled their homes in land that became Israel.

Fathi Kallab, a member of the leftist political faction Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, said the plan would violate international law.

"Displacement of residents under humanitarian pretexts is considered a war crime punishable by law, as recognized by multiple international organizations," he said. "It exploits the humanitarian conditions that the people of Gaza are suffering from in most cases."

Gaza: Senators say sending troops may not be popular, will cost lives

FROM PAGE 1

American troops.

"The U.S. will take over the Gaza Strip, and we will do a job with it too," Trump said at an evening news conference with Netanyahu by his side. The president who made his name as a New York real estate developer added: "We'll make sure that it's done world-class. It'll be wonderful for the people — Palestinians, Palestinians mostly, we're talking about."

Trump outlined his thinking as he held talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House, where the two leaders also discussed the fragile ceasefire and hostage deal in the Israeli-Hamas conflict and shared concerns about Iran.

Trump said the U.S. would redevelop the territory after Palestinians are resettled elsewhere and turn the territory into a place where the "world's people" — including Palestinians — would live. He offered no detail about what authority the U.S. would use to take the land and develop it.

Trump insists the Palestinians "have no alternative" but to leave

the "big pile of rubble" that is Gaza. He spoke out as his top aides stressed that a three-to-five-year timeline for reconstruction of the war-torn territory, as laid out in a temporary truce agreement, is not viable.

Last week, both Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi and Jordanian King Abdullah II dismissed Trump's calls to resettle Palestinians in Gaza.

But Trump said he believes Egypt and Jordan — as well as other countries, which he did not name — will ultimately agree to take in Palestinians.

"You look over the decades, it's all death in Gaza," Trump said. "This has been happening for years. It's all death. If we can get a beautiful area to resettle people, permanently, in nice homes where they can be happy and not be shot and not be killed and not be knifed to death like what's happening in Gaza."

Trump also said he isn't ruling out deploying U.S. troops to support reconstruction of Gaza. He envisions "long-term" U.S. ownership of a redevelopment of the territory.

The president's proposal was greeted with alarm by Democrats and a measure of skepticism by his Republican allies.

"He's completely lost it," said Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn. "He wants a U.S. invasion of Gaza, which would cost thousands of American lives and set the Middle East on fire for 20 years? It's sick."

"We'll see what our Arab friends say about that," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican and a Trump ally. "And I think most South Carolinians are probably not excited about sending Americans to take over Gaza. I think that might be problematic, but I'll keep an open mind."

The White House's focus on the future of Gaza comes as the nascent truce between Israel and Hamas hangs in the balance.

Netanyahu is facing competing pressure from his right-wing coalition to end a temporary truce against Hamas militants in Gaza and from war-weary Israelis who want the remaining hostages home and for the 15-month conflict to end.

Trump may be betting he can

persuade Egypt and Jordan to come around to accept displaced Palestinians because of the significant aid that the U.S. provides Cairo and Amman. Hard-line right-wing members of Netanyahu's government have embraced the call to move displaced Palestinians out of Gaza.

"To me, it is unfair to explain to Palestinians that they might be back in five years," Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, said. "That's just preposterous."

Trump also signaled that he may be reconsidering an independent Palestinian state as part of a broader two-state solution to the decades-long Israel-Palestinian conflict.

"Well, a lot of plans change with time," he told reporters when asked if he was still committed to a plan like the one he laid out in 2020 that called for a Palestinian state. "A lot of death has occurred since I left and now came back."

Netanyahu's arrival in Washington for the first foreign leader visit of Trump's second term coincides with the prime minister's popular support sagging.

The prime minister is in the

middle of weeklong testimony in an ongoing corruption trial that centers on allegations he exchanged favors with media moguls and wealthy associates. He has decried the accusations and said he is the victim of a "witch hunt."

Being seen with Trump, who is popular in Israel, could help distract the public from the trial and boost Netanyahu's standing.

"We have the right leader of Israel who's done a great job," Trump said of Netanyahu.

Netanyahu praised Trump's leadership in getting the hostage and ceasefire deal. The prime minister also spoke glowingly of Trump thinking outside the box.

"You say things others refuse to say. And after the jaws drop, people scratch their heads and they say, 'You know he's right.'"

Hamas in a statement decried Trump's comments.

"We reject Trump's statements in which he said that the residents of the Gaza Strip have no choice but to leave, and we consider them a recipe for creating chaos and tension in the region," the group said.

NATION



RICHARD VOGEL/AP

A cargo ship unloads containers at the port of Los Angeles in San Pedro in 2023.

Fast fashion, laptops to cost more due to tariffs on Chinese imports

By HALELUYA HADERO
Associated Press

A sweeping new U.S. tariff on products made in China is expected to increase the prices American consumers pay for a wide array of products, from the ultra-cheap apparel sold on online shopping platforms to toys and electronic devices such as computers and cellphones.

An additional 10% tariff on all Chinese goods took effect Tuesday.

The previous day, President Donald Trump agreed to pause his threatened tariffs against Mexico and Canada for 30 days following negotiations on Trump's demands for the North American nations to take steps to reduce illegal immigration and the flow of drugs such as fentanyl into the U.S.

After failing to get a similar White House reprieve, China struck back with retaliatory tariffs on some U.S. goods that are set to begin next week.

The sheer volume and variety of the China-made merchandise sold in the U.S. means residents would probably see the prices of many typically inexpensive items tick higher if the tit-for-tat tariffs persist.

These are some of the products most likely to be impacted:

Electronics, home supplies and car parts

The U.S. imported about \$427 billion worth of goods from China in 2023, the most recent year with complete data, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Consumer electronics, including cellphones, computers and other tech accessories, make up the biggest import categories.

China is a dominant production engine for tech gear, including for American companies like Apple that have their products assembled in the country. In 2023, China accounted for 78% of U.S. smartphone imports and 79% of laptop and tablet imports, the Consumer Technology Association trade group reported.

The tariffs also may affect how much consumers pay for typically inexpensive clothing, shoes and kitchen items like pots and pans, as well as the big-ticket items, such as appliances, furniture and auto parts.

Low-cost apparel, accessories

In addition to imposing a new tariff on Chinese imports, Trump's executive order also suspended a little-known trade exemption that allowed goods worth less than \$800 to come into the U.S. duty-free. The order left open the possibility for the loophole to still be used with shipments from other countries.

The trade rule, known as "de

minimis," has existed for nearly a century. It came under greater scrutiny in recent years due to the rapidly growing number of low-cost items coming into the U.S. from China, mainly from prominent China-founded online retailers such as Shein, Temu and Alibaba's AliExpress.

Former President Joe Biden's administration proposed a crack-down on the loophole in September, but the rules did not take effect before Biden left office.

Juozas Kaziukenas, founder of e-commerce intelligence firm Marketplace Pulse, said he thinks the price increases on platforms like Shein and Temu will be "pretty small" and the products they sell will remain cheap. However, the rule change is likely to result in delivery delays since the packages now have to go through customs, Kaziukenas said.

The new tariffs will also hit third-party sellers on Amazon that import products from China, according to Squali. He expects sellers to eat some of the costs and pass the rest onto customers, which he thinks could result in percentage price increases in the mid-single digits. Other e-commerce sites that host businesses, such as Etsy, are also going to be impacted, Squali said.

Trump to ban trans females in sport events

By WILL GRAVES
Associated Press

President Donald Trump planned to sign an executive order on Wednesday designed to prevent people who were biologically assigned male at birth from participating in women's or girls' sporting events.

The order marks another aggressive shift by the president's second administration in the way the federal government deals with transgender people and their rights.

The president put out a sweeping order on his first day in office last month that called for the federal government to define sex as only male or female and for that to be reflected on official documents such as passports and in policies such as federal prison assignments.

Trump found during the campaign that his pledge to "keep men out of women's sports" resonated beyond the usual party lines. More than half the voters surveyed by AP VoteCast said support for transgender rights in government and society has gone too far.

He leaned into the rhetoric before the election, pledging to get rid of the "transgender insanity," though his campaign offered little in the way of details.

Wednesday's order — which coincides with National Girls and Women in Sports Day — will involve how his administration will interpret Title IX, the law best known for its role in pursuing gender equity in athletics and preventing sexual harassment on campuses.

"This executive order restores fairness, upholds Title IX's original intent, and defends the rights of female athletes who have worked their whole lives to compete at the highest levels," said U.S. Rep. Nancy Mace, a Republican from South Carolina.

Every administration has the

authority to issue its own interpretations of the landmark legislation.

The last two presidential administrations — including Trump's first — offer a glimpse at the push-pull involved.

Betsy DeVos, the education secretary during Trump's first term, issued a Title IX policy in 2020 that narrowed the definition of sexual harassment and required colleges to investigate claims only if they're reported to certain officials.

The Biden administration rolled back that policy last April with one of its own that stipulated the rights of LGBTQ+ students would be protected by federal law and provided new safeguards for victims of campus sexual assault. The policy stopped short of explicitly addressing transgender athletes. Still, more than a half-dozen Republican-led states immediately challenged the new rule.

"All Trump has to say is, 'We are going to read the regulation traditionally,'" said Doriane Lambelet Coleman, a professor at Duke Law School.

How this order could affect the transgender athlete population — a number that is incredibly difficult to pin down — is uncertain.

The Associated Press reported in 2021 that in many cases, the states introducing a ban on transgender athletes could not cite instances where their participation was an issue. When Utah state legislators overrode a veto by Gov. Spencer Cox in 2022, the state had only one transgender girl playing in K-12 sports who would be affected by the ban. It did not regulate participation for transgender boys.

"This is a solution looking for a problem," Cheryl Cooky, a professor at Purdue University who studies the intersection of gender, sports, media and culture, told the AP after Trump was elected.

USPS lifts ban on Hong Kong, China a day after imposing

Associated Press

HONG KONG — The U.S. Postal Service is reversing course a day after placing a ban on all inbound mail and packages from China and Hong Kong.

The post office had announced Tuesday that it would no longer accept parcels from China and

Hong Kong after the U.S. imposed an additional 10% tariff on Chinese goods and ended a customs exception that allowed small value parcels to enter the U.S. without paying tax.

The Postal Service reversed course Wednesday but gave no reason for the reversal, but said it

would work with Customs and Border Protection to implement a collection process for the new China tariffs to avoid delivery disruptions. The post office pointed to the short prepared statement on the reversal when asked for more details Wednesday by The Associated Press.

The ban had the potential to create massive disruptions for online shopping platforms like Shein and Temu, popular with younger shoppers in the U.S. for cheap clothing and other products, usually shipped directly from China.

Cheap, direct postal service helps these companies keep costs

low, as did the "de minimis" exemption that previously allowed shipments to go tax-free if their value is under \$800. The suspension by USPS would have likely have created delays in shipments and potentially higher prices for the companies that rely on rock-bottom pricing for huge sales.

NATION

Trump's birthright citizenship order on hold again

Associated Press

GREENBELT, Md. — A federal judge on Wednesday ordered a second temporary pause on President Donald Trump's executive order seeking to end birthright citizenship for anyone born in the U.S. to someone in the country illegally.

U.S. District Judge Deborah

Boardman said no court in the country has endorsed the Trump administration's interpretation of the 14th Amendment.

Trump's inauguration week order had already been on temporary hold nationally because of a separate suit by four states, in which a federal judge called the order "blatantly unconstitutional."

In total, 22 states, as well as other organizations, have sued to try to stop the executive action.

Boardman, nominated by former President Joe Biden, agreed to the preliminary injunction after a hearing federal court in Greenbelt, Md.

Bringing the suit before Boardman are immigrant-rights advo-

cacy groups CASA and the Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project along with a handful of expectant mothers.

The Trump administration asserts that children of noncitizens are not "subject to the jurisdiction" of the United States and therefore not entitled to citizenship.

The 14th Amendment was added in the aftermath of the Civil War to ensure citizenship for former slaves and free African Americans. It states: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside."

DeepSeek chatbot linked to Chinese telecom banned in US

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The website of the Chinese artificial intelligence company DeepSeek, whose chatbot became the most downloaded app in the United States, has computer code that could send some user login information to a Chinese state-owned telecommunications company that has been barred from operating in the United States, security researchers say.

The web login page of DeepSeek's chatbot contains heavily obfuscated computer script that

when deciphered shows connections to computer infrastructure owned by China Mobile, a state-owned telecommunications company. The code appears to be part of the account creation and user login process for DeepSeek.

