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50¢/Free to Deployed Areas

War heroes among 26K images in DEI purge

BY TARA COPP,
LOLITA C. BALDOR
AND KEVIN VINEYS
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — References to a World War II Medal of Honor recipient, the Enola Gay aircraft that dropped an atomic bomb on Japan and the first women to pass Marine infantry training are among the tens of thousands of photos and online posts marked for deletion as the Defense Department works to purge diversity, equity and inclusion content, according to a database obtained by The Associated Press.

The database, which was confirmed by U.S. officials and published by AP, includes more than 26,000 images that have been flagged for removal across every military branch. But the eventual total could be much higher.

One official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details that have not been made public, said the purge could delete as many as 100,000 images or posts in total, when considering social

SEE PURGE ON PAGE 7



U.S. MARINE CORPS/AP

Among the flagged but still visible military images included in the Pentagon's DEI purge is one of World War II Medal of Honor recipient Pfc. Harold Gonsalves.



TREY GONZALES/U.S. Army

U.S. Army infantry soldiers wait for further instruction last year during a force on force exercise near Tapa, Estonia. The Pentagon has continued to take part in NATO exercises despite reports of the United States preparing to withdraw from such drills.

US plans to stay involved

Officials respond to claims of Pentagon pulling out of Europe drills

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — NATO continues to prepare for military exercises involving the United States this year and beyond, the alliance said in response to recent media reports that the U.S. was preparing to withdraw from such drills.

U.S. Army Col. Martin O'Donnell, spokesman for Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, said NATO continues to "plan and execute exercises" with all 32 member states.

The exercises "increase our collective readiness to deter potential threats against the Euro-Atlantic, and defend its one billion inhabitants," O'Donnell said in a statement Sunday.

The comments came following a report Friday by Sweden's Expressen newspaper that allies were notified the U.S. would no longer take part in the planning of NATO military exercises in Europe after 2025.

The newspaper, citing unnamed Swedish sources, said the move was related to the U.S. intention to focus more on military activities in

the Asia-Pacific region.

While U.S. officials say planning for U.S. involvement in NATO exercises continues, there has been more focus on having European allies play a bigger role.

"These exercises include U.S. forces, but also see more and more European forces training solely with other European forces like during last month's Steadfast Dart (exercise)," he said.

SEE STAY ON PAGE 7

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Trump Organization sues over account closures

Associated Press

MIAMI — A company owned by President Donald Trump sued Capital One on Friday, claiming the bank unjustifiably terminated over 300 of the Trump Organization's accounts without cause in 2021, shortly after the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

The suit was filed by the Donald J. Trump Revocable Trust and Eric Trump in Miami-Dade Circuit Court.

The Trump Organization claims the decision by Capital One to close

the accounts was an attack on free speech and free enterprise. The suit also claims the decision was a response to Trump's political views.

"Capital One has not and does not close customer accounts for political reasons," the company said in a statement.

The Trump Organization claims it suffered considerable financial harm and losses when Capital One notified them in March 2021 that accounts holding millions of dollars would be closed in three months.

The lawsuit claims Capital One violated the law and the Trump Organization is seeking damages.

The account closures were announced about two months after Jan. 6, 2021, when a mob of several thousand Trump supporters attacked the U.S. Capitol in an attempt to stop lawmakers from certifying the 2020 election results, which named President Joe Biden as the winner.

Other banks also stopped doing business with the Trump Organization around the same time.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates												
Euro costs (March 11)	0.90	Switzerland (Franc)	0.8787									
British pound (March 11)	\$1.26	Thailand (Baht)	33.83									
Japanese yen (March 11)	145.00	Turkey (NewLira)	36.5477									
South Korean won (March 11)	1409.00											
Commercial rates												
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769	<p>(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.)</p> <div>INTEREST RATES</div> <table><tr><td>Prime rate</td><td>7.50</td></tr><tr><td>Interest Rates Discount rate</td><td>4.50</td></tr><tr><td>Federal funds market rate</td><td>4.38</td></tr><tr><td>3-month bill</td><td>4.30</td></tr><tr><td>30-year bond</td><td>4.60</td></tr></table>	Prime rate	7.50	Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50	Federal funds market rate	4.38	3-month bill	4.30	30-year bond	4.60
Prime rate	7.50											
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50											
Federal funds market rate	4.38											
3-month bill	4.30											
30-year bond	4.60											
Britain (Pound)	1.2925											
Canada (Dollar)	1.4421											
China (Yuan)	7.2343											
Denmark (Krone)	6.8836											
Egypt (Pound)	50.5996											
Euro	0.9230											
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7679											
Hungary (Forint)	368.80											
Israel (Shekel)	3.6384											
Japan (Yen)	147.05											
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3081											
Norway (Krone)	10.7805											
Philippines (Peso)	57.45											
Poland (Zloty)	3.87											
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7511											
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3315											
South Korea (Won)	1456.66											

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MILITARY

Tensions rise as N. Korea fires missiles

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — North Korea launched several ballistic missiles off its western coast on Monday, coinciding with the start of Freedom Shield, an annual large-scale military exercise conducted by the United States and South Korea.

The missiles were fired toward the Yellow Sea at around 1:50 p.m., according to a text message sent to reporters by South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff. No further details were immediately available.

The launches mark North Korea's first ballistic missile test in nearly two months. In January, the regime fired multiple short-range ballistic missiles that traveled roughly 155 miles before landing in the Sea of Japan, or East Sea. On Feb. 26, it launched several cruise missiles that flew approximately 990 miles in a circular flight pattern off its coast.

Pyeongyang has framed its missile tests as a response to joint military drills between the U.S. and South Korea, which it views as a provocation. On Sunday, North Korea's Foreign Ministry issued a statement condemning Freedom Shield and warning that the exercise would spur the "radical growth" of its nuclear arsenal.

The ministry, through the state-run Korean Central News Agency, described Freedom Shield as an



U.S. Army soldiers prepare to cross the Hantan river at a training field in Yeoncheon, South Korea, near the border with North Korea, on Monday.

AHN YOUNG-JOON/AP

"aggressive and confrontational war rehearsal."

"All the facts go to clearly show the multi-domain and all-round offensive nature of Freedom Shield," the statement said. "Obviously, the U.S. intends to push the situation in the Korean Peninsula and the region to an uncontrollable phase ..."

The ministry warned that the exercise would "inevitably lead to a serious strategic misjudgment" and prompt "the radical growth of the nuclear force."

The statement came a day after KCNA reported that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspected a nuclear-powered submarine under construction at an undisclosed location. The vessel, if completed, would represent a significant step for a navy that has traditionally relied on diesel-powered submarines.

"We should ensure that incomparably threatening warships fulfill their mission as ... a nuclear power, capable of containing the inveterate 'gunboat diplomacy' of

the hostile forces," KCNA said.

The U.S. and South Korean militaries have repeatedly described Freedom Shield as defensive drills designed to reinforce their security posture. It is the first of two major exercises held annually on the Korean Peninsula, with the second, Ulchi Freedom Shield, scheduled for August.

Roughly 19,000 South Korean troops will participate in Freedom Shield on land, air and sea, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. U.S. Forces Korea, which oversees

28,500 American service members in the country, does not disclose its troop participation numbers, citing operational security.

The start of Freedom Shield was preceded by an incident that prompted a halt to live-fire training in South Korea. About an hour before the exercise was formally announced on Thursday, two South Korean air force KF-16 fighter jets accidentally released eight MK-82 free-fall bombs outside of a practice range in Pocheon, a city near the border.

The mishap injured 14 South Korean troops and 15 civilians.

South Korea's air force attributed the accident to pilot error after a preliminary investigation, according to a statement released Friday.

Gen. Lee Youngsu, the air force chief of staff, apologized for the incident and took full responsibility during a press conference at the Ministry of National Defense in Seoul on Monday.

This "should never have happened," he said.

In response, U.S. and South Korean military officials suspended all live-fire training "until further notice," USFK spokesman Col. Ryan Donald said Friday.

"The safety of the local community, U.S. and [South Korean] personnel is our top priority," he said. "We take this incident very seriously."

F-35B presence expanded in Japan, marking new phase in fighter duties

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

A third Marine Corps squadron of F-35B Lightning II fighters arrived in Japan over the weekend, marking the latest step in the service's efforts to modernize its deployed forces in the Indo-Pacific.

The squadron — Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 214, also known as the Black Sheep — arrived Friday from Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., according to the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. The deployment is the first rotational assignment for the F-35B under the Marines' Unit Deployment Program, which cycles units through the region to bolster readiness.

The aircraft will temporarily support flight operations at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni under Marine Aircraft Group 12, the wing said in a statement Monday. The group includes two permanently based Marine F-35B squadrons, an aerial refueling squadron, and logistics and support squadrons.

The base also hosts Carrier Air

Wing 5, the Navy's air component for the aircraft carrier USS George Washington, homeported at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan.

The Unit Deployment Program has historically been supported by fixed-wing aircraft groups operating F/A-18 Hornets and AV-8B Harriers. The Black Sheep squadron transitioned to the F-35B in March 2022 and is now the first F-35 unit to deploy to the Indo-Pacific under the program, according to the wing.

"Our focus during this deployment is threefold," Lt. Col. Robert Guyette, the squadron's commander, said in the release. "To seamlessly integrate within Marine forces, joint forces, and regional allies and improve warfighting readiness as a combined force, refine our ability to operate from austere locations, and align with key Marine Corps concepts like Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations to maximize survivability and airpower projection."

Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations emphasize mobility,

allowing forces to disperse to smaller, harder-to-target locations. The strategy has become central to Marine Corps planning as the Pentagon seeks to counter China's growing military presence in the region.

"The F-35B's ability to operate from austere locations, integrate with joint networks, and provide enhanced battlespace awareness makes it a force multiplier," Col. Kyle Shoop, commander of Marine Aircraft Group 12, said in the release.

Maj. Gen. Marcus Annibale, commander of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, said the Marines would continue to expand their F-35B deployments.

"Munitions with greater capabilities will become available, the platform's support systems will strengthen, and the F-35's technology suite will continue to evolve," he said in the release. "As more F-35 squadrons deploy to the remote and contested environments of the Indo-Pacific, Marine Aviation's readiness will grow, and our capabilities as a combined



SAMANTHA RODRIGUEZ/U.S. Marine Corps

F-35B Lightning II stealth fighters with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 214 taxi after arriving at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, on Saturday.

force in this region will become even more lethal."

Retired Marine Col. Grant Newsham, a senior researcher with the Japan Forum for Strategic Studies, said the F-35B is more survivable than the aircraft it is replacing and could serve as a deterrent.

"With more American stealth fighters in the region, you can see the difficulties for a Chinese force assaulting Taiwan across the strait, or trying to operate north and east of Taiwan," he said Monday.

At the same time, the aircraft's reliance on established bases could pose challenges in a conflict, Newsham added.

"The Chinese know where most, maybe all, of these bases are

and just might hit them," he said. "I expect they would, especially if they started taking losses."

The United States and its allies are working to address those concerns through a combination of airfield defense measures, decoys, rapid runway repairs, and dispersal to civilian airfields in Japan and the Philippines, Newsham said.

Because the F-35B is designed for short takeoffs and vertical landings, it can also operate from amphibious assault ships and smaller airstrips, offering additional flexibility, he added.

However, Newsham noted that aerial refueling remains a challenge, given the aircraft's limited range.

EUROPE

Soldiers in Germany follow procedurals too

Episode of crime show filmed on training range airs

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — An installment of a popular German television show that was filmed on a U.S. Army training range in Bavaria aired recently, showcasing American soldiers who got in on the act.

Producers of the crime procedural “Tatort,” which means “Crime Scene,” filmed the episode in February 2024 at the 7th Army Training Command’s Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels during exercise Allied Spirit.

Titled “Charlie,” the episode aired March 2 on public broadcaster ARD and featured base leadership and soldiers.

The collaboration marked the first time that the Defense Department had partnered with a foreign production company, said Harold Shorter, a former Army captain and public affairs liaison who helped fa-

cilitate the filming. He said participating in the filming of the show, akin to the U.S. series “CSI: Crime Scene Investigation,” was the capstone achievement of his career.

“The experience was a ton of fun,” recalled Shorter, who has since left the service.

“Tatort” has been on German television since 1970 and occupies the prime-time Sunday slot of 8:15 p.m., according to the ARD website. It also airs in Austria and Switzerland.

“Charlie” was watched by 8.13 million viewers, the OberpfalzECHO newspaper reported March 3.

The episode begins with the discovery of a woman’s body in an abandoned military vehicle during the NATO exercise, according to the online database IMDb. Detectives Franz Leitmayr and Ivo Batic, played by actors Udo Wachtveitl and Miroslav Nemec, are called to investigate.

Over the course of the 90-minute

show, the detectives team up with military police to find out who killed the civilian battlefield actor.

Col. Kevin Poole, U.S. Army Garrison Bavaria commander at the time, had a speaking role in the production, training command spokeswoman Lacey Justinger said.

Soldiers from the training area’s resident opposition force — 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment — appeared as extras.

The project was first proposed to the training command by the Munich-based Lucky Bird Pictures in 2021, Justinger said.

Lucky Bird then submitted a script, which eventually went to the Army’s Office of the Chief of Public Affairs in Los Angeles, the agency that handles film requests for the service.

The production team scouted locations in September 2022 and filmed for a week at the end of February last year.

Sgt. 1st Class John Allenbrand,



CHRISTIAN CARRILLO/U.S. Army

The cast and crew of the German crime show “Tatort” film an episode at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, last year. The episode, with U.S. soldiers as extras, aired this month.

assigned to the regiment, was offered a small part in the show after providing information to the producers in the unit headquarters.

“The experience of being on a TV show in Germany was humbling,”

he said. It “gave us the opportunity to provide legacy to the Warrior Battalion at Hohenfels.”

Stars and Stripes reporter Marcus Kloeckner contributed to this report.



JOHN VANDIVER/Stars and Stripes

Members of the military community in Stuttgart, Germany, gathered Monday to celebrate Robinson Barracks Elementary School’s recent selection as a national Blue Ribbon School.

Elementary school in Stuttgart celebrates Blue Ribbon status

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Robinson Barracks Elementary students, educators and military leaders gathered Monday to celebrate their school’s recent designation as a National Blue Ribbon School.

The school, part of the U.S. Army Garrison in Stuttgart, was one of three Department of Defense Education Activity Schools to receive the honor in 2024.

“Your curiosity, your enthusiasm for learning and your commitment to excellence are an inspiration to all of us,” Col. Kirk Alexander, the Stuttgart garrison commander, said during a school assembly that marked the occasion.

School and district leaders also lauded teachers and students for their efforts during the event.

The Blue Ribbon School designation is given by the U.S. Department of Education to recognize schools that demonstrate exceptional academic performance or make significant progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups.

Robinson Elementary was selected as an “exemplary high-performing school.”

The other two DODEA schools to receive the Blue Ribbon honor in 2024 were West Point Elementary School at the U.S. Military Academy and Alconbury Elementary School in the United Kingdom.

In 2024, 356 schools nationwide received Blue Ribbon status.

Union workers at all US bases in German state to hold 1-day strike

By ZADE VADNAIS
Stars and Stripes

All U.S. military installations in the state of Rheinland-Pfalz are expected to see strikes by their German employees this week, the union representing them said Monday.

Ver.di is organizing a one-day “warning strike” Wednesday in response to stalled wage negotiations, the union said in a statement.

The strike is expected to last the entire day on Wednesday. Additionally, Ver.di’s statement urged workers scheduled for overnight shifts that begin late Tuesday or end early Thursday to strike for

their entire shift.

Besides the collection of installations that make up U.S. Army Garrison Rheinland-Pfalz, the state also hosts Ramstein Air Base and Spangdahlem Air Base.

The sprawling Kaiserslautern Military Community in Rheinland-Pfalz is the largest overseas U.S. military community. It’s home to tens of thousands of U.S. service members and their families.

The most recent round of collective bargaining talks ended Feb. 24 with Ver.di employees offered a 1.7% annual raise, which the statement said was “completely inadequate.”

The union is calling for a one-time payment of 320 euros and an annual 3% salary increase for employees over a 10-month period. It is also seeking an additional pay hike for fire department employees of 2 euros per hour.

Short-duration strikes have occurred sporadically in recent years at bases in Germany. Most base services typically continue uninterrupted during the walkouts but with some delays.

The union will also hold a demonstration at Stiftsplatz in Kaiserslautern on Wednesday at 10:30 a.m.

Transportation strikes on tap in Italy

By REBECCA HOLLAND
Stars and Stripes

Walkouts by airline and railway workers in Italy in the coming days are likely to delay plans for many travelers, including American service members stationed at bases around the country.

The first planned strikes are set for Sunday and involve airports in Venice and Naples, both of which are close to U.S. bases. Milan’s airport, one of the region’s busiest, also will be impacted.

Baggage handlers across the country will take part in a 24-hour walkout, according to Italian media reports. A starting time has not been publicly announced.

From noon to 4 p.m. the same day, workers for a company that manages air traffic control operations in Italy also will strike, according to the Transport Ministry.

Check-in, baggage services and flight times would be affected by those two strikes.

On March 18, a 24-hour strike of workers at four Italian rail operators is slated to begin at 9 p.m. The affected train services are Trenitalia, Italo, Trenord and Trenitalia TPER.

Regional and long-distance train services could be canceled or delayed, though rush-hour services in the morning and evening are guaranteed, according to the Transport

Ministry website.

A day later, the UGL Ferrovieri, FAST-Confsal and ORSA Trasporti unions will take part in a separate strike from 9:01 a.m. to 4:59 p.m.

The railway unions say the right to strike is under threat, according to a statement from FAST-Confsal. The strikes come in the midst of contract negotiations.

In Germany, meanwhile, most flights were canceled Monday at 13 major airports nationwide as union workers staged a 24-hour strike.

At Frankfurt Airport, more than 1,000 of the day’s 1,116 scheduled takeoffs and landings were canceled, according to German news agency dpa.

PACIFIC

DODEA students protest DOD diversity policy

Kubasaki High students follow similar walkouts in Asia, Germany

BY BRIAN McELHINEY
Stars and Stripes
CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Roughly 45 students at Kubasaki High School staged a walkout Monday to protest a Pentagon policy affecting diversity initiatives, joining a series of similar demonstrations at Defense Department schools in Asia and Europe.

The students walked out of class at 7:25 a.m. and remained outside for 25 minutes, according to a letter sent to parents by principal Silvanus Thrower.

“We ask for your partnership in working with your child to discuss meaningful actions they can take to engage in their community,” Thrower wrote.

Enrollment at the school is 573 students, according to its website.

The protest, like others at Defense Department Education Activity schools, was directed at a Jan. 27 executive order by President Donald Trump that eliminated diversity, equity and inclusion programs established under previous administrations, organizers said.

“We wanted to lend our voice to that call, that we are not just going to sit down and let these orders pass that we as the public did not approve of,” Kubasaki senior Benjamin Cozart said after school at the Camp Foster food court. “Especially because this is impacting us, we want to do our part — our civic duty — and push back against that.”



TRENT LEWIS

Student protesters at Kubasaki High School pose during a walkout at Camp Foster, Okinawa, on Monday.



ELYSIA SMITH

Students create signs for the walkout at Kubasaki High on Monday.

Cozart, along with junior Elysia Smith and freshman Maggie Brookover, helped organize the walkout.

During the protest, students delivered speeches about DODEA policies related to diversity, orga-

nizers said.

They also placed their handprints in paint on a banner that read, “Don’t Prevent Access.”

The demonstration mirrored actions taken at several other DODEA schools, including Kaiser-

slautern, Wiesbaden and Ramstein high schools in Germany; Humphreys High School in South Korea; Kadena High School on Okinawa; Nile C. Kinnick High School in Yokosuka, Japan; and Patch Middle School in Stuttgart, Germany.

Stars and Stripes was not permitted to cover the protest on campus.

DODEA requires parental consent for student interviews and photographs, and the school did not know in advance which students would participate, spokeswoman Miranda Ferguson said in an email Friday.

She did not respond to further questions asked on Monday.

Trump’s order has led to the review and potential removal of certain books and classroom discussions related to diversity, equity and inclusion, the Kubasaki organizers said.

It could also limit some school clubs and extracurricular activities and end official observances

such as Black History Month.

At Kubasaki, 69 books have been removed from the library, Cozart said.

He did not identify specific titles but said they addressed topics related to gender identity, diversity and equity.

Posters celebrating Black History Month were taken down in February, and the library has scaled back plans for other month-specific observances, including Women’s History Month, according to organizers.

The school will also discontinue Advanced Placement psychology next year, Cozart said. A DODEA memorandum issued in February listed the course among several programs with “selected instructional resources that should not be used” pending review.

In a letter to students’ families on Monday, DODEA Pacific Region Director Lois Rapp said the agency does not endorse school protests but often coordinates with students in advance.

“DODEA respects the right of our students to engage in peaceful expression of their Free Speech rights,” she wrote.

“Whether given advance notice or not, school administrators work to ensure assembled acts of student-led advocacy remain peaceful and respectful events that do not interfere with the rights of others and do not disrupt learning.”

Administrators also inform students of their responsibilities and potential consequences for participating in protests, Rapp wrote.

Cozart said there were no repercussions for the walkout.

“The protest itself and everything we did were within our rights as students, so there’s no consequences handed to us,” he said.

No sign of missing sea ambulance as 6-day search ends

BY JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

Authorities on Monday suspended the search for a Marshall Islands sea ambulance and its crew of four, missing since March 3, according to the U.S. Coast Guard.

“We stand with the families and the Republic of the Marshall Islands community in their grief,” Chief Warrant Officer Sara Muir, spokeswoman for U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia, Sector Guam, said in a news release.

The 37-foot fiberglass vessel left Majuro, the Marshall Islands’ capital, at 12:30 p.m. for Mili Atoll, 73 miles southeast, for a tuberculosis screening, the Marshall Islands Ministry of Health and Human Services said March 4.

It did not arrive at the atoll and

failed to return to Majuro by its expected arrival time that evening, according to the Coast Guard and the health ministry.

The six-day search included a U.S. Navy P-8 Poseidon patrol aircraft from Kadena Air Base, Okinawa; a Coast Guard HC-130 Hercules from Air Station Barbers Point, Hawaii; and two vessels from the Marshall Islands — the RMIS Lomor 03, a sea patrol vessel, and the LiWeton Mour, another sea ambulance, according to a Coast Guard update Monday.

Searchers faced challenging conditions in the vast Pacific, Muir said. A “little bit higher sea state with larger swells” hindered visibility.

The Navy, Coast Guard and Marshall Islands crews conducted more than 16 searches covering

52,391 square miles — an area the size of Arkansas — over nearly 82 flight hours but found no sign of the vessel, Muir said by text message.

The missing vessel’s captain was an experienced mariner, and the route was a routine transit, she said searchers were told. Also aboard the vessel was a nurse practitioner, a health assistant and a community health outreach worker, according to the Monday update.

Because Pacific islanders are experienced mariners, search efforts in the region often last for days, unlike in areas with more extreme conditions, Muir said.

“We know there’s a chance, and we’re always thrilled when we can find them,” she added.

The vessel was equipped with

communication and navigation systems capable of sending a distress call, but no signal was received, according to New Zealand public radio RNZ Pacific, which cited the health ministry on Friday.

“It’s always difficult when we don’t find the people we’re looking for,” Muir said by phone Monday. “Suspending an active search effort is never easy. It doesn’t diminish respect for mariners’ lives and hope that answers may come for their families.”

The Marshall Islands has an extremely high incidence of tuberculosis — at least 100 times higher than the U.S. — according to EthnoMed, a medical website sponsored by the University of Washington Health Sciences Libraries and Harborview Medical Center

in Seattle.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention collaborated with the Marshall Islands Health Ministry to train health care providers to recognize and treat TB, a virulent lung disease.

The Marshall Islands is a sovereign nation that relies on the U.S. for defense and security under a 42-year-old compact.

The Marshall Islands is the first Pacific nation to initiate mass TB screenings, according to Dr. Richard Bostrom, CDC tuberculosis officer for Hawaii and the U.S. Pacific Islands, who spoke Dec. 9 at a TB training session in Majuro, according to a ministry news release.

A ministry spokesperson could not be immediately reached Monday by phone or email.

MILITARY

Court-martial begins for DOD leaker Teixeira

Associated Press
BEDFORD, Mass. — A court-martial convened on Monday for Massachusetts Air National Guard member Jack Teixeira, who was sentenced in federal court last year to 15 years in prison for leaking highly classified military documents after the most consequential national security breach in years. Teixeira, 22, pleaded guilty last year to six counts of willful retention and transmission of national defense information under the Espionage Act. He faces additional military charges of disobeying orders and obstructing justice in the court-martial, held at Hanscom Air Force Base in Massachusetts. His lawyer argued for dismissal of the obstructing justice charge. Lt. Col. Bradley Poronsky said that it would amount to double jeopardy because it already came up at Teixeira's November sentencing. Prosecutors disagreed. Military prosecutors said the court-martial is appropriate given that obeying orders is the "absolute core" of the military. The military judge took the matter under advisement and postponed the proceeding until Thursday. The leaks exposed to the world unvarnished secret assessments of Russia's war in Ukraine, including information about troop movements in Ukraine, and the provision of supplies and equipment to Ukrainian troops. Teixeira also ad-

mitted posting information about a U.S. adversary's plans to harm U.S. forces serving overseas. Teixeira was part of the 102nd Intelligence Wing at Otis Air National Guard Base in Massachusetts. He worked as a cyber transport systems specialist, which is essentially an information technology specialist responsible for military communications networks. He remains in the Air National Guard in an unpaid status, an Air Force official said.

Before he was sentenced in U.S. District Court in Boston, Teixeira apologized for his actions. He previously admitted he illegally collected some of the nation's most sensitive secrets and shared them with other users on the social media platform Discord. The security breach raised alarm over the country's ability to protect its most closely guarded secrets and forced the Biden administration to scramble to try to contain the diplomatic and military fallout. The leaks also embarrassed the Pentagon, which tightened controls to safeguard classified information and disciplined members found to have intentionally failed to take required action about Teixeira's suspicious behavior.



Teixeira



KRYSTEN HOUK/U.S. Marine Corps

As warmer weather approaches, U.S. Marines begin to roll up their sleeves under strict standards. Folds must be crisp and even, and the camouflage pattern must be properly aligned.

Marines begin rolling up sleeves as warmer temperatures arrive

BY AARON KIDD
Stars and Stripes
The arrival of spring in the Marine Corps is not measured by cherry blossoms or rising temperatures alone. It's marked by the annual rolling of uniform sleeves, a ritual as predictable as the Cyber Awareness Challenge. On Sunday — as daylight saving time took effect in the U.S. — Marines around the world folded back the sleeves of their combat utility uniforms, signaling the transition to warmer months. The tradition, long ingrained in the Corps' culture, is a visible shift that separates the service from its sister branches, which keep their sleeves down year-round. The change applies only to Marines in garrison environments; those in

operational or deployed settings continue to wear sleeves down for protection. The ritual, however, does not always proceed on schedule. Last year, Marines stationed in Japan and South Korea were granted a reprieve when an unseasonably cold spring delayed the transition for several weeks. This year, the practice has resumed as planned. A stop-motion video posted Saturday on Marine Corps Installations Pacific's Facebook page humorously reminded Marines of the importance of the practice. The video shows a lance corporal dozing off as his blouse autonomously removes itself from a hanger and rolls up its sleeves. "Sleeves up doesn't happen by magic — put in the work," the post read. "Roll 'em tight, look sharp." Despite its seemingly simple nature, the process of rolling sleeves is governed by strict standards. Folds must be crisp and even, with the camouflage pattern properly aligned. Achieving the perfect roll is often a matter of pride and practice. Rolling sleeves up and down has been a part of Marine life for decades, with one notable interruption. In 2011, then-Commandant Gen. James Amos ordered sleeves to remain down throughout the year, citing uniformity and protection from the elements. The decision was met with widespread resistance from Marines who viewed the sleeve roll as a symbol of tradition and discipline. The policy was reversed in 2014.

Court sentences Okinawa woman for string of anti-base protests

BY BRIAN McELHINEY AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes
NAHA CITY, Okinawa — A woman opposed to U.S. military presence on Okinawa was convicted in a Japanese court recently on 16 counts related to her protests the past four years, including a threat against the U.S. Consulate. A three-judge panel in Naha District Court on Thursday convicted Akino Miyagi, 46, of Higashi village, of offenses against six sections of Japanese law, including the Road Traffic, Public Offices Election and Explosive Control acts. She was sentenced to three years in prison — suspended for four years — and more than \$2,000 in fines. Her lack of prior convictions spared her a prison cell, but she

must serve extra time if she fails to pay the fine, Presiding Judge Teturo Sato said at sentencing. Miyagi "repeatedly engaged in criminal acts to assert her beliefs," Sato said. "It warrants severe accountability for her complete disregard to follow the laws." A self-described writer and butterfly scientist, Miyagi, after her sentencing, said she is undeterred as a protester. She said she had pleaded guilty in court to all but one of 17 counts. "This sentencing will not change how I conduct my protest activities; I will continue doing them in the same way," she told reporters outside the courthouse. "The range of what is permitted to do under the freedom of expression is only up to the point where it

does not trouble the U.S. military or the government, such as the sit-ins or demonstration marches with placards in Henoko." The Japanese government is building a military airfield at Marine Corps Camp Schwab in rural Henoko to replace Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Ginowan city. In one incident, Miyagi carried a steel pipe filled with empty bullet casings and gunpowder on May 15, 2023, outside the U.S. Consulate in Urasoe city, according to court records. For that, she was convicted of violating the Explosives Control Act. However, she was acquitted due to a lack of evidence on a related charge of threatening police with the pipe, Sato said. Miyagi was convicted on one

count of intrusion for interrupting an event Sept. 6 sponsored by the consulate at the Hilton Okinawa Chatan Resort, where she shouted, "Grenade!" during a ceremony. Again on Aug. 26, 2022, Miyagi shouted, "Bullets!" and threw empty shell casings at a rally in Naha led by Liberal Democratic Party gubernatorial candidate Atsushi Sakima, records state. For that, she was convicted of two counts of the Explosive Control Act and one count of the Public Offices Election Act. Miyagi carried an empty bullet casing in protest again June 23 during the Irei No Hi ceremony at Peace Memorial Park in Itoman city, earning another conviction under the explosives act. She told reporters she collected the empty casings on land once

part of the Marine Corps' Northern Training Area, now part of the Yanbaru World Heritage Site. The Marines returned nearly 10,000 acres to Japanese control in 2016. Yanbaru is a focus of her protest activity, Miyagi said outside court. "This is where the Ministry of Defense stated that they had completed the removal of obstacles," she said. "I will continue fighting until I can secure a promise for the removal across the entire area." Miyagi was also convicted of violating the Road Traffic Act three times in 2021 and six times in 2022. In one incident, she stood in front of vehicles and blocked traffic on Road 70 near the Northern Training Area, according to records. Miyagi may appeal the verdict, her attorney, Nozomi Kanetaka, told reporters.

Purge: Content removal hits snags as confusion regarding DEI list abounds

Stay: Europe questions US commitment

WAR IN UKRAINE

Nations set for talks on new security force

By JOHN LEICESTER
Associated Press

PARIS — Military officials from more than 30 nations will take part in Paris talks on the creation of an international security force for Ukraine, a French military official said Monday.

Such an international force would aim to dissuade Russia from launching another offensive after any ceasefire in Ukraine comes into effect.

The long list of participants in Tuesday’s discussions will also include Asian and Oceania nations that will join remotely, the French official said. The international

makeup of the meeting offers an indication of how broadly France and Britain — which are working together on plans for the force — are casting their net as they aim to build what the French official described as a coalition of nations “able and willing” to be part of an effort to safeguard Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire.

The French military official spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss the blueprint for the force that is shrouded in secrecy and the Paris talks that will consider it.

The force being envisaged by France and Britain would aim to

reassure Ukraine and deter another large-scale Russian offensive after any ceasefire, the official said. It could include heavy weaponry and weapons stockpiles that could be rushed within hours or days to aid in Ukraine’s defense in the event of a Russian attack that shatters any truce, the official said.

The French-British blueprint will be presented to military officials from more than 30 nations in the first part of Tuesday’s talks, the official said.

The talks’ second part will include “more precise and concrete” discussions where the par-

ticipants will be invited to say whether and how their militaries might be able to contribute, the official said.

“It’s not, ‘This is what we need,’” the official said. “It’s more, ‘What are you bringing to the pot?’”

The official stressed, however, that the ultimate decision on whether nations take part in the force would be taken at a political level, by government leaders.

Army chiefs or their representatives from nearly all of the 32 nations of the NATO military alliance will attend the Paris talks — with the notable exception being

the United States.

The official said the United States wasn’t invited because European nations want to demonstrate that they can take responsibility for a large part of the post-ceasefire security framework for Ukraine.

Also attending will be the chiefs of staff of Ireland and Cyprus and a representative from Austria — all nations that are not NATO members but are in the European Union.

Ukraine will be represented by a military official who is also a member of the country’s security and defense council.

Ukraine to propose limited ceasefire during talks with US

Associated Press

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia — A Ukrainian delegation set to meet with America’s top diplomat in Saudi Arabia about ending the 3-year war with Russia will propose a ceasefire covering the Black Sea and long-range missile strikes, as well as the release of prisoners, two senior Ukrainian officials said Monday.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, also said the Ukrainian delegation is ready during the talks to sign an agreement with the United States on access to Ukraine’s rare earth minerals — a deal that President Donald Trump is keen to secure.

The officials discussed the confidence-building measures, with no further details, ahead of the Ukrainian negotiating team’s meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Jeddah.

Kyiv is trying to repair the damage done when Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s Feb. 28 visit to Washington descended into an Oval Office argument with Trump and Vice President JD

Vance.

At stake is the military aid and intelligence previously offered by the United States that had helped Ukraine in the war but is now paused as Washington pushes for a peace agreement.

Rubio and Zelenskyy landed a few hours apart Monday in Saudi Arabia, though they were not expected to meet.

Zelenskyy was to meet with the kingdom’s powerful crown prince Monday evening. Rubio also was due to meet Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Speaking to reporters aboard his plane, Rubio said he and national security adviser Mike Waltz would take stock of Ukraine’s responses in Saudi Arabia.

If Ukraine and the U.S. reach an understanding acceptable to Trump, that could accelerate the push to peace talks.

“What we want to know is, are they interested entering some sort of peace conversation and general outlines of the kinds of things they could consider, recognizing that it has been a costly and bloody war



ANDRIY ANDRIYENKO, UKRAINE’S 65TH MECHANIZED BRIGADE/AP
Ukrainian service members train in the Zaporizhzhia region of Ukraine on Monday.

for the Ukrainians,” Rubio said.

Zelenskyy has said his team meeting Rubio will include his chief of staff Andriy Yermak, Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiha and Defense Minister Rustem Umerov. Rubio will lead the U.S. team.

The rest of Europe remains skeptical about the talks as it has been sidelined by Washington.

The European Union last week

agreed to boost the continent’s defenses and to free up hundreds of billions of euros for security in response to the Trump administration’s shift in stance on Ukraine.

White House special envoy Steve Witkoff told Fox News on Monday that the pause of U.S. intelligence-sharing with Ukraine has not limited defense intelligence-sharing.

“We never shut off intelligence for ... anything defensive that the Ukrainians need,” Witkoff said.

A pause on sharing U.S. intelligence that can be used for offensive purposes by Ukrainian forces remains in effect, according to a U.S. official familiar with the matter who was not authorized to comment and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Ukraine war has increased US dominance of global arms trade

By ADAM TAYLOR
The Washington Post

The war in Ukraine has helped grow U.S. dominance of the global arms industry, according to a study released Sunday. U.S. arms exports between 2020 and 2024 were up by more than a fifth compared with the previous five-year window, reaching 43% of the worldwide total.

The United States has averaged 35% of arms exports over the past two decades, making the recent surge unusual, according to esti-

mates from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which published the study.

“The USA is in a unique position when it comes to arms exports,” said Mathew George, director of the arms transfer program at SIPRI. “At 43 percent, its share of global arms exports is more than four times as much as the next-largest exporter, France.”

SIPRI found that Ukraine, which Russia invaded in February 2022, was the largest weapons importer between 2020 and 2024,

with its number of imports nearly 100 times greater than they were between 2015 and 2019. Arms imports to European states surged by 155% in the same window, fueled by fears of Kremlin expansionism and pressure from the United States to rearm.

The findings come as the Trump administration puts pressure on Ukraine to end the war that began with Russia’s invasion more than three years ago. President Donald Trump has repeatedly said that the United States

should be repaid for its military aid to Ukraine, much of which comes in the form of military equipment, by way of a proposed deal for U.S. access to Ukraine’s critical minerals. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky rejected Trump’s account of U.S. aid and pointed out that a large share of the \$174 billion in U.S. funds appropriated by Congress in response to the war actually went to the U.S. defense industry.

The study suggests that military aid to Ukraine has been a boon for

U.S. arms producers. Most U.S. weapons sent to Ukraine have come through the presidential drawdown authority, under which the United States sends equipment from its stockpiles, or through another program that uses funding to procure arms directly from U.S. manufacturers.

The study counts weapons sent from stockpiles as exports. European countries also sent aid from their stockpiles, the replenishment of which drove still further demand for U.S. weapons.

NATION



JABIN BOTSFORD/The Washington Post

Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. watches as President Donald Trump signs executive orders in the Oval Office last month. Most of the health department’s 80,000 workers have been emailed an offer to leave their job for as much as a \$25,000 payment.

HHS makes \$25K buyout offer to most of its 80,000 employees

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Most of the 80,000 federal workers responsible for researching diseases, inspecting food and administering Medicare and Medicaid under the auspices of the Health and Human Services Department were emailed an offer to leave their job for as much as a \$25,000 payment as part of President Donald Trump’s government cuts.

Workers cannot start opting in until Monday and have until 5 p.m. on Friday to submit a response for the so-called voluntary separation offer. The email was sent to staff across the department, which includes the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, and the National Institutes of Health as well as the Food and Drug Administration, both in Maryland.

The mass email went out to a “broad population of HHS employees,” landing in their inboxes

days before agency heads are due to offer plans for shrinking their workforces. HHS is one of the government’s costliest federal agencies, with an annual budget of about \$1.7 trillion that is mostly spent on health care coverage for millions of people enrolled in Medicare and Medicaid.

The agency oversees health insurance for roughly half the country through Medicare for older adults and Medicaid for disabled and poor Americans.

There was no immediate comment Sunday from HHS.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Trump’s health secretary, has hinted at plans at deep cuts to the staff. Last year, he promised to immediately clear out 600 employees at the NIH, the nation’s biomedical research arm. He has not gone that far, but in an interview last month shortly after being sworn, Kennedy said he wanted to remove some workers from the public health agencies.

“I have a list in my head,” Kennedy said of potential firings at the agency. He said some workers “made really bad decisions” on nutrition guidelines.

The Trump administration, with the help of billionaire Elon Musk, has been trying to push out federal workers in an effort to cut costs. In January, most federal employees received a deferred resignation offer that said it came with eight months of pay. Thousands of probationary employees, too, have been fired across federal agencies, including at HHS.

The latest move to reduce the number of federal health workers comes as the CDC is assisting with a deadly measles outbreak in West Texas and New Mexico and as lawmakers are debating deep cuts to Medicaid in the federal budget.

HHS workers are directed in the email to reach out to their local human resources office to submit for the voluntary separation.

Rubio says USAID purge done; State to run what’s left

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Monday the Trump administration had finished its six-week purge of programs of the six-decade-old U.S. Agency for International Development, and said he would move the 18% of aid and development programs that survived under the State Department.

Rubio made the announcement in a post on X. It marked one of his relatively few public comments on what has been a historic shift away from U.S. foreign aid and development, executed by Trump political appointees at State and Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency teams.

Rubio in the post thanked DOGE and “our hardworking staff who worked very long hours to achieve this overdue and historic reform” in foreign aid.

President Donald Trump on Jan. 20 issued an executive order directing a freeze of foreign assistance funding and a review of all of the tens of billions of dollars of U.S. aid and development work abroad. Trump charged that much of foreign assistance was wasteful and advanced a liberal agenda.

Rubio’s social media post Monday said that review was now “officially ending,” with some 5,200 of USAID’s 6,200 programs eliminated.

Those programs “spent tens of billions of dollars in ways that did not serve, (and in some cases even harmed), the core national interests of the United States,” Rubio wrote.

“In consultation with Congress, we intend for the remaining 18% of programs we are keeping ... to be

administered more effectively under the State Department,” he said. Democratic lawmakers and others call the shutdown of congressionally-funded programs illegal, saying such a move requires Congress’ approval.

The State Department in one of multiple lawsuits it is battling over its rapid shutdown of USAID had said earlier this month it was killing more than 90% of USAID programs. Rubio gave no explanation for why his number was lower, and no details of what programs were spared or how the State Department would run them.

In the weeks after Trump’s order, one of his appointees and transition team members, Pete Marocco, and Musk pulled USAID staff around the world off the job through forced leaves and firings, shut down USAID payments overnight and terminated aid and development contracts by the thousands.

Contractors and staffers running efforts ranging from epidemic control to famine prevention to job and democracy training stopped work. Aid groups and other USAID partners laid off tens of thousands of their workers in the U.S. and abroad.

Lawsuits brought by some of the nonprofit groups and businesses that had partnered with USAID say the form-letter contract terminations purge eliminated even programs that Rubio had said he wanted to save, violated the contract terms and stiffed aid groups and businesses of billions of dollars.

The shutdown has left many USAID staffers and contractors and their families still overseas, many of them awaiting U.S.-paid backpayments and travel expenses back home.

Noem taps new ICE leaders, moves to use polygraph tests to ID leakers

Associated Press

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem on Sunday announced new leadership at the agency tasked with immigration enforcement as she also pledged to step up lie detector tests on employees to identify those who may be leaking information about operations to the media.

“The authorities that I have under the Department of Homeland Security are broad and extensive and I plan to use every single one of them to make sure that we’re following the law, that we are following the procedures in place to keep

people safe and that we’re making sure we’re following through on what President Trump has promised,” Noem told CBS’ “Face the Nation.”

While these polygraph exams are typically not admissible in court proceedings, they are frequently used by federal law enforcement agencies and for national security clearances.

“The Department of Homeland Security is a national security agency,” DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement. “We can, should, and will polygraph personnel.”

White House officials have previously expressed frustration with the pace of deportations, blaming it in part on recent leaks revealing cities where authorities planned to conduct operations.

Noem’s announcement of two new leadership appointments within the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement comes less than two months into the Trump administration and demonstrates the importance that the administration places on carrying out the president’s deportation agenda.

Todd Lyons, the former assistant director of field operations for

the agency’s enforcement arm, will serve as acting ICE director. Madison Sheahan, secretary of the



Noem

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Noem’s former aide when she was governor of South Dakota, has been tapped to be the agency’s

deputy director.

The leadership changes come after ICE’s acting director was reassigned on Feb. 21. Two other

top immigration enforcement officials were reassigned Feb. 11. Those staffing changes came amid frustrations in the Trump administration about the pace of immigration arrests.

Noem also announced on Friday that the agency has identified and planned to prosecute two “leakers of information.”

On Sunday, she said these two people “were leaking our enforcement operations that we had planned and were going to conduct in several cities and exposed vulnerabilities.” She said they could face up to 10 years in federal prison.

NATION

Sanders takes lead of anti-Trump resistance

BY STEVE PEOPLES

Associated Press

WARREN, Mich. — Bernie Sanders is standing alone on the back of a pickup truck shouting into a bullhorn.

He's facing several hundred ecstatic voters huddled outside a suburban Detroit high school — the group that did not fit inside the high school's gym or two overflow rooms. The crowd screams in delight when he tells them that a combined total of 9,000 people had shown up for the rally.

"What all of this tells me, is not just in Michigan or in Vermont, the people of this country will not allow us to move toward oligarchy. They will not allow Trump to take us into authoritarianism," Sanders yelled. "We're prepared to fight. And we're going to win."

At 83 years old, Sanders is not running for president again. But the stooped and silver-haired democratic socialist has emerged as a leader of the resistance to Donald Trump's second presidency. In tearing into Trump's seizure of power and warning about the consequences of firing tens of thousands of government workers, Sanders is bucking the wishes of those who want Democrats to focus on the price of eggs or "roll over and play dead."

For now, at least, Sanders stands alone as the only elected progressive willing to mount a national campaign to harness the fear and anger of the sprawling anti-Trump movement.

He drew a crowd of 4,000 in Kenosha, Wis., on Friday night. He faced another 2,600 or so the next morning a few hours away in Altoona, Wis., a town of less than 10,000 residents. And his crowd of 9,000 in suburban Detroit exceeded his own team's expectations. By design, each stop was in a swing U.S. House district represented by a Republican.

Sanders, who was just elected to his fourth Senate term from Vermont, conceded that this is not the role he expected to play at this stage of his career.

In fact, his team intentionally waited in the early weeks of the Trump presidency to launch what



JOSE JUAREZ/AP

Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., right, speaks to an overflow crowd outside Lincoln High School as he talks about "Fighting Oligarchy: Where We Go From Here", on Saturday in Warren, Mich.

they are now calling his "stop oligarchy tour" to see if a high-profile Democrat would fill the leadership void. Instead, Sanders — who is not a Democrat himself despite allying with Senate Democrats and running twice for the party's presidential nomination — has people wondering if he's considering another White House bid.

"This is like presidential campaign rallies, isn't it? But I'm not running for president, and this is not a campaign," Sanders told The Associated Press. "You gotta do what you gotta do. The country's in trouble and I want to play my role."

Since losing the White House, Democrats across Washington have struggled to coalesce behind a consistent message or messenger to stop Trump's aggressive moves to slash the government workforce, weaken federal oversight and empower tech titan Elon Musk to execute his vision.

There has been no centralized movement to organize the anti-Trump resistance.

"You look around — who else is doing it? No one," Rep. Alexandria

Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., said of Sanders' efforts. "My hope is that the dam will break in terms of Democrats going on the offense ... We need to take the argument directly to the people."

Ocasio-Cortez, a longtime Sanders ally, said she would join him on the road in the coming weeks. She's also planning solo appearances in Republican-held congressional districts in Pennsylvania and New York — and perhaps others in places where Republicans have declined to hold in-person town halls where they might face protests.

"It's not about whether Bernie should or shouldn't be doing this. It's about that we all should," she said. "But he is unique in this country, and so long as we are blessed to have that capacity on our side, I think we should be thankful for it."

Beyond Sanders' tour, angry voters have so far relied on grassroots groups like Indivisible to organize a series of local protests. They have been effective in pressuring Trump's allies in some cases. A number of House Republi-

cans facing angry questions have criticized Musk or questioned the cuts being carried out at his allies' behest.

Indivisible co-founder Ezra Levin, who has been critical of many Democratic leaders, praised Sanders for stepping up.

"I wish more Democrats were traveling the country, including to red states, to rally the the majority against Musk and Project 2025," Levin said. "Sure as hell beats (House Democratic leader Hakeem) Jeffries traveling the country for his children's book tour during a constitutional crisis."

During last month's congressional recess, Jeffries made two appearances to promote a children's book about democracy. He has also traveled to support House Democrats. This past weekend, he was in Selma, Ala., to mark the 60th anniversary of Bloody Sunday.

The truth is that few, if any, Democratic leaders have the capacity to draw such crowds on short notice or organize the related logistics on a national scale. The

party's nascent class of 2028 presidential prospects, a group that includes California Gov. Gavin Newsom, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, and Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, have limited national profiles and they have been reluctant to step too far into the national spotlight so far.

Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy, among the more outspoken Trump critics in Congress, said that Democrats must be better organized.

"People are desperate to be plugged into action right now. People see the threat. They are anxious and angry and motivated and they want to be sent in a direction to help," he said.

Murphy acknowledged that Sanders still has plenty of detractors within the Democratic Party who view him and his progressive policy ideas — replacing private and job-based health insurance with a government-funded "Medicare for All" plan, free public college, and the "Green New Deal" on climate policy — as too radical.

Indeed, it was just five years ago when Democrats coalesced around Joe Biden to effectively block Sanders from winning the party's 2020 presidential nomination.

"There still are a lot of folks who view Bernie as a danger to the party," Murphy said, "whereas I see his message as the core of what we need to build on."

Sanders was a staunch supporter of Biden over the last four years but criticized the Democratic Party in the aftermath of Kamala Harris' loss last fall, declaring that Trump's victory was possible only because Democrats had "abandoned" the working class.

United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain, who introduced Sanders in Michigan, said more Democrats need to "follow his lead to focus on working-class people and working-class issues."

"They've got to take a hard look in the mirror, in my opinion, and decide who the hell they want to represent," Fain said of Democrats. "We've been clear as a union, if they aren't looking out for working-class people, we're not going to be there for them."

Trump says four bidders in play for deal to purchase TikTok 'soon'

Bloomberg News

President Donald Trump said Sunday he was negotiating with four different possible buyers for TikTok's U.S. business and that a deal for the social video app could come "soon."

"We're dealing with four different groups, and a lot of people want it," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One on Sunday. He didn't specify the contenders nor say which way he was leaning,

instead saying "all four are good."

ByteDance Ltd.'s TikTok faces a deadline of April 5 to strike a deal for its U.S. operations — or be banned from the country under a bipartisan law passed during the Biden administration. The U.S. is by far its most important market — ByteDance operates a sister service, Douyin, at home in China — and TikTok U.S. was estimated to be worth as much as \$50 billion last year.

Last week, Trump said he would be open to extending the deadline again if it were necessary, but thought a deal was possible in the next month. He already pushed back the initial Jan. 19 date, averting a prolonged TikTok blackout, and has repeatedly signaled he's open to striking a deal. As he's tried to broker a sale, the president has said he believes the U.S. should be granted a 50% stake in the company as a condi-

tion.

Beijing-based ByteDance has not indicated any interest in selling off its U.S. operations, though Chief Executive Officer Shou Chew met with Trump at Mar-a-Lago in December and attended the inauguration earlier this year. The company has made efforts to allay national security concerns among U.S. lawmakers so as to be able to continue operating in the country.

China's government would also need to approve any potential sale, and public pronouncements from Beijing have to date been unsupportive. Officials have been evaluating a potential option that involves Elon Musk acquiring the service in the U.S., though the strong preference is for TikTok to remain wholly within ByteDance, Bloomberg News reported. Musk, who already owns the X social network, has said he's not interested.

NATION

Supreme Court takes up conversion therapy bans

By MARK SHERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court agreed Monday in a case from Colorado to decide whether state and local governments can enforce laws banning conversion therapy for LGBTQ+ children.

The conservative-led court is taking up the case amid actions by President Donald Trump targeting transgender people, including a ban on military service and an end to federal funding for gender-affirming care for transgender minors.

The justices also have heard ar-

guments in a Tennessee case over whether state bans on treating transgender minors violate the Constitution. But they have yet to issue a decision.

Colorado is among roughly half the states that prohibit the practice of trying to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity through counseling.

The issue is whether the law violates the speech rights of counselors.

Defenders of such laws argue that they regulate the conduct of professionals who are licensed by the state.

The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of

Appeals in Denver upheld the state law.

The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta has struck down local bans in Florida.

In 2023, the court had turned away a similar challenge, despite a split among federal appeals courts that had weighed state bans and come to differing decisions.

At the time, three justices, Samuel Alito, Brett Kavanaugh and Clarence Thomas, said they would have taken on the issue.

It takes four justices to grant review.

The nine-member court does not typically reveal how justices

vote at this stage of a case so it's unclear who might have provided the fourth vote.

The case will be argued in the court's new term, which begins in October.

The appeal on behalf of Kaley Chiles, a counselor in Colorado Springs, was filed by Alliance Defending Freedom, the conservative legal organization that has appeared frequently at the court in recent years in cases involving high-profile social issues.

One of those cases was a 5-4 decision in 2018 in which the justices ruled that California could not force state-licensed anti-abortion

crisis pregnancy centers to provide information about abortion.

Chiles' lawyers leaned heavily on that decision in asking the court to take up her case.

They wrote that Chiles doesn't "seek to 'cure' clients of same-sex attractions or to 'change' clients' sexual orientation."

In arguing for the court to reject the appeal, lawyers for Colorado wrote that lawmakers acted to regulate professional conduct, "based on overwhelming evidence that efforts to change a child's sexual orientation or gender identity are unsafe and ineffective."

Immigration agents arrest Palestinian activist

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Federal immigration authorities arrested a Palestinian activist Saturday who played a prominent role in Columbia University's protests against Israel, a significant escalation in the Trump administration's pledge to detain and deport student activists.

Mahmoud Khalil, a graduate student at Columbia until this past December, was inside his university-owned apartment Saturday night when several Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents entered and took him into custody, his attorney, Amy Greer, told The Associated Press.

Greer said she spoke by phone with one of the ICE agents during the arrest, who said they were acting on State Department orders to revoke Khalil's student visa. Informed by the attorney that Khalil was in the United States as a permanent resident with a green card, the agent said they were revoking that instead, according to the lawyer.

A spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security confirmed Khalil's arrest in a statement Sunday, describing it as "in

support of President Trump's executive orders prohibiting anti-Semitism."

Khalil's arrest is the first publicly known deportation effort under Trump's promised crackdown on students who joined protests against the war in Gaza that swept college campuses last spring. The administration has claimed participants forfeited their rights to remain in the country by supporting Hamas.

A spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security, Tricia McLaughlin, signaled the arrest was directly connected to Khalil's role in the protests, alleging he "led activities aligned to Hamas, a designated terrorist organization."

As ICE agents arrived at Khalil's Manhattan residence Saturday night, they also threatened to arrest Khalil's wife, an American citizen who is eight months pregnant, Greer said.

Khalil is currently being held in an immigration detention center



Khalil

in Louisiana after initially being sent to a facility in New Jersey, according to ICE's online detainee database, which lists his birthplace as Syria.

The Department of Homeland Security can initiate deportation proceedings against green card holders for a broad range of alleged criminal activity, including supporting a terror group. But the detention of a legal permanent resident who has not been charged with a crime marked an extraordinary move with an uncertain legal foundation, according to immigration experts.

Khalil, who received his master's degree from Columbia's school of international affairs last semester, served as a negotiator for students as they bargained with university officials over an end to the tent encampment erected on campus last spring.

The role made him one of the most visible activists in support of the movement, prompting calls from pro-Israel activists in recent weeks for the Trump administration to begin deportation proceedings against him.

Khalil was among those under investigation by a new Columbia



A protester parades a Palestinian flag in 2024 outside the entrance to Hamilton Hall on the campus of Columbia University in New York.

University office that has brought disciplinary charges against dozens of students for pro-Palestinian activism, according to records shared with the AP.

Federal immigration authorities also visited a second international student at Columbia over

the weekend and attempted to take her into custody but were prevented from entering the apartment, according to a union representing the student. The woman has not been identified, and it's not clear what grounds ICE had for the visit.

Feds: Agent told women to expose breasts to enter US

The Charlotte Observer

A now former United States Border Patrol agent is accused of making women expose their breasts to get into the country.

Shane Millan, 53, pleaded guilty on March 7 to two counts of deprivation of rights under color of law, according to court records. His attorney did not immediately respond to McClatchy News' request for comment on Sunday.

In August 2023, while stationed at Wellesley Island in Jefferson County, N.Y., Millan was tasked with processing immigrants who crossed into the country at the

southern border, court records said.

He was responsible for processing paperwork that would allow the immigrants to stay in the country until court hearings.

On Aug. 10, 2023, Millan was processing paperwork for a woman via webcam. The woman was in Eagle Pass, Texas, with her 1-year-old daughter, records said.

During the processing, Millan falsely told the woman that her file said she had a tattoo on her chest, according to court records. The woman responded by saying that she did not have a tattoo on her

chest, but Millan ordered her to show him, the plea agreement said. The woman stood up, lifted her clothing and exposed her breasts, the court records said.

Toward the end of the webcam call, Millan told the woman he has to confirm again there was no tattoo, officials said. When the woman resisted, he told her he would not sign the paperwork unless she did it, records said.

The woman put her baby on the ground and exposed her breasts again, according to court records. Then Millan told the woman, "OK ... Welcome to the U.S.A.," documents said.

On Aug. 25, 2023, Millan interviewed a woman via webcam who had her husband and children in the room with her. He ordered the husband and children to leave then asked if she had any tattoos, the plea agreement said.

The woman said she had a tattoo on her collarbone and pulled the neckline of her shirt down to show him, according to court records.

Millan told the woman to lift her shirt and bra, which she did, exposing her breasts, the court records said. Before the end of the interview, he told her to do it again,

and she complied, records said.

Millan is accused of ordering other women to expose their breasts during their virtual proceedings, court records said.

He also used his computer to search phrases in Spanish, including, "I will need you to lift your shirt and bra also, please" and "to verify I will need you to lift your shirt, please," court records said.

Millan is scheduled to be sentenced on July 7 and faces up to two years in prison, according to a news release from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of New York.

WORLD

Chaos in Romania after far-right candidate barred from vote redo

Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Romania — Chaos broke out in Romania’s capital Sunday evening as incensed supporters of the far-right populist Calin Georgescu protested the electoral body’s decision to reject his candidacy in a presidential election redo. He won the first round of last year’s race before a top court annulled the election.

Georgescu, 62, filed his candidacy on Friday in the capital, Bucharest. The Central Election Bureau, also known by its Romanian acronym BEC, had 48 hours to register or reject it.

In its decision, the BEC cited the country’s Constitutional Court ruling last year to cancel the election,

arguing it was ordered due to “the candidate’s failure to comply with electoral regulations.”

“It would be unacceptable for the restarted election process to consider the same individual as eligible for the presidency,” BEC said.

Georgescu appealed the electoral body’s decision to a top court on Monday. Romania’s Constitutional Court said there would be a hearing on Tuesday, but it will have 48 hours to make a decision.

Hundreds of protesters gathered outside BEC’s headquarters to express anger over its decision, with many waving Romanian flags and chanting: “The last resort is another revolution!” Some protesters threw broken paving stones and

other objects at the scores of riot police dispatched to the area, overturned a news vehicle and set a bush ablaze.

Georgescu reacted to the decision Sunday by calling it “a direct blow to the heart of democracy worldwide!”

“I have one message left! If democracy in Romania falls, the entire democratic world will fall! This is just the beginning. It’s that simple!” he said in a post on X. “Europe is now a dictatorship, Romania is under tyranny!”

The BEC’s rejection of Georgescu’s candidacy came after the Constitutional Court annulled the first-round results two days before the Dec. 8 runoff, after allegations



VADIM GHIRDA/AP

A supporter of Calin Georgescu reacts during a protest after Romania's electoral body rejected his candidacy in the presidential election rerun in Bucharest, Romania, on Sunday.

emerged that Russia had run a coordinated online campaign to promote the outsider, who ran as an independent. The court’s unprecedented decision plunged the European Union and NATO member country into a protracted political crisis.

The first round of the rerun is scheduled for May 4. If no candidate wins more than 50% of the ballots, a runoff will follow on May 18.

Iran says it is open to talks about militarization of its nuclear program

Associated Press

Iran said Sunday it would consider negotiations with the United States if the talks were confined to concerns about the militarization of its nuclear program.

In a statement posted on X, the

country’s U.N. mission said: “If the objective of negotiations is to address concerns vis-à-vis any potential militarization of Iran’s nuclear program, such discussions may be subject to consideration.”

A day earlier, Iran’s Supreme

Leader Ali Khamenei had rejected talks with the U.S., because he said they would be aimed at imposing restrictions on Iran’s missile program and its influence in the region.

Khamenei’s remarks came a

day after President Donald Trump acknowledged sending a letter to him seeking a new deal with Tehran to restrain its rapidly advancing nuclear program and replace the nuclear deal he withdrew America from during his

first term in office.

Khamenei said U.S. demands would be both military and related to the regional influence of Iran. He said such talks would not solve problems between Iran and the West.

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Gene Hackman, wife's cause of death revealed

NM SANTA FE — Forensic experts came to a heartrending conclusion about the manner of death for actor Gene Hackman: he died of heart disease with complications from Alzheimer's disease on an empty stomach a week after a rare, rodent-borne disease took the life of his wife at their home in Santa Fe.

The partially mummified remains of Hackman, 95, and Betsy Arakawa, 65, were discovered Feb. 26 when maintenance and security workers showed up at the home and alerted police.

Authorities unraveled the mysterious circumstances and revealed that Arakawa likely died Feb. 11 at home from hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, a rare but potentially fatal disease spread by infected rodent droppings.

Hackman, in the advanced stages of Alzheimer's, apparently was unaware that his wife was dead.

"He was in a very poor state of health. He had significant heart disease, and I think ultimately that's what resulted in his death," chief medical investigator Dr. Heather Jarrell said.

Man who targeted women waiting for ride sentenced

CO DENVER — A Denver man was sentenced to 290 years to life in prison for targeting women and falsely posing as the driver of the vehicles they had requested on ride-hailing apps in order to kidnap and sexually assault them, prosecutors said.

John Pastor-Mendoza, 43, was convicted in October of kidnapping 12 women, sexually assaulting two of them and attempting to sexually assault seven others, Denver District Attorney John Walsh said in a statement. Pastor-Mendoza was also found guilty of one count of robbery.

Investigators said that between 2018 and 2022, Pastor-Mendoza sought out seemingly intoxicated women outside clubs and bars in downtown Denver. The women told investigators that they had been waiting for the ride they had called on apps such as Lyft and Uber.

Transportation chief calls street murals unsafe

DC WASHINGTON — Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy sent a letter to D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser saying that murals and artwork on District roadways are unsafe and asked the District's Department of Transportation to identify potential areas of "roadway noncompliance" and plans for addressing them within 30 days.

In a letter that echoed remarks President Donald Trump has made about the city, Duffy said he was writing to Bowser to request "assistance in making Washing-



MENGSHIN LIN/AP

Celebration of culture

Kamehameha Schools' Hawaiian Ensemble dancers perform Saturday during Hokulea's 50th birthday commemoration at Kualoa Regional Park in Kaneohe, Hawaii. Hokulea, the Hawaiian name for the star Arcturus, is a double-hulled sailing canoe, that sailed in 1975 as part of a resurgence of pride in Hawaiian culture.

ton, D.C. safe and beautiful once again and restoring our pride in our Nation's Capital."

The letter was one of three Duffy sent to regional leaders: Duffy asked Amtrak CEO Stephen Gardner and WMATA CEO Randy Clarke to produce reports on their efforts to reduce crime at Union Station and the Washington Metro system, respectively. Duffy cannot dictate changes in those agencies or in D.C.'s traffic management, but both the city and the transportation agencies rely to varying degrees on federal funds.

Private lunar lander dead after landing sideways

FL CAPE CANAVERAL — A private lunar lander is no longer working after landing sideways in a crater near the moon's south pole and its mission is over, officials said.

The news came less than 24 hours after the botched landing attempt by Texas-based Intuitive Machines.

The lander named Athena missed its mark by more than 800 feet and ended up in a frigid crater, the company said in declaring it dead.

Athena managed to send back pictures confirming its position and activate a few experiments before going silent. NASA and other customers had packed the lander with tens of millions of dollars' worth of experiments including an ice drill, drone and pair of ro-

vers to roam the unexplored terrain ahead of astronauts' planned arrival later this decade.

It's unlikely Athena's batteries can be recharged given the way the lander's solar panels are pointed and the extreme cold in the crater.

8 hurt when driver plows vehicle into dealership

CA INGLEWOOD — Eight people were injured when a driver plowed a vehicle into a CarMax location in the Los Angeles area.

Two people were critically hurt at the dealership in Inglewood, while the other six had minor injuries, Los Angeles County Fire Department spokesperson Jonathan Torres said.

Video of the aftermath posted on social media showed a damaged SUV backing into the building, followed by an employee rushing out. The vehicle pivoted in a lobby area and drove out of the opposite end of the building.

CarMax said the driver was a customer whose vehicle had been appraised. He was later arrested.

Pilot error likely caused crash that killed family

TN NASHVILLE — A fiery small plane crash in Tennessee last year that killed a Canadian family of five was most likely the result of an error by the father, who was piloting the plane,

according to a National Transportation Safety Board report released.

A yearlong investigation of the March 4, 2024, crash found no mechanical problems with the plane, although the fuel selector was between the "off" position and the left main tank position.

"This setting would starve the engine of fuel and was likely the result of the pilot changing the fuel selector handle in preparation for landing," according to the report.

The Piper PA-32RT single-engine plane crashed within Nashville city limits alongside Interstate 40, frightening passing motorists. It burst into flames in grass just off the highway and behind a Costco on the city's westside, about 3 miles south of Nashville's John C Tune Airport.

US headed toward hospital bed shortage

DC WASHINGTON — The United States may face a shortage of hospital beds by 2032, a recent analysis in JAMA Network Open warns.

The study found that hospital admissions have remained 11 percentage points higher since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and that an aging population and dwindling number of hospital beds because of labor shortages and hospital closures could exacerbate the problem.

Researchers used weekly hospital occupancy data collected by

the Department of Health and Human Services between 2020 and 2024, when the agency required the reporting as part of coronavirus tracking.

By 2035, the researchers project, annual hospitalizations will rise from 36 million in 2025 to 40 million in 2035 because of the aging U.S. population, with a national occupancy of about 85% of available staffed adult beds.

That would constitute a shortage, the researchers write, with the "dangerous threshold" arriving as soon as 2032.

US representative, 70, dies 2 months into role

TX HOUSTON — Democratic U.S. Rep. Sylvester Turner of Texas has died two months after taking office and hours after attending President Donald Trump's address before Congress in Washington, D.C., officials and his family said on Wednesday. He was 70.

While attending Trump's speech to Congress, Turner was taken to a hospital and later released, Turner's family said in a statement.

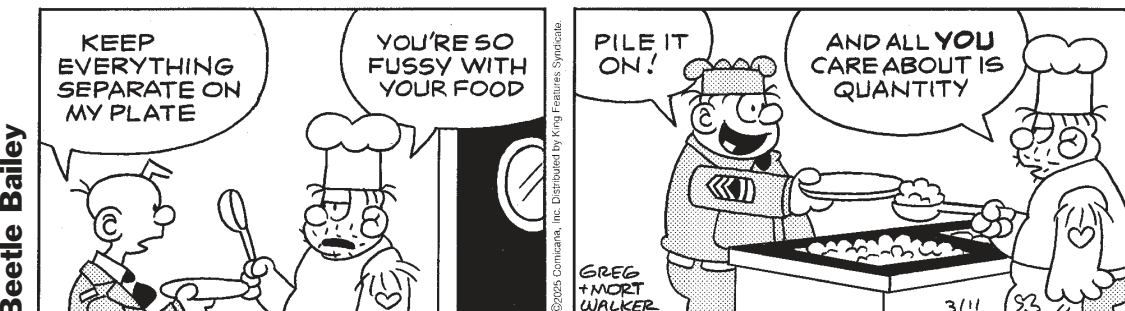
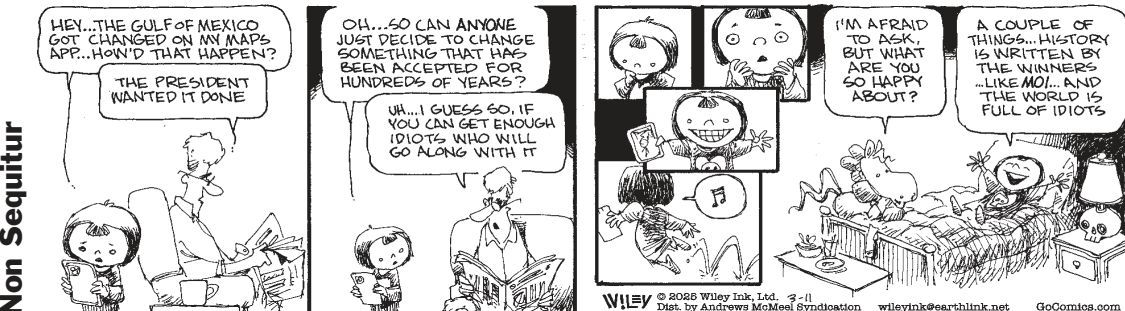
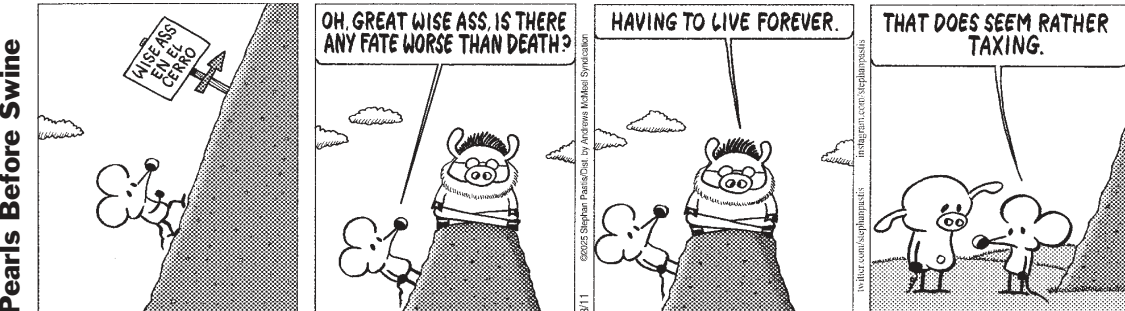
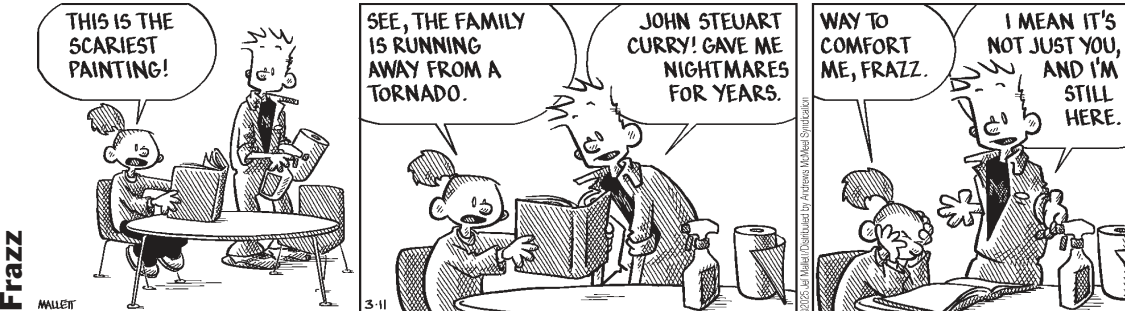
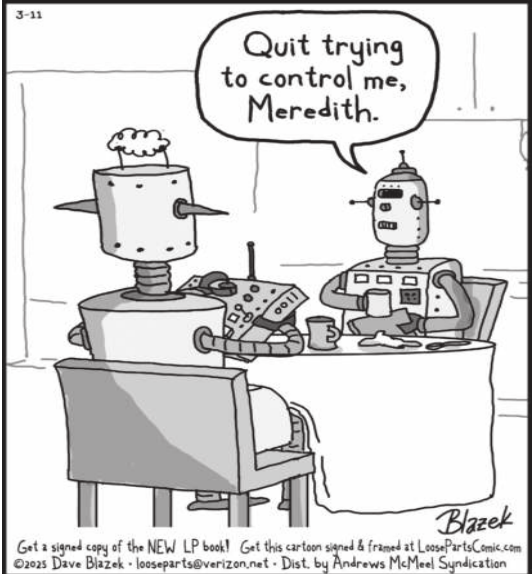
Turner's family said that at 5:45 a.m. Wednesday, "he died at his home from enduring health complications."

The family did not offer additional information on those health complications.

Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16				17			
18					19				20			
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30					31				32			
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38	39	40				41				42	43	44
45						46			47			
48						49			50			
51						52			53			

- ACROSS
- 52 Deleted
- 53 Signature pieces?
- 22 Shock partner
- 23 Resort
- 24 Web address
- 25 June honoree
- 26 Dead heat
- 27 Sportage maker
- 28 Stately tree
- 29 — Moines
- 31 Qt. fractions
- 34 Part of NIMBY
- 35 Sir Guinness
- 37 Notorious
- 38 List-ending shorthand
- 39 Bud holder
- 40 Concept
- 41 Evening, in an ad
- 42 Golf target
- 43 Volunteer's words
- 44 Clothing store section
- 46 NFL's Jaguars, on scoreboards
- 47 LL Cool J's music
- DOWN
- 1 Japanese volcano
- 2 Eve's grandson
- 3 Flower part
- 4 Spain's Costa del —
- 5 Use elbow grease on
- 6 Pinnacle
- 7 Zero-star review
- 8 "Home Alone" actor
- 9 Satan's forte
- 10 "Network" star Dunaway
- 11 Level
- 16 Family
- 20 Hot temper
- 21 "Misery" actor

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

3-11

CRYPTOQUIP

TS NLF ZIQI SLQRIK PL HYN
PL JI LV Y HLHFDYQ ULRTYD
VIZU ZIJUTPI, ZLFDK NLF
FUI Y QIKKTP RYQK?
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: ACTIVITY FOR FOLKS WHO REALLY LIKE VIEWING ALL EVENTS INVOLVING THE PONTIFF: PAPAL-WATCHING.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: H equals P



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 Lt. Col. Katie R. Fidler, Europe commander
 John Rodriguez, Europe chief of staff
 Lt. Col. Marci Hoffman, Pacific commander

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OPINION

Ukraine is to the right as Israel is to the left

BY JASON WILLOCK
The Washington Post

President Donald Trump is trying to force Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy into a peace agreement with Russia by browbeating Zelenskyy rhetorically and withholding military aid as leverage. This playbook has stunned Washington, but it shouldn't be entirely unfamiliar: For much of 2024, progressive Democrats pleaded with the Biden administration to deploy a similar approach against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to stop the war with Hamas.

No, President Joe Biden never called Netanyahu a "dictator," as Trump did Zelenskyy, but Democrats such as then-Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York did seek Netanyahu's wartime removal from office (in a speech Biden praised). No, Biden never made bullying demands of Netanyahu in front of the cameras, but he did push Israel hard to accept a deal with Hamas that fell well short of fulfilling Israel's military objectives. No, Biden's White House never announced a weapons embargo against Israel, but it did bottle up arms deliveries to express displeasure with Israel's insistence on pursuing Hamas in the Gazan city of Rafah.

In other words, Biden didn't apply the same level of pressure against Israel to end the conflict on his terms as Trump is applying against Ukraine. But Biden's perceived tentativeness dismayed progressives in Congress, the media and the Democratic base to no end. They said Israel was taking U.S. support for granted and disrespecting the president. With his punitiveness and pungency, Trump is behaving toward Zelenskyy the way progressives wish Biden would have behaved toward Netanyahu.

This comparison infuriates liberals, who

see pressure on Israel as well-meaning and Trump's efforts to coerce Ukraine as nefarious. But that's precisely the point: Foreign policy is often a projection of domestic political ideals. Which of the world's wars are vital to U.S. interests, and which are mere "territorial disputes" or "ethnic rivalries"? Which allies are righteous sentinels of American values, and which are ungrateful dependents? A country that can't agree on its fundamental ideals will struggle to answer those questions in a consistent way.

The consistency in Trump's approach — a tight leash for Ukraine, freer rein for Israel — is that the president tends to tilt toward the stronger party. Russia is stronger than Ukraine, and Israel is stronger than its ring of Iran-backed enemies. It takes less U.S. effort to forge a peace that is acceptable to the stronger party. Meanwhile, the conventional Democratic approach to these two conflicts — hold back Israel while declaring a willingness to back Ukraine "as long as it takes" — requires more diplomatic exertion by Washington. It aligns with the liberal instinct to stand with the "underdog," but it has also proved politically unsuccessful.

The Trump administration seems to see less of a U.S. interest in Europe's defense partly for ideological reasons. Instead of regarding the European Union as a model of humane liberal democracy, many conservative populists see a cautionary political tale in the Continent's geopolitical decline, bureaucratic government and progressive excesses. Meanwhile, Democratic skepticism of Israel has clearly been influenced by the projection of American identity politics onto the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with Israel playing the role of oppressor.

But no matter a president's ideological outlook, Washington's ability to force peace on an

unwilling ally in an existential war depends in part on that ally's domestic politics. Biden's entreaties and ultimatums to Israel always felt doomed to fail because they underestimated the degree to which Israel's political system was united around the government's aggressive stance against Hamas. Netanyahu at one point said that even if the U.S. cut off weapons, Israelis would "fight with our fingernails," and the opposition did not contradict him.

Trump might well face a similar challenge trying to impose an unsatisfying peace on Ukraine. Ukrainians won't agree to a peace that looks like their country's death warrant. On the other hand, progressives were convinced throughout the war with Hamas that if only Biden had used more of the United States' leverage against Netanyahu, Israel might have had no choice but to obey his commands.

Trump's hardball diplomacy will test the limits of Washington's capacity to use brute force to control states that rely on U.S. backing to survive in dangerous neighborhoods. Keith Kellogg, Trump's special envoy for the Russia-Ukraine war, said on Thursday that the pause on military aid to Ukraine is "like hitting a mule with a two-by-four across the nose. You got their attention."

The contours of the peace settlement Trump has in mind if and when he forces Ukraine to the negotiating table remain elusive. But the relentless liberal pressure on Biden to go harder on Israel during the last year of his presidency refutes the notion that coercing an ally at war is itself somehow beyond the pale. What we are seeing is a fracturing political consensus about what American values are and at which of the world's pressure points they are most at stake.

Jason Willock is a Washington Post columnist focusing on law, politics and foreign policy.

One party worked harder to build a bigger tent in 2024

BY ROB RICHIE
The Fulcrum

Democrats keep pointing fingers for reasons they lost last November. Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s new role leading the Department of Health and Human Services underscores an important factor deserving more attention: Democrats spent millions trying to bully Kennedy, Jill Stein and other insurgents off the ballot rather than respect their supporters.

They treated it as a strategic masterstroke, but their anti-democratic bet was a miscalculation.

In a change election resulting in the closest popular vote since 2000, hypocrisy was a fatal sin. Democrats would have benefited from embracing competition and building a bigger tent of their own, not fighting against voter choice. It was not enough to stand up for the rule of law and protection of voting rights. To build a majority in today's America, one must embrace voter choice.

Polling indicates that by August, Kennedy had become more of a "spoiler" for Donald Trump than Kamala Harris. The fact that Stein's liberal Green Party voters also may have broken toward Trump underscores the impact of Republicans' different approach. They expanded their tent to include Kennedy and new Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. Trump risked boos at the Libertarian Party convention, but it paid off in November — Libertarian presidential nominee Chase Oliver's 0.4% vote share was the lowest

in a generation.

Democrats had opportunities to show their respect for voters and dissident voices. When Kennedy, Dean Phillips and Marianne Williamson challenged President Joe Biden for the Democratic nomination, they could have required primary debates rather than simply close ranks

After abandoning the Democratic primary, Kennedy had the highest poll numbers of any independent since Ross Perot, yet Democrats treated him only as a threat to neutralize rather than a weakness to address. Their war room converted its tactics against a prospective No Labels candidate to blocking Kennedy.

Democrats made certain Kennedy be kept from the first presidential debate stage despite double-digit poll support. They attacked Kennedy's ballot access across the battleground states, sought to prevent an independent super PAC from helping him collect signatures, and sued to keep him off the ballot in deep-blue New York. Such hardball tactics "worked" in that Kennedy's polling collapsed. But most of Kennedy's voters never returned home. While Harris wouldn't even meet with Kennedy, Trump won his endorsement. That embrace, just a day after the Democratic convention, may have negated Harris' bounce heading into a dead-heat election — where a shift of as few as 115,000 voters would have given Harris the presidency.

Kennedy is not the only independent who Democrats tried to sue and shame into oblivion. In Michigan and Wisconsin, among other

states, Democrats ran negative ads that suggested a vote for Stein was a vote for Trump and that she was a "puppet" of Vladimir Putin. In Michigan, where Stein campaigned to significant numbers of Arab-American voters opposed to Biden's Middle East policies, Democrats acted as if those voters would not turn to Trump. But many did.

Imagine if Democrats had embraced competition instead of stifling it. They didn't need to embrace Kennedy's views on vaccines, or Stein's most left-wing stances, but instead highlight common ground on the environment, minimum wage and healthier diets.

Looking at the math of our antiquated plurality voting system, the Democrats' actions may seem rational. They feared Trump winning states with less than half the vote and assumed that reducing votes for Kennedy and Stein would mean more for Harris. But that strategy backfired, spectacularly.

Parties can show they respect voters through widespread adoption of pro-voter choice changes like ranked choice voting, open primaries, fusion voting, and proportional representation. Rather than attack minor parties at every turn, major parties would need to learn to court disgruntled voters to build an electoral majority.

It turns out those voters in 2024 made their voices heard anyway. And the candidate who made the effort to include them is now the president of the United States.

Rob Richie is president and CEO of FairVote.

FACES

Not the retiring type

James Taylor extends 2025 concert tour, discusses reasons for recent political post supporting Ukraine

BY GEORGE VARGA
The San Diego Union-Tribune
Legendary singer-songwriter James Taylor is adding 17 new August and September concerts to his 2025 tour.

The new concerts, which conclude Sept. 17 in Fort Worth, Texas, are in addition to 24 previously announced shows Taylor will perform beginning May 5.

The prospect of hitting the road again in such a big way for his annual summer tour is one that both delights and grounds him.

“This is something that is a rare thing in America: I have the same job today that I had when I was 15!” said Taylor, speaking last week from the Boston suburb of Brookline.

The 2016 Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient and 2000 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee celebrates his 77th birthday on Wednesday. Now at work on a new album, among other projects, he is clearly not the retiring type.

“When something works, you tend to stick with it,” Taylor agreed. “And performing is the realest part of a kind of a showbiz career, or a commercial artistic career. The fact that you put it in front of an audience — they come back to hear you again and again — and you know immediately how they’re receiving it and what their response is.

“Otherwise, it can be a very unreal life to sort of be a celebrity, or to sort of promote yourself as a product, brand or whatever, a (type of) human existence that is removed from reality already. So, it can be very uncertain or subject to interpretation. But being on the road — and traveling and working with musicians — and getting the response from the audience, that’s as real as it gets.”

Yet, despite the fact he is now in his sixth decade of touring, Taylor doesn’t take performing for granted. And he admits that getting preshow jitters is not uncommon.

“I still do get stage fright, although once we’re in the groove, once we’re in the saddle

and out there, my nerves aren’t so bad from night to night. But in the beginning, they are. And if you stay out (on tour) too long and get exhausted, then your nerves can overwhelm you. ... So it’s just a matter of knowing what you’re able to handle.

“I’ve often said that 90% of performance — the art of performance — is whether or not you look good when you’re nervous. And there’s a way to use that energy, and a way also to sort of foil it, to get around it on stage.”

Taylor’s concerts showcase the wealth of classic songs he has written and recorded, including “Fire and Rain,” “Sweet Baby James,” “Carolina in My Mind,” “Mexico,” “Shower The People” and “Country Road.” They have become part of the fabric of the shared American listening experience, as evidenced by the multigenerational audiences that attend and cheer his performances, and by their appeal to listeners with different political and social perspectives.

While he has performed on behalf of Democratic presidential candidates over the decades, Taylor has generally shied away from making political statements on or off stage. But he made a notable exception on Feb. 21 with his heartfelt social media post, “Thoughts On Ukraine.”

He began the post by acknowledging how rare it is for him to publicly make such a personal statement, writing: “I always hesitate to bring my political beliefs into this space. I don’t think my listeners would expect that from me and some of you will find it disappointing: not what you were looking for ... But the recent reversal of our support for the Ukrainian resistance to Putin’s invasion motivates me to cross that line.”

Taylor then asks: “Were we wrong about Zelenskyy, the hero of Ukraine? Were we wrong to feel the brotherhood of freedom in their struggle to resist the unprovoked attack upon their young nation? When they fought the bully Putin to a standstill with



THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER/TNS

James Taylor, shown performing Aug. 30 in Philadelphia, turns 77 this week.

righteous resistance. When they stood up to the tyrant and stoically paid the price in patriots’ blood, were we not thrilled at their courage...”

He concludes by pondering: “Is this what has become of the cradle of liberty, and the home of the brave? That we slide the hidden dagger in the back of those who were our champions? While our allies in the defeat of Hitler and Stalin witness our betrayal in disbelief...”

Could “Thoughts On Ukraine” inspire Taylor to write a song on the same subject matter?

“Well, I introduced that piece on my social media by sort of apologizing for getting political,” he replied. “Generally speaking, I don’t think that’s what people come to see me for (in concert). I think that’s probably a distraction.

“As far as my live performances are concerned... I don’t want to burden or distract my audience from what’s essentially, if I can presume to call it art, an artistic experience with this kind of (political statement) stuff. So, I keep politics out of my performances and, generally speaking, out of my

public offerings... But one of the main things that concerned me, was Trump’s relationship with Putin and (Hungarian Prime Minister) Viktor Orban, and our relationship with NATO and our mission as world leaders, and of our commitment to representative democracy and human rights.

“That’s one of the main things that motivated me (to write and share ‘Thoughts On Ukraine’ and make that political stand. I’ve been dreading what happened with Ukraine under this administration... It came as a surprise to me how sort of blunt it was and how sort of clumsy the handling of it has been.

“The relationship between Trump and Putin has always been something that concerned me. I’m surprised it doesn’t concern more people, but it’s front and center now. And one of my major concerns has been, and continues to be: What do we stand for in the world? What are we? Are we abandoning our our mission of promoting democracy in the world?

“As my friend (film and TV director) Dave Mirkin says: ‘These are the fun questions.’”

Sci-fi ‘Mickey 17’ tops box office, but profitability a long way off

Associated Press
“Mickey 17,” the original science fiction film from “Parasite” filmmaker Bong Joon Ho, opened in first place on the North American box office charts.

According to studio estimates Sunday, the Robert Pattinson-led film earned \$19.1 million in its first weekend in theaters, enough to dethrone “Captain America: Brave New World” after a three-week reign.

Overseