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50¢/Free to Deployed Areas

IRS mulls reducing half of its workforce

By **FATIMA HUSSEIN**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The IRS is drafting plans to cut its workforce by as much as half through a mix of layoffs, attrition and incentivized buyouts, according to two people familiar with the situation.

The people spoke Tuesday on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to disclose the plans.

The layoffs are part of the Trump administration's efforts to shrink the size of the federal workforce through billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency by closing agencies, laying off nearly all probationary employees who have not yet gained civil service protection and offering buyouts to almost all federal employees through a "deferred resignation program" to quickly reduce the government workforce.

A reduction in force of tens of thousands of employees would render the IRS "dysfunctional," said John Koskinen, a former IRS commissioner.

The federal tax collector employs roughly 90,000 workers total across the United States, according to the latest IRS data. People of color make up 56% of the IRS workforce, and women represent 65%.

SEE IRS ON PAGE 10

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BEN CURTIS/AP

House Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana, right, and Vice President JD Vance, left, listen as President Donald Trump addresses a joint session of Congress at the Capitol in Washington on Tuesday.

'We are just getting started'

Defiant Trump signals full speed ahead on divisive policies in address

By **MATT VISER**
The Washington Post

President Donald Trump on Tuesday night addressed a divided nation in a speech marked by acrimony, as a Texas Democrat was escorted from the chamber within the first few moments and as Trump taunted Democrats in the room — outlining a message of defiant optimism for those who support him and gloomy despair for those who don't.

His speech came 43 days after his inauguration, a period marked by turbulent change as he uses his belligerent style to upend global diplomatic norms and trade alliances, deconstruct large portions of the federal government and implement a raft of new policies. It also arrived hours after the stock market tumbled as a result of his newly imposed tariffs, but Trump doubled down on his plans for reciprocal tariffs and made clear

that he was unrestrained by any rising Democratic resistance, signs of economic trouble or falsehoods as he made a number of claims unsupported by the facts.

"It has been nothing but swift and unrelenting action," he said, in a 100-minute speech. "And we are just getting started."

Trump arrived in the House chamber for the joint address to Congress with vivid reminders of the control that Republicans now

exert over Washington. House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., sat on one side behind him and Vice President JD Vance on the other.

On their side of the chamber, some Democrats wore pink as a statement for women's rights and others dressed in blue and yellow to support Ukraine. And while several prominent members of the party chose to boycott the

SEE ADDRESS ON PAGE 8

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Judge declines to block OpenAI for-profit conversion

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — A federal judge has denied Elon Musk’s request for a court order blocking OpenAI from converting itself to a for-profit company but said she could expedite a trial to consider Musk’s claims against the ChatGPT maker and its CEO.

U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers ruled late Tuesday that “Musk has not demonstrated likelihood of success on the merits” in his request for a preliminary injunction. She offered to hold a trial in her California courtroom as soon as this fall, “given the public interest at stake and potential for harm if a conversion contrary to law occurred.”

Musk, an early OpenAI investor, began a legal offensive against the ChatGPT maker and CEO Sam Altman a year ago, suing for breach of contract over what he said was the betrayal of its founding aims as a nonprofit.

He escalated the legal dispute late last year, adding new claims and defendants, including Microsoft, and asking for a court order that would stop OpenAI’s plans to convert itself into a for-profit business. Musk also added his own AI company, xAI, as a plaintiff, claiming that OpenAI was unfairly stifling business competition.

He and a group of investors recently made an unsolicited \$97.4 billion bid to buy a controlling stake in the nonprofit — undermining Musk’s “claim of irreparable harm,” the judge wrote.

OpenAI said it welcomed the court’s decision.

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EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Commercial rates	
Euro costs (March 6)	0.93	Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769
British pound (March 6)	\$1.24	Britain (Pound)	.7772
Japanese yen (March 6)	145.00	Canada (Dollar)	1.4354
South Korean won (March 6)	1419.00	China (Yuan)	7.2656
		Denmark (Krone)	6.9289
		Egypt (Pound)	50.6714
		Euro	0.9287
		Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7714
		Hungary (Forint)	370.30
		Israel (Shekel)	3.6250
		Japan (Yen)	148.62
		Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3083
		Norway (Krone)	10.9557
		Philippines (Peso)	57.21
		Poland (Zloty)	3.86
		Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7502
		Singapore (Dollar)	1.3317
		South Korea (Won)	1444.04
Switzerland (Franc)	0.8873		
Thailand (Baht)	33.62		
Turkey (NewLira)	36.4365		

(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	4.38
3-month bill	4.30
30-year bond	4.54

WEATHER OUTLOOK

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THURSDAY IN EUROPE



FRIDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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MILITARY

German official aims to revive military draft

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Compulsory military service should be reintroduced this year in Germany, a leading official of the party that won recent federal elections said this week amid growing questions about the reliability of U.S. defense commitments.

“The first conscripts will have to walk through the barracks gates in 2025,” Florian Hahn, a defense policy spokesman for the center-

right Christian Democratic Union, told the German newspaper Bild on Tuesday.

Germany suspended military conscription in 2011, but the CDU and its Bavarian counterpart, the Christian Social Union, say the current security situation makes the status quo no longer tenable.

“We cannot stand by and watch as the world around us becomes more unsafe,” Hahn said.

Reinstatement of obligatory military service has also been advocated by CDU leader Friedrich

Merz, who is expected to become Germany’s next chancellor.

Merz said Europe must prepare for the possibility that the United States can no longer be counted on to ensure the security of the Continent.

“My absolute priority will be to strengthen Europe as quickly as possible so that step by step, we can really achieve independence from the USA,” Merz said shortly after his party’s victory.

However, it’s unclear how the debate over mandatory military

service will play out as Germany’s next coalition government takes shape.

The center-left Social Democratic Party also has sought to enlarge the German armed forces, but its call for a return of compulsory military service has been less clear-cut.

Meanwhile, Andre Wüstner, the chairman of the German Armed Forces Association, which represents volunteer reservists, said some form of a draft should begin immediately.

“Without some kind of new conscription, we will not be able to recruit and retain the personnel we need,” he said Tuesday on Welt-TV.

The push for a return to mandatory military service is the latest sign of Germany’s efforts to strengthen its defenses.

On Tuesday, the CDU and prospective partners in the next government said they will try to loosen budget deficit rules to allow for significantly higher defense spending.



AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

Marine Col. Jason Berg, left, commander of Combat Logistics Regiment 3, and Col. Scott D. Welborn, commander of Combined Arms Training Center Camp Fuji, survey the supply ship Resolution at Numazu Beach, Japan, on Feb. 27.

Beach experiment in offloading Marine gear in Japan falls short

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

NUMAZU BEACH, Japan — A trial by the Marine Corps of an experimental landing ship ended recently with the vessel failing to offload equipment at this coastal training area southwest of Tokyo and heading back to port.

The 254-foot Resolution, a converted offshore supply vessel with over 6,000 square feet of deck, spent the morning of Feb. 27 just off Numazu Beach, a 1,000-foot-wide swath of coast designated for U.S. military training on Suruga Bay in Shizuoka prefecture.

The vessel appeared to deploy stabilizing pylons while Marines ashore waited for the ship to drop a large ramp and offload tactical vehicles, tents and gear for an exercise at the nearby Combined Arms Training Center Camp Fuji.

The bay was relatively calm as

the Resolution eventually headed out to sea and north to Yokohama to offload its cargo.

Marines from Combat Logistics Regiment 3, the unit involved in the exercise, were in the field Tuesday and had yet to respond to queries about the landing attempt, Song Jordan, a Camp Fuji spokeswoman, said by email that day.

The Marines had loaded their vehicles and gear at Naha Military Port, Okinawa, two weeks earlier, regimental commander Col. Jason Berg told Stars and Stripes at Numazu.

The Marines were bound for Camp Fuji for two weeks of full-spectrum combat logistics training.

“This is the first time we have moved gear like this,” he said of the stern landing effort, which involved the vessel backing up to

the beach in the attempt to offload cargo.

In March 2022, landing craft launched from the dock landing ship USS Ashland and dropped off Marines and vehicles at Numazu Beach during training.

The training area there is set aside for ship-to-shore drills and serves as a helicopter landing zone, Camp Fuji commander Col. Scott Welborn said at the beach.

The Resolution went through a series of trials last year in the Del Mar Boat Basin at Camp Pendleton, Calif., as part of Navy efforts to design a new type of landing ship, USNI News reported Feb. 26, 2024.

The vessel is a prototype for a future medium landing ship, Cathy Close, a Marine Corps Systems Command spokeswoman told reporters at the time, according to the report.

Uyghur deportation from Thailand prompts warning to US citizens

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

KORAT, Thailand — The U.S. Embassy in Thailand this week advised U.S. citizens to “exercise increased caution and vigilance” following Thailand’s recent deportation of asylum-seekers to China.

The Thai government on Feb. 27 deported at least 40 Uyghur asylees back to China, prompting a reminder from the embassy that a similar deportation in 2015 was followed by a terrorist attack in Bangkok.

That attack involved improvised explosive devices detonated at the Erawan Shrine, killing 20 people and injuring 125 others, according to an embassy alert Tuesday to military personnel in Thailand.

Two Chinese Uyghurs accused of the attack are still on trial in Thailand after long delays; a third defendant, a Thai woman, was acquitted in November, according to The Associated Press.

Approximately 3,200 U.S. troops are in Thailand for Cobra Gold, an annual exercise that this year drew another 4,800 troops from 30 countries, including limited participation by China.

U.S. citizens are urged to review security plans, follow local authorities’ instructions and exercise increased vigilance, especially in crowded tourist locations, accord-

ing to the embassy alert.

The military exercise is thus far unaffected by the alert or deportation, Capt. Jennifer Messina, spokeswoman for the U.S. Army 7th Infantry Division’s Combined Joint Information Bureau, said Wednesday.

“All scheduled Cobra Gold activities and events continued as planned,” she said.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio condemned “in the strongest possible terms” Thailand’s decision to deport the Uyghurs, members of a primarily Muslim ethnic minority in China, according to a Feb. 27 statement.

Uyghurs in China lack due process rights and have “faced persecution, forced labor, and torture,” Rubio said.

“China, under the direction and control of the Chinese Communist Party, has committed genocide and crimes against humanity targeting predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and other members of ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang,” he said.

Thai authorities detained more than 300 Uyghurs fleeing China in 2014 and have since deported at least 109 to China and another 173 to Turkey. Of the 53 remaining, three adults and two children have died in detention, the AP reported Feb. 28.



CHAINWIT/Wikimedia Commons

People pray at Erawan Shrine in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2018.

MILITARY

3 soldiers, 4 horses injured during training

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Three soldiers and four horses at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Va., were injured Monday afternoon during a training exercise, the Army confirmed.

The training accident occurred at about 2 p.m. between soldiers and horses of the Caisson Detachment of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, known as “The Old Guard.” Three horses unseated their riders but did not escape the base, Army spokesman Lt. Col. Patrick Husted said.

“The three soldiers who were unseated received non-life-threatening injuries which required treatment at a local hospital. One soldier underwent surgery and remained at the hospital overnight, while two were released upon completion of treatment,” Husted added.

Four horses also suffered non-life-threatening injuries and have

been examined and treated by on-site veterinarians.

“None of the animals needed to be evacuated for higher level care and are expected to fully recover,” Husted said.

One wagon was damaged and was moved to the Caisson Detachment motor pool for further evaluation, Husted added. The accident remains under investigation.

The caisson platoon of the 3rd Infantry Regiment has carried the caskets of deceased service members to gravesites at Arlington National Cemetery, Va., since 1948.

The caisson — a ceremonial wagon that bears the casket — is drawn by four specially trained horses. The processions are considered an integral part of traditional full-honor military funerals at Arlington.

But unsanitary living conditions, malnourishment and a lack of open space for the herd led to the suspension of horse-drawn funerals conducted by the 3rd Infan-

try Regiment Caisson Platoon in May 2023. The horses were infested with parasites, crowded into small fields filled with manure and construction debris and suffering from malnutrition from low-quality feed. Two horses died.

Language in the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal 2025 instructs the Army secretary to complete renovations of historic stables that had fallen into disrepair at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall. The Army also must ensure equine handlers are trained and certified to manage the herd and take other steps to establish safeguards for the horses' welfare before caisson services can return.

The unit remains sidelined from Arlington funerals, and the Army has not identified a date when the operations will resume. The Old Guard unit resumed operation in January as part of former President Jimmy Carter's funeral.



ELIZABETH FRASER/Arlington National Cemetery

Soldiers from the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment and the U.S. Army Band conduct military funeral honors in 2023 at Arlington National Cemetery, Va.

Administration memo details plan to cut 80K from Veterans Affairs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs is planning an “aggressive” reorganization that includes cutting 80,000 jobs from the sprawling agency that provides health care for retired military members, according to an internal memo obtained by The Associated Press.

The VA's chief of staff, Christopher Syrek, told top level officials at the agency that it had an objective to cut enough employees to return to 2019 staffing levels of just under 400,000. That would re-

quire terminating tens of thousands of employees after the VA expanded during the Biden administration, as well as to cover veterans impacted by burn pits under the 2022 PACT Act.

The memo instructs top-level staff to prepare for an agency-wide reorganization in August to “resize and tailor the workforce to the mission and revised structure.” It also calls for agency officials to work with the White House's Department of Government Efficiency to “move out aggressively, while taking a prag-

matic and disciplined approach” to the Trump administration's goals.

Veterans have already been speaking out against the cuts at the VA, which so far had included a few thousand employees and hundreds of contracts. More than 25% of the VA's workforce are veterans themselves.

In Congress, Democrats have decried the cuts at the VA and other agencies, while Republicans have so far watched with caution toward the Trump administration's changes.

Senator blocks resolution to restore veterans' jobs in federal workforce

By LINDA F. HERSEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., introduced a resolution Tuesday demanding the immediate reinstatement of the 6,000 veterans fired from federal government jobs in a sweeping workforce reduction, including at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

But Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., quickly stood to object to the resolution after Blumenthal called for passage by unanimous consent. His objection effectively ended the resolution's adoption.

Moran is chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. Blumenthal is a member of the same

committee.

Blumenthal pledged to continue to fight for the restoration of veterans' jobs. He was joined by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., Sen. Mark Kelly, D-Ariz., Sen. Mazie Hirono, D-Hawaii, Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich., and Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., when he introduced the resolution.

But Moran said it would divide members of Congress, as Republicans have pledged to carry out President Donald Trump's directive to reduce the size of the federal

workforce. Nearly one-third of federal civilian workers are veterans.

“I commit to all my colleagues to work with them to make VA retain an effective workforce, but we will only achieve that by working together and with the Department of Veterans Affairs for desired outcomes,” Moran said.

Blumenthal pledged to work with Republican senators on a bipartisan agreement and bring veterans back to their jobs.

On social media, Kelly posted Blumenthal “just tried to get VA staff who serve veterans rehired after Donald Trump and Elon Musk fired thousands of them without cause. Senate Republicans blocked it.”



Moran

Marine in Japan accused of car theft, home intrusion

By KEISHI KOJA
AND BRIAN McELHINEY
Stars and Stripes

Japanese police are holding Marine in custody in Iwakuni city on allegations he stole a car, drove drunk and crashed it before intruding into a man's home last month.

The Marine, assigned to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, has been in city police custody since the incident Feb. 11 but was re-arrested Tuesday following further investigation, a spokesman with the Iwakuni Police Station said by phone Wednesday.

Re-arresting a suspect allows Japanese police to reset a 20-day limit on custody.

Police forwarded their cases against the Marine to local prosecutors on Feb. 12 and again Wednesday, according to the spokesman.

Stars and Stripes is choosing not to identify the Marine until charges are filed.

The Marine was first taken into custody at 12:26 a.m. Feb. 11 on suspicion that he had intruded into the apartment of a 63-year-old man, a spokesman with Yamaguchi Prefectural Police said Wednesday.

Further investigation found that minutes earlier the Marine stole a car left running in a convenience store parking lot, drove it an unspecified distance and crashed into a utility pole, the Iwakuni police spokesman said.

The owner, a 20-year-old woman, told police a “drunken foreigner” took her car, the spokesman

said.

“We are aware of the incident and are fully cooperating with local authorities, who hold primary jurisdiction of this case, in their investigation,” MCAS Iwakuni spokesman Maj. Gerard Farao told Stars and Stripes by email Wednesday.

“We take all allegations of misconduct seriously,” he said.

He declined further comment, citing the ongoing investigation.

Following the crash, the Marine walked about 60 feet to a nearby apartment building and entered an apartment unit through the front door, according to Iwakuni police.

He set off a fire extinguisher but did no further damage in the apartment, according to the Iwakuni spokesman.

The resident was not home at the time.

Police were responding to the crash when a “family member” ran from the apartment and reported the Marine had intruded, the spokesman said.

Police arrested the Marine at the apartment door.

The Marine's blood-alcohol content was above Japan's legal limit of 0.03%, the spokesman said, but he declined to provide an exact number.

The legal limit in all 50 U.S. states is 0.08%.

Some Japanese officials speak to the press only on condition of anonymity.

EUROPE

US pauses sharing intel Ukraine uses to strike Russia

The Washington Post

The United States has paused major portions of its intelligence-sharing with Ukraine, squeezing the flow of vital information that Kyiv has used to repel invading Russian forces and strike back at select targets inside Russia, according to U.S. and Ukrainian officials.

The rupture in intelligence-sharing includes a halt in targeting data

that U.S. spy agencies supply to Kyiv so it can launch American-provided weapons and Ukraine-made long-range drones at Russian targets, Ukrainian officials said. Some Ukrainian missile operators say they are no longer receiving information needed to hit targets inside Russia.

The pause follows a decision early this week by President Donald Trump to freeze future deliv-

eries of weapons to Ukraine, to pressure Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy into peace negotiations with Russia.

CIA Director John Ratcliffe confirmed the latest move Wednesday, telling Fox News that the United States has paused both intelligence-sharing and weapons systems in the aftermath of a contentious Oval Office meeting last week between Trump and Zelenskyy.

Ratcliffe said the pauses would “go away” once it was clear Zelenskyy was committed to peace.

The move is another major reversal from the approach of the Biden administration, which set up special systems to share copious amounts of intelligence on Russian military forces with Ukraine, officials said — virtually unprecedented for a non-NATO country.

A Ukrainian military officer fa-

miliar with operations of the long-range multiple rocket launching system known as HIMARS, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to speak freely about classified intelligence, said that for roughly the past month, at least one of the Ukrainian groups responsible for launching rockets from the U.S. systems has not received coordinates to strike more than about 40 miles beyond the contact line.

Starmer praises sacrifice of UK troops in oblique rebuke to Vance comments

By PAN PYLAS
Associated Press

LONDON — U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Wednesday praised the hundreds of British troops who died fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq “alongside our allies,” in an oblique rebuke of Vice President JD Vance, who has questioned the merits of a potential European peacekeeping force in Ukraine following the signing of any peace agreement between the country and Russia.

In his opening remarks before the start of a weekly parliamentary question session, Starmer specifically paid tribute to six

British soldiers who died on patrol in Afghanistan when their vehicle was struck by an explosive. Thursday marks the 13-year anniversary of their deaths.

“These men fought and died for their country, our country,” Starmer told the House of Commons. “And across the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, 642 individuals died fighting for Britain alongside our allies, many more were wounded.”

Without directly referencing Vance, the prime minister said he and all lawmakers will “never forget their bravery and their sacrifice.”

Vance said in an interview with Fox News this week that an economic pact with Kyiv sought by President Donald Trump “is a way better security guarantee than 20,000 troops from some random country that hasn’t fought a war in 30 or 40 years.”

Though Vance has subsequently sought to head off criticism by noting that he did not specifically name any countries, his “random country” comment prompted anger, particularly in the U.K. and France. British troops fought alongside the U.S. in Afghanistan and Iraq; French troops were deployed to Afghanistan.



STEFAN ROUSSEAU/AP

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer departs 10 Downing Street, London, to attend Prime Minister’s Questions at the Houses of Parliament, on Wednesday. In his opening remarks, he paid tribute to six British soldiers who died on patrol in Afghanistan in 2012.

Sakura
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CHILD 15.00 (6-12)
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MILITARY

Fighter pilot takes command of USS Eisenhower

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — A Navy fighter pilot with more than two decades of service is the new commanding officer of the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Capt. Shane Marchesi took command Tuesday, Navy messages on Facebook and X the same day said. He takes over from Capt. Chris Hill, who was named interim commanding officer of the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman last month.

Truman's former commanding officer, Capt. Dave Snowden, was fired following a Feb. 12 collision between the carrier and a cargo ship near the Suez Canal.

Truman this week was in the Red Sea along with the cruiser USS Gettysburg and the destroyers USS Stout and USS Jason Dunham, USNI News reported Monday.

The Navy didn't immediately respond to a request for comment Wednesday about Eisenhower's change of command.

Marchesi served as executive officer of Truman from April 2021 to May 2023. His most recent role was as commanding officer of the amphibious transport dock ship USS San Antonio, a position he



Capt. Shane Marchesi, left, shakes hands with Rear Adm. Kavon Hakimzadeh, commander of Carrier Strike Group 2, after taking command of the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower on Tuesday.

held until June 2024, according to his LinkedIn biography.

A 1998 graduate of the Naval Academy, he was designated a pilot in 2000. He is a former execu-

tive officer and commanding officer of Strike Fighter Squadron 87, serving in the latter role until March 2018.

He deployed in 2001 in support

of the war in Afghanistan and two years later supported Operation Iraqi Freedom.

On Tuesday, an Eisenhower social media post thanked Hill for

his nearly two years of service at the carrier's helm.

"Capt. Hill's leadership fostered a strong sense of morale and unity, ensuring the IKE crew always came first," the post stated. "His impact on this ship and its sailors will be felt long after his departure."

Hill assumed command of Eisenhower in March 2023, according to the Navy.



Hill

Months later, it was defending against attacks on shipping in the Red Sea by Iran-backed Houthi militants.

Officials aboard the carrier told Stars and Stripes last year that Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group sailors were under fire at levels not seen since World War II. The ship returned to its homeport in Norfolk, Va., in July after a nine-month deployment.

In January, the Navy announced that Eisenhower had arrived at Norfolk Naval Shipyard for a planned maintenance, including comprehensive work to the carrier's propulsion system, combat systems and aviation support capabilities.

N. Korea close to completing early warning aircraft

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea appears close to completing its first airborne early warning aircraft, satellite imagery showed, an asset that experts say will sharply bolster the country's air force power when it's deployed.

North Korea's nuclear and missile programs pose a significant security threat to South Korea, the U.S. and others. But its aerial surveillance capability is far behind

those of its rivals, while most of its military aircraft are aging.

38 North, a website specializing in North Korea studies, reported Tuesday that recent commercial satellite imagery showed an Ilyushin IL-76 aircraft parked at a Pyongyang airport, with a large radome mounted on top of the fuselage. A radome refers to a structure that encircles a radar system.

It called the aircraft's near-completion "a significant upgrade

for an air force that has not seen new airborne capabilities in years."

The website said the radome has a distinctive triangle design on top, similar to what is seen on some Chinese airborne early warning aircraft but not used on U.S. or Russian aircraft. "This could indicate support or influence from China, although the triangle alone is not conclusive proof," the website said.

Jung Chang Wook, head of the Korea Defense Study Forum think tank in Seoul, said the aircraft would detect and track the movements of enemy planes and other military assets and relay information to land-based centers. If it has technology to distribute such information to its air and other assets and command their operations, it will help North Korea conduct military operations in a much faster manner.

"It's like the North Korean air forces opening their eyes," he said. He said that North Korea would need at least four airborne early warning aircraft to monitor South Korea 24 hours a day, as they can take turns to perform surveillance missions, undergo maintenance and conduct training. He said South Korea has four U.S.-made airborne early warning and control aircraft and plans to buy four more.

US drone lost over Red Sea same day as Houthi claim downing

By LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. military MQ-9 Reaper drone disappeared over the Red Sea the same day Houthi militants in Yemen claimed to have shot one down, according to a defense official with knowledge of the operation.

U.S. Central Command lost contact with the drone Monday, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The day given by the official coincides with the one in an X post by the Houthis that they had downed a Reaper in a coastal region of Yemen using a surface-to-air missile.

It's unclear whether the Houth-

is were responsible for the loss of the drone.

"If true, then this is the latest example of the increased reckless actions by the Iranian-backed Houthis that pose a risk to regional stability," the defense official told Stars and Stripes through an email.

News of the drone's disappearance comes just days after the State Department reinstated its designation of the Houthis as a terrorist group.

The Houthis have launched hundreds of strikes at commercial and military vessels in the Red Sea since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza on Oct. 7, 2023.

In response to the Houthis' actions, the U.S. has carried out regular strikes against the group. The most recent, in early January, took out an underground weapons storage site.

The U.S. has lost 12 MQ-9 Reaper drones to the Houthis since the start of the war in Gaza, the defense official said.

The aircraft, which cost around \$30 million apiece, are primarily used to gather intelligence but can also be used to perform precision strikes.

Houthi activity in the Red Sea and nearby waters has significantly slowed since Israel and Hamas agreed to a tentative ceasefire in January.



VICTORIA NUZZI/U.S. Air Force

An MQ-9 Reaper lifts off from Creech Air Force Base, Nev., Feb. 8.



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NATION

Address: Trump voters 'didn't sign up for this,' Democrat says

FROM PAGE 1

event — a reflection of the party's disapproval of Trump and some of the lingering divisions over how vigorously to oppose him — there were also protests — silent and loud — during the speech.

As Trump walked past her, Rep. Melanie Stansbury, D-N.M., held a small handwritten sign that read "This is NOT Normal." Others held signs aloft as the president spoke, including "Musk Steals" and "Save Medicaid." Just several minutes into the speech, Rep. Al Green, D-Texas, stood up, shook his cane in the air and shouted at Trump, "You don't have a mandate!"

Republicans drowned him out with chants of "USA! USA! USA!" but his protests continued.

"Mr. Green, take your seat. Take your seat, sir," Johnson said, banging the gavel, before directing the House sergeant at arms to "remove this gentleman from the chamber."

Even for a president who has often seemed omnipresent since taking office for his second term, the address provided his largest audience since the inauguration.

He began with an optimistic tone, at times oozing confidence and swagger.

"America's momentum is back. Our spirit is back, our pride is back, our confidence is back," he said. "And the American Dream is surging bigger and better than ever before."

But there was little attempt at unity or reconciliation, as he called Joe Biden "the worst president in American history" and chided many of the Democrats in front of him for refusing to applaud.

He also repeatedly blamed his predecessor, faulting Biden for the economy and foreign policy.

"Joe Biden especially let the price of eggs get out of control — and we are working hard to get it back down," he said. The price of a dozen eggs in U.S. cities hit a record \$4.95 in January, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as millions of hens have been slaughtered in the hopes of containing a bird flu outbreak.

Earlier Tuesday, Trump imposed tariffs on the nation's three top trading partners, which quickly triggered retaliation from China, Mexico and Canada and unleashed a potentially economically devastating trade war and massive market losses. China imposed tariffs of up to 15% on many U.S. farm products and blacklisted more than 20 U.S. companies.

Several top Republicans have expressed concern over the tariffs and held out hope that they would be implemented for only a short time. A few notably did not stand to applaud when Trump mentioned reciprocal tariffs kicking in next month.

Some administration officials have hinted that the tariffs could be short-lived, but Trump gave little indication of that during his remarks.

"Whatever they tariff us, other countries, we tariff them. Whatever they tax us, we tax them," he said. "If they do nonmonetary tariffs to keep us out of their market, then we do nonmonetary barriers to keep them out of our market. We will take in trillions of dollars and create jobs like we have never seen before."

One of the most explosive aspects of Trump's first few weeks has been foreign policy, where he has raised the prospect of the United States taking over Gaza, aligned



ERIC KAYNE/Stars and Stripes

Rep. Al Green, D-Texas, heckles Trump during the address. He shouted at Trump, "You don't have a mandate!" Green was eventually removed from the chamber.

himself more closely with Russia and started a combustible relationship with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

He returned to more restrained language during his speech — suggesting that he was open to working on a ceasefire — and he read aloud from what he said was "an important letter" from Zelenskyy that stated: "Ukraine is ready to come to the negotiating table as soon as possible."

"It's time to end this senseless war," Trump said. "If you want to end wars, you have to talk to both sides."

Zelenskyy hours earlier had proposed a new framework for a partial ceasefire with Russia, saying that Kyiv would be willing to release prisoners and agree to a truce that

would ban long-range attacks on civilian and energy infrastructure.



Slotkin

The offer came after the Trump administration declared that Zelenskyy was not ready for peace and froze the U.S. military assistance that Ukraine has been relying on to battle the Russian invasion.

In his speech, Trump proposed "a gigantic natural gas pipeline in Alaska" and actions "to dramatically expand production of critical minerals and rare earths" in the United States. He said that Congress should repeal the Chips and Science Act, which passed during the Biden administration with bipartisan support. He called on Congress to pass a sweeping legislation and spending bill and asked it to pass a new law "permanently banning and criminalizing sex changes on children."

Trump also devoted a chunk of his remarks to attempts to cut government spending, looking up in the gallery at Elon Musk, the tech billionaire who has headed up the U.S. DOGE Service efforts.

At another point, as Trump proclaimed that "the days of rule by unelected bureaucrats are over," several Democrats shouted and pointed at Musk in the gallery.

Trump falsely stated that DOGE has found "hundreds of billions of dollars of fraud" — it has claimed to cut \$9 billion thus far, and even that number is in doubt — and ticked through a range of projects around the world that he claimed no one cared about and in countries that no one has heard of.



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Devarjay "DJ" Daniel holds an honorary U.S. Secret Service special agent ID, presented to him by Secret Service Director Sean Curran, right, as President Donald Trump addresses a joint session of Congress at the Capitol in Washington, on Tuesday.

He also claimed that they were taking aim at massive "fraud" in Social Security being paid out to deceased Americans who are still in the system. Analysts and watchdog groups have said that the problem is neither new nor a sign of widespread fraud, but a technological issue with Social Security's tracking system that does not represent a source of significant spending.

His speech in several instances had the feel of a reality show, with guests in the room receiving life-altering news.

To high school senior Jason Hartley, whose father was killed as a Los Angeles County sheriff's deputy when Jason was a child, Trump announced that he was accepted into West Point.

And, in perhaps the warmest moment of the night, Trump awarded honorary Secret Service agent status to 13-year-old DJ Daniel, a cancer survivor who was attending the event with his father. DJ looked shocked as Secret Service Director Sean Curran handed him the badge as the crowd applauded.

Trump also highlighted the low number of illegal border crossings and said his administration "has launched the most sweeping border and immigration crackdown in American history."

Illegal crossings along the southern border have plummeted in recent months. But the decline also began last year, after Mexico increased enforcement and the Biden administration implemented new rules that effectively barred asylum claims by those who cross the border and arrive illegally.

He downplayed the need for legislation, disparaging Democrats for saying that it was needed.

"It turned out that all we really needed was a new president," he said as Republicans applauded loudly.

Michigan Sen. Elissa Slotkin delivered the Democratic response to the speech, coming at a moment with deep party divisions. She urged Americans: "Don't tune out. It's easy to be exhausted."

Speaking from Wyandotte, Mich., Slotkin noted the "sense of patriotism" in the working-class town.

"It might not seem like it, but plenty of places like this still exist across the United States," she said. "Places where people believe that if you work hard and play by the rules, you should do well and your kids should do better."

While many Democrats did attend the speech, several chose to boycott, including Sens. Patty Murray of Washington and Ron Wyden of Oregon, and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York.

"These are not normal times," said Rep. Gerry Connolly, D-Va., who said he has never missed a presidential speech to Congress since he took office in 2009. "I will not attend Donald Trump's address to Congress."

Several brought guests who are being negatively affected by Trump's policies, including farmers who are reeling from tariffs, cancer researchers worried that clinical trials are at risk because of funding cuts, and veterans who rely on federal health benefits.

"These are real people that the administration is hurting with their chaos, with their tariffs and with their Musk-led quest to ship \$2 trillion from regular people to pay for \$2 trillion in tax cuts for the rich," said Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., referring to Musk. "Americans who voted for the president didn't sign up for this. They wanted lower costs."

Among the guests sitting with first lady Melania Trump were Marc Fogel, the history teacher from Pennsylvania who was freed last month from a Russian prison and returned to the United States in a surprise move the Trump administration described as a "show of good faith" from Russia to end the war in Ukraine, along with his mother, Malphine, who had asked Trump to help. There were also relatives of Corey Comperatore, the former Pennsylvania firefighter who was killed during an assassination attempt on Trump last summer in Butler, Pa.

Trump claimed a divine mandate in the wake of the assassination attempt, as he has done previously. "I was saved by God to make America great again," he said in his address.

NATION

Trump repeats his call to acquire Greenland, retake Panama Canal

BY NIHA MASIH
The Washington Post

In President Donald Trump's address to a joint session of Congress on Tuesday night, he reiterated that the United States should acquire Greenland and retake control of the Panama Canal, doubling down on his expansionist foreign policy vision.

During his nearly 100-minute speech, Trump said that although he supported Greenland's right to determine its future, he would welcome it into the United States.

"And I think we're going to get it — one way or the other, we're going to get it," he said in remarks that are likely to cause fresh alarm in Greenland, an autonomous territory of Denmark. It is the world's largest island that is not a continent and has a population of at least 56,000 people, most of whom reside on the 20% of land not covered by ice.

Trump emphasized that Greenland, which houses a U.S. military base, was important for what he described as security reasons. "It's a very small population but very, very large piece of land, and very, very important for military security," he said.

Danish officials have repeatedly stated that Greenland is not for sale, and leaders in Nuuk, Greenland's capital, have said that their people do not want to be part of the United States. Last month, Greenland passed a law to ban foreign contributions to political parties in an act of self-assertion following Trump's rhetoric.

Following Trump's speech, Greenland's prime minister, Mute Bourup Egede, said: "We don't want to be Americans, nor Danes ... Americans and their leader need to understand this. We're not for sale and cannot simply be taken. Our future will be decided by us in Greenland," he wrote on social media.



TARINA RODRIGUEZ/Bloomberg

A tug guides a container ship through the Cocoli Locks at the Panama Canal in Panama City, Panama, last month. President Donald Trump has alleged Chinese influence over the canal.

Greenland is due to hold a general election on Tuesday in which independence and foreign interference is expected to be an issue. Greenland gained home rule in 1979, after more than two centuries of Danish rule. Greenlandic leaders manage domestic affairs, and Denmark retains control over foreign policy and defense.

Trump also repeated his previous assertions about retaking the Panama Canal, a crucial shipping waterway that connects the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. He argued that the waterway was important for enhancing national security and that it was "built by Americans for Americans, not for others."

Trump has also alleged Chinese influence over the canal. "We didn't give it to China; we gave it to Panama, and we're taking it back," Trump said in his speech. Earlier Tuesday, CK Hutchinson, a Hong Kong-based company, announced it would sell its stake in two Panama Canal ports to a U.S.-led consortium, apparently in re-

sponse to threats from Trump.

Trump mentioned the development and said the Panama Canal was built at a "tremendous cost" to the United States.

The United States took over the construction of the canal in the early 1900s from the French. For more than six decades, the United States controlled the waterway and the surrounding Canal Zone, establishing numerous military bases, which over time fueled resentment among locals. President Jimmy Carter granted Panama eventual control of the canal through a 1977 treaty.

Trump claimed during his speech that the agreement had been violated and that Secretary of State Marco Rubio was in charge, adding with a chuckle, "Now we know who to blame if anything goes wrong."

Besides Greenland and the Panama Canal, Trump has also expressed a desire for Canada to become the 51st U.S. state, prompting sharp criticism from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Trump: Abbey Gate suspect caught, to face charges in US

BY ERIC TUCKER
AND ZEKE MILLER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A suspected senior planner in the suicide bombing at the Kabul airport that killed 13 American service members during the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan has been taken into custody and will appear Wednesday in federal court in the United States to face charges.

President Donald Trump announced the arrest during his Tuesday night address to Congress, with the White House and the Justice Department subsequently identifying the suspect as Mohammad Sharifullah. Officials accuse him of being a member of Islamic State's Afghan affiliate, known as ISIS-Khorasan, or ISIS-K, and say he admitted his role in that attack and others during an interview with FBI agents on Sunday after being taken into custody.

Senior Pakistani intelligence officers on Wednesday confirmed the arrest and said Sharifullah, also known as Jafar, was captured in the country's restive southwest Balochistan province near the border with Afghanistan after multiple operations had failed to seize him. The officers, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media, said Sharifullah had joined the militant group in 2016 and was involved in numerous attacks in Afghanistan.

Sharifullah is charged in federal court in Virginia with providing material support to a foreign terrorist organization, resulting in death. Additional charges are possible as the case moves through the court system.

Trump, in his address to Congress, said he was "pleased to announce that we have just apprehended the top terrorist responsible for that atrocity. And he is right now on his way here to face the swift sword of American justice."

The Abbey Gate bombing, in the waning days of an airlift for those fleeing the Taliban takeover of the country amid the withdrawal by U.S. forces from the country, occurred in August 2021 when a suicide bomber attacked crowds of Afghans flocking to Kabul's airport. Besides 13 U.S. service members, about 170 Afghans were also killed in the attack, which triggered congressional criticism and undermined public confidence in President Joe Biden's administration.

According to an FBI affidavit filed as part of the case, Sharifullah admitted under questioning to having joined ISIS-K in 2016 and to having participated in the Abbey Gate bombing by scouting a route to the airport for the bomber and communicating to other members of the militant group that the path was clear. The bomber was later identified as Abdul Rahman al-Logari, an ISIS militant who had been in an Afghan prison but was released by the Taliban as the group took control of the country that summer.

Sharifullah was arrested in 2019 by the U.S.-backed Afghan government at the time but escaped from prison on Aug. 15, 2021, as the Taliban took Kabul.

The Pakistani officials said Sharifullah remained on the run in the border areas of Balochistan until his arrest through a joint intelligence-sharing operation between Pakistan and the U.S.

A look at false, misleading claims made by Trump in address

Associated Press

President Donald Trump's address to a joint session of Congress Tuesday night highlighted several of the initiatives he's started in his first six weeks in office, but many of his comments included false and misleading information. Here's a look at the facts.

■ **He overstated the numbers on his immigration crackdown**

TRUMP: "Illegal border crossings last month were by far the lowest ever recorded. Ever."

THE FACTS: Trump wrote in a Truth Social post on Saturday that Border Patrol apprehended 8,326 people on the U.S.-Mexico border last month. But U.S. government data show that Border Patrol routinely averaged below that number in the 1960s.

While February marked the lowest arrest total in decades, Border Patrol averaged less

than February 2025 for the first seven years of 1960s. The government website does not track U.S.-Mexico border totals before 1960. Border Patrol's monthly average was 1,752 arrests in 1961.

■ **Economists differ with Trump on tariffs**

TRUMP: "Tariffs are about making America rich again and making America great again. And it's happening. And it will happen rather quickly. There'll be a little disturbance, but we're OK with that. It won't be much."

THE FACTS: Trump believes that taxing imports is the road to riches for the U.S. Most economists say Trump's tariffs would hurt the country, as they're tax increases that could raise the costs of goods in ways that could also harm economic growth. Trump suggests that the impact on inflation would be minimal.

When the Yale University Budget Lab looked at the tariffs that Trump imposed Tues-



ERIC KAYNE/Stars and Stripes

Democratic lawmakers silently protest on as President Donald Trump addresses a joint session of Congress on Tuesday.

day on Canada, Mexico and China, it found that inflation would increase a full percentage point, growth would fall by half a percentage point and the average household would lose

about \$1,600 in disposable income.

■ **A closer look at Army recruitment numbers**

TRUMP: "I am pleased to report that in January, the U.S. Army had its single best recruiting month in 15 years."

THE FACTS: Trump has repeatedly claimed that the Army's recruiting turnaround is tied to his time in office.

In fact, according to Army data, recruiting numbers have been increasing steadily over the past year, with the highest total coming in August 2024 — before the November election.

A significant driver of the recruiting success was the Army's decision to launch the Future Soldier Prep Course at Fort Jackson, S.C., in 2022. That program gives lower-performing recruits up to 90 days of academic or fitness instruction to help them meet military standards and move on to basic training.

NATION

Trump gives tariff break to automakers

By JOSH BOAK
AND ROB GILLIES
Associated Press

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump is granting a one-month exemption on his stiff new tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada for U.S. automakers, amid fears that the trade war could harm U.S. manufacturers.

The announcement comes after Trump spoke with leaders of the “big 3” automakers, Ford, General Motors and Stellantis, on Wednesday.

“We spoke with the big three auto dealers,” Trump said in a statement read by his spokesperson. “We are going to give a one month exemption on any autos coming through USMCA,” referencing the North American free trade agreement he renegotiated in his first term.

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick had said earlier Wednesday that there might be carveouts coming to the 25% tariffs placed on Canada and Mexico by Trump, a softening of the U.S. position after Tuesday’s tax hike hurt the stock market, worried consumers and started a trade war.

But Trump’s tariffs have stirred up bad blood among allies who see his aggression on trade as misguided, leading Canada to suggest it will reject any offer to water down the day-old tariffs.

The trade war isn’t necessarily a brief skirmish as the White House maintains that even harsher taxes on imports are coming in April, even as businesses and consumers worry that the cost of paying the taxes will crush economic growth, worsen inflation and cause layoffs.



DARREN CALABRESE/AP

An employee removes American-made wine from their shelves at Bishop's Cellar in Halifax on Wednesday.

Still, the administration is grappling with the fallout of tariffs beloved by Trump that could create serious blowback for his political mandate to lower prices. The president has recognized that his tariffs could cause some financial pain, yet he has repeatedly tried to suggest the tariffs will lead to more domestic investment and factory work.

“There are going to be tariffs, let’s be clear,” Lutnick said in a Wednesday interview with Bloomberg Television. “But what he’s thinking about is which sections of the market that can maybe—maybe—he’ll consider giving them relief until we

get to, of course, April 2.”

On April 2, Trump plans to announce what he calls “reciprocal” tariffs to match the tariffs, taxes and subsidies provided by other countries. That could dramatically increase the tariff rates charged globally while maintaining the risk of a broader tariff.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is not willing to lift Canada’s retaliatory tariffs if Trump leaves any tariffs on Canada, a senior government official told The Associated Press.

On Tuesday, Trump put 25% taxes on imports from Mexico and Can-

ada, taxing Canadian energy products such as oil and electricity at a lower 10% rate. The president also doubled the 10% tariff he placed on China to 20%.

The administration has said the tariffs are about stopping the smuggling of drugs such as fentanyl, but Trump also suggested that the tariffs are about getting rid of persistent U.S. trade deficits.

The taxes almost immediately triggered retaliatory measures by Canada and China, with Mexico planning to announce its response on Sunday.

The U.S. stock market has given

up all of the gains since Trump’s victory in last year’s presidential election and consumers are already exhausted by inflation and worried the costs of the tax hike would lead to higher prices.

Those concerns may have prompted Lutnick to signal a possible retreat in a Tuesday afternoon interview with the Fox Business Network.

But in his joint address to Congress on Tuesday night, Trump seemed intent on pushing forward with tariffs. The U.S. president tried to play down the possible economic harm as “a little disturbance,” as the administration has suggested that the estimates of higher inflation and slower growth in most outside economic forecasts are overblown.

“It may be a little bit of an adjustment period,” he said after claiming that farmers would benefit from reciprocal tariffs on countries that have tariffs on U.S. exports. “You have to bear with me again and this will be even better.”

Ontario Premier Doug Ford told the AP the auto sector in the U.S. and Canada will last approximately 10 days before they start shutting down the assembly lines in the U.S. and in Ontario.

“People are going to lose their jobs,” he said.

Trudeau said on Tuesday that his country would plaster tariffs on over \$100 billion of American goods over the course of 21 days, stressing that the United States had abandoned a long-standing friendship.

Beijing responded to Trump’s tariffs with tariffs of its own up to 15% on a wide array of U.S. farm exports.

Watchdog wants thousands of federal workers to be reinstated

By CHRIS MEGERIAN
AND MICHAEL KUNZELMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A government watchdog wants more than 5,000 probationary employees to be reinstated at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the latest example of resistance to President Donald Trump’s efforts to downsize the federal workforce.

The Office of Special Counsel made the request Friday and disclosed it Tuesday. If the request is granted by the Merit Systems Protection Board, the employees would be back on the job for 45 days as an investigation continues. At that point, the board could be asked to make a final decision to reinstate them.

Special Counsel Hampton Dellinger said the firings “appear to have been carried out in a manner inconsistent with federal person-

nel laws.” It’s possible that he could reach similar conclusions about employees at other departments as well.

Probationary workers have been targeted for layoffs across the federal government because they’re usually new to the job and lack full civil service protection. They were often summarily informed that they were being fired for poor performance.

The case is proceeding at a moment of turbulence for the federal workforce and the offices responsible for protecting workers’ rights. Not only are administration officials laying off thousands of employees, Trump wants to remove obstacles by firing Dellinger and Cathy Harris, a member of the Merit Systems Protection Board.

Both attempts have been blocked through litigation, most recently on Tuesday when U.S.

District Judge Rudolph Contreras ruled that Trump did not have the power to remove Harris from office “at will.”

The attempt to fire her was illegal because he didn’t seek to remove her for “inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office,” the judge said.

The one-sentence email that informed Harris of her firing didn’t cite any of those reasons, Harris’ attorneys said.

The Merit Systems Protection Board is responsible for protecting federal government employees from political reprisals or retaliation for whistleblowing. Its administrative judges issue around 5,000 decisions annually.

Trump’s recent executive orders regarding federal employees have led to a surge in new appeals over the past few weeks, according to Harris’ lawyers.

IRS: DHS seeks to borrow workers

FROM PAGE 1

Already, about 7,000 probationary IRS employees with roughly one year or less of service were laid off from the organization in February.

The organization also offered IRS employees — along with almost all federal employees across the government — “deferred resignation program” buyouts, though IRS employees involved in the 2025 tax season were told earlier this month that they would not be allowed to accept a buyout offer from the Trump administration until mid-May, after the taxpayer filing deadline.

In addition to the planned layoffs, the Trump administration intends to lend IRS workers to the Department of Homeland Security to assist with immigration enforcement.

In a letter sent in February, DHS Secretary Kristi Noem asked Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to borrow IRS workers to help

with ongoing immigration crackdown efforts.

Koskinen and six other former IRS Commissioners wrote in the New York Times earlier this month that: “Aggressive reductions in the I.R.S.’s resources will only render our government less effective and less efficient in collecting the taxes Congress has imposed.”

According to a White House memo sent to federal agencies in late February, agencies are required to develop a report by March 13 on their reduction in force plans — but it is unclear whether the White House will approve the IRS’ reorganization plan and over what period of time it would be implemented.

Representatives for the White House, the Treasury Department and IRS did not respond to an Associated Press request for comment.

The New York Times first reported the deliberations.

NATION

Storms create blizzard conditions, tornadoes

By JEFF MARTIN
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Powerful storms that killed two people in Mississippi and ripped roofs from buildings in a small Oklahoma town charged across the nation, threatening more communities Wednesday in the central to eastern United States with wide-ranging weather.

Meanwhile, forecasters warned that a Pacific storm was expected to bring widespread rain and mountain snow across California and other parts of the West from Wednesday into Friday.

A tornado watch was issued Wednesday morning for parts of North and South Carolina until early afternoon. Tornado warnings were issued in Florida, North and South Carolina and Virginia on Wednesday morning.

On Tuesday, high winds forced some changes to Mardi Gras in New Orleans, which moved up and shortened the two biggest parades to wrap them up ahead of the bad weather. Tornadoes touched down Tuesday in Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana, according to preliminary information from the National Weather Service.

In Mississippi, two people died due to the severe weather, Gov. Tate Reeves said Tuesday in a social media post without going into detail. WAPT-TV reported that one person died from a falling power line in Madison County, while a driver in the same county was killed by a tree falling on his car.



Workers walk outside a damaged warehouse after storms moved through Tuesday in Lewisville, Texas.

LM OTERO/AP



The heaviest snowfall of the season blankets Father Hennepin Park in Minneapolis and obscures the downtown skyline on Wednesday.

STEVE KARNOWSKI/AP

Blizzard conditions hit eastern Nebraska overnight into Wednesday, bringing around 4 inches of snow and winds up to 65 mph, limiting visibility and closing numerous snowy roads, including a stretch of Interstate 80.

The Minneapolis-St. Paul area, southern Minnesota and much of Iowa were on the downward slide of a powerful winter storm. The storm brought the heaviest snow of the season to Minneapolis, where the National Weather Service reported 7.4 inches at the airport, and it was still falling early

Wednesday. That easily beat the 5.5 inches that fell at the airport Dec. 19.

The slippery roads led to dozens of crashes, the Minnesota State Patrol reported.

Schools across the Midwest closed, delayed opening or switched to e-learning. The winds that caused significant damage in some suburban Kansas City neighborhoods brought down trees and limbs that blocked roads and knocked out power to some buildings, according to Shawnee Mission District, one of the largest in Kansas. The district delayed opening.

In a South Carolina community near Myrtle Beach, where firefighters have been battling wildfires since the weekend, Horry County Fire Rescue said in a social media post that air drops weren't planned Wednesday due to heavy winds and that could limit strategic responses to flare-ups and spot fires. Firefighters won't enter the woods if winds become too intense because many trees have been structurally compromised. Instead, they will flow water from outside those areas.

The storms have left hundreds of thousands of people without electricity service on Wednesday morning across the central and southeastern United States, including more than 98,000 customers in Texas, about 48,000 in Tennessee and about 42,000 in Alabama, according to PowerOutage.us.

Supreme Court rejects Trump on USAID foreign-aid freeze

By GREG STOHR
Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court dealt a blow to President Donald Trump's foreign-aid freeze, reinstating a lower court order that requires the quick disbursement of as much as \$2 billion owed to contractors for already completed work.

Over four dissents, the justices on Wednesday rejected Trump's request to toss out the order, which affects money owed by the U.S. Agency for International Development and State Department. In its one-paragraph order, the majority told a federal trial judge to reset the timeline for paying the money since his original deadline has now passed.

Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Amy Coney Barrett joined the three liberals in the majority. Justices Samuel Alito, Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh dissented. Alito wrote for the group that he was "stunned" by the decision.

Humanitarian groups say the

money is urgently needed. They say the freeze is upending hundreds of projects, forcing USAID partner groups to lay off or furlough thousands of U.S. workers and putting people who depend on the assistance at risk of disease and death.

The Supreme Court action hints at a willingness to serve as a check on Trump as he asserts sweeping power to overhaul the government and slash spending even in areas where Congress has appropriated money. The decision also suggests the court in at least some cases is prepared to stand behind trial judges who conclude the administration might be violating the law.

The order is the court's first significant move on Trump's push since he was sworn in on Jan. 20. More than 100 lawsuits have been filed in an effort to rein in Trump.

In an order last week, U.S. District Judge Amir Ali gave the administration 36 hours to pay for work performed before Feb. 13. Ali issued that directive after aid

groups offered evidence the administration wasn't complying with his earlier order to lift the payment freeze.

Trump's team told the Supreme Court that it can't comply with Ali's follow-up order on such a short time frame.

Ali, appointed to the Washington bench by Joe Biden, will hold a hearing on Thursday. The aid groups also want the judge to block the White House from dismantling USAID.

At the Supreme Court, acting U.S. Solicitor General Sarah Harris said the administration had begun making individual payments and decided to retain 500 USAID awards, while canceling 5,800. The State Department is keeping 2,700 awards and terminating 4,100, she said.

The aid groups blasted the administration's claims that making quick payments isn't feasible, telling the high court the government was seeking to "leverage its procrastination."

US charges Chinese hackers, officials of cyberespionage

By ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Eight leaders or members of a Chinese hacking company have been charged alongside two Chinese law enforcement officers in a global cyberespionage campaign that targeted dissidents, news organizations and U.S. agencies, the Justice Department announced Wednesday.

A set of criminal cases adds new detail to what U.S. officials say is a hacking-for-hire ecosystem in China, in which private companies and contractors are paid by the Chinese government to target victims of particular interest to Beijing.

One indictment charges officials with a private hacking company known as I-Soon, whose officials conducted a sweeping array of breaches around the world as part of what U.S. officials say was a broad intelligence-gathering operation.

The targets were in some cases directed by China's Ministry of Public Security — two law enforcement officers were also charged — but in other instances the hackers acted at their own initiative and tried to sell

the stolen information to the government afterward, the indictment says. The company charged the government the equivalent of between approximately \$10,000 and \$75,000 for each email inbox it successfully hacked, officials said.

Among the targets of the hacking was the U.S. Treasury Department, which disclosed a breach by Chinese actors last year in what it called a "major cybersecurity incident."

I-Soon representatives did not immediately respond to an AP email requesting comment.

A spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington suggested that the allegations were a "smear" and said, "We hope that relevant parties will adopt a professional and responsible attitude and base their characterization of cyber incidents on sufficient evidence rather than groundless speculation and accusations."

A separate indictment charges two other Chinese hackers in a for-profit campaign that targeted victims including U.S. technology companies, think tanks, defense contractors and health care systems.

USAG RHEINLAND-PFALZ

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

45 years for day care owner in fentanyl death

NY NEW YORK — A woman who owned a New York City day care center where a toddler died after ingesting fentanyl has been sentenced to 45 years in prison after pleading guilty to federal drug charges.

Grei Mendez, 37, dropped her head into her crossed arms as Judge Jed S. Rakoff announced the sentence that triggered sobs among Mendez's family and the mother whose 22-month-old child, Nicholas Feliz-Dominici, died in September 2023.

Rakoff had previously given the same sentence to Mendez's husband, Felix Herrera-Garcia, after he pleaded guilty to drug charges and causing bodily harm related to the death. Mendez had pleaded guilty to drug charges including conspiracy to distribute narcotics resulting in death.

When the poisoning occurred on Sept. 15, 2023, Feliz-Dominici was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he died. Three other children exposed to the fentanyl at the day care survived after medics administered the overdose-reversing drug Narcan.

Baby seal rescued from street dies at aquarium

CT NEW HAVEN — A baby seal found stranded on a street near Connecticut's Yale University last month has died from severe digestive issues, a local aquarium announced Monday.

Mystic Aquarium said "Chappy," a nod to Chapel Street in New Haven where he was rescued, died while recovering at its Animal Rescue Clinic.

"The Mystic Aquarium staff are proud that they were able to give Chappy the best chance possible and are devastated by this outcome," the aquarium wrote on Facebook. "The reality of working with stranded animals can be tough sometimes, but Chappy was surrounded by love until the very end."

The underweight gray seal pup was brought to the clinic on Feb. 16 after being spotted by a passerby. The seal, which was believed to be about 5 to 6 weeks old, was more than 1,000 feet from the nearest river.

The aquarium in Mystic, Conn., said Chappy had been responding well to treatment for dehydration, malnutrition and a mild pneumonia but began having digestive difficulties as he transitioned to eating whole fish.

Officers charged for role in youth 'gladiator fights'

CA LOS ANGELES — Thirty officers at a Southern California juvenile detention facility have been charged for their role in facilitating so-called "gladiator fights" between youth in their care, the state's attorney general said Monday.

A grand jury indictment alleges



ADAM ROBISON, THE NORTHEAST MISSISSIPPI DAILY JOURNAL/AP

Rounding into form

Jennifer Slayton, with Slayton's Concrete, sets the forms that stamp a brick pattern on fresh concrete poured in the alleyway between Van Atkins Jewelers and Citizens Style in downtown Tupelo, Miss.

the officers at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall in Los Angeles County allowed and sometimes encouraged nearly 70 fights to take place between July 2023 and December 2023. More than 140 victims between the ages of 12 and 18 were involved.

"We believe that this was planned, it was intended," Attorney General Rob Bonta said.

The officers face charges including child endangerment and abuse, conspiracy, and battery.

The investigation began after the Los Angeles Times first obtained and published footage that shows a 17-year-old being attacked by at least six other young people, who come at him one-by-one as officers stand by watching. Some officers appear to laugh and shake hands with the participants in the beating.

Push is on to ban speed cameras near schools

GA DECATUR — Outside Beacon Hill Middle School in the Atlanta suburb of Decatur, like along hundreds of roadsides across Georgia, the unblinking eye of a camera tickets drivers who speed through a school zone.

Supporters say cameras slow down drivers and provide constant enforcement that understaffed police departments can't equal. But some state lawmakers want to ban them, saying the cameras are more about generating money for local governments and camera compa-

nies, and that some use them deceptively.

Georgia's fight will come to a head soon in its General Assembly, with three separate bills advancing out of committees. The state first authorized speed cameras, but only in school zones, in 2018.

More than 100 representatives in Georgia's 180-member House signed on to House Bill 225, which would ban the cameras. Dale Washburn, the Macon Republican sponsoring that measure, provided a stack of emails from outraged people ticketed statewide who said lights weren't flashing, they didn't even know they were in a school zone, or the cameras were otherwise unfair.

While the tickets in Georgia are civil citations and don't go on a driver's criminal record, the state does block people who don't pay from renewing their vehicle registration. The cameras generated more than \$112 million in revenue in 54 Georgia cities and counties since 2019, WANF-TV found last year. Camera companies typically take a share of the revenue.

Swing state's audit finds no voting machine errors

WI MADISON — An audit of the November election won by President Donald Trump in swing-state Wisconsin found that not a single vote was counted incorrectly, altered or missed by tabulating machines.

The audit also found no evidence that any voting machine or software had been hacked or otherwise tampered with. The Wisconsin Elections Commission released the audit's findings last week and is scheduled to discuss them Friday.

Trump defeated former Vice President Kamala Harris in Wisconsin by just over 29,000 votes.

In 2020, when Trump lost to Joe Biden by just under 21,000 votes, Trump and his supporters alleged there was widespread fraud in Wisconsin. But two partial recounts, a nonpartisan audit, a conservative law firm's review and multiple state and federal lawsuits did not support the claims.

Judge: Lobster fishermen can sue for defamation

ME SCARBOROUGH — A group of lobster fishermen can sue one of the world's largest seafood watchdog groups for defamation, a federal court has ruled, over a report that described Maine lobster as an unwise choice for consumers.

The threat to a rare whale species from getting tangled in fishing gear has prompted Monterey Bay Aquarium in California to caution against eating a variety of lobster that New England fishermen have harvested for centuries. Seafood Watch, a conservation program operated by the aquarium, placed lobster from the U.S. and Canada on its do-not-eat "red list" in 2022. Some

retailers pulled lobster from stores after the recommendation.

Judge John Woodcock ruled last month that the fishermen made a case that they suffered damage to their industry's reputation as a result of the red-listing, after the aquarium made a bid in U.S. District Court in Maine to have the 2023 lawsuit tossed. A spokesperson for the aquarium said Sunday it plans to appeal.

CIA to discuss 'creative problem solving' at SXSW

DC WASHINGTON — The CIA is headed to the South By Southwest festival to share tips on finding innovative solutions to complex challenges.

America's preeminent spy agency will deliver a presentation Sunday on creative problem solving at the annual SXSW music festival and tech conference held in Austin, Texas, the CIA announced Monday.

The typically tight-lipped agency said a CIA historian and one of the agency's public affairs officers will deliver the talk, titled "Mission Possible: The Spies' Guide to Creative Problem Solving."

The agency said its tips on creative problem solving are designed to be helpful to anyone, even if their particular challenges don't include running covert surveillance, organizing clandestine meetups or sniffing out double agents.

FACES

A sequel of sorts, but this time on stage

George Clooney revisits a journalistic hero in Broadway version of 'Good Night, and Good Luck'

By MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

George Clooney made waves in July when he called on Joe Biden to drop out of the presidential race, citing diminished capacity. For Clooney, there wasn't a choice to stay silent.

"I was raised to tell the truth and telling the truth means telling it when it's not comfortable," the actor-director and big Democratic booster told The Associated Press. "I did what I was raised and taught to do. That's it."

There was inevitable backlash — just as there was back when he was branded a traitor for speaking out against the invasion of Iraq — but Clooney took the hits.

"Telling the truth to power or taking chances like that — we've seen it over our history," he said. "We've been here and survived these things and we will survive it."

His truth-to-power stance takes another step this spring as Clooney makes his Broadway debut, telling the story of legendary reporter Edward R. Murrow in an adaptation of his 2005 film "Good Night, and Good Luck." Performances start March 12.

Murrow, who died in 1965, is considered one of the architects of U.S. broadcast news and perhaps his greatest moment was opposing Sen. Joe McCarthy, who cynically created paranoia of a communist threat in the 1950s.

"This is a story about who we are at our best, when we hold our own feet to the fire, when we check and balance ourselves," Clooney said. "What's scary about now and the difference between Murrow's time is that we've now decided that truth is negotiable."

Movie versus play

In the movie version — which Clooney co-wrote with Grant Heslov — the role of Murrow went to David Strathairn and Clooney played CBS executive Fred Friendly; this time, Clooney takes up the mantle of Murrow. Clooney



Edward R. Murrow, shown in 1954, is a pioneer of American broadcast news.

played Murrow when he and Heslov did a reading for theater investors, and the financiers agreed to sink their money in the play — on the condition Clooney stay in the lead role.

The transition to Broadway makes sense because many of the movie's reviewers said it felt to them a lot like a play. It was originally conceived as a live TV movie, an idea scuttled after Justin Timberlake exposed Janet Jackson's nipple in the 2004 Super Bowl halftime show and scared networks away from live events.

Journalism under fire

Two-time Oscar winner Clooney returns to Murrow at a time when journalists are under fire from the new administration and being denied access for not following White House talking points.

"We didn't decide to remount or do the play for any real political reasons," said Heslov, a frequent Clooney collaborator who is also making his Broadway writing debut. "It turns out that the environment might be ripe for it."

Murrow had a large presence in Clooney's home growing up. His father, Nick Clooney, a veteran



CHRISTOPHER SMITH, INVISION/AP

George Clooney participates in the "Good Night, and Good Luck" Broadway cast announcement at the Winter Garden Theatre on Feb. 6 in New York. The play revisits his 2005 film of the same name.

journalist, worked as a TV news anchor and host in a variety of cities including Cincinnati, Salt Lake City and Los Angeles. He also wrote a newspaper column in Cincinnati and taught journalism at American University.

"I'm the son of a journalist, a proper journalist, a guy who tells the truth. My father's still out there fighting the good fight," Clooney said. "I believe in it. I believe in the whole idea of how this works."

Broadway star power

Clooney is part of a starry group of Hollywood veterans arriving on Broadway this season, a list that includes Denzel Washington, Jake Gyllenhaal, Keanu Reeves, Robert Downey Jr., Jim Parsons, Sarah Snook and John Mulaney.

Clooney insisted before he came that he didn't want to be the highest paid actor on Broadway. It mirrored the time he mortgaged

his house and paid himself a salary of just \$1 to finance the movie version of "Good Night, and Good Luck."

"To me, it's like, pay Patti LuPone the most of anybody on Broadway. Pay somebody who's paid their dues. It shouldn't be somebody who's doing his first Broadway play," he said. "I can't do that. I don't want to be part of that. It doesn't make sense to me."

The box office for a ticket to see him at the Winter Garden is white-hot even before previews, but Clooney deflects that to Murrow.

"The words of Edward Murrow are words that kind of soothe us," he said. "It's a salve for insanity. And I think people are excited to be in a room and share some of those conversations."

'I know how to tell this story'

Clooney hasn't done a full-length play since 1986 in Chicago

as the comic relief in "Vicious," about punk icon Sid Vicious.

"Most of the cast members that I'm working with weren't born when I did my last play. So it's scary," he said.

He thought he'd missed his chance at Broadway, a notch on many actors' bucket lists. He's 63 now and it would mean uprooting his family for months.

"I've succeeded in my career. I'm not saying that I haven't succeeded, but I hadn't done anything on Broadway and I thought maybe it's too late," he said.

"I'd been offered a couple of plays that I didn't think I was right for, and I thought if I was going to do it, I should do something that I was right for. And this was an opportunity where I thought, 'Well, I know how to tell this story. I may not do a great job with it. You know, I may really screw it up, but I know what's required of the thing.'"

Oscars get biggest audience in 5 years despite small-film wins

From wire reports

Smaller movies didn't mean smaller viewership for the Oscars.

An estimated 19.7 million viewers watched Sunday night's 97th Academy Awards ceremony — the biggest audience in five years — according to figures released by ABC on Tuesday.

The triumph of "Anora," which won five Oscars including best picture, and other relatively little-seen favorites and winners still

brought a lift over the 19.5 million viewers last year, when the major hit "Oppenheimer" won the top categories and the even bigger hit "Barbie" was a major presence.

The Conan O'Brien-hosted telecast did have the benefit of 10 nominations for the big hit "Wicked" and an opening performance from its stars, Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande. The film won Oscars for its production design and costumes.

The show had an especially big lift among people aged 18 to 49, driven by mobile and laptop watches from younger viewers. The network said it was the most watched prime-time entertainment show of 2025.

Still, the upward trend comes from an all-time low during the pandemic, and changes in viewing habits for virtually all live events other than the Super Bowl mean the numbers the show once drew

are unlikely ever to be reached again.

A high-water mark of 55 million people watched "Titanic" clean up in 1998, and the show didn't have fewer than 30 million viewers until 2018, when it dipped to 26.5 million.

The bottom fell out with the pandemic-diminished show in 2021, seen by 9.85 million.

Hulu's first-time livestream of this year's Oscars cut off in the fi-

nal moments of the show, making viewers miss Mikey Madison's best actress win and the best picture win of "Anora" in real time.

Other news

■ George Lowe, a veteran voice actor known for playing the title role on Adult Swim's "Space Ghost Coast to Coast," has died. He was 67. No cause of death was released, but he was described as having endured a long illness.

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OPINION

No need to emulate Europe on free speech

BY JESSICA MELUGIN

Los Angeles Times

Vice President JD Vance's wise words to Europe about U.S. commitments to free speech are on a collision course with some of what's happening stateside. The Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Trade Commission are headed in the opposite direction of Vance's prudent remarks.

On Feb. 11, Vance valiantly informed an artificial intelligence summit in Paris that "American AI will not be co-opted into a tool for authoritarian censorship." A few days later he told an audience in Munich, "In Britain and across Europe, free speech, I fear, is in retreat."

His scolding is well deserved. The U.K. recently fined a man for praying silently, while not obstructing anyone, near an abortion clinic. Last month, a CBS News "60 Minutes" segment highlighted Germany's speech policing by interviewing prosecutors involved in pre-dawn raids of homes and electronics sparked by people's online comments critical of politicians. FIRE, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, has collected other egregious examples from around the Continent.

Thankfully, the First Amendment protects Americans from such violations of their free speech rights. That's why recent actions by the trade commission and the communications commission are so odd.

On Feb. 20, the FTC launched a public inquiry "to better understand how technology platforms deny or degrade users' access to services based on the content of their speech or affiliations, and how this conduct may have violated the law." But because those tech plat-

forms, including Facebook, YouTube and X, are all private companies, the First Amendment, which protects citizens from government censorship, as observed in Europe, is not implicated. Just the opposite: The FTC's implied crackdown on speech decisions of private tech companies is itself the threat to free speech.

By way of a real-world example, just as you should not expect the First Amendment to apply to your speech while you're visiting Disneyland, don't expect it on a social media platform either. Platforms can feel like and are often referred to as the town square, but just like Disneyland's Main Street, U.S.A., they are not actually a public place. They are, in fact, private property owned by entities with free speech rights of their own and a vested interest in curating behavior to create a specific environment.

Tech platforms are within their rights to remove content they do not wish to carry, just as Disney can remove you from its parks if you're waving a political banner or holding forth on a soapbox or otherwise "speaking" in a way that violates its rules. You may not like the outcome, but the legality of these expulsions is not in serious question.

The same situation of private activity as opposed to government infringement of constitutionally protected speech is being ignored at the FCC too. Before being elevated by President Donald Trump to chairman, FCC Commissioner Brendan Carr sent a letter in November to Alphabet, Apple, Meta and Microsoft accusing them of participating in a "cartel of censorship" by contracting with content moderation consulting company NewsGuard.

Likewise, the FCC's foray into newsrooms defies the First Amendment. The agency is in-

vestigating KCBS All News radio in San Francisco for its coverage of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement activities, which is protected by the First Amendment. It has also restarted a previously closed investigation of CBS News' editing of a pre-election interview with Kamala Harris. That action was followed by Trump calling for CBS to "lose its license." The agency has also opened an investigation into NBCUniversal and its parent company, Comcast, private corporations, over their DEI practices.

Even before the 2024 presidential election, Carr announced on cable news that the agency would look into whether a cameo appearance by Harris on NBC's "Saturday Night Live" had violated the "equal time rule," indicating license revocation was an option. As it turns out, the Trump campaign was given equal time by the network, but the most important question is why the anachronistic rule still exists at all.

This political moment provides an opportunity to get rid of outdated legacy regulations that can be used to favor or disfavor either party. If an equal time rule for broadcasters ever made sense, it was on the basis of scarcity of news outlets. But today's information and entertainment landscape is filled with cable news, social media, websites, satellite radio and many other media beyond licensed broadcasters. Why not get the FCC, whether led by Republicans or Democrats, out of the speech policing business altogether?

The United States should take its own advice and reduce executive agencies' meddling in speech issues online and over the airwaves.

Jessica Melugin is the director of the Center for Technology and Innovation at the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

What Democrats can learn from left-leaning Danes

BY RAMESH PONNURU

Special to The Washington Post

Something is working in the state of Denmark.

As David Leonhardt details in The New York Times, its progressive politicians have bucked the populist-right tide hitting other countries. Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen tells him they did it largely by moderating on immigration.

It's an approach that Democrats in our country could learn from — if only they were willing.

Their immoderation cost them in the last election. Election analysis found that voters who listed immigration as their top issue were slightly more likely to vote for Donald Trump than voters who listed abortion were to vote for Kamala Harris. Unfortunately for the Democrats, there were nearly twice as many voters who prioritized immigration.

Frederiksen argues that large-scale immigration undermines progressives in another way, as well: By increasing economic inequality and weakening the country's sense of cultural cohesion, it reduces voters' support for the welfare state, whose benefits they increasingly fear will go to new arrivals at their own expense. That's why Denmark's ruling Social Democrats have lowered immigration and stepped up deportations.

Democrats in the United States are not ready to follow the Danes' example. Their reluctance is partly a reaction to Trump. They find the president's policies and rhetoric on immigration outrageous. Capitulating to any of that would, they think, betray their legacy.

Some progressives continue to think, as well, that immigration is a "distraction," an issue invented to draw attention from more important issues such as the concentration of wealth. The solution is to address economic issues directly rather than fall for the tactic.

What these rationalizations have in common is a failure to take seriously the possibility that moderation on immigration is even possible. They assume that voters have no reasons for tightening control of the border other than racism or ignorance and that our alternatives are limited to laxity and brutality.

Voters themselves don't all think that way. Some Americans believe immigration has generally been good for our country, but that we should have less of it at this particular moment. They want restrictions on asylum to keep the border from being overwhelmed but also oppose deporting all undocumented immigrants. These are all, according to Gallup, the positions of the median American.

They're also positions in line with Democrats of the past, and not the distant past, either. In the 1990s, President Bill Clinton appointed a commission on immigration that issued balanced recommendations including a reduction in legal immigration, timely removal of undocumented newcomers and access to government benefits for those legally admitted. He endorsed those recommendations.

Returning to that older approach, or something like it, wouldn't make Democrats less effective in attacking Trump's excesses. It would make them more credible. It would also put them in a better position to advocate all of their positions on non-immigration issues.

Voters who favor the whole Trump package on immigration would, of course, stick with him. Other voters, though, might find it appealing were Democrats to do more to acknowledge the existence of trade-offs in immigration policy.

Accepting that these voters have rational concerns seems more promising than telling them that they feel ambivalence only because plutocrats have suckered them.

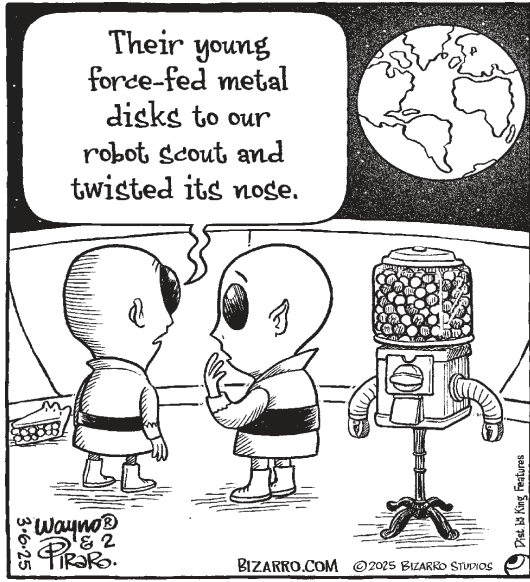
Frederiksen's point about the welfare state might raise a mischievous question for conservatives: Should we reconsider our prevailing view, too, and start favoring high levels of immigration because they make big government less viable?

I think not. For one thing, it might be that a lower-trust society will support fewer government benefits but also ask government to do more to broker inter-group conflicts. For another, a fractured country is worth avoiding for its own sake. We should want limited government so that our republic can flourish, not because we have given up on the idea of one.

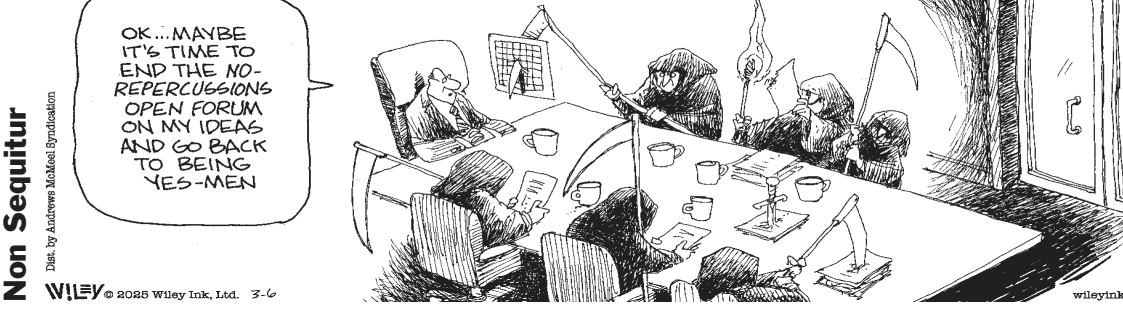
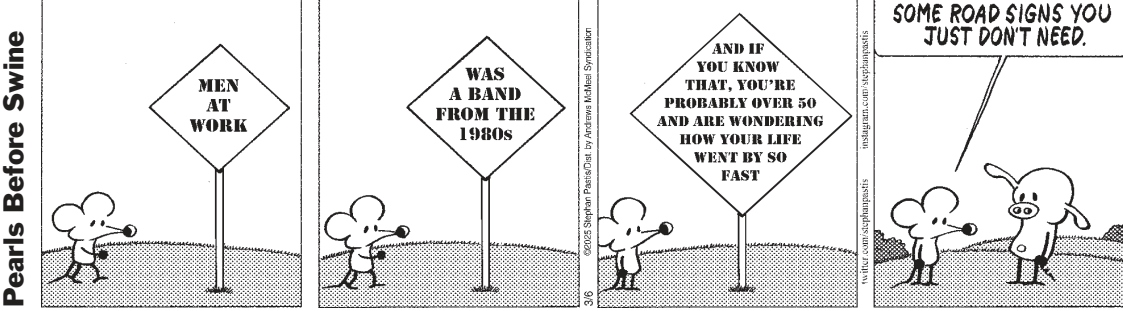
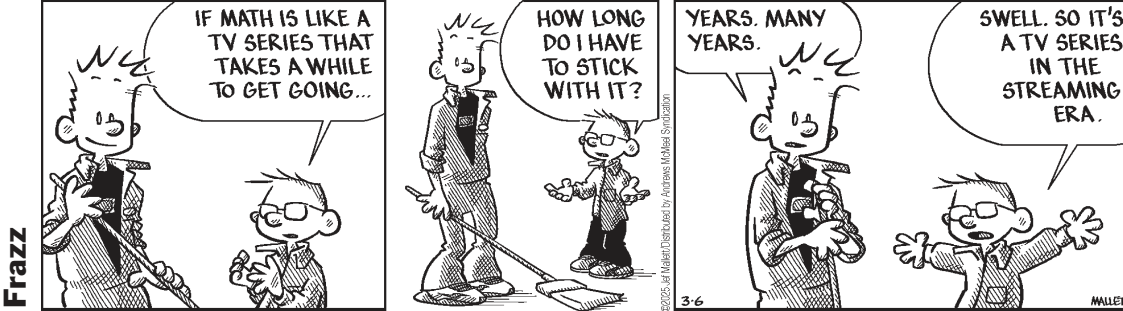
For now, though, there is little sign of a rethinking on either side of the immigration debate. Progressives are hoping that a public turn against Trump spares them from having to make painful changes, which is what happened during his first term. They should reflect that if the United States had accepted fewer immigrants over the past few decades, Trump might not have had a first term.

Ramesh Ponnuru, a contributing columnist for The Washington Post, is the editor of National Review and a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
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- ACROSS**
- 1 Clock radio toggle
 - 5 Hardly any
 - 8 Epidermis
 - 12 Humdinger
 - 13 "La-la" lead-in
 - 14 Actress Hatcher
 - 15 Teensy bit
 - 16 Genetic letters
 - 17 Asia's — Sea
 - 18 Rookie
 - 20 Gloomy
 - 22 Billboards
 - 23 Mac alternatives
 - 24 Laptop connection
 - 27 Off-white
 - 32 Standard
 - 33 Sushi choice
 - 34 Auction signal
 - 35 Big snake
 - 38 Make well
 - 39 Formerly called
 - 40 Hog haven
 - 42 Tinseltown trophies
 - 45 Willowy
 - 49 "Les États- —"
 - 50 Sashimi fish
 - 52 Par
 - 53 Fan publication
 - 54 Diarist Anais
 - 55 Landed
 - 56 Pundit's piece
- DOWN**
- 1 Actor Rickman
 - 2 Trumpet muffler
 - 3 Oxen's burden
 - 4 City of India
 - 5 Predicted
 - 6 A billion years
 - 7 "Pow!"
 - 8 Collar stiffener
 - 9 Lantern fuel
 - 10 Nest egg
 - 11 Cleopatra's river
 - 19 Freudian concept
 - 21 Chances, for short
 - 24 New Deal agcy.
 - 25 Author Fleming
 - 26 "American Dad!" character
 - 28 H.S. proficiency test
 - 29 Translucent paper
 - 30 Mauna —
 - 31 "Bad" cholesterol
 - 36 Stopped
 - 37 Not 'neath
 - 38 Serengeti howlers
 - 41 Boob tube
 - 42 Greek liqueur
 - 43 Use scissors
 - 44 Crooned
 - 46 Classic Kinks song
 - 47 Stumble
 - 48 911 responders
 - 51 Hasten

Answer to Previous Puzzle

L	I	M	P		L	O	S		S	P	A	T
A	R	E	A		S	A	L		T	A	R	O
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3-6 CRYPTOQUIP

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J P M P M P Z P O N Y V C B M O H O

M X C C H N I P O U ? W Q N Z W Y H O L U .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN THE MALICIOUS DOG WAS CELEBRATING HIS BAR MITZVAH, WHAT DID EVERYBODY CRY? "MUZZLE TOV!"

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals P

SCOREBOARD

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Men's conference tournaments

America East Conference At Higher-Seeded Schools First Round Saturday, March 8
 Vermont vs. New Hampshire
 Bryant vs. UMBC
 Maine vs. Mass.-Lowell
 Albany (NY) vs. Binghamton

Atlantic Sun Conference At Higher-Seeded Schools First Round Sunday, March 2
 Austin Peay 90, North Florida 69
 Cent. Arkansas 77, Stetson 72

Quarterfinals Monday, March 3
 Queens University 71, Florida Gulf Coast 65
 Jacksonville 78, E. Kentucky 67
 North Alabama 90, Austin Peay 64
 Lipscomb 84, Cent. Arkansas 66

Semifinals Thursday, March 6
 North Alabama vs. Jacksonville
 Lipscomb vs. Queens University

Big Sky Conference At Boise, Idaho First Round Saturday, March 8
 Weber St. vs. Sacramento St.
 N. Arizona vs. E. Washington

Quarterfinals Sunday, March 9
 N. Colorado vs. Weber St.-Sac. St. winner
 Montana vs. N. Arizona-E. Wash. winner

Monday, March 10
 Idaho St. vs. Montana St.
 Portland St. vs. Idaho

Big South Conference At Johnson City, Tenn. First Round Wednesday, March 5
 Gardner-Webb vs. SC-Upstate

Quarterfinals Friday, March 7
 High Point vs. Gardner-Webb-SC-Upstate winner
 Radford vs. Presbyterian
 UNC-Asheville vs. Charleston Southern
 Winthrop vs. Longwood

Coastal Athletic Conference At Washington, D.C. First Round Friday, March 7
 Delaware vs. Stony Brook
 Hofstra vs. NC A&T

Second Round Saturday, March 8
 Drexel vs. Elon
 Campbell vs. Delaware-Stony Brook winner
 Northeastern vs. Hampton
 Monmouth (NJ) vs. Hofstra-NC A&T winner

Quarterfinals Sunday, March 9
 Towson vs. Drexel-Elon winner
 William & Mary vs. TBD
 UNC-Wilmington vs. Northeastern-Hampton winner
 Coll. of Charleston vs. TBD

Horizon League Conference At Higher-Seeded Schools First Round Tuesday, March 4
 Oakland 96, Green Bay 72
 N. Kentucky 99, Detroit 75
 Wright St. 98, IU Indy 85

Quarterfinals Thursday, March 6
 Youngstown St. vs. Fort Wayne
 Cleveland St. vs. N. Kentucky
 Robert Morris vs. Wright St.
 Milwaukee vs. Oakland

Missouri Valley Conference At St. Louis, Mo. First Round Thursday, March 6
 S. Illinois vs. Indiana St.
 Illinois St. vs. Missouri St.

Murray St. vs. Evansville
 UIC vs. Valparaiso

Quarterfinals Friday, March 7
 Drake vs. S. Illinois-Indiana St. winner
 Belmont vs. Illinois St.-Missouri St. winner
 Bradley vs. Murray St.-Evansville winner
 N. Iowa vs. UIC-Valparaiso winner

Northeast Conference At Higher-Seeded Schools First Round Wednesday, March 5
 Fairleigh Dickinson vs. Stonehill
 LIU vs. Chicago St.
 St. Francis (Pa.) vs. Wagner
 CCSU vs. Le Moyne

Ohio Valley Conference At Evansville, Ind. First Round Wednesday, March 5
 Tennessee Tech vs. UT Martin
 Lindenwood vs. Morehead St.

Quarterfinals Thursday, March 6
 UALR vs. Tenn. Tech-UT Martin winner
 Tennessee St. vs. Lindenwood-Morehead St. winner

Patriot League At Higher-Seeded Schools First Round Tuesday, March 4
 Loyola (Md.) 77, Lehigh 73
 Lafayette 69, Holy Cross 68

Quarterfinals Thursday, March 6
 American vs. Lafayette
 Colgate vs. Army
 Boston U. vs. Navy
 Bucknell vs. Loyola (Md.)

Southern Conference At Asheville, N.C. First Round Friday, March 7
 Mercer vs. W. Carolina
 VMI vs. The Citadel

Quarterfinals Saturday, March 8
 Chattanooga vs. Mercer-W. Carolina winner
 UNC-Greensboro vs. VMI-The Citadel winner
 ETSU vs. W. Carolina
 Samford vs. Furman

Southland Conference At Lake Charles, La. First Round Sunday, March 9
 Texas A&M-CC vs. Houston Christian
 SE Louisiana vs. Incarnate Word

Summit League Conference At Sioux Falls, S.D. First Round Wednesday, March 5
 UMKC vs. Oral Roberts

Quarterfinals Thursday, March 6
 Omaha vs. UMKC-Oral Roberts winner
 St. Thomas vs. Denver

Friday, March 7
 N. Dakota St. vs. South Dakota
 S. Dakota St. vs. North Dakota

Sun Belt Conference At Pensacola, Fla. First Round Tuesday, March 4
 Southern Miss. 66, Coastal Carolina 63
 La-Lafayette 73, La-Monroe 69

Second Round Wednesday, March 5
 Georgia Southern vs. Southern Miss.
 Old Dominion vs. Louisiana-Lafayette

Third Round Thursday, March 6
 Georgia St. vs. Ga. Southern-S. Miss. winner
 Texas St. vs. Old Dominion-La.-Lafayette winner

Fourth Round Friday, March 7

Marshall vs. TBD
 Appalachian St. vs. TBD

Quarterfinals Saturday, March 8
 Arkansas St. vs. TBD
 Troy vs. TBD

Semifinals Sunday, March 9
 South Alabama vs. TBD
 James Madison vs. TBD

West Coast Conference At Las Vegas First Round Thursday, March 6
 Pacific vs. San Diego

Second Round Friday, March 7
 Portland vs. Pepperdine
 Loyola Marymount vs. Pacific-San Diego winner

Tuesday's men's scores

EAST

Bryant 90, New Hampshire 56
 Creighton 79, Seton Hall 61
 Georgetown 75, Villanova 73
 Lafayette 69, Holy Cross 68
 Loyola (Md.) 77, Lehigh 73
 Maine 71, Mass.-Lowell 70
 Miami (Ohio) 84, Buffalo 69
 NJIT 75, Binghamton 72
 VCU 71, Duquesne 62
 Vermont 79, Albany (NY) 71

SOUTH
 Arkansas 90, Vanderbilt 77
 Georgia 73, South Carolina 64
 Georgia Tech 89, Miami 74
 Kentucky 95, LSU 64
 La-Lafayette 73, La-Monroe 69, OT
 N. Kentucky 99, Detroit 75
 North Carolina 91, Virginia Tech 59
 Southern Miss. 66, Coastal Carolina 63
 Texas 87, Mississippi St. 82, OT
 Virginia 60, Florida St. 57

MIDWEST

Akron 96, Toledo 87
 BYU 88, Iowa St. 85, 2OT
 Bowling Green 71, N. Illinois 58
 Cent. Michigan 69, Ball St. 67
 Dayton 75, Saint Louis 67
 E. Michigan 83, Ohio 79
 Kent St. 77, W. Michigan 76
 Oakland 96, Green Bay 72
 Ohio St. 116, Nebraska 114, 2OT
 Purdue 100, Rutgers 71
 Wright St. 98, IU Indianapolis 85

SOUTHWEST

Baylor 61, TCU 58
 Memphis 75, UTSA 70
 SMU 77, Syracuse 75
 Temple 81, Tulsa 77
 Texas A&M 83, Auburn 72

FAR WEST
 Arizona 113, Arizona St. 100
 Boise St. 80, Air Force 57
 Colorado St. 83, San Jose St. 56
 Fresno St. 62, Wyoming 58
 New Mexico 71, Nevada 67
 Oregon 73, Indiana 64
 UNLV 74, San Diego St. 67
 West Virginia 71, Utah 69

Women's conference tournaments

America East Conference At Higher-Seeded Schools First Round Thursday, March 6
 Vermont vs. UMBC
 Bryant vs. Binghamton
 Maine vs. NJIT
 Albany (NY) vs. New Hampshire

Atlantic 10 Conference At Glen Allen, Va. First Round Wednesday, March 5
 George Washington vs. Loyola Chicago
 Saint Louis vs. St. Bonaventure
 VCU vs. La Salle

Second Round Thursday, March 6
 Fordham vs. Duquesne
 Rhode Island vs. George Washington-
 Loyola Chicago winner

UMass vs. Saint Louis-St. Bonaventure
 winner
 Dayton vs. VCU-La Salle winner

Atlantic Coast Conference At Greensboro, N.C. First Round Wednesday, March 5
 Boston College vs. Syracuse
 Virginia vs. Pittsburgh
 Stanford vs. Clemson

Second Round Thursday, March 6
 North Carolina vs. BC-Syracuse winner
 Virginia Tech vs. Georgia Tech
 California vs. Virginia-Pitt winner
 Louisville vs. Stanford-Clemson winner

Atlantic Sun Conference At Higher-Seeded Schools First Round Friday, March 7
 West Georgia Wolves vs. Austin Peay
 Jacksonville vs. Bellarmine

Big 12 Conference At Kansas City, Mo. First Round Wednesday, March 5
 BYU vs. UCF
 Colorado vs. Houston
 Cincinnati vs. Arizona St.
 Kansas vs. Texas Tech

Second Round Thursday, March 6
 Kansas St. vs. BYU-UCF winner
 Arizona vs. Colorado-Houston winner
 Iowa St. vs. Cincinnati-Ariz. St. winner
 Utah vs. Kansas-Texas Tech winner

Big East Conference At Uncasville, Conn. First Round Friday, March 7
 St. John's vs. Butler
 Providence vs. Georgetown
 DePaul vs. Xavier

Quarterfinals Saturday, March 8
 UConn vs. St. John's-Butler winner
 Marquette vs. Villanova
 Creighton vs. Providence-Georgetown
 Seton Hall vs. DePaul-Xavier winner

Big Sky Conference At Boise, Idaho First Round Saturday, March 8
 N. Colorado vs. Portland St.
 E. Washington vs. Sacramento St.

Big South Conference At Johnson City, Tenn. First Round Wednesday, March 5
 Presbyterian vs. UNC-Asheville

Quarterfinals Thursday, March 6
 High Point vs. Presbyterian-UNC-Asheville winner
 Charleston Southern vs. Winthrop
 Longwood vs. SC-Upstate
 Radford vs. Gardner-Webb

Big Ten Conference At Indianapolis, Ind. First Round Wednesday, March 5
 Washington vs. Minnesota
 Nebraska vs. Rutgers
 Iowa vs. Wisconsin

Second Round Thursday, March 6
 Oregon vs. Indiana
 Michigan vs. Washington-Minnesota
 winner
 Illinois vs. Nebraska-Rutgers winner
 Michigan St. vs. Iowa-Wisconsin winner

Horizon League Conference At Higher-Seeded Schools First Round Tuesday, March 4
 Wright St. 73, Youngstown St. 58
 Detroit 73, Milwaukee 62
 Oakland 62, IU Indy 56

Ohio Valley Conference At Evansville, Ind. First Round Wednesday, March 5

Southern Indiana vs. Tennessee St.
 UT Martin vs. W. Illinois

Quarterfinals Thursday, March 6
 UALR vs. Southern Indiana-Tennessee St. winner
 E. Illinois vs. UT Martin-W. Illinois winner

Southeastern Conference At Greenville, S.C. First Round Wednesday, March 5
 Tennessee vs. Texas A&M
 Georgia vs. Arkansas
 Mississippi St. vs. Missouri
 Florida vs. Auburn

Second Round Thursday, March 6
 Vanderbilt vs. Tenn.-Texas A&M winner
 Oklahoma vs. Georgia-Arkansas winner
 Mississippi vs. Miss St.-Missouri winner
 Alabama vs. Florida-Auburn winner

Southern Conference At Asheville, N.C. First Round Thursday, March 6
 UNC-Greensboro vs. W. Carolina
 Chattanooga vs. Mercer
 ETSU vs. Furman
 Wofford vs. Samford

Summit League Conference At Sioux Falls, S.D. First Round Wednesday, March 5
 Omaha vs. Denver

Quarterfinals Thursday, March 6
 Oral Roberts vs. South Dakota
 S. Dakota St. vs. Omaha-Denver winner

Friday, March 7
 St. Thomas vs. North Dakota
 N. Dakota St. vs. UMKC

Sun Belt Conference At Pensacola, Fla. First Round Tuesday, March 4
 Georgia Southern 70, Southern Miss. 59
 Marshall 73, South Alabama 59

Second Round Wednesday, March 5
 Louisiana-Monroe vs. Georgia Southern
 Texas St. vs. Marshall

Third Round Thursday, March 6
 Georgia St. vs. La-Monroe-Ga Southern
 winner
 La-Lafayette vs. Texas St.-Marshall
 winner

West Coast Conference At Las Vegas First Round Thursday, March 6
 Pepperdine vs. San Diego

Second Round Friday, March 7
 Santa Clara vs. Loyola Marymount
 Pacific vs. Pepperdine-San Diego winner

Tuesday's women's scores

EAST
 Marshall 73, South Alabama 59

SOUTH
 FAU 69, Memphis 62
 Georgia Southern 70, Southern Miss. 59
 New Orleans 73, McNeese St. 71
 Temple 60, Charlotte 54
 UAB 66, Tulane 64
 UTSA 67, East Carolina 48

MIDWEST
 Detroit 73, Milwaukee 62
 Oakland 62, IUPUI 56
 Tulsa 58, Wichita St. 46
 Wright St. 73, Youngstown St. 58

SOUTHWEST
 North Texas 68, Rice 56

FAR WEST
 Boise St. 72, Utah St. 59
 Colorado St. 90, San Jose St. 70
 New Mexico 77, Air Force 74
 San Diego St. 75, Fresno St. 61

DEALS

Tuesday's transactions

BASEBALL Major League Baseball National League
ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Optioned LHP Bailey Horn to Memphis (IL).
WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Assigned OF Stone Garrett outright to Rochester (IL).
BASKETBALL National Basketball Association
ATLANTA HAWKS — Re-signed F Dominick Barlow to a rest-of-season contract.
BOSTON CELTICS — Signed F Miles Norris to a two-way contract.
BROOKLYN NETS — Signed G Tyson Etienne to a two-way contract. Waived G Kendall Brown.
GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS — Converted the contract of G Pat Spencer to an NBA contract.
MILWAUKEE BUCKS — Converted the contract of G Ryan Rollins to an NBA contract.
NEW YORK KNICKS — Signed F MarJon Beauchamp to a two-way contract.

Claimed F Anton Watson off waivers.
TORONTO RAPTORS — Signed G Jared Rhoden to a two-way contract. Converted the contract of C Orlando Robinson to an NBA contract.
FOOTBALL National Football League
CLEVELAND BROWNS — Tendered TE Blake Whiteheart and LB Winston Reid.
DALLAS COWBOYS — Re-signed DT Osa Odighizuwa to four-year contract extension. Re-signed ST C.J. Goodwin to a one-year contract extension. Re-signed OL Brock Hoffman to a one-year contract extension.
GREEN BAY PACKERS — Signed K Brandon McManus to a three-year contract.
NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Released RB Jamaal Williams.
SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Released re-signed OLB Dre'Mont Jones, S Rayshawn Jenkins, DT Roy Robertson-Harris and OL George Fant.
HOCKEY National Hockey League
BOSTON BRUINS — Recalled F Georgii Merkulov and LW Jeffrey Viel from Provi-

dence (AHL).
COLORADO AVALANCHE — Signed G Adam Scheel to a one-year contract.
COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS — Placed C Cole Sillinger on injured reserve.
EDMONTON OILERS — Acquired C Trent Frederic, LW Max Jones and RW Petr Hausser from Boston in exchange for D Max Wanner, a 2025 second-round pick and a 2026 fourth-round pick as part of a three-team trade with New Jersey. Sent D Cam Dinnen to Bakersfield (AHL). Loaned LW Max Jones to Bakersfield.
FLORIDA PANTHERS — Signed C Jesper Boqvist to a two-year contract.
MONTREAL CANADIENS — Signed C Jake Evans to a four-year contract.
NEW JERSEY DEVILS — Moved D Jonas Siegenthaler to long-term injured reserve.
NEW YORK ISLANDERS — Loaned F Daylan Kueffer to Bridgeport (AHL).
PITTSBURGH PENGUINS — Reassigned D Isaac Belliveau and G Sergei Murashov to Wilkes-Barre/Scranton (AHL) from Kansas City (ECHL).
SAN JOSE SHARKS — Loaned RW Walker Duehr to San Jose (AHL).
SEATTLE KRACEN — Activated C Yanni

Gourde from long-term injured reserve. Reassigned C Ben Meyers to Coachella Valley (AHL).
TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Placed RW Cam Atkinson on waivers. Signed C Logan Brown to a one-year contract.
TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Recalled D Dakota Mermis from Toronto (AHL).
VANCOUVER CANUCKS — Sent LW Arshdeep Bains to Abbotsford (AHL). Recalled RW Jonathan Lekkerimaki from Abbotsford.
SOCCER Major League Soccer
FC DALLAS — Loaned M Diego Pepi to Texoma FC (USL League One) for the 2025 season.
NEW ENGLAND REVOLUTION — Signed D Keegan Hughes to a one-year contract.
National Women's Soccer League
ORLANDO PRIDE — Exercised their mutual option for F Ally Watt for 2026.
PORTLAND THORNS FC — Signed G Morgan Messner to a one-year contract.
UTAH ROYALS FC — Signed a short-term contract with D Sydney Jones and M Aria Nagai.

AP SPOTLIGHT

March 6
1964 — Boxing legend Cassius Clay joins the Nation of Islam and changes his name to Muhammad Ali, calling his former title a "slave name".
1983 — The 12-team United States Football League begins its first season with five games.
1984 — Dale Hawerchuck of the Winnipeg Jets sets the NHL record for most assists in one period, with five in the second period of a 7-3 triumph over the Los Angeles Kings.
1996 — Detroit's Chris Osgood becomes the third goalie in NHL history to score a goal, firing the puck into an empty net with 11 seconds remaining in the Red Wings' 4-2 victory over the Hartford Whalers.
2001 — George Mason beats North Carolina-Wilmington 35-33 in the second-lowest scoring game in the shot-clock era of NCAA basketball.
2019 — LeBron James scores his 32,293rd point in the 2nd quarter of a Lakers' 115-99 loss to Denver in LA to pass Michael Jordan for 4th place on the NBA all-time scoring list.

AUTO RACING/NFL



BUTCH DILL/AP

NASCAR countersued teams owned by Bob Jenkins, left, of Front Row Motorsports, and Michael Jordan, of 23XI Racing.

NASCAR counters with claim against 23XI, Front Row

BY JENNA FRYER

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — NASCAR on Wednesday filed a counterclaim against Michael Jordan-owned 23XI Racing and Front Row Motorsports alleging they “willfully” violated antitrust laws by orchestrating anticompetitive collective conduct in connection with the most recent charter agreements.

23XI and Front Row were the only two teams out of 15 that refused to sign the new agreements, which were presented to the teams last September in a take-it-or-leave-it offer a mere 48 hours before the start of NASCAR’s playoffs.

The charters are NASCAR’s version of a franchise and guarantee 36 of the 40 spots in each week’s field to the teams that hold them, as well as other financial incentives. 23XI and Front Row sued, alleging NASCAR and the France family that owns the stock car series are a monopoly.

NASCAR already has lost one round in court in which the two teams have been recognized as chartered organizations for the 2025 season as the legal dispute winds through the courts.

In the 30-page counterclaim filed Wednesday — which names Curtis Polk, Jordan’s longtime agent, as a defendant — NASCAR said “the undisputed reality is that it is 23XI and FRM, led by 23XI’s owner and sports agent Curtis Polk, that willfully violated the antitrust laws by orchestrating anticompetitive collective conduct in connection with the terms of the 2025 Charter Agreements.”

“This is not the first time that 23XI and FRM have sought to impose their viewpoints, and those of their counsel, on the racing teams writ large,” NASCAR continued. “And it is truly ironic that in trying

to blow-up the Charter system, 23XI and FRM have sought to weaponize the antitrust laws to achieve their goals.”

NASCAR alleged that Polk threatened to boycott NASCAR races as part of the negotiations on the new charters and is “attempting to misuse the legal system as a last resort to secure new terms.”

Polk started as an agent and is now Jordan’s business partner and business manager.

NASCAR’s counterclaim asks for an injunction eliminating guaranteed starting spots for charter teams “if Counterclaim Defendants persist in seeking to have the Charter Agreements declared as unlawful under the antitrust laws.”

NASCAR attorney Christopher Yates in a call after the filing argued the charter extensions signed by 13 teams provided significant improvements to the previous charter agreements and said “NASCAR doesn’t need the charter system,” but that the teams fought for it in 2016 and the most recent agreement “is fair and equitable” and gives teams what they wanted.

He said the charter system provides little benefit to NASCAR, and while NASCAR is “happy” to continue the system, it would discontinue charters if needed.

“Polk and 23XI’s other owners openly professed that they wanted to change NASCAR’s economic model by demanding more money for the teams from NASCAR media revenues, instead of teams competing against each other,” Yates said. “However, 23XI and FRM did not merely reject the terms of the 2025 Charters. Rather, those teams embarked on a strategy to threaten, coerce, and extort NASCAR into meeting their demands for better contract and financial terms.”

NFL BRIEFS

Chiefs trading guard Thuney to Bears for 4th-round pick

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo.— The Kansas City Chiefs are trading two-time All-Pro guard Joe Thuney to the Chicago Bears for a fourth-round pick in the 2026 draft, a person familiar with the deal told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the trade had not been finalized.

Thuney, 32, would have carried a salary cap number of nearly \$27 million next season, unless the Chiefs could have worked out a contract extension. That extension is now expected to come from the Bears, who have been working to retool their offensive line to better protect young quarterback Caleb Williams next season.

On Tuesday, the Bears agreed to send a 2025 sixth-round pick to the Los Angeles Rams for Jonah Jackson, a former Pro Bowl offensive guard. Jackson was drafted by the Detroit Lions, where he had played for new Chicago coach Ben Johnson.

Williams was sacked an NFL-high 68 times last season. The Texans’ C.J. Stroud was next with 63 sacks.

Kansas City would have liked to keep the dependable Thuney, who has started all 146 games in his nine NFL seasons. He is a four-time Super Bowl champion, winning two with the Patriots and two with the Chiefs, and has proven to be the consummate team player, even sliding out to left tackle late last season as Kansas City struggled to protect Patrick Mahomes’ blind side.

Vikings let QB Darnold hit free agent market

MINNEAPOLIS — The Minnesota Vikings will likely let their starting quarterback set the NFL free agent market for a second straight offseason.

The Vikings passed on the opportunity to place the franchise tag on Sam Darnold before the league’s deadline Tuesday, maximizing their options for bolstering the roster and potentially making the first-time Pro Bowl pick available to every team when free agency opens next week.

Though some of the circumstances varied, the Vikings essentially did the same a year ago in declining to re-sign Kirk Cousins.

The franchise tag comes at a steep fixed price based on the top salaries at that position group. For Darnold, that would’ve been between \$35 million and \$41 million for 2025.

With the Vikings eyeing several



PETER AIKEN/AP

Chiefs guard Joe Thuney gets set on the line before the play during the AFC title game against the Buffalo Bills on Jan. 26 in Kansas City, Mo.

areas for upgrades despite a 14-win season in 2024 and already developing a prized young quarterback in J.J. McCarthy, the salary cap space protected by their decision to let Darnold hit the market will go a long way toward their attempt to restock for another run at that elusive Super Bowl.

With roughly 20% of the league lacking a clear starting quarterback this spring and a much thinner draft class than the 2024 group that featured six first-round picks, Darnold at age 27 coming off a career-best performance is bound to get a big-money deal. The Las Vegas Raiders, Tennessee Titans and New York Giants are three teams in particular in need of a quarterback with ample salary cap space.

Jets release WR Adams amid roster overhaul

Davante Adams’ reunion with Aaron Rodgers lasted just 11 games with the New York Jets.

The team released the veteran wide receiver Tuesday, ahead of the start of the NFL’s new league year next week.

The move, which was expected, will save the Jets \$29.9 million in salary cap space. It follows the team’s announcement on Feb. 13 that they’re also moving on from Rodgers, Adams’ longtime teammate and friend.

Releasing Adams will cost the Jets \$8.3 million in dead-cap money, according to overthecap.com.

Adams caught 67 passes for 854 yards and seven touchdowns in 11 games with the Jets.

Eagles make Barkley highest-paid RB

Saquon Barkley will become the highest-paid running back in NFL history after his record-setting season helped the Philadelphia Eagles win the Super Bowl.

The Eagles are giving Barkley a two-year extension worth \$41.2 million with \$36 million guaranteed, a person with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press on Tuesday. The person, speaking on condition of anonymity because the contract extension hasn’t been announced, said Barkley’s new deal includes \$15 million in incentives.

Barkley ran for 2,504 yards in the regular season and playoffs, breaking Terrell Davis’ record for most yards rushing combined in one season. He had 2,005 yards in the regular season before sitting out the final game with a chance to break Eric Dickerson’s single-season mark.

The Eagles signed Barkley to a three-year, \$37.75 million deal in free agency last year after the New York Giants allowed the 2018 No. 2 overall pick to walk away.

NHL

ROUNDUP

Harley's late goal lifts Stars over Devils

Associated Press

DALLAS — Thomas Harley scored from near the blue line with 4.8 seconds remaining, lifting the Dallas Stars to a 4-3 victory over the New Jersey Devils on Tuesday night after the Stars squandered a two-goal lead in the third period.

Roope Hintz had a goal and two assists as the Stars won for the 11th time in 14 games and edged closer to the Central Division-leading Winnipeg Jets, who lost to the New York Islanders on Tuesday.

Hintz has three goals and 11 assists in his past five games.

Wyatt Johnston followed a hat trick with an unassisted goal, and Ilya Lyubushkin scored his first goal of the season for the Stars. Jason Robertson had two assists.

Timo Meier, Nico Hischier and Brett Pesce each scored with a man advantage for the Devils. Meier and Hischier scored on power plays, and Pesce got the tying tally with 4:08 remaining at 6-on-5 during a delayed penalty.

Casey DeSmith made 25 saves in his 11th victory as Jake Oettinger's backup. Jacob Markstrom had 17 stops for New Jersey in his second game back after missing five weeks with a knee injury.

Islanders 3, Jets 2: Brock Nelson had a goal and an assist as host New York took down NHL-leading Winnipeg.

Josh Morrissey and Nikolaj Ehlers scored for the Jets. Connor Hellebuyck made 26 saves, but Winnipeg dropped its third straight.

Hurricanes 2, Red Wings 1: Jordan Martinook had a goal and an assist in Carolina's victory at Detroit.

Jordan Staal also scored as the Hurricanes won for the third time in four games. Frederik Andersen stopped 24 shots.

Predators 6, Bruins 3: Ryan O'Reilly scored twice and had an assist, Steven Stamkos had a goal and two assists and Nashville picked up a rare road win.

Tommy Novak and Jonathan



JULIO CORTEZ/AP

Stars goaltender Casey DeSmith falls to the ice while defending against New Jersey Devils left wing Erik Haula, center, during the second period Tuesday night in Dallas. The Stars won 4-3.

Marchessault also scored for the Predators, who entered the game with an NHL-worst six wins on the road this season. Mark Jankowski added an empty-net goal late in the third period for Nashville.

Sharks 6, Sabres 2: Rookies Will Smith and Macklin Celebrini scored in a four-goal third period for visiting San Jose, which pulled away for a victory over Buffalo.

Smith, William Eklund, Timothy Liljegren and Tyler Toffoli all had a goal and an assist each as the Sharks won back-to-back games after snapping an 0-5-3 skid with a shootout win at Toronto on Monday night.

Flames 6, Flyers 3: Connor Zary scored twice and Nazem Kadri had a goal in a 1:52 stretch midway through the first period for a three-goal lead as Calgary won at

Philadelphia.

The Flames also defeated the Flyers 6-3 on Oct. 12 in their only other meeting this season.

Lightning 6, Blue Jackets 2: Victor Hedman scored twice and had three points to lead Tampa Bay past visiting Columbus.

Zach Werenski scored both goals for Columbus, which had won four in a row. Elvis Merzlikins finished with 34 saves.

Avalanche 4, Penguins 1: Casey Mittelstadt scored the go-ahead goal on a power play with 4:09 remaining, Nathan MacKinnon extended his home point streak to 17 games, and host Colorado beat Pittsburgh.

Scott Wedgewood was stellar in goal, stopping 32 shots in his first appearance since Feb. 22. Defenseman Ryan Lindgren made his

Colorado debut after being acquired from the New York Rangers last weekend.

Ducks 6, Oilers 2: Mason McTavish had a pair of goals and Jackson LaCombe and Cutter Gauthier each had three assists as Anaheim scored four goals in the final eight minutes of the first period en route to a victory at Edmonton.

Leon Draisaitl and Connor McDavid each had a goal and an assist for the Oilers who have lost six of their last seven.

Wild 4, Kraken 3: Mats Zuccarello's goal 8:22 into the second period proved to be the difference in Minnesota's win at Seattle.

Brandon Montour and Shane Wright — on the power play — scored late in the second period to pull the Kraken within 4-3.

Oilers get big forward Frederic from Bruins in 3-team deal

Associated Press

The Edmonton Oilers made their first big move ahead of the NHL trade deadline Tuesday, acquiring hard-nosed forward Trent Frederic from the Boston Bruins.

Edmonton sent a 2025 second- and a 2026 fourth-round pick and prospect Max Wanner to Boston for the 6-foot-3, 220-pounder, with the Bruins retaining half of Frederic's \$2.3 million salary. The New Jersey Devils retained another quarter and received the rights to unsigned draft pick

Shane Lachance from the Oilers and Petr Hauser from the Bruins.

Trading Frederic is the first sell-off by the Bruins, who are three-quarters of the way through an underachieving season but remain among the playoff contenders vying for the final couple of spots in the Eastern Conference.

Captain Brad Marchand, like Frederic, is a pending unrestricted free agent, although he has said he would like to play his entire career with Boston and also was injured last weekend and is con-

sidered week to week.

Frederic, 27, provides Edmonton much-needed toughness with the aim of helping Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl and company make another long playoff run a year after reaching Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final and losing to Florida. Frederic, also week to week with a lower-body injury after getting hurt Feb. 25 against Toronto, has 15 points and 44 penalty minutes in 57 games this season.

In addition to adding Frederic at a bargain cap hit of \$575,000 —

under the league minimum — the Oilers also got depth forward Max Jones in this deal. A veteran of 265 NHL games, Jones got into seven this year with Boston.

The deadline is Friday at 3 p.m. EST. Mikko Rantanen, traded from Colorado to Carolina as part of a three-team deal in January, is among the big-name stars who could move, along with Brock Nelson of the New York Islanders and any number of players from the Pittsburgh Penguins and Philadelphia Flyers.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division						
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF GA
Toronto	61	38	20	3	79	196 175
Florida	62	38	21	3	79	206 172
Tampa Bay	61	36	21	4	76	218 160
Detroit	61	30	25	6	66	177 193
Ottawa	60	30	25	5	65	170 173
Boston	63	28	27	8	64	170 201
Montreal	61	30	26	5	65	184 204
Buffalo	60	24	30	6	54	191 208

Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF GA
Washington	61	39	14	8	86	220 161
Carolina	62	36	22	4	76	197 171
New Jersey	63	33	24	6	72	189 158
Columbus	61	30	23	8	68	207 202
N.Y. Rangers	61	31	26	4	66	187 183
Philadelphia	62	27	27	8	62	183 208
N.Y. Islanders	61	28	26	7	63	168 182
Pittsburgh	64	24	30	10	58	184 237

Western Conference

Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF GA
Winnipeg	62	42	16	4	88	216 146
Dallas	61	40	19	2	82	210 158
Minnesota	62	36	22	4	76	177 179
Colorado	62	36	24	2	74	202 183
St. Louis	62	29	27	6	64	179 187
Utah	61	27	25	9	63	172 181
Nashville	61	22	32	7	51	159 204
Chicago	61	19	35	7	45	169 214

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF GA
Vegas	60	36	18	6	78	199 166
Edmonton	61	35	22	4	74	197 180
Los Angeles	59	31	20	8	70	167 159
Calgary	61	29	23	9	67	161 179
Vancouver	60	27	22	11	65	165 184
Anaheim	60	27	26	7	61	160 185
Seattle	62	26	32	4	56	183 202
San Jose	63	17	37	9	43	166 234

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.

Monday's games

N.Y. Rangers 4, N.Y. Islanders 0
Washington 5, Ottawa 4, SO
Florida 2, Tampa Bay 1
Montreal 4, Buffalo 3, OT
San Jose 3, Toronto 2, SO
Chicago 5, Los Angeles 1

Tuesday's games

Carolina 2, Detroit 1
Nashville 6, Boston 3
San Jose 6, Buffalo 2
Calgary 6, Philadelphia 3
Tampa Bay 6, Columbus 2
N.Y. Islanders 3, Winnipeg 2
Dallas 4, New Jersey 3
Colorado 4, Pittsburgh 1
Anaheim 6, Edmonton 2
Minnesota 4, Seattle 3

Wednesday's games

Ottawa at Chicago
Washington at N.Y. Rangers
Toronto at Vegas
Anaheim at Vancouver
St. Louis at Los Angeles

Thursday's games

Boston at Carolina
Buffalo at Tampa Bay
Columbus at Florida
Utah at Detroit
Winnipeg at Philadelphia
Calgary at Dallas
Seattle at Nashville
Montreal at Edmonton
San Jose at Colorado

Friday's games

Detroit at Washington
Winnipeg at New Jersey
Utah at Chicago
Minnesota at Vancouver
Pittsburgh at Vegas
St. Louis at Anaheim

Saturday's games

N.Y. Rangers at Ottawa
Seattle at Philadelphia
Boston at Tampa Bay
Buffalo at Florida
Toronto at Colorado
Montreal at Calgary
Chicago at Nashville
St. Louis at Los Angeles
Dallas at Edmonton
N.Y. Islanders at San Jose

Sunday's games

New Jersey at Philadelphia
Seattle at Washington
Pittsburgh at Minnesota
Winnipeg at Carolina
Columbus at N.Y. Rangers
Los Angeles at Vegas
Dallas at Vancouver
N.Y. Islanders at Anaheim

MLB



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

The record-breaking deal given to Juan Soto this offseason was the peak of a major spending increase that the New York Mets have seen under Steve Cohen, left, who has owned the team since 2020.

Mets' payroll in last 4 years tops 3 teams in previous 21

By RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The New York Mets led the major leagues in spending for the third straight season in 2024 and have totaled \$1.36 billion in payroll and luxury tax over four years under owner Steve Cohen, exceeding what the Marlins, Pirates and Rays each have spent on players in the past 21 seasons.

The Mets established a \$333.3 million regular payroll record, according to figures finalized by Major League Baseball this week and obtained by The Associated Press. That topped the previous mark of \$319.5 million set by New York in 2023, when they became the first team to exceed \$300 million.

The Mets totaled \$430.4 million last year in payroll and luxury tax (\$97.1 million) to set a cost record. New York paid \$420 million the year before, including a \$100.8 million tax.

Since Cohen bought the team from the Fred Wilpon and Saul Katz families in November 2020, the Mets have totaled \$1.13 billion in payroll and \$228.7 million in tax. And that was even before he lavished a record \$765 million, 15-year contract on outfielder Juan Soto that starts this season.

"One thing I've learned a long time ago, if you want something that's amazing, it's going to be uncomfortable," Cohen said in December.

New York's spending on major league players for 2021-24 was just above what the payrolls from

2004-24 totaled for Miami (\$1.34 billion), Pittsburgh (\$1.32 billion) and Tampa Bay (\$1.32 billion).

By comparison, the Athletics have spent a low of \$269 million over the past four seasons and the Pirates \$271 million.

Total spending, based on regular payrolls, rose 1.8% to \$5.158 billion from \$5.065 billion last year and has increased 27.3% in three seasons under the current labor contract from \$4.051 billion in 2021.

The Mets became the first team to lead in payrolls in three straight seasons since the Los Angeles Dodgers from 2014-17.

The Yankees were second among regular payrolls at a team record \$310.9 million. The World Series champion Dodgers were third at \$270.8 million and the Phillies fourth at \$249.1 million.

Ten teams topped \$200 million, down from a record 11 in 2023. A record-low four teams were below \$100 million, a decrease from six in 2023.

Because \$68 million of his \$70 million salary is deferred until from 2034-43, Shohei Ohtani totals \$28.2 million in salary toward payroll plus \$1.03 million in non-cash compensation.

Oakland had the lowest payroll at \$66.5 million in its final season before moving to Sacramento for at least three seasons before a planned shift to Las Vegas. Pittsburgh was 29th at \$87.3 million.

The Athletics, Pirates and Rays are the only teams never to finish with a \$100 million payroll.

The 12 teams that reached the postseason combined to spend \$2.37 billion, 46% of payrolls, including \$1.02 billion (19.9%) for the four teams in the League Championship Series. Los Angeles and AL champion New York combined for \$644.2 million (12.5%).

Adding payroll and luxury tax, the four LCS teams combined for 23.5% of total spending (\$1.29 billion of \$5.47 billion) and the Yankees and Dodgers for 13.7% (\$747.3 million).

The Arizona Diamondbacks raised payroll the most, by \$48 million to \$177 million after winning the NL pennant, and the Chicago Cubs were the second-most, by \$34 million to \$230 million.

The San Diego Padres cut payroll by \$85 million to \$172 million in 2024 following the death of owner Peter Seidler. The Los Angeles Angels dropped \$51 million to \$179 million and the Minnesota Twins by \$34 million to \$133 million.

Regular payrolls are based on 2024 salaries, earned bonuses and prorated shares of signing bonuses and non-cash compensation for 40-man rosters. Deferred salaries and bonus payments are discounted to present-day values, and termination pay, option buyouts and cash transactions among clubs are accounted for.

MLB calculated the average salary at \$4,592,147, while the players' association, using a slightly different methodology, pegged it at \$4,655,366.

Jumping: Yan closer than ever to majors following long journey

in their organization, making it all the way to Triple-A but never the big leagues. He struck out 102 batters in 57 innings in 2023 and elected for free agency following the season.

Last year, he pitched in Japan before signing with the Rockies this winter. Colorado manager Bud Black said he's been impressed with the late-blooming lefty who can hit the mid-90s with his fastball and has some nasty breaking pitches that are tough to pick up thanks to a herky-jerky delivery.

Yan threw a scoreless inning of relief Sunday against the Seattle Mariners. He hasn't given up a run in three appearances this spring.

"There's been a few walks in the minors, but the strikeout is in there," Black said. "We need him to continue to throw the ball over the plate and be aggressive. He's a little flamboyant for sure, but that's who he is. We encourage guys to be themselves."

Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Emmet Sheehan and outfielder James Outman said they had seen Yan's celebrations on the mound and didn't have a problem with it. Outman's only issue was that a pitcher gets a lot more strikeouts than batters hit homers, so the balance needs to be right.

"A good compromise would be a three-pitch strikeout," Outman said. "That's worth it."

Yan said fans in Japan were receptive to his strikeout gymnastics and added that international baseball is ahead of the curve with celebrations — whether it's in the Dominican Republic or Japan.

But the passion is catching on in the big leagues.

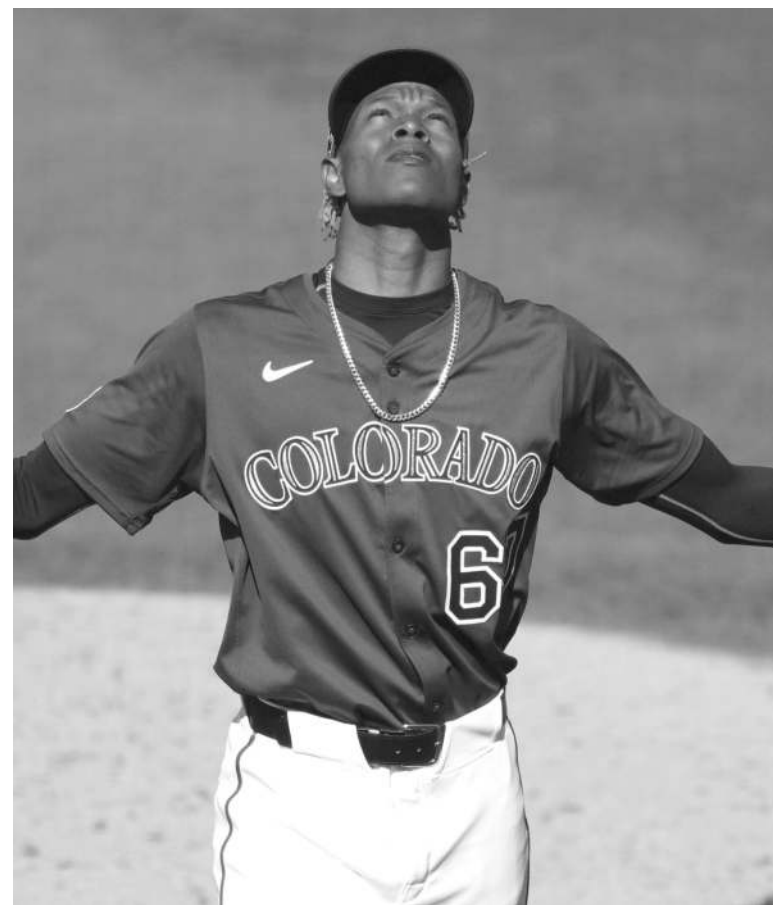
Star hitters from the Dominican Republic like Elly de la Cruz and Fernando Tatis Jr. are no strangers to bringing some added flair to their celebrations, and Yan said they have every right to be jubilant after a home run.

"They're going to enjoy their time, I'm going to enjoy my time," Yan said. "Everything's fair. You do you, and I'll do my celebration."

Yan is probably a longshot to make the Rockies' opening day roster, but in the thin air of Coors Field, plenty of pitching is needed over a six-month season. The mound moxie is a fun part of his persona, but the lefty knows it's the results that will help him realize his dream of making the big leagues.

Then the real celebration will begin.

"I pray that I'm healthy, can help this team and make my major league debut," Yan said.



ROSS D. FRANKLIN/AP

Colorado Rockies pitcher Jeffry Yan is unlikely to make the team's opening day roster, but his immediate impact in the early days of spring training should help his case for getting called up later in the season.

NBA

ROUNDUP

Lakers win; James first to 50K points

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — LeBron James finished with 34 points and became the first player to score 50,000 combined points in the regular season and playoffs, and the Los Angeles Lakers extended their longest winning streak in four years to seven games with a 136-115 victory over the New Orleans Pelicans on Tuesday night.

Luka Doncic had 30 points, 15 assists and eight rebounds for the Lakers, who have won 17 of 20 to move into second place in the Western Conference at 39-21. Jaxson Hayes had a season-high 19 points and 10 rebounds as Los Angeles won its second straight without injured starters Austin Reaves and Rui Hachimura.

Zion Williamson scored 37 points for the 14th-place Pelicans, who went 2-2 on an encouraging road trip. Trey Murphy III added 19 points.

James surpassed his latest milestone with a 3-pointer early in the first quarter. LA fans gave a standing ovation moments later to James, who acknowledged it with a wave of his hand.

"I mean, that's a lot of points," James said after the game. "Obviously, the first thing that comes to mind is where I'm from. Picking up the game when I was a little kid and having a love for the sport, and hoping that someday I'd be able to play at the highest level. I've been able to do that and really enjoy my career. So it's definitely an honor. It's pretty cool to see that."

Pacers 115, Rockets 102: Tyrese Haliburton scored 28 points and matched a season high with 15 assists, and host Indiana recovered after blowing a 17-point third-quarter lead to beat Houston.

Pascal Siakam scored 18 points and Myles Turner added 16 for the Pacers, who have won six of eight.



JAE C. HONG/AP

Lakers forward LeBron James throws chalk in the air before a game Tuesday in Los Angeles. James became the first player in NBA history to score 50,000 points between the regular season and playoffs.

Raptors 114, Magic 113: Ja'Kobe Walter swished a contested 3-pointer with 0.5 seconds remaining and visiting Toronto edged Orlando after blowing a 12-point lead in the fourth quarter.

Walter, a rookie from Baylor, had 17 points for the Raptors, who improved to 7-23 on the road.

Bucks 127, Hawks 121: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 26 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists for his seventh triple-double of the season, and surging Milwaukee beat host Atlanta.

Damian Lillard scored 23 points for the Bucks, who have won three straight and seven of eight. Milwaukee remained in fourth place in the Eastern Conference, with the same record as fifth-place Indiana (35-25).

Warriors 114, Knicks 102: Stephen Curry had 28 points and nine

assists while running his personal record to 12-1 at Madison Square Garden, and visiting Golden State beat New York.

Jimmy Butler and Brandin Podziemski added 19 points apiece for the Warriors.

Timberwolves 126, 76ers 112: Anthony Edwards scored 18 points, Naz Reid added 23 and host Minnesota pulled away in the fourth quarter to beat short-handed Philadelphia.

Paul George returned after missing one game with groin soreness, but the Sixers were still without guard Tyrese Maxey (lower back strain) and played their third game since announcing Joel Embiid will miss the rest of the season for left knee injury management. George finished with just seven points on 3-of-11 shooting.

Cavaliers 139, Bulls 117: Do-

novan Mitchell scored 28 points, Jarrett Allen added 25 points and 17 rebounds, and NBA-best Cleveland won its 11th straight game, over host Chicago.

Darius Garland added 19 points on 7-for-22 shooting for the Cavaliers, who rested forward Evan Mobley and fell behind by 15 points in the first half, but still found a way to extend their third double-digit winning streak of the season.

Spurs 127, Nets 113: Devin Vassell had a career-high 37 points along with 10 rebounds, and host San Antonio rolled to a victory over Brooklyn.

Suns 119, Clippers 117: Kevin Durant scored 34 points, Devin Booker added 17 and host Phoenix rallied from a 23-point deficit late in the third quarter to beat Los Angeles.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	43	18	.705	—
New York	40	21	.656	3
Brooklyn	21	40	.344	22
Philadelphia	21	40	.344	22
Toronto	20	42	.323	23½

Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	29	31	.483	—
Orlando	29	34	.460	1½
Atlanta	28	34	.452	2
Charlotte	14	46	.233	15
Washington	11	49	.183	18

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	51	10	.836	—
Milwaukee	35	25	.583	15½
Indiana	35	25	.583	15½
Detroit	35	27	.565	16½
Chicago	24	38	.387	27½

Western Conference

Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	38	23	.623	—
Houston	37	25	.597	1½
Dallas	32	30	.516	6½
San Antonio	26	34	.433	11½
New Orleans	17	45	.274	21½

Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	50	11	.820	—
Denver	39	22	.639	11
Minnesota	34	29	.540	17
Portland	28	34	.452	22½
Utah	15	46	.246	35

Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	39	21	.650	—
Golden State	34	28	.548	6
Sacramento	32	28	.533	7
L.A. Clippers	32	29	.525	7½
Phoenix	29	33	.468	11

Tuesday's games

Indiana 115, Houston 102
Toronto 114, Orlando 113
Milwaukee 127, Atlanta 121
Golden State 114, New York 102
Minnesota 126, Philadelphia 112
Cleveland 139, Chicago 117
San Antonio 127, Brooklyn 113
Phoenix 119, L.A. Clippers 117
L.A. Lakers 136, New Orleans 115

Wednesday's games

Miami at Cleveland
Minnesota at Charlotte
Portland at Boston
Utah at Washington
Dallas at Milwaukee
Sacramento at Denver
Oklahoma City at Memphis
Detroit at L.A. Clippers

Thursday's games

Chicago at Orlando
Golden State at Brooklyn
Indiana at Atlanta
Philadelphia at Boston
Houston at New Orleans
New York at L.A. Lakers

Mavericks star Irving out for season with torn ACL

BY SCHUYLER DIXON
Associated Press

DALLAS — Dallas Mavericks star Kyrie Irving has a torn ACL in his left knee and will miss the rest of the season, the biggest setback in a season full of them for a team that traded superstar Luka Doncic.

The team confirmed Irving's diagnosis Tuesday, a day after he was injured in the first quarter of the Mavericks' 122-98 loss to the Sacramento Kings. Following the injury, Irving made two free throws with tears rolling down his cheeks before leaving the game.

The 32-year-old was fouled by DeMar DeRozan on a drive to the basket and his right foot landed on the foot of the Kings' Jonas Valanciunas. Irving lost his balance and then landed awkwardly on his left leg, and his knee appeared to hyperextend be-



Irving

fore he fell to the floor.

The presence of Irving was the biggest reason Dallas felt it could proceed with the controversial move of sending Doncic to the Los Angeles Lakers for Anthony Davis, a move that infuriated the Mavs fan base.

Now Irving is out for the season, and would figure to be in the final stages of recovery when teams report for training camp for the 2025-26 season. He has a \$44 million player option for next season.

"Kyrie is the heart and soul of this team, and he has embraced the city of Dallas as his home and our fans as an extension of his own family," said general manager Nico Harrison, the target of most of the criticism

over the trade. "His work ethic and absolute dedication to his craft, it's cut from the cloth of greats."

After he was hurt, Irving grabbed his leg and remained on the floor for multiple minutes. Davis was among those helping Irving to the locker room before coach Jason Kidd spoke to Irving, who then returned to take two free throws. After converting both to pull the Mavericks within 23-18, Irving was helped into the tunnel.

"The recovery process has already started," Irving said in a live post on social media. "Just wanted to let you guys know I'm OK, and I will be OK going forward."

Irving's decision to shoot free throws was reminiscent of the late Kobe Bryant, who made two game-tying foul shots for the Los Angeles Lakers after tearing his Achilles tendon late in the fourth quarter of a victo-

ry over Golden State on April 12, 2013.

"That's just who, I mean, Kai's a tough guy," Kidd said. "I asked him as they were taking him off the court, 'Are you good if you leave without shooting? You're ruled out.' So they took him to the free-throw line, and he shot the free throws and then we got him out."

The injury could make it difficult for the defending Western Conference champions to get back to the playoffs. Dallas is 10th in the West, the final spot in the play-in tournament.

The Mavs are just nine months removed from Doncic and Irving leading them to the NBA Finals for the first time in 13 years. Dallas, which lost to Boston in five games, could become the fifth team to miss the playoffs the season after reaching the finals.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

No. 1 Tigers 'physically dominated' in loss

No. 22 Texas A&M tops Auburn for its 1st victory over a top-ranked team

By KRISTIE RIEKEN
Associated Press

COLLEGE STATION, Texas — Auburn coach Bruce Pearl knew exactly why his top-ranked team fell 83-72 to No. 22 Texas A&M on Tuesday night.

"They just physically dominated us," he said.

Zhuric Phelps scored 19 points off the bench and the Aggies (21-9, 10-7 Southeastern Conference) never trailed.

It was Texas A&M's first-ever win over a team ranked No. 1 in the AP Top 25 poll, and it ended a six-game winning streak for the Tigers, who clinched the SEC title with a win over Kentucky on Saturday.

Texas A&M denied Auburn (27-3, 15-2) an undefeated conference road record after the Tigers entered the game 9-0 in SEC road games this season.

The Aggies, who snapped a season-long four-game skid, led by double digits for most of the night and were up 12 with about two minutes to go before Tahaad Pettiford made a 3-pointer to get Auburn within 79-70. But Phelps made two free throws to extend the lead.

Pettiford made three 3-pointers in less than two minutes early in the second half to power a run that got the Tigers within six, but Wade Taylor IV had a three-point play that started a 5-0 run which pushed A&M's advantage to 62-51.

Pettiford led Auburn with 19 points, including six 3-pointers.

Auburn has held the top spot in the poll for eight straight weeks and was a unanimous No. 1 pick for a second consecutive week.

Pearl denied that Auburn looked past the



SAM CRAFT/AP

Texas A&M guard Zhuric Phelps (1) reacts after being fouled while shooting late in the second half against Auburn on Tuesday night in College Station, Texas. Phelps scored 19 points off the bench as the Aggies beat the Tigers 83-72.

Aggies after wrapping up the conference championship this weekend. He said their struggles were simply a matter of A&M playing better Tuesday night.

"They physically manhandled us," he said. "And if this team is going to continue to win, we're going to run up against teams like Texas A&M or like Florida or like Duke that are big and physical."

The Aggies entered the game leading the nation in offensive rebounding and Pearl pointed to their 24-9 advantage in this game as evidence of their physicality.

"We have no excuses to allow those guys to get 24 offensive rebounds," he said. "I give Texas A&M all the credit. Our guys

were physically dominated... so no, I don't excuse our guys at all. We're better than that, but not tonight."

Hearing Pearl's comments about the Aggies meant a lot to Texas A&M coach Buzz Williams, who said physicality and communication are the two most important things he tries to teach.

"We have to play incredibly physical, and I think we have to do a lot of the things that are not necessarily in the stat sheet for for us to win," Williams said.

The Tigers were also hurt by an off night from top scorer Johni Broome, who entered the game averaging 18.4 points but managed just eight. He left the game for a couple

of minutes early in the first half with what appeared to be a shoulder injury but played 32 minutes despite the problem.

"It may have affected him," Pearl said. "He obviously had a shoulder injury in December. He had it banged a few times and it he obviously had it banged (Tuesday) and it was bothering him. He tried to play through it."

Along with Broome's struggles Tuesday, the Tigers were also without one of their top defenders in Denver Jones, who sat out with an ankle injury.

"Denver's the best one-on-one cover guy I got," Pearl said. "So obviously missing Denver was a factor."

ROUNDUP

No. 23 BYU edges No. 10 Iowa State in double-OT

Associated Press

AMES, Iowa — Richie Saunders scored 23 points and No. 23 BYU outlasted No. 10 Iowa State 88-85 in double overtime Tuesday night for its seventh straight victory.

Dallin Hall had 22 points off the bench for the Cougars (22-8, 13-6 Big 12), who blew a 21-point lead. Egor Demin added 12 points and Mawot Mag scored 10.

Joshua Jefferson finished with 19 points for the Cyclones (22-8, 12-7), and Milan Momcilovic had 18. Curtis Jones scored 16 off the bench, Tamin Lipsey added 15 and Keshon Gilbert contributed 13.

No. 16 Memphis 75, UTSA 70: Dain Dainja scored 19 points as the visiting Tigers (25-5, 15-2 American Athletic Conference) beat the Roadrunners (11-18, 5-12) to clinch at least a share of the AAC regular-season title.

Memphis — which won its first regular-season conference title since 2012-13, its final season in Conference USA — will be the No. 1 seed in the conference tournament, which begins March 12.

No. 18 Purdue 100, Rutgers 71: Fletcher Loyer and Braden Smith scored 23 points apiece to lead the Boilermakers (21-9, 13-6 Big Ten) past the visiting Scarlet Knights (14-16, 7-12).

Loyer and Smith each made seven 3-pointers as Purdue went 18-for-36 from beyond the arc. Trey Kaufman-Renn added 16 points for the Boilermakers, who have won two in a row following a four-game skid.

No. 19 Kentucky 85, LSU 64: Otega Oweh scored 24 points on 9-for-11 shooting to lead the Wildcats (20-10, 9-8 Southeastern Conference) past the visiting Tigers (14-16, 3-14).

Ansley Almonor and Brandon Garrison scored 15 points each and Collin Chandler finished with 11 for Kentucky.

No. 24 Arizona 113, Arizona State 100: Henri Veesaar scored 22 points, Caleb Love added 21 and the host Wildcats (20-10, 14-5 Big 12) pulled away for a victory over the rival Sun Devils (13-17, 4-15).

Arizona wore down the Sun Devils, shooting 59% with a 52-30 advantage in the paint

to earn a bye into the quarterfinals of the conference tournament. KJ Lewis added 21 points.

Texas 87, No. 25 Mississippi State 82 (OT): Tramon Mark had 24 points and Tre Johnson scored 23 to lead the visiting Longhorns (17-13, 6-11 Southeastern Conference) to an overtime win over the Bulldogs (20-10, 8-9).

Mark and Arthur Kaluma both hit two free throws in the final 21 seconds of overtime to secure the win.

North Carolina 91, Virginia Tech 59: Ven-Allen Lubin had 10 points and 11 rebounds, and Ian Jackson hit five of a season-high 15 3-pointers while scoring 19 points for the visiting Tar Heels (20-11, 13-6 Atlantic Coast Conference) in a victory over the Hokies (13-17, 8-11).

Arkansas 90, Vanderbilt 77: Johnell Davis scored 21 points, Trevon Brazile had his first double-double of the season and the visiting Razorbacks (18-12, 7-10 Southeastern Conference) beat the Commodores (20-10, 8-9).



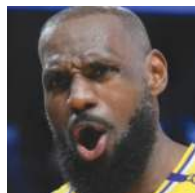
CHARLIE NEIBERGALL/AP

BYU forward Richie Saunders walks off the court after the Cougars beat Iowa State 88-85 in double overtime Tuesday night in Ames, Iowa. Saunders scored 23 points to lead the Cougars.

Baylor 61, TCU 58: Norchad Omier scored 19 points and grabbed 12 rebounds as the visiting Bears (18-12, 10-9 Big 12) held on to beat the Horned Frogs (16-14, 9-10).

Ohio State 116, Nebraska 114 (2OT): Bruce Thornton scored 29 points and had nine assists as the Buckeyes (17-13, 9-10 Big Ten) beat the visiting Cornhuskers (17-13, 7-12) in double overtime.

SPORTS



Historic milestone

James is 1st to notch 50K total points in Lakers' win over Pelicans » **NBA, Page 22**

MLB

Jumping for joy

From roofing to spring sensation, Rockies' Yan thrills with celebrations

BY DAVID BRANDT
Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — More than a decade after the bat flip became ubiquitous following a big home run in Major League Baseball, Colorado Rockies pitcher Jefry Yan might be at the forefront of a celebration revolution on the mound.

The lanky Dominican left-hander has become the talk of spring training in Arizona with his animated celebrations, leaping into the air and nearly doing the splits following a strikeout.

The 28-year-old said he comes by the enthusiasm honestly — a celebration of his long journey back to baseball.

“I never wish ill will or want to make the batter look bad,” Yan said through an interpreter. “I’m just enjoying baseball. That’s my main focus. So when I strike someone out, the emotions come out of me.”

The well-traveled pitcher started his professional baseball career in 2014, spending two seasons in the Los Angeles Angels organization as a teenager before arm injuries derailed his career. He had Tommy John elbow surgery in 2016 and was eventually released.

For the next 3½ years, he played in a Sunday amateur league in Arizona and did odd jobs on the side, including roofing, landscaping and being a delivery driver.

“I was still working on my baseball stuff,” Yan said. “I never let my dream of playing in MLB go away.”

It wasn’t until 2021 that he got back into professional baseball, signing with the Miami Marlins and spending three years



ROSS D. FRANKLIN/AP

Colorado Rockies pitcher Jefry Yan celebrates a strikeout during a spring training game Sunday in Scottsdale, Ariz. Yan has thrown just 3 scoreless innings this spring as of Tuesday, but has gained notoriety for his exuberant strikeout celebrations.

SEE JUMPING ON PAGE 21

Frederic dealt to Oilers in three-team deal » **NHL, Page 20**