In its privacy policy, DeepSeek acknowledged storing data on servers inside the People's Republic of China. But its chatbot appears more directly tied to the Chinese state than previously known through the link revealed by researchers to China Mobile. The U.S. has claimed there are

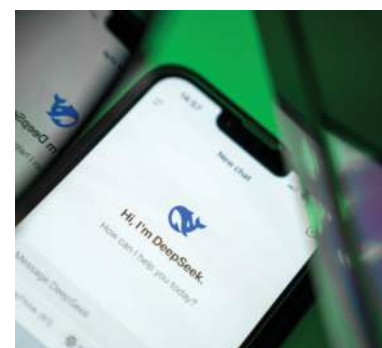
close ties between China Mobile and the Chinese military as justification for placing limited sanctions on the company. DeepSeek and China Mobile did not respond to emails seeking comment.

The growth of Chinese-controlled digital services has become a major topic of concern for U.S. national security officials. Lawmakers in Congress last year on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis voted to force the Chinese parent company of the popular video-sharing app TikTok to divest or face a nationwide ban

though the app has since received a 75-day reprieve from President Donald Trump, who is hoping to work out a sale.

The code linking DeepSeek to one of China's leading mobile phone providers was first discovered by Feroot Security, a Canadian cybersecurity company.

The analysis only applies to the web version of DeepSeek. They did not analyze the mobile version, which remains one of the most downloaded pieces of software on both the Apple and the Google app stores.



LAM YIK/Bloomberg

The DeepSeek app is seen on a smartphone.

Suspect arrested in fatal cosmetics warehouse shooting in Ohio

Associated Press

NEW ALBANY, Ohio — A suspect in the shooting at an Ohio warehouse that killed one person and wounded five was arrested Wednesday morning in Columbus, authorities said.

Chief Deputy U.S. Marshal Dan Deville said Bruce Reginald Foster III was located in an apartment and arrested around 10 a.m.

Foster was turned over to police in New Albany, where the shooting took place Tuesday night.

There were no reports of any kind of confrontation or dispute that would have prompted the shooting, New Albany Police Chief Greg Jones told reporters at a news conference.

Foster had been at work "for some time" before the shooting,

which happened about 10:30 p.m., Jones said.

All of the victims also worked at the facility, Jones said. Five of them were taken to hospitals for treatment, Jones said. He said he could not release their conditions. The sixth victim died in the building.

A handgun was recovered at the scene, he said.

Licking County court records did not immediately list a defense attorney for the aggravated murder case opened under Foster's name. Two possible phone numbers for Foster or a relative were not working Wednesday.

The shooting happened at the warehouse for a company that makes products including cosmetics and toiletries. Jones said

Wednesday morning that investigators did not have a motive for the shooting.

A message seeking comment was sent to the company Wednesday morning. New Albany is about 15 miles northeast of downtown Columbus.

Jones earlier described the shooting as a "targeted type of attack."

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SERVICE DIRECTORY

The Daily Guide to Navigating The Military Business Market

Transportation 944

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For 2nd POV Shipments - Offices / Agencies near Military Installations

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Reading Stars and Stripes gives you a better handle on issues that affect you most. *No one covers the bases the way we do.*

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

FDA OKs pig organ transplant trials

MD SILVER SPRING — The Food and Drug Administration has given two biotechnology companies approval for clinical trials that will transplant organs from genetically modified pigs into patients with kidney failure, an experimental but potentially groundbreaking innovation for thousands of Americans on the waiting list for organ transplants.

United Therapeutics Corp. said Tuesday that its trial will start with six patients with end-stage renal disease around the middle of this year. The trial could expand to 50 people who are unable to receive a donor kidney for medical reasons, or who are on the wait-list but are unlikely to receive one within five years.

Another company, eGenesis, said Tuesday it received FDA approval in December for a kidney transplant study on three patients, with the option to expand.

Bird flu outbreak hikes Waffle House egg prices

NY NEW YORK — The Waffle House restaurant chain is putting a 50 cent per egg surcharge in place temporarily due to the biggest bird flu outbreak in a decade.

The Georgia company said that the resulting egg shortage has led to a dramatic increase in its costs.

Bird flu is forcing farmers to slaughter millions of chickens a month, pushing U.S. egg prices to more than double their cost in the summer of 2023. And it appears there may be no relief in sight with Easter approaching.

The average price per dozen eggs nationwide hit \$4.15 in December. That's not quite as high as the \$4.82 record set two years ago, but the Agriculture Department predicts egg prices are going to soar another 20% this year.

Waffle House, well known as a place to get a cheap breakfast, said that its egg surcharge became effective this week and that it applies to all of its menus. The restaurant's two-egg breakfast, which comes with toast and a side, was listed at \$7.75 on Tuesday.

Reality show spoof warns spring breakers

FL MIAMI — The city of Miami Beach released a marketing video Tuesday in which actors depict a spring break gone wrong due to strict rules, police crackdowns and potential curfews.

The 90-second video, titled "Miami Beach Spring Break Reality Check," is a spoof of a reality show in which a young group of friends is excited for a spring break excursion — "Miami Beach, here we come!" — only to have their fun time ruined by parking restrictions and cops



KATIE ADKINS/AP

Bits of Bach

Colin MacKnight, director of music at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Little Rock, Ark., is planning lunch-time concerts on Wednesdays in 2025, performing all the organ works of Johann Sebastian Bach a half-hour at a time to commemorate the 275th anniversary of Bach's death.

shutting down their beach party.

The video, produced by the ad agency VML for the city of Miami Beach and the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, leads with humor but also warns of \$100 parking, security checkpoints and heavy police presence.

"The show is fake ... but the rules ... are very real," the video says.

Council expels member over bribe allegations

DC WASHINGTON — The D.C. Council voted unanimously Tuesday to expel council member Trayon White Sr., a searing and unprecedented rebuke stemming from federal allegations that he took \$35,000 in bribes from a government contractor.

White's expulsion—the first imposed by the council in its 51-year history — forced the Democrat to immediately surrender his seat representing Ward 8, a swath of largely blue-collar neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River.

As the council voted 12-0 to remove him, White, 40, sat expressionless in the audience alongside his attorney, Frederick D. Cooke, and a couple dozen of his supporters. White, who has pleaded not guilty to the federal bribery

charge, is scheduled to go on trial next January.

Mayor backs out of \$20M school payments

LA NEW ORLEANS — New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell appears to have decided against honoring a \$20 million, City Council-authorized settlement agreement with the Orleans Parish School Board, councilmembers announced on Saturday.

The agreement was intended to help the city's schools pull out of an estimated \$36 million deficit and settle a long-running lawsuit filed by the School Board against the city. Chief Administrative Officer Gilbert Montaño took part in settlement negotiations, and the council voted to approve the agreement in late November without any objection from the Cantrell administration.

In a Saturday statement, councilmembers blasted the administration, saying the city is legally and morally obligated to carry out the agreement.

"The refusal to fund the settlement is illegal," Councilman Joe Giarrusso, who chairs the council's budget committee, said in a statement. "The Council not only made this deal to help the children

of New Orleans, but also expected it to be honored. The Administration's refusal to help children is indefensible."

Under the terms of the agreement, the \$20 million was to be paid out in two payments, the first of which was supposed to go out before the end of 2024. As The Times-Picayune reported last month, the city missed that deadline.

Gold treasure hunter to serve additional time

OH COLUMBUS — A former deep-sea treasure hunter who has served nearly a decade in jail for refusing to disclose the whereabouts of missing gold coins has had that term ended by a federal judge in Ohio, but he will remain behind bars for now.

U.S. District Judge Algenon Marbley agreed Friday to end Tommy Thompson's sentence on the civil contempt charge, saying he "no longer is convinced that further incarceration is likely to coerce compliance." However, he also ordered that the research scientist immediately start serving a two-year sentence he received for a related criminal contempt charge, a term that was delayed when the civil contempt term was imposed.

Thompson has been held in con-

tempt of court since Dec. 15, 2015, and also incurred a daily fine of \$1,000. In his ruling, Marbley assessed Thompson's total civil contempt fine at \$3,335,000.

Thompson's case dates to his discovery of the S.S. Central America, known as the Ship of Gold, in 1988. The gold rush-era ship sank in a hurricane off South Carolina in 1857 with thousands of pounds of gold aboard, contributing to an economic panic.

Estee Lauder to cut up to 7,000 jobs as sales slide

NY NEW YORK — Estee Lauder may trim as many as 7,000 jobs by fiscal 2026, more than 11% of its workforce, after the global beauty cosmetics maker lost money in its most recent quarter and reported a 6% sales slump.

The New York company behind such brands as MAC, La Mer and Aveda tempered its profit outlook as the economies of China and South Korea slow, in addition to global geopolitical uncertainty.

Estee Lauder expects to book restructuring and other charges related to the job cuts of between \$1.2 billion and \$1.6 billion, before taxes.

From wire services

FACES

Rumor says Gellar might come back to 'Buffy' role

New York Daily News

Sarah Michelle Gellar is reportedly deep into negotiations to reprise her role as a stake-wielding killer of the undead in a "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" pilot series coming to Hulu.

The 47-year-old would again play the Buffy Summers character she brought to life from 1997 to 2003 in her series on WB, then UPN, according to Variety. But rather than portraying a high school student tasked with saving the world from evil, Gellar will reportedly have a recurring role in support of a new vampire slayer.

It's not clear who that young slayer might be. Gellar said in 2022 that Zendaya, now 28, had her vote. A year earlier, Gellar told interviewer and actor Mario Lopez that as a middle-aged adult, she was no longer the right candidate for that role.

The new show would be produced by Gellar and previous "Buffy" producers Gail Berman, Fran Kuzui and Kaz Kuzui, as well as singer Dolly Parton, according to Variety.

Parton told Business Insider in January 2024 that a "Buffy" reboot was in the works.

Despite being a creative force behind the original "Buffy" series, Joss Whedon doesn't appear to be involved in the reported revamp. Several female performers who worked with Whedon, including Gellar, have distanced themselves from the famed showrunner since he was accused of contributing to a toxic work environment.

Whedon admitted to New York Magazine he was sometimes not well-mannered on set because "sometimes you had to yell" when "Buffy" shoots turned into a party environment.

Whedon wrote the 1992 "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" film that birthed the series. That movie starred Kristy Swanson and featured Donald Sutherland, Luke Perry, Paul Reubens and Hilary Swank.



RODIN ECKENROTH, GETTY IMAGES/TNS

From left, Josh Brolin, Jeff Cohen, Kerri Green, Corey Feldman, director Chris Columbus and Ke Huy Quan attend a "Love Hurts" movie premiere on Monday in Los Angeles for fellow "Goonies" actor Quan.

Goonies never say die

Co-stars reunite for Ke Huy Quan's Hollywood handprint ceremony

BY ALEXANDRA DEL ROSARIO

Los Angeles Times

For some fans of "The Goonies," star Ke Huy Quan's hand and footprint ceremony at the TCL Chinese Theatre on Monday was a "Data" remember.

The Oscar winner — who starred as gadget whiz Richard "Data" Wang in "The Goonies" — on Monday placed his prints in the renowned cement slabs, joining the ranks of Hollywood names memorialized there.

For Quan, the ceremony fulfilled a "crazy dream."

"Dreams are weird, aren't they? They have a way of planting themselves quietly and surviving on hope, even when reality tries to uproot them," he said. "And then one day they bloom in ways we never expected."

The ceremony for the "Love Hurts" and "Everything Everywhere All at Once" actor was a trip down memory lane that featured appearances by several special guests — including those from Quan's early acting years. "Goonies" stars Josh Brolin, Jeff Cohen, Kerri Green, Corey Feldman and screenwriter Chris Columbus showed up to help celebrate Quan's milestone, which coincides with the 40th anniversary of their 1985 adventure classic.

"You're here and you're doing something that I thought stopped in the '40s," Brolin joked to Quan during his speech on Monday, according to footage shared by Maximo TV.

Brolin continued: "Obviously they brought it back

for somebody super special, and that's you. I hold you in a very dear place in my heart."

In "The Goonies," one of his earliest acting credits, a 13-year-old Quan portrayed the crafty Data who helps his friends locate a hidden pirate treasure and save their neighborhood from foreclosure. Quan was also known for his work as Short Round in Spielberg's "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" and various roles in "Encino Man," TV series "Head of the Class" and "Nothing Is Easy," among other credits.

Quan returned to the big screen after nearly 20 years with "Finding 'Ohana" and directors Daniels' — Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheiner — "Everything Everywhere All at Once." For Quan, the latter proved life-changing.

In 2023, Quan won his first career Oscar and several acting opportunities followed. He starred in Disney+'s "American Born Chinese" and Marvel series "Loki," and is the leading man in this month's action comedy "Love Hurts."

During his speech, Quan thanked his family who has "shown me what it means to never give up."

"This moment isn't just about leaving my markings in that," he said, "it's about honoring the people who have always believed in me when I couldn't always believe in myself."

"Love Hurts" premiered at the Chinese Theatre on Monday evening. The film from director Jonathan Eusebio hits theaters Friday.

'Another Simple Favor' to open SXSW festival

"Another Simple Favor," Paul Feig's sequel to his 2018 noir comedy starring Anna Kendrick and Blake Lively, will open the SXSW Film and TV Festival.

Organizers of the Austin, Texas, festival announced Tuesday that the long-awaited "A Simple Favor" sequel will kick off this year's edition on March 7. The Amazon MGM release plots another twist-filled round of murder and betrayal, with Stephanie Smothers (Kendrick) and Emily Nelson (Lively) heading to an Italy wedding on Capri.

SXSW has hosted Feig's films before, including a work-in-progress screening of "Bridesmaids" in 2011 and the premiere of "Spy" in 2015.

"Another Simple Favor" is Lively's first new movie since last year's "It Ends with Us" and the subsequent legal drama involving Lively and that film's director and co-star, Justin Baldoni.

Box-office hit 'Moana 2' drives up Disney profit

Disney easily topped first-quarter expectations thanks in part to the box office smash "Moana 2."

Originally intended as a series for the company's streaming service before it was produced for the big screen, "Moana 2" blew predictions out of the water. Its five-day opening set a new record for Thanksgiving moviegoing.

The Walt Disney Co. earned \$2.55 billion, or \$1.40 per share, for the period ended Dec. 28.

Disney's direct-to-consumer business, which includes Disney+ and Hulu, reported quarterly operating income of \$293 million compared with an operating loss of \$138 million a year ago.

Other news

■ Gene "Daddy G" Barge, an admired and durable saxophone player, songwriter and producer who worked on hits by Natalie Cole, oversaw recordings by Muddy Waters, performed with the Rolling Stones and helped inspire the dance classic "Quarter to Three," has died. He was 98. He died in his sleep Sunday at his home in Chicago, according to daughter Gina Barge.

From The Associated Press

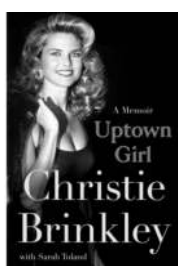
Christie Brinkley releasing 'Uptown Girl' memoir in April

Associated Press

Christie Brinkley will have a memoir out this spring, tracing "every adventure and twist of fate" from her rise to becoming a supermodel to her acting career to her marriage to Billy Joel.

And, yes, she's calling it "Uptown Girl."

"I wrote 'Uptown Girl' to inspire readers to create the life they want, which is what I've always tried to do, not through fortune or fame, but by saying yes to adventure and trying to find the magic in every moment, no matter how big or how small," Brinkley



said in a statement Tuesday. Harper Influence said it will publish her book on April 29.

Brinkley, who turned 71 this week, has been a celebrity for half a century, since she was discovered in Paris by photographer Errol Sawyer.

Her image has appeared on hundreds of magazine covers, from Sports Illustrated to Vogue. She's also known for such films as

"National Lampoon's Vacation," her turn on Broadway as Roxie Hart in "Chicago," and her cameo in the 1983 video of Joel's "Uptown Girl," a top 10 hit widely associated with her.

Brinkley has been married four times, most recently to Peter Cook, whom she divorced in 2008. According to Harper Influence, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, she will reflect on "her whirlwind career, her four tumultuous marriages — including her heartbreaking divorce from Billy Joel — and the harrowing experiences

(a 1994 helicopter crash) that almost cut her life short."

"In 'Uptown Girl,' she chronicles the unexpected, unexplainable ways her life has unfolded," Tuesday's announcement says, "embracing every adventure and twist of fate along the way: traveling the world as a supermodel at the height of the model wars, living life on the road with her rock star husband and their baby, starring in blockbuster movies, riding horses with cowboys, training with world-champion boxers, and stepping into the spotlight on Broadway."

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Stars and Stripes (USPS 0417900) published daily (except Saturday, Sunday, 25 December and 1 January) for 50 cents (Monday through Thursday) and one dollar on Friday by Stars and Stripes Pacific, OPC 706 BOX 7, APO AP 96301-9001. Periodicals postage paid at San Francisco, CA Postmaster: Send address changes to Pacific Stars and Stripes, OPC 706 BOX 7, AP 96301-9001.

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OPINION

Constitutional system is doing fine despite tests

BY NOAH FELDMAN

Bloomberg Opinion

The Trump administration is subjecting the U.S. constitutional system to a stress test. We're on the treadmill, with instruments recording everything that's happening.

Nearly every day since taking office, President Donald Trump has done something unlawful that makes the treadmill go a little faster. He has purported to ban birthright citizenship; fired 17 inspectors general; briefly frozen federal spending; and most recently, taken steps to shutter the U.S. Agency for International Development. That's not counting the tariffs imposed on Mexico, Canada and China, which would probably-but-not-definitely be upheld by the courts as a lawful exercise of power delegated by Congress.

When these stressors are introduced into the system, the courts swing into action and block Trump's executive overreach. Congress protests — or is supposed to — that the president can't override federal laws that direct spending or establish agencies. If those things happen, the system equilibrates. Instead of degrading, the stress test shows the system works and what might need some fixing.

How long will the stress test continue? No one knows for sure. It's been two weeks and Trump still seems able to come up with a headline-capturing power grab every day or two. What is certain is that the president can't sustain this rhythm forever. At some point, Americans will demand that he start doing his main job, which is making the executive branch function.

If you're watching Trump closely, as I am,

your heart rate has probably been going up. Mine certainly has. That's because the big question for our democracy right now is the same one that arises during any stress test: Will our heart hold out?

My bet is on survival. So far, Trump's latest version of constitutional quasi-chaos hasn't swamped the system. I'm tempted to suggest that we try to manage our anxiety, even as we keep running harder. Anxiety, after all, can also raise your heart rate.

Consider what's happened so far. The president can't change the Constitution, so Trump's executive order claiming to roll back birthright citizenship is beyond his power. A court has already said so, blocking the order from going into effect. Trump could appeal all the way to the Supreme Court, but it's not going to make any difference. The high court is not going to announce a brand-new, made-up interpretation of the 14th Amendment.

Should the fired inspectors general choose to sue for their jobs back, they would likely win on the grounds that the law requires the president to inform Congress before taking such action. That would be nice for the rule of law. But they might choose not to sue since all Trump would have to do is fire them again, this time giving Congress proper notice.

As for the ill-fated spending freeze, which also could have been done legally if Trump had given notice to Congress, a court blocked it within hours. Trump then folded and lifted it.

That brings us to USAID, a federal agency responsible for delivering humanitarian aid around the world. Trump can't unilaterally shut down a federal agency created by Congress, as former senior White House lawyer Tess Bridgeman has pointed out. Money ap-

propriated by Congress for specific purposes must be spent for those purposes under the Impoundment Act. Civil service employees can sometimes be let go from their jobs when there is a reorganization leading to a reduction in force; but that's not what's happened here — at least so far. If Trump doesn't follow the law regarding USAID, there will be more lawsuits, which he will lose.

Those taking notice of all this systematic (and unnecessary) illegality are understandably concerned that Trump might ignore court orders. That would generally count as a constitutional crisis — the real thing, not the stress test. Yet Trump, who did not ignore court orders in his first term, is unlikely to defy a judicial decision. The Supreme Court has six conservatives, three of them Trump appointees. The single worst thing he could do to alienate the justices would be to ignore a court order. No matter how conservative the justices might be, their primary identity comes from their role as interpreters of the Constitution and laws. They might tolerate a lot from Trump, but they won't tolerate direct defiance of the authority of the judiciary.

Relying on Trump to act rationally might seem like a poor idea. Nevertheless, it's worth remembering that the flurry of the last two weeks is intended to make headlines. Fear for the system can be combined with serious worries about the effects of Trump's policies — all of which leads to panic and more headlines. For now, let's take the stress test one burst at a time, and try to keep breathing.

Noah Feldman is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist. This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

Federal workforce needs reform, but Trump can't do it

BY MATTHEW YGLESIAS

Bloomberg Opinion

The federal civil service, which has many virtues, is also a bit of a mess. This is not only my view but that of almost every former Democratic administration official I know, going back to President Barack Obama's first term. So I was fully prepared to concede President Donald Trump some points on this score and urge Democrats to at least try to work toward some good-faith reforms.

Then came his first two weeks in office. While Trump certainly has a well-defined sense of grievance about the civil service, he has no program for reform at all.

Instead, there is an effort to get lots of people to quit their jobs. The Trump administration is ordering everyone back to the office five days a week with no exceptions, a policy much stricter than what private-sector employers have generally adopted — overcorrecting for former President Joe Biden's excessive leniency. It is pairing this with a "buyout" offer (spoiler alert: it's not really a buyout) to get rid of civil servants who don't want to comply. It has fired senior people in legally dubious ways and reassigned others in an effort to get them to resign. And the less said about the president's use of a fatal airline accident as an opportunity to criticize federal hiring practices, the better.

It's clear that Trump's goal is not to make the civil service better or more responsive or to enact any kind of systemic change. This is a reckless effort to reduce headcount or, failing that, to create vacancies the new administration can fill.

It is also setting up civil servants for demoralizing lose-lose situations. It works like this: The administration is issuing scores of broadly worded memos and executive orders. When they are implemented in ways that strike the public as outrageous overreach — like the Air Force removing the Tuskegee Airmen from a training video — conservatives accuse them of "malicious compliance." Civil servants who fail to act, meanwhile, or react with insufficient alacrity, are accused of perpetrating "Deep State" sabotage. And those who ask for further clarification are accused of dragging their feet.

Amid the chaos, it's easy to forget that civil-service reform is a legitimate and time-honored subject of political debate. The most recent major reform was the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, which created today's Office of Personnel Management, the Merit System Protection Board, and the Federal Labor Relations Authority. But it has been almost half a century. From a management standpoint, today's civil service is rigid and inflexible, and for many employees, the appeal of a government job is not the work itself but generous parental leave and a good retirement program.

But the bigger problem for the federal government is not how difficult it is to fire people, but how hard it is to hire them. Jennifer Pahlka, a senior fellow at the Niskanen Center and a former deputy chief technology officer under Obama, likes to tell the story of how the Pentagon was unable to hire the programmer who won its hacking competition because he didn't know the secret to "hacking" the federal hiring process: To make the first cut for a competitive job, you need to maximize the number

of keyword matches between your résumé and the job listing (i.e., copy and paste) and then you need to rate yourself as having top-level skill (i.e., lie) in every area.

In other words, the overcorrection against politicized hiring has created a bureaucratic system that is hostile to applicants and undermines managerial discretion.

This all suggests the possibility of a grand bargain featuring a less compressed pay scale, more flexibility in hiring and firing, while retaining some kind of guardrails against pure patronage. The challenge for Democrats would be to acknowledge that the federal workforce should be managed in the public interest, not for the sake of the workers. The challenge for Republicans would be to acknowledge the costs of underinvesting in the personnel who actually run the government. Capacity-building and competence matter more than trying to save money.

But Trump isn't doing any of this. He's just imposing an arbitrary hiring freeze, trying to make the government a less desirable employer, and hoping to induce as many people as he can to quit.

Executive orders are no way to build a legacy, and unilateralism makes constructive engagement impossible. It seems absurd to end with an earnest plea for someone in the administration to take governing seriously — but they really should consider trying.

(With assistance from Carolyn Silverman.)

Matthew Yglesias is a columnist for Bloomberg Opinion. A co-founder of and former columnist for Vox, he writes the Slow Boring blog and newsletter. He is the author of "One Billion Americans." This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

SCOREBOARD/COLLEGE BASKETBALL

DEALS

Tuesday's transactions

BASEBALL Major League Baseball American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Agreed to terms with OF Ramon Laureano on a one-year contract. Designated INF Luis Vazquez for assignment.

LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Agreed to terms with RHPs Connor Brogdon, Dakota Hudson, LHP Victor González, 3B Yolmer Sanchez, SS Tim Anderson and INF Carter Kieboom on minor league contracts.

TEXAS RANGERS — Agreed to terms with INF Nick Ahmed and OF Sam Haggerty on minor league contracts.

TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Agreed to terms with RHP Max Scherzer on a one-year contract. Designated RHP Michael Petersen for assignment.

National League

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Agreed to terms with OF Randal Grichuk on a one-year contract.

CHICAGO CUBS — Acquired RHP Ryan Brasier from the Los Angeles Dodgers for a player to be named later or cash considerations. Designated LHP Rob Zastryzny for assignment.

CINCINNATI REDS — Agreed to terms with RHP Ian Gibaut and LHPs Joe La Sorsa and Wade Miley on minor league contracts.

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Activated LHP Robert Gasser.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Agreed to terms with RHP Ryan Ryder, LHP Ryan Borucki and OF DJ Stewart on minor league contracts.

BASKETBALL

National Basketball Association

DALLAS MAVERICKS — Received F Caleb Martin from Philadelphia in exchange for G Quentin Grims and draft considerations.

LOS ANGELES LAKERS — Recalled G Bronny James from the South Bay Lakers of the G League.

Women's National Basketball Association

CHICAGO SKY — Signed G Kia Nurse to a contract. Acquired G Rebecca Allen from the Connecticut Sun in exchange for G Lindsay Allen and the exclusive negotiating rights of C Nikolina Milic.

CONNECTICUT SUN — Signed Fs Mya Hollingshed and Robyn Parks to training camp contracts.

FOOTBALL

National Football League

CAROLINA PANTHERS — Signed WR Brycen Tremayne to a reserve/futures contract.

CINCINNATI BENGALS — Signed WR Mitchell Tinsley to a reserve/futures contract.

HOUSTON TEXANS — Promoted Cole Po-

povich full-time offensive line coach and run game coordinator.

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Hired Chip Kelly as offensive coordinator. Released running backs coach Cadillac Williams, wide receivers coach Edgar Bennett, linebackers coach Mike Caldwell, cornerbacks coach Ricky Manning Jr. and assistant quarterbacks coach Fred Walker.

TENNESSEE TITANS — Hired Travis Smith as defensive run game coordinator and Lori Locust as defensive assistant.

WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — Signed OL Bobby Hart to a reserve/futures contract.

HOCKEY

National Hockey League

NHL — Suspended F Ryan Hartman 10 games for using his forearm to violently slam the head of Ottawa forward Tim Stutzle into the ice during a Feb. 1 game.

BOSTON BRUINS — Sent C Vinni Lettieri to Providence (AHL).

BUFFALO SABRES — Recalled G Felix Sandstrom from Rochester (AHL). Placed D Mattias Samuelsson on injured reserve.

MINNESOTA WILD — Reassigned C Ben Jones to Iowa. Reinstated C Marcus Johansson and D Jonas Brodin from injured reserve.

MONTREAL CANADIENS — Called up D Logan Mailloux from Laval (AHL). Recalled C Owen Beck from Laval.

NASHVILLE PREDATORS — Placed RW Vinnie Hinostroza on waivers.

NEW JERSEY DEVILS — Reinstated LW Erik Haula from injured reserve. Sent LW Brian Halonen to Utica (AHL).

NEW YORK ISLANDERS — Recalled Hudson Fasching from Bridgeport (AHL). Placed C Mathew Barzal on injured reserve.

NEW YORK RANGERS — Placed C Adam Edstrom on injured reserve.

PHILADELPHIA FLYERS — Activated LW Nicolas Deslauriers.

ST. LOUIS BLUES — Reinstated D Nick Leddy from injured reserve.

SAN JOSE SHARKS — Recalled C Andrew Poturalski from San Jose (AHL).

TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Reassigned RW Conor Geekie to Syracuse (AHL).

UTAH HOCKEY CLUB — Designated C Logan Cooley for injured reserve.

VANCOUVER CANUCKS — Recalled Ds Victor Mancini and Elias Pettersson and RW Linus Karlsson from Abbotsford (AHL).

SOCCER

Major League Soccer

ATLANTA UNITED FC — Signed F Latte Lath to a four-year contract.

MINNESOTA UNITED — Announced a mutual agreement with D Ethan Bristow to terminate his contract.

PHILADELPHIA UNION — Signed D Neil Pierre to a four-year contract.

PORTLAND TIMBERS — Signed D Jimer Fory to a four-year contract.

TOP 25 ROUNDUP

No. 1 Auburn has 5 score in double figures in rout

Associated Press

AUBURN, Ala. — Johni Broome and Chad Baker-Mazara scored 15 points each and No. 1 Auburn remained undefeated in Southeastern Conference play with a 98-70 win over Oklahoma on Tuesday night.

The Tigers (21-1, 9-0) have now won 14 games in a row, the second-longest active winning streak in the country.

Auburn had five players in double figures for the second straight game. Denver Jones and Chaney Johnson both scored 13 points while Tahaad Pettiford added 11.

The Sooners (16-6, 3-6) were led by Dayton Forsythe with 13 points. Jalon Moore added 11, while Jeremiah Fears and Kobe Elvis both had 10.

Dylan Cardwell had a career-high six blocks for the Tigers, who had 11 as a team.

No. 5 Houston 72, Oklahoma St. 63: L.J. Cryer scored 18 points, Milos Uzan added 17 points and the host Cougars rebounded from their first Big 12 loss of the season with a win over the Cowboys.

J'Wan Roberts had 14 points and 10 rebounds, and Terrance Arceneaux had 10 points for Houston (18-4, 10-1 Big 12), which shot 42% and went 8 of 21 on 3-pointers.

No. 6 Florida 86, Vanderbilt 75: Will Richard scored 21 points, Alex Condon added 19 and the host Gators beat the Commodores despite playing without leading scorer Walter Clayton Jr.

Clayton watched from the bench after he sprained his left ankle during a lopsided loss at Tennessee on Saturday.

Richard and Condon, meanwhile, carried Florida (19-3, 6-3 Southeastern Conference). Richard hit 5 of 7 shots from 3-point range, and Condon chipped in nine rebounds, four assists and two blocked shots.

No. 7 Purdue 90, Iowa 81: Braden Smith had 31 points and Trey Kaufman-Renn scored 25 as the visiting Boilermakers beat the Hawkeyes.

Purdue (18-5, 10-2 Big Ten) won its third consecutive game, pulling away from a 36-all halftime deadlock with a 17-5 run early in the second half.

Iowa (13-9, 4-7) got within 80-77 with 2:42 left in the game but the Boilermakers held the Hawkeyes off.

UCLA 63, No. 9 Michigan St. 61: Eric Dailey Jr. scored the go-ahead basket over two defenders with 7 seconds left, lifting the host



BUTCH DILL/AP

Auburn center Dylan Cardwell hits a slam dunk as Oklahoma guard Kobe Elvis watches during the second half Tuesday.

Bruins to a hard-fought victory against the Spartans.

Sky Clark scored 14 points and Tyler Bilodeau added 13 for UCLA (17-6, 8-4 Big Ten), which won its sixth in a row and fifth against a ranked team.

Jaden Akins' potential game-winning 3-pointer bounced off the front of the rim as time expired and he bent over in agony. Akins led Michigan State (18-4, 9-2) with 15 points, its only double-figure scorer.

No. 12 St. John's 70, No. 11 Marquette 64: Kadary Richmond had 18 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists as the host Red Storm beat the Golden Eagles in their showdown for first place in the Big East.

RJ Luis Jr. added 17 points and 11 rebounds for streaking St. John's (20-3, 11-1), which has won nine straight games and 15 of 16. Zuby Ejiolor added 13 points and 13 rebounds.

Chase Ross had 16 points for Marquette (18-5, 9-3). In foul trouble early, Kam Jones scored 13 of his 15 points in the second half.

No. 25 Mississippi 98, No. 14 Kentucky 84: Matthew Murrell scored 24 points and the host Rebels dominated the first half to beat the Wildcats.

Murrell made six 3-pointers, four in the first half, as Ole Miss

(17-6, 6-4 Southeastern Conference) never trailed and used runs of 10-0 and 15-3 to race to a 54-31 halftime lead.

Dre Davis scored 17 points, Malik Dia added 16 points and Jaylen Murray had 15 points and a season-high 10 assists for the Rebels. Amari Williams had a triple-double for Kentucky (15-7, 4-5) with 12 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists.

No. 20 Arizona 85, BYU 74: Caleb Love scored 18 points and Jaden Bradley added 17 — all in the second half — to help the visiting Wildcats pull away from the Cougars.

Henri Veesaar also finished with 17 points and Tobe Awaka added 14 to help Arizona (16-6, 10-1 Big 12) win its fourth straight game. The Wildcats have won 11 of their last 12 overall to stay in a first-place tie with Houston atop the Big 12 standings.

No. 21 Wisconsin 76, Indiana 64: John Tonje had 15 points to lead a balanced scoring attack and the Badgers continued their home domination of the Hoosiers.

Wisconsin (18-5, 8-4 Big Ten) has won its last 21 home games against Indiana, the Hoosiers' longest road losing streak against any opponent.

Max Klesmit scored 13 points for the Badgers.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Tuesday's men's scores

EAST

Minnesota 69, Penn St. 61
Saint Louis 73, UMass 71
St. John's 70, Marquette 64

SOUTH

Auburn 98, Oklahoma 70
Drake 55, Murray St. 45
Florida 86, Vanderbilt 75
Florida St. 67, Notre Dame 60
Georgia Tech 89, Clemson 86, 3OT
Mississippi 98, Kentucky 84
VCU 96, La Salle 66
Wichita St. 66, Charlotte 58

MIDWEST

Akron 81, Ball St. 73
Bowling Green 84, N. Illinois 77
Dayton 69, Davidson 63
Kent St. 70, E. Michigan 49
Loyola Chicago 77, St. Bonaventure 53
Miami (Ohio) 76, Cent. Michigan 70
Northwestern 77, Southern Cal 75
Ohio 94, W. Michigan 69
Purdue 90, Iowa 81
SIU-Edwardsville 66, E. Illinois 41
Toledo 87, Buffalo 74
Wisconsin 76, Indiana 64

Xavier 74, Georgetown 69

SOUTHWEST

Ark.-Pine Bluff 69, Texas Southern 68
Houston 72, Oklahoma St. 63
Texas Tech 73, Baylor 59

FAR WEST

Arizona 85, BYU 74
Boise St. 71, UNLV 62
Kansas St. 71, Arizona St. 70
Nevada 74, Air Force 60
San Jose St. 94, Fresno St. 91, 2OT
UCLA 63, Michigan St. 61
Utah St. 71, Wyoming 67

Tuesday's women's scores

EAST

George Washington 69, Fordham 59

MIDWEST

E. Illinois 67, SIU-Edwardsville 61, OT

SOUTHWEST

Texas Southern 75, Ark.-Pine Bluff 65
UTSA 54, North Texas 52

FAR WEST

Colorado St. 69, New Mexico 63

TENNIS

Dallas Open

Tuesday

At Dallas
Purse: \$2,760,000
Surface: Hardcourt indoor
Seedings in parentheses
Men's Singles
Round of 32

Tommy Paul (3), United States, def. Jensen Brooksby (3), United States, 6-7 (6), 6-3, 6-4.

Cameron Norrie, Britain, def. Alex Michelsen (7), United States, 2-6, 7-6 (1), 6-1.
Ben Shelton (4), United States, def. Aleksandar Vukic, Australia, 6-3, 6-3.

ABN AMRO Open

Tuesday

At Rotterdam, Netherlands
Purse: Euro 2,401,550
Surface: Hardcourt indoor
Men's Singles
Round of 32

Jiri Lehecka, Czechia, def. Alexei Popyrin, Australia, 7-5, 6-2.

Alex de Minaur (3), Australia, def. David Goffin, Belgium, 6-2, 6-4.
Jakub Mensik, Czechia, def. Alexander Bublik, Kazakhstan, 6-4, 6-4.

Andrey Rublev (4), Russia, def. Zhang Zhizhen, China, 6-3, 6-4.

Pedro Martinez, Spain, def. Roberto Bautista Agut, Spain, 6-3, 6-2.

Carlos Alcaraz (1), Spain, def. Botic Van de Zandschulp, Netherlands, 7-6 (3), 3-6, 6-1.

Holger Rune (5), Denmark, def. Lorenzo Sonego, Italy, 7-6 (4), 6-4.

Transylvania Open

Tuesday

At Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Surface: Hardcourt indoor
Women's Singles
Round of 32

Anastasia Potapova (1), Russia, def. Julia Grabher, Austria, 6-4, 6-0.

Olga Danilovic (2), Serbia, def. Alycia Parks, United States, 6-3, 6-3.

Viktorija Golubic, Switzerland, def. Arantxa Rus, Netherlands, 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (10).

Elisabetta Cocciaretto (7), Italy, def. Irina-Camelia Begu, Romania, 6-3, 7-5.

Aliaksandra Sasnovich, Belarus, def. Jessica Bouzas Maneiro (6), Spain, 6-7 (0), 7-5, 6-4.

Ana Bogdan, Romania, def. Jodie Burrage, Britain, 6-2, 6-3.

Anna Blinkova, Russia, def. Sara Sorribes Tormo, Spain, 6-2, 6-2.

Lucia Bronzetti, Italy, def. Simona Halep, Romania, 6-1, 6-1.

Peyton Stearns (3), United States, def. Varvara Gracheva, Russia, 2-6, 6-2, 6-2.

NHL

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference							
Atlantic Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Florida	55	32	20	3	67	184	162
Toronto	53	32	19	2	66	165	153
Ottawa	54	29	21	4	62	156	146
Detroit	54	28	21	5	61	157	165
Tampa Bay	52	28	20	4	60	181	146
Boston	55	27	22	6	60	152	175
Montreal	53	25	23	5	55	157	179
Buffalo	53	22	26	5	49	167	179

Metropolitan Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	53	35	11	7	77	188	132
Carolina	54	32	18	4	68	176	149
New Jersey	55	30	19	6	66	170	139
Columbus	54	26	21	7	59	179	179
N.Y. Islanders	53	25	21	7	57	146	152
N.Y. Rangers	52	25	23	4	54	156	160
Pittsburgh	55	22	24	9	53	159	196
Philadelphia	55	23	25	7	53	156	186

Western Conference							
Central Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Winnipeg	55	38	14	3	79	198	131
Dallas	53	34	18	1	69	170	131
Minnesota	54	31	19	4	66	155	155
Colorado	55	31	22	2	64	177	168
Utah	53	22	22	9	53	147	157
St. Louis	54	24	25	5	53	146	163
Nashville	52	18	27	7	43	136	169
Chicago	52	16	31	5	37	135	179

Pacific Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Edmonton	53	33	16	4	70	174	144
Vegas	54	31	17	6	68	178	151
Los Angeles	50	27	17	6	60	139	127
Vancouver	53	24	18	11	59	151	164
Calgary	53	26	20	7	59	144	158
Anaheim	53	23	24	6	52	135	164
Seattle	55	23	28	4	50	165	178
San Jose	55	15	34	6	36	144	206

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

Tuesday's games

- Buffalo 3, Columbus 2
- Washington 6, Florida 3
- Boston 3, Minnesota 0
- Tampa Bay 4, Ottawa 3
- New Jersey 3, Pittsburgh 2, SO
- N.Y. Islanders 2, Vegas 1
- Edmonton 3, St. Louis 2, OT
- Winnipeg 3, Carolina 0
- Utah 3, Philadelphia 2, OT
- Toronto 6, Calgary 3
- Vancouver 3, Colorado 0
- Detroit 5, Seattle 4, SO
- Anaheim 2, Dallas 1
- Montreal 4, San Jose 3

Wednesday's games

- Boston at N.Y. Rangers
- Edmonton at Chicago
- Montreal at Los Angeles

Thursday's games

- Ottawa at Tampa Bay
- Utah at Columbus
- Vegas at New Jersey
- Washington at Philadelphia
- Carolina at Minnesota
- Florida at St. Louis
- Colorado at Calgary
- Toronto at Seattle
- Vancouver at San Jose

Friday's games

- Pittsburgh at N.Y. Rangers
- N.Y. Islanders at Winnipeg
- Nashville at Chicago
- Colorado at Edmonton
- Dallas at Los Angeles

Scoring leaders

Through Tuesday				
	GP	G	A	PTS
Nathan MacKinnon, COL	55	20	60	80
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	53	37	42	79
Nikita Kucherov, TB	50	25	52	77
Mitch Marner, TOR	52	16	54	70
Connor McDavid, EDM	47	22	48	70
Kyle Connor, WPG	55	30	37	67
Jack Eichel, LV	53	18	48	66
Mikko Rantanen, COL	54	26	40	66
David Pastrnak, BOS	55	27	39	66
Jack Hughes, NJ	55	23	40	63
Jesper Bratt, NJ	55	16	45	61
Mark Scheifele, WPG	55	31	30	61
Martin Necas, COL	55	17	43	60
Sam Reinhart, FLA	55	31	29	60
Quinn Hughes, VAN	47	14	45	59

ROUNDUP

Ducks' Gibson gets win in 500th game

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Trevor Zegras scored the go-ahead goal early in the third period, John Gibson made 26 saves in his 500th career NHL game and the Anaheim Ducks beat Dallas 2-1 on Tuesday night, snapping the Stars' five-game winning streak.

Cutter Gauthier also scored for Anaheim, which has won four straight at home.

Gibson became the first goaltender in franchise history to appear in 500 games. He is the 10th American-born netminder to reach that milestone and the third active. The New York Rangers' Jonathan Quick has appeared in 797 games and the Winnipeg Jets' Connor Hellebuyck has played in 547.

It was also Gibson's 202nd win, leaving him four wins from tying Jean-Sebastien Giguere for the most in franchise history.

Despite the accomplishments, Gibson tried to focus on the present instead of looking back at his career or any milestones still ahead.

"Tonight obviously was a little more special, so it's nice to get the win on top of it," Gibson said. "I was talking to someone earlier, I think it's something that I can be able to look back and reminisce on maybe towards the end of the career in the summer when you're with family and stuff like that."

Bruins 3, Wild 0: Charlie McAvoy got his 299th career point with a goal in the second period and Jeremy Swayman stopped 35 shots for his third shutout of the season as host Boston shut out Minnesota.

Trent Frederic scored and Morgan Geekie added an empty-net goal in the final minute for the Bruins.

Marc-Andre Fleury had 32 saves for the Wild, who swept Boston in both meetings last season but could not get anything past Swayman on Tuesday. Minnesota was shut out for the second straight game.

Sabres 3, Blue Jackets 2: Alex Tuch had two goals and an assist, and host Buffalo beat Columbus for its first four-game winning streak in more than two years.

Bowen Byram had a goal and an assist, and James Reimer stopped 28 shots to get his second win of the season and snap a five-game skid (0-4-1). The Sabres had not won four straight since a five-game run spanning Jan. 19-26, 2023.

Kent Johnson got his career-high-tying 16th goal, and Ivan Provorov also scored for the Blue Jackets. Elvis Merzlikins stopped 18 shots.

Lightning 4, Senators 3: Brandon Hagel scored less than two minutes into the third period to



ALEX GALLARDO/AP

The Ducks' John Gibson became the first goaltender in Anaheim franchise history to appear in 500 games, the 10th U.S.-born player in NHL history and the third active behind Jonathan Quick and Connor Hellebuyck.

give host Tampa Bay the lead for good in a win that snapped Ottawa's five-game winning streak.

Luke Glendening, Nikita Kucherov and Ryan McDonagh also scored for the Lightning while Andrei Vasilevskiy finished with 25 saves.

Michael Amadio, Claude Giroux and Drake Batherson scored for the Senators. Linus Ullmark, making his first start in goal since Dec. 22, finished with 34 saves.

Devils 3, Penguins 2 (SO): Timo Meier beat Alex Nedeljkovic in the seventh round of a shootout to lift visiting New Jersey past Pittsburgh.

Jack Hughes scored twice for the Devils. Nico Daws stopped 25 shots in overtime and regulation then turned away five of the seven Penguins he faced in the shootout as New Jersey won for the sixth straight time in Pittsburgh.

Jesper Bratt assisted on both of Hughes' goals to boost his season total to 45 as the Devils bounced back from a loss to lowly Buffalo by ending the Penguins' modest two-game winning streak.

Capitals 6, Panthers 3: Alex Ovechkin scored his 878th career goal into an empty net with 0.1 seconds left on the clock to move closer to Wayne Gretzky's NHL career record, and host Washington defeated defending Stanley Cup champion Florida.

Ovechkin's goal puts him 17 away from breaking Gretzky's mark of 894 that once seemed unapproachable. The Capitals have 29 games left for him to get to 895 or beyond this season, though he does have another year left on his contract.

The Panthers' winning streak

ended at three despite goals from Sam Bennett, Aleksander Barkov and Matthew Tkachuk and 21 saves by Sergei Bobrovsky.

Islanders 2, Golden Knights 1: Brock Nelson snapped a tie midway through the third period and Ilya Sorokin made 34 saves, helping host New York beat Vegas for its eighth win in nine games.

Nelson tipped a shot by defenseman Alexander Romanov past Ilya Samsonov at 10:43. Tony DeAngelo also assisted on Nelson's 16th goal of the season.

Bo Horvat also scored for the Islanders, who improved to 11-3-0 since Jan. 5.

Oilers 3, Blues 2 (OT): Connor Brown scored at 2:33 of overtime and visiting Edmonton beat St. Louis.

Connor McDavid had a goal and two assists and Leon Draisaitl had a goal and an assist for the Oilers, who have won four of their last six games. Stuart Skinner made 20 saves.

Jets 3, Hurricanes 0: Eric Comrie made 29 saves and host Winnipeg's potent power play struck for a pair of goals in a victory over Carolina that extended its winning streak to seven games.

Nino Niederreiter and Neal Pionk both scored with the man advantage, giving the Jets an NHL-best 51 power-play goals this season. Rasmus Kupari also scored and Niederreiter added an assist for Winnipeg.

Maple Leafs 6, Flames 3: William Nylander had three goals for his second career hat trick, and visiting Toronto beat Calgary.

John Tavares, Bobby McMann and Matthew Knies also scored for the Maple Leafs, who pulled one

point behind first-place Florida in the Atlantic Division. Auston Matthews had three assists and Joseph Woll stopped 23 shots.

Utah Hockey Club 3, Flyers 2 (OT): Dylan Guenther scored with 1 second left in overtime, and host Utah beat Philadelphia.

Guenther had two goals and an assist in his return to Utah's lineup after missing 12 games with an injury. He tied it at 2 with his 17th goal 8:40 into the third period.

Canucks 3, Avalanche 0: Thatcher Demko stopped 25 shots for his ninth career shutout and host Vancouver beat Colorado.

Jake DeBrusk had a goal and an assist, Brock Boeser and Drew O'Connor also scored and Filip had two assists to help the Canucks pull into a tie with Calgary for the second wild card in the Western Conference. Vancouver is 4-1-1 in its last six games.

Red Wings 5, Kraken 4 (SO): Patrick Kane scored his NHL-record 53rd career shootout goal and visiting Detroit beat Seattle for its seventh straight win.

Lucas Raymond, Moritz Seider, Jonatan Berggren and Elmer Soderblom scored in regulation for the Red Wings, and Cam Talbot had 23 saves.

Canadiens 4, Sharks 3: Joel Armia scored a short-handed tie-breaking goal late in the third period and visiting Montreal beat San Jose to snap a five-game losing streak.

Alex Newhook had a goal and an assist, and Cole Caufield and Brendan Gallagher also scored for the Canadiens, who were 0-4-1 during their skid. Kirby Dach had two assists and Sam Montebault finished with 27 saves.

NBA

When will Doncic debut with Lakers?

BY GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles Lakers' acquisition of Luka Doncic has altered the future of a franchise that had been trying to squeeze one more championship run out of 40-year-old LeBron James' partnership with Anthony Davis.

The Lakers' next decade suddenly looks much brighter with Doncic at center stage, and they could even contend for a ring this year if Doncic makes a quick connection with James. It's even more possible if the Lakers can acquire a center to fill the massive void left by Davis.

Any big finish to this season will begin only after Doncic returns to full strength and makes his Lakers debut, however.

The 25-year-old Slovenian scorer hasn't played since Christmas, and his absence has been long enough to preclude him from qualifying for the All-NBA team, which he has made in the past five consecutive seasons.

What is Luka's injury?

Doncic strained his left calf late in the second quarter of the Mavericks' loss to Minnesota. The injury was serious enough to leave Doncic stuck downcourt while play went on without him before he limped to the locker room.

Doncic missed the Mavs' next 19 games — and he had been back in Dallas' lineup for only two games before his latest injury. He had missed the Mavs' previous two games with a bruised left heel. Doncic has played in 70



Doncic

games in a season just once since his rookie year in 2018-19.

When should fans expect Luka to play?

Lakers general manager Rob Pelinka said Doncic will participate in 5-on-5 practice drills Wednesday. After that workout, the Lakers will work with Doncic's personal training team to formulate a return plan.

Both Doncic and the Lakers seem certain he'll be in uniform soon, hinting it could be before the Lakers finish their current stretch of four games in Los Angeles over the next seven days.

But Doncic said he has been trying to treat this injury seriously after he routinely played through minor past injuries, sometimes to his detriment.

"For the first time, I took my time (to) get it to heal 100%," Doncic said of his return. "Other times, I think I just wanted to go back to the court playing basketball, and I really (wouldn't) be healthy 100%. This time I just took my time, which was the normal amount of time to get back to 100%."

The Lakers have time to do things right, since there are still 33 games left in the regular season after their victory over the Clippers on Tuesday night.

"We're going to take it one day at a time just to make sure that the calf injury is in a good and safe place," Pelinka said. "I would truly say at

this point that he's day to day. We're going to take it one step at a time, but if (everything) goes well and Luca feels good and confident, he'll be in a game soon."

What will the Lakers look like with Luka?

Their new superstar is almost certain to start alongside versatile Austin Reaves in the backcourt. He would take the spot recently held by Max Christie, the young 3-and-D wing traded alongside Davis to the Mavericks.

Christie moved into the Lakers' starting lineup on Dec. 8. Los Angeles hasn't made extensive use of a traditional point guard since trading D'Angelo Russell on Dec. 29, although veteran Gabe Vincent is usually in the rotation.

James and Reaves initiate much of the Lakers' offense, but Doncic clearly will have the ball in his hands constantly. Contrary to some pundits' opinions, that should be quite pleasing to James, who has voiced his desire to play off-ball more this season.

The most obvious place to put James and Doncic together is in pick-and-roll sets. JJ Redick, who played alongside Doncic in Dallas, is undoubtedly salivating at the prospect of scheming plays for these two supreme playmakers and creative scorers.

As for the Lakers' defense? Without Davis protecting the rim, they'll take an enormous step backward. It isn't tough to imagine James and Doncic simply trying to outscore most teams — and this duo will often have the talent to do it.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	36	15	.706	—
New York	34	17	.667	2
Philadelphia	20	29	.408	15
Brooklyn	17	33	.340	18½
Toronto	16	34	.320	19½

Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	24	24	.500	—
Orlando	24	27	.471	1½
Atlanta	23	27	.460	2
Charlotte	12	35	.255	11½
Washington	8	41	.163	16½

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	40	10	.800	—
Indiana	28	21	.571	11½
Milwaukee	26	22	.542	13
Detroit	25	25	.500	15
Chicago	22	29	.431	18½

Western Conference

Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	34	16	.680	—
Houston	32	18	.640	2
Dallas	26	25	.510	8½
San Antonio	21	26	.447	11½
New Orleans	12	38	.240	22

Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	39	9	.813	—
Denver	31	19	.620	9
Minnesota	27	23	.540	13
Portland	22	29	.431	18½
Utah	11	37	.229	28

Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	29	19	.604	—
L.A. Clippers	28	22	.560	2
Sacramento	25	24	.510	4½
Phoenix	25	24	.510	4½
Golden State	25	24	.510	4½

Monday's games

Washington 124, Charlotte 114
Atlanta 132, Detroit 130
New York 124, Houston 118
Oklahoma City 125, Milwaukee 96
Sacramento 116, Minnesota 114
Memphis 128, San Antonio 109
Denver 125, New Orleans 113
Indiana 112, Utah 111
Golden State 104, Orlando 99
Portland 121, Phoenix 119, OT

Tuesday's games

Philadelphia 118, Dallas 116
New York 121, Toronto 115
Brooklyn 99, Houston 97
Boston 112, Cleveland 105
Chicago 133, Miami 124
L.A. Lakers 122, L.A. Clippers 97
Portland 112, Indiana 89

Wednesday's games

Cleveland at Detroit
Milwaukee at Charlotte
San Antonio at Atlanta
Memphis at Toronto
Miami at Philadelphia
Washington at Brooklyn
Chicago at Minnesota
Golden State at Utah
New Orleans at Denver
Phoenix at Oklahoma City
Orlando at Sacramento

Thursday's games

Dallas at Boston
Houston at Minnesota
Orlando at Denver
Golden State at L.A. Lakers
Sacramento at Portland
Indiana at L.A. Clippers

Friday's games

Cleveland at Washington
San Antonio at Charlotte
Miami at Brooklyn
Milwaukee at Atlanta
Philadelphia at Detroit
Toronto at Oklahoma City
Utah at Phoenix

Saturday's games

Houston at Dallas
Indiana at L.A. Lakers
San Antonio at Orlando
Atlanta at Washington
Golden State at Chicago
Oklahoma City at Memphis
Portland at Minnesota
Boston at New York
Denver at Phoenix
New Orleans at Sacramento
Utah at L.A. Clippers



SUE OGRICK/AP

Boston forward Jayson Tatum shoots over Cavaliers guard Darius Garland on Tuesday night in Cleveland. The Celtics won 112-105.

had 26 points, nine assists and eight rebounds, as the visiting Lakers thrashed the Clippers.

Austin Reaves and Rui Hachimura scored 20 points apiece for the Lakers.

Norman Powell scored 20 points for the Clippers (28-22), who fell two games behind the fifth-place Lakers (29-19) in the West.

Trail Blazers 112, Pacers 89: Anfernee Simons had 22 points and Portland won its fifth straight game with a win over visiting Indiana. Jerami Grant added 20 points for the Blazers, who have won nine of their past 10.

Andrew Nembhard scored 17 points for the Pacers in the loss.

ROUNDUP

Tatum scores 22, Celtics hold off Cavs in matchup of East's best

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Jayson Tatum scored 22 points, Derrick White added 20 and the Boston Celtics showed their championship makeup down the stretch with a 112-105 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers in a matchup of the Eastern Conference's top teams Tuesday night.

The defending NBA titlists executed in the final minutes and held off the Cavs, who lost for just the fourth time in 28 home games.

Kristaps Porzingis added 19 points and Jaylen Brown 16 with nine rebounds as Boston won its fourth straight and improved to 2-1 against Cleveland this season.

Donovan Mitchell scored 31 points and Darius Garland 25 for the Cavs, who cut a 15-point deficit to four in the fourth quarter.

But the Celtics, who have won four straight, didn't buckle and responded in every crucial moment to put away the Cavs.

Jarrett Allen had 17 points and 18 rebounds for Cleveland.

76ers 118, Mavericks 116: Joel Embiid had 29 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists in his first action in a month to lead Philadelphia to victory over visiting Dallas, which fell to 0-2 since trading star Luka Doncic to the Los Angeles Lakers.

Embiid recorded his first triple-double of an injury-plagued season in which he's appeared in just 14 games.

Tyrese Maxey had 33 points and 13 assists for the Sixers.

Kyrie Irving scored 34 points for the Mavs and Naji Marshall added 19.

Nets 99, Rockets 97: Keon Johnson and D'Angelo Russell made 3-pointers in the final 10 seconds, and Brooklyn stunned Houston for its first home victory in two months.

Jalen Green missed a deep 3 at the buzzer for the Rockets as Brooklyn (17-33) ended its 11-game skid at Barclays Center.

Johnson scored 22 points, and Evbuomwan and Nic Claxton each scored 14. Russell had 10 points on 3-for-15 shooting.

Knicks 121, Raptors 115: Karl-Anthony Towns had 27 points and 20 rebounds, Jalen Brunson scored 28 points and New York beat host Toronto for its eighth win in 10 games.

Mikal Bridges and Precious Achiuwa each scored 17 points as the Knicks won their eighth straight meeting with the Raptors. Josh Hart added 15 points as all five Knicks starters reached double digits.

Scottie Barnes scored 23 points and Jamal Sheard had a career-high 16 for the short-handed Raptors. Toronto played without leading scorer RJ Barrett (concussion protocol) and lost center Jakob Poeltl (right hip) at halftime.

Bulls 133, Heat 124: Rookie Matas Buzelis scored a career-best 24 points and Josh Giddey matched it to help host Chicago top Miami.

Coby White scored 22 points and Ayo Dosunmu added 21 points and nine assists for the Bulls, who played their first game since trading two-time All-Star Zach LaVine to Sacramento late Sunday.

Tyler Herro and Bam Adebayo each scored 23 for Miami, which had won three of four.

Lakers 122, Clippers 97: LeBron James

NBA

Bucks send Middleton to Wizards for Kuzma

BY SCHUYLER DIXON

Associated Press

The Milwaukee Bucks are trading NBA champion and Olympic gold medalist Khris Middleton to the Washington Wizards and getting Kyle Kuzma back in the deal, a person with knowledge of the agreement told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Also involved in the trade: A.J. Johnson goes from the Bucks to the Wizards and Patrick Baldwin goes from Washington to Milwaukee, along with a future pick swap and some second-round draft capital, said the person, who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the trade had yet to receive league approval.

The move, first reported by ESPN, came one day before Thursday's 3 p.m. Eastern trade deadline.

The 33-year-old Middleton, who has struggled with injuries, leaves the Bucks after spending all but one of his 13 NBA seasons in Milwaukee. The three-time All-Star has been limited to 23 games this season, 16 of those coming off the bench, but was shooting a career-best 51% in those appearances.

Middleton helped the Bucks win the NBA title in 2021, helped the United States win gold at the Tokyo Games later that year and was someone Milwaukee star Giannis Antetokounmpo has raved about for years.

"It's definitely a plus having Khris back," Antetokounmpo said earlier this season when Middleton was available again following ankle issues. "Man, he takes us to the next level with his IQ, decision-making, shot ability, defense."

The Bucks will become Kuzma's third team, after four years with the Los Angeles Lakers and parts of four years with the Wizards. The 29-year-old has averaged 17.2 points per game for his career, 15.2 points per game this season.

The move gives Milwaukee some financial flexibility in that it gets the Bucks below



HOWARD LAO/AP

Forward Khris Middleton helped the Milwaukee Bucks win a title and was a three-time All-Star. He has played in just 23 games this season and was traded Tuesday.

the second apron — meaning, in the short term, some other trade options may be available to them before the deadline.

Being over the second apron had limited the moves Milwaukee could make as it tried to upgrade an aging roster. The Bucks (26-22) are in fifth place in the Eastern Conference after exiting in the first round of the playoffs each of the last two seasons.

They ended up trading a player whose No. 22 jersey could hang from the Fiserv Forum rafters at some point.

Middleton owns the Milwaukee franchise record for career 3-pointers with 1,382. He had 12,586 points with the Bucks to rank as the franchise's third-leading scorer, behind Antetokounmpo and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

He ranks second in team history in games

played (735) and minutes played (23,039) — behind Antetokounmpo — and third in assists (2,990).

Middleton had 24 points, 6.3 rebounds and 5.3 assists per game during the 2021 NBA Finals as the Bucks beat Phoenix in six games. He averaged 20.6 points, 6.5 rebounds and 4.8 assists in 80 career playoff games with Milwaukee. He earned All-Star Game selections in 2019, 2020 and 2022.

But injuries limited him over the last few seasons.

He was unavailable for the Bucks' seven-game loss to Boston in the 2022 Eastern Conference semifinals and played in just 33 games in 2022-23 and 55 in 2023-24. Middleton didn't make his 2024-25 debut until Dec. 6 as he recovered from offseason surgery to each of his ankles. He went scoreless in two



NELL REDMOND/AP

Wizards forward Kyle Kuzma has career lows this season in shooting percentages in field goals, 3-pointers and free throws.

games in late January.

Kuzma has dealt with his own issues this season. He is shooting 42% from the floor, 28.1% on 3-point attempts and 60.2% on free throws — all career lows. He scored 31 points and 22 points in his last two games.

Milwaukee selected Johnson with the 23rd overall pick in the 2024 draft. The 20-year-old guard averaged 2.9 points in seven games with the Bucks.

Baldwin, who went to high school in the Milwaukee area and played his lone college season at Milwaukee, was the 28th overall pick in the 2022 draft. The 22-year-old forward averaged 2.1 points and 4.6 minutes in 22 games this season.

Davis knows magnitude of deal

BY SCHUYLER DIXON

Associated Press

Anthony Davis gave up a \$6 million bonus as part of the seismic trade that brought him to the Dallas Mavericks and sent Luka Dončić to the Los Angeles Lakers in a rare swap of superstars.

Perhaps it was the first small step for the 10-time All-Star in trying to illustrate his understanding of the magnitude of a move that infuriated fans of his new team.

Most of the ire has been directed at general manager Nico Harrison. Still, Davis is at risk of being viewed by Dallas fans as the guy in the deal that cost them their beloved Dončić, no matter what the Mavericks do with one of the members of the NBA's 75th anniversary team.

"Losing a monumental piece like Luka. It's a lot, right?" Davis said of his fellow five-time All-NBA first-team player. "So I'm just trying to do my part and help Nico and the organization on how we can continuously get better. That's just always the right thing to do."

Davis spoke Tuesday at shoota-

round in Philadelphia, a few hours before Dallas lost 118-116 to the 76ers. He already had been ruled out with the abdominal injury that sidelined him in his final days with the Lakers.

Of course, he didn't know when he sustained the injury a week ago against Philadelphia that he had played his last game for LA. Just as Dončić never imagined his final game with the Mavs would be on Christmas, when he strained a calf.

Davis spoke to reporters on the East Coast while Dončić was doing the same at a packed news conference on the West Coast. And both confirmed the obvious shock and surprise over one of the biggest trades in NBA history.

"I was actually at home, about to watch a movie with my wife and got the phone call," Davis said. "I had no idea. I just sent the team a text about congratulations about beating the Knicks, big win, and looking forward to Tuesday's game against the Clippers. And I found out an hour later I was no longer with the team."

Dončić watched from the bench Tuesday as his new team thrashed the Clippers 122-97. His return from the calf injury could come soon, though.

Davis should be back on the court first. He said he might play Thursday in Boston, and if not then, perhaps Saturday against Houston in Dallas' first home game since the trade.

There is some familiarity for Davis with his new club.

Mavs coach Jason Kidd was an assistant when Davis teamed with LeBron James to bring the Lakers their 17th championship in the Florida "bubble" in 2020.

Davis has known Harrison since he was in high school. He ultimately signed with Nike, where Harrison worked for two decades before Dallas hired him in 2021.

"Nico believes in me and what I can add to this team," Davis said. "We are both extremely excited about what we can do, and I think we have a great opportunity to win a championship."

The most important relationship will be with Kyrie Irving, who



JACOB KUPFERMAN / AP

Forward Anthony Davis understands that Mavericks fans won't quickly warm to the player traded for Luka Dončić, the face of the franchise.

came to the Mavs in a trade from Brooklyn to co-star with Dončić, a pairing that paid off a year later with Dallas' first trip to the NBA Finals in 13 years last season. The Mavs lost to the Celtics in five games.

Now Dallas has a new set of co-stars.

They're both dealing with the shock of the trade that made it hap-

pen. Irving, who hasn't talked to reporters since the trade, joked with them to "take it easy" on Davis in that first media session.

"Had no idea that it was happening," Davis said of the deal. "But, I mean, now I'm kind of over it, and just kind of getting ready to play with Dallas."

And understanding the gravity of who he replaced.

SUPER BOWL LIX

Eagles, Chiefs GMs took no shortcuts to top

Roseman's success in 'Howie season' puts Philadelphia back in the big game

By ROB MAADDI
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Howie Roseman's journey to becoming one of the top executives in professional sports began as an unpaid summer intern with the Philadelphia Eagles in 2000.

He rose to become the youngest general manager in the NFL at age 34 in 2010, fulfilling a childhood dream that began in elementary school when he would evaluate college players and put together a draft board.

But Roseman didn't have immediate success and he ended up getting exiled in 2015 following a power struggle with former coach Chip Kelly. That didn't work out for the Eagles and Roseman regained personnel control a year later after Kelly was fired.

He quickly built the franchise's first Super Bowl championship team in 2017. Then, after a disastrous 2020 season, Roseman rebuilt the roster again and Philadelphia reached the Super Bowl two years later only to lose to the Kansas City Chiefs 38-35.

They're back, facing the Chiefs in a rematch on Sunday in the Superdome. They wouldn't be here if Roseman didn't make all the right moves last offseason following an epic collapse from a 10-1 start.

"I really feel like the only thing that matters is the outcome on Sunday," Roseman said. "I'll trade every (personal) award you can ever get for another world championship."

There may be no other team executive who has been criticized more severely and loved more passionately than Roseman. Eagles fans once vilified Roseman but now refer to the offseason as "Howie Season" or #HowieSzn because of his ability to manage the salary cap and add players.

It was Howie Season when the Eagles snatched Saquon Barkley away from the rival New York Giants and watched him run for 2,447 yards with seven touchdowns of 60-plus yards.

It was Howie Season when the Eagles signed a special teams player in free agency and turned Zack Baun into an All-Pro linebacker and finalist for the AP NFL Defensive Player of the Year award.

It was Howie season when the Eagles drafted cornerback Quinyon Mitchell in the first round and added cornerback Cooper DeJean in the second, reshaping the secondary into a formidable part of the league's No. 1 ranked defense.

"I can't tell you how many times I've said how good of a job Howie



CHRIS SZAGOLA/AP

Eagles fans once vilified general manager Howie Roseman but now refer to the offseason as "Howie Season" or #HowieSzn because of his ability to manage the salary cap and add players.

has done in getting these guys in here," Eagles coach Nick Sirianni said. "Then it's about building the team and building the habits and the guys continuing to get better. I think that's what you've seen. With eight new starters on defense, really good defense in 2022, really good defense here in 2024.

So much credit to Howie and his staff, and then the guys themselves going out there and playing their (behinds) off."

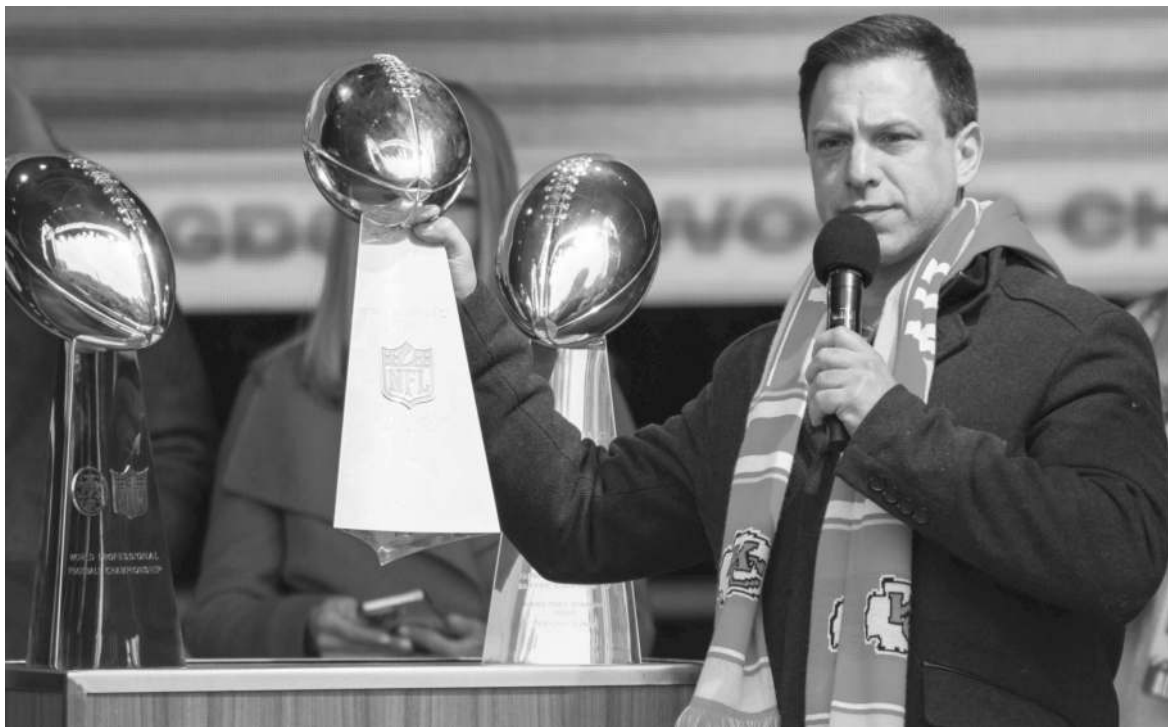
Nobody talks anymore about Roseman drafting Jalen Reagor ahead of Justin Jefferson in 2020 or J.J. Arcega-Whiteside ahead of DK Metcalf in 2019. Drafting DeVonta Smith in the first round in 2021 panned out and acquiring A.J. Brown in a trade was a steal, giving the Eagles one of the best wide receiver tandems in the league.

Selecting Jalen Hurts in the second round of the 2020 draft even when the team had Carson Wentz could be Roseman's best pick. He selected Jordan Mailata in the seventh round in 2018 even though the Australian rugby star had never played football. He's become one of the NFL's best left tackles.

But Roseman won't gloat about his success. He's not holding any grudges against fans or media who wanted him fired.

"When you work in Philly, you know you're one step away from banners flying over stadiums (saying "Fire Howie!")," Roseman said.

"So I think that you gotta be humble. You have to keep your head down. All that matters is winning. I said this to Nick when we hired him: 'You win or lose.' At the end of the day, nothing else matters. I can explain my bad moves and the reasoning behind them and the rationale that I think I had. Nobody cares. You're judged by your record and you're judged by the success of that. And I'm OK with that."



AP

General manager Brett Veach holds up the Chiefs' third Lombardi Trophy during a celebration in Kansas City, Mo., on Feb. 15, 2023. Coach Andy Reid credits Veach with rebuilding the roster each season.

From cheeseburger delivery man to architect of dynasty: Veach keeps Kansas City humming

By DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Chiefs coach Andy Reid first met Brett Veach after he'd been recommended for an internship with his Philadelphia Eagles.

One of Veach's many tasks? Running out for the occasional lunch order.

Cheeseburgers were common.

All these years later, Veach is still delivering the goods for Reid, only now as the general manager of a Chiefs franchise chasing an unprecedented third consecutive Super Bowl title. Veach is the one who Reid freely credits with rebuilding the roster each year, and whose collection of players will face the Philadelphia Eagles on Sunday night in New Orleans.

"You could see right from the get-go his energy and how smart he was," Reid told The Associated Press. "Then his passion for the players side of it. Those guys that came in, I gave them the opportunity to either go personnel or to the football side, and he was so passionate about digging in with it and finding guys."

Veach did his time as a coaching intern, spending most of four years in the role. He learned not only the nuances of identifying prospects — something Reid largely handled himself in Philly — but also what Big Red valued in players on his team.

That would become invaluable.

Veach was promoted to a coaching assistant, then moved into a scouting role, and helped to identify DeSean Jackson, LeSean McCoy and Fletcher Cox, all players who contributed so greatly to the Eagles' success while Reid was the coach.

His track record is why Reid brought Veach along with him to Kansas City in 2013, hiring the former Delaware wide receiver — and teammate of Chiefs offensive coordinator Matt Nagy — as a pro and college personnel analyst.

Two years later, Veach was promoted to co-director of player personnel. And when the Chiefs moved

on from John Dorsey, they gave the general manager job to Veach, making him one of the youngest in the NFL at the time.

The final draft with Dorsey in charge became famous in large part because of Veach: He stood up in the draft room that night and lobbied — insisted, even — that Kansas City trade up to select a gunslinging quarterback from Texas Tech.

Veach had delivered Reid his franchise quarterback in Patrick Mahomes.

"With Brett, it starts early in the offseason, and what an amazing job he does in putting this team together," Chiefs chairman Clark Hunt said. "It's an amazing achievement to keep turning over the roster every year."

Indeed, the Chiefs that won their first Super Bowl title in five decades in the 2019 season are much different than the Chiefs going for a historic three-peat

this season. They have lavished massive contracts on Mahomes, tight end Travis Kelce, defensive tackle Chris Jones and others, and yet they've managed to massage the salary cap in such a way as to keep plugging their biggest holes.

It might be signing wide receiver Marquise Brown to a club-friendly contract. Or running back Kareem Hunt off the couch when nobody else wanted him. Or it might be through the draft, where Veach's hit rate on everyone from cornerback Trent McDuffie to

pass rusher George Karlaftis to speedy wide receiver Xavier Worthy is virtually unmatched across the league.

Veach is too humble to take all the credit. But he acknowledges being part of a team effort that has kept Kansas City on top.

"We have a good group here. We plan to be successful for a long time," Veach said. "We just have to be smart. It's a delicate balance of being disciplined and aggressive. There is a fine balance, and it's a complete group effort between my staff and Clark and the coaching staff."

"You could see right from the get-go his energy and how smart he was."

Andy Reid
on Chiefs GM Brett Veach

SUPER BOWL LIX

Chiefs' Hunt makes most of 2nd chance

By **BRETT MARTEL**
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Chiefs running back Kareem Hunt has understood the value of second chances since fumbling on the first carry of his NFL debut in 2017.

"I thought my career was done and I was like, 'Man, I'm a bust. It's over with,'" Hunt recalled Tuesday as he fielded questions about playing in his first Super Bowl against the Philadelphia Eagles this Sunday.

As Hunt remembers it, Kansas City coach Andy Reid wasted little time seeking him out on the sideline at New England after his early turnover.

"He was like, 'Relax, man. Calm down. When we get this ball back, we're giving it right back to you,'" Hunt said. "So that was another second chance right there. And I'm like, 'Wow, I got to make the most of it.'"

Similarly, Hunt has made the most of his latest stint with the team that drafted him.

Following offseason sports hernia surgery, Hunt entered the 2024 season unsigned and working out on his own at his old high school and recovering from his training sessions in a sauna at the



Super Bowl LIX
Kansas City Chiefs (17-2)
vs. Philadelphia Eagles (17-3)
at New Orleans
AFN-Sports
12:30 a.m. Monday CET
8:30 a.m. Monday JKT

YMCA, unsure whether he'd played his final game in the NFL.

"I didn't know if the opportunity was going to come or not," said Hunt, who'd spent his previous five seasons with the Cleveland Browns.

When Isaiah Pacheco fractured his fibula in Week 2, Hunt got the call he'd longed to receive — not only from the team that drafted him, but during what has become the Chiefs' bid to become the first NFL franchise to win three straight Super Bowls.

"When I got that call, I was excited and I told them, 'You won't regret it,'" Hunt said.

They didn't. Hunt led the Chiefs in rushing



REED HOFFMANN/AP

Chiefs running back Kareem Hunt runs through a hole in the line against the Buffalo Bills during the second half of the AFC Championship game Jan. 26 in Kansas City, Mo.

this season with 728 yards, and his seven touchdowns were also a team high.

Even after Pacheco returned to the lineup, Hunt remained Kansas City's primary running back and has since added touchdowns in each of the Chiefs' two playoff victories.

"Being able to play football in February is amazing," Hunt said. "I got to make the most of it now."

Hunt was one of the NFL's premier players by his second pro season in 2018, and was helping then first-year starter Patrick Ma-

homes lead Kansas City to the playoffs. But in late November of that season, video surfaced that showed Hunt kicking a woman in the hall of a Cleveland hotel.

While no charges were filed after the woman stopped cooperating with authorities, the Chiefs released their young star running back.

Hunt joined the Browns in 2019 and served an eight-game suspension for violating the NFL's personal-conduct policy. But most of his five seasons in Cleveland — during which he rushed for 2,285

yards and five touchdowns — were far less productive than his first two in Kansas City.

The Chiefs, meanwhile, went to four Super Bowls — winning three — after Hunt was gone.

While he's missed out on those championships, he's back in time to try to help this Kansas City dynasty make history.

"I almost should have never left," Hunt said. "So I'm just grateful to be able to come back where it all started, and hopefully finish it out and do the unthinkable. And three-peat."

Interior: Offensive line positions becoming more expensive

FROM PAGE 24

lent at getting his hands off you. He's constantly gaining ground while getting to your edge," Baldinger said. "He just knows when those key moments are and how to win those moments."

Interior OL more valuable

Left tackle has always been a premium position for the vital role of blocking the right-handed quarterback's blind side, and as the quality of pass rushers spread across the league, a right tackle who could also consistently hold his own against a dominant player on the edge became equally important to have. There are 32 tackles in the NFL with contracts carrying an annual average value of \$10 million or more, according to salary data compiled by Over The Cap.

But the guards and centers are catching up in value. There are 20 guards and six centers whose current deals average at least \$10 million per year, according to OTC, beginning with Eagles left guard Landon Dickerson. Kansas City's Creed Humphrey is the league's highest-paid center.

Just like with the defensive linemen they'll be trying to fend off, this Super Bowl will be a showcase of some of the best interior blockers in the game — whose success has been aided by revered veteran offensive line coaches. The Chiefs' Andy Heck is in his 12th season with the team and 21st as an NFL coach. Philadelphia's Jeff Stoutland



CHRIS SZAGOLA/AP

The Eagles' Pro Bowl lineman Landon Dickerson is one of 20 guards and centers making at least \$10 million per year.

is also in his 12th season with the team, spanning three head coaches, and his 41st year of coaching.

Humphrey and left guard Joe Thuney, who recently moved over to left tackle to help shore up an unsettled position, gave Kansas City a pair of first team All-Pros. Right guard Trey Smith was a Pro Bowl pick who'll be a prize free agent at age 25 next month. The Chiefs could move Thuney back to his natural spot if D.J. Humphries is

deemed healthy enough to return to left tackle.

For the Eagles, Dickerson was selected for his third straight Pro Bowl. Center Cam Jurgens got his first such honor after stepping in this season for retired stalwart Jason Kelce. Right guard Mekhi Becton, a 2020 first-round draft pick by the New York Jets, was a former tackle who signed with Philadelphia and quickly took to his new position. Dickerson started the NFC championship game at center because Jurgens was dealing with a back injury. Then Dickerson hurt his knee, forcing Jurgens back into duty.

"These guys are playing through pain. I just can't say enough about how much I respect these guys of what they have to do with their bodies," Eagles coach Nick Sirianni said. "I don't think anyone knows the half of it, what they have to do to play the long season."

Job getting tougher

Aaron Donald redefined the defensive tackle position with an eight-time All-Pro career over 10 seasons, and Jones has picked up the baton for the interior pass rushers since Donald retired. But the guards and centers have more than just those freak-of-nature players to be concerned about.

More and more teams will slide their edge defenders inside on passing downs for a matchup advantage. Minnesota Vikings defensive coordinator Brian Flores, for one

extreme example, repeatedly put his four best pass rushers in standup positions on the line on third downs.

"The guys we're going against are bigger, and as they get bigger they're still staying fast, they're still staying twitchy," Minnesota right guard Dalton Risner said earlier this postseason. "The game of football is ever changing, ever evolving. Everyone's trying to figure out one way to one-up it."

The teams with more vulnerability in the middle play at their own peril. Take the Vikings as another example, with interior pass protection that has been a problem for the past several years. Their 14-win season went up in flames when they were blown out in Week 18 by the Detroit Lions and in their wild-card round playoff game by the Los Angeles Rams. Quarterback Sam Darnold was swallowed up by the rush in those games, starting up the middle.

Kansas City and Philadelphia are here because they've kept that from happening.

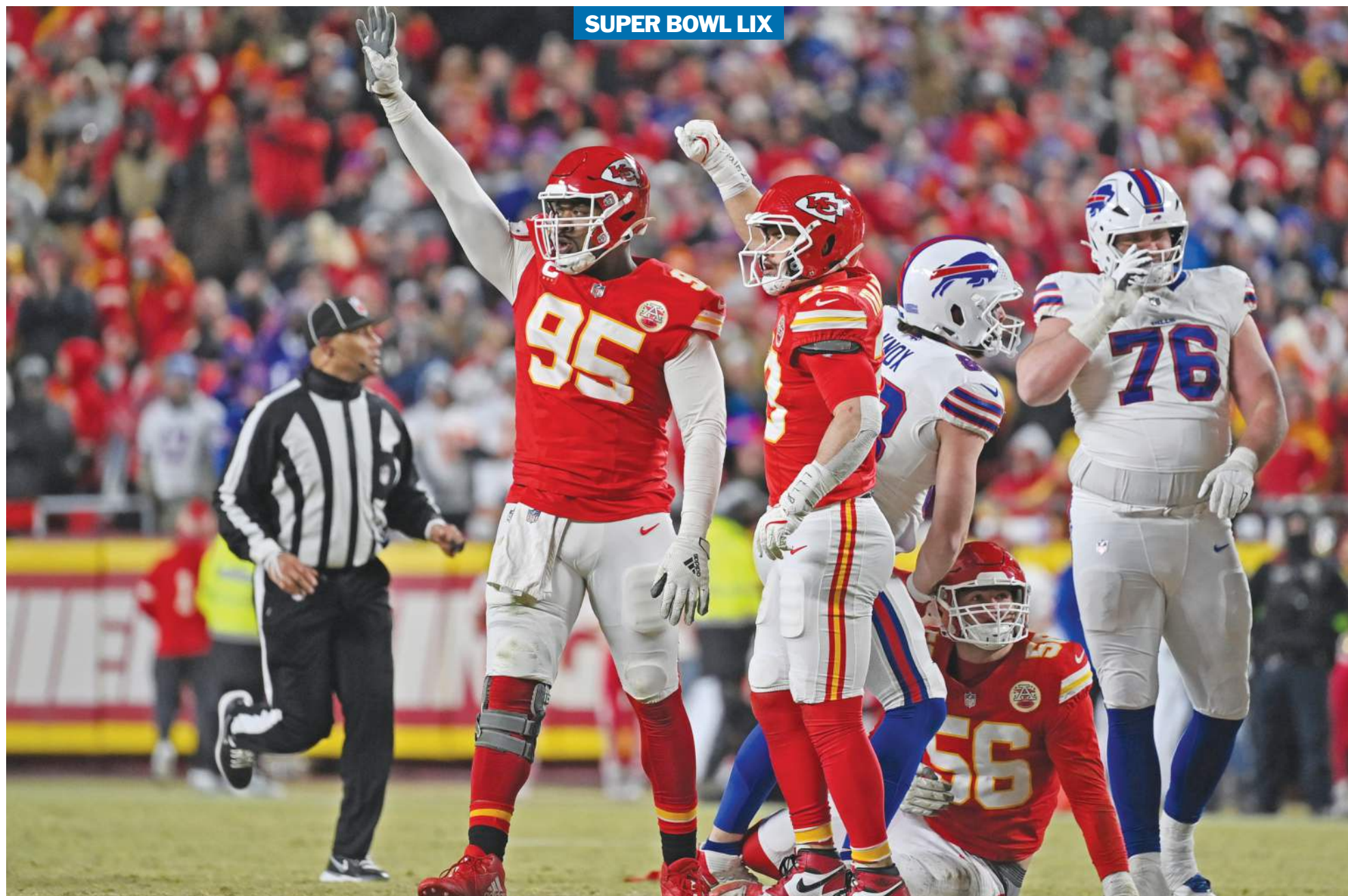
"How many pressures you gave up and how many sacks you gave up, those are the stats that we all know," Sirianni said. "Sometimes you only get focused on for the negative thing. But I love offensive linemen. I've always loved offensive linemen because of that selflessness they have. They're protectors, right? They're there to protect and serve other people. That's the best thing you can say about a human being, that you want to do well for yourself to do well for others."

SPORTS



Middleton to Washington

Bucks trade 13-year veteran to Wizards for Kuzma » **NBA, Page 21**



SUPER BOWL LIX

PETER AIKEN/AP

Chiefs defensive tackle Chris Jones (95) and linebacker Drue Tranquill celebrate after stopping the Buffalo Bills on third down during the AFC title game Jan. 26 in Kansas City, Mo.

Focus shifting toward interior

Game may hinge on middle men as Chiefs, Eagles prep for opponent's fierce pass rush

By **DAVE CAMPBELL**
Associated Press

Once Josh Allen backpedaled from the shotgun snap after the Buffalo Bills had just gone ahead of the Kansas City Chiefs, this crucial 2-point conversion play late in the third quarter of the AFC championship game quickly turned into chaos.

Allen retreated to the 14-yard line, sized up the pressure and desperately darted right as two pass rushers converged. Chris Jones, the star of this daunting Chiefs de-

fense, fittingly finished the strip-sack.

Over those few unfortunate seconds for Bills left guard David Edwards, Jones provided yet another vivid example of why he's been a first team All-Pro for three years in a row.

With a straight-forward bull rush, Jones simply overpowered Edwards from his defensive tackle position and single-handedly destroyed the pocket around Allen. Kansas City defensive end George Karlaftis, after pushing right tackle Spencer Brown back more than

5 yards, shrewdly veered left to keep Allen from scrambling around the end and then deftly shed the block with a jump back inside. Karlaftis helped corral Allen low, while Jones hit him high to dislodge the ball.

There's no better way to blow up a play in the NFL these days than with strong pressure through the middle.

"It's the most direct path to the quarterback," NFL Network analyst and former offensive lineman Brian Baldinger said. "The evolution of the quarterback position

and the ability of these guys to either extend plays or just become a runner, it's changed the way people have to rush these guys now. If you can collapse the pocket on the inside, you can make it a lot harder on them."

The outcome of Super Bowl 59 on Sunday between the Chiefs and Eagles might well hinge on which team can better protect the interior against the fierce pass rush lurking on the other side. Philadelphia, led by Pro Bowl pick Jalen Carter, accounted for three of the top eight and four of the top 22 inte-

rior pass rushers in the league this season as ranked by Pro Football Focus.

Jones got the highest overall grade for interior defenders in 2024 and was also ranked as the best pass rusher at his position in PFF's independent analysis.

"He's got very light feet for a big guy. He's very big, size-wise. He's got tremendous hands, and his feet and his hands are always moving. He's very slippery. It's hard to get hands on him, and he's excel-

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Gibson 1st Ducks goalie to play 500 games » **NHL, Page 19**



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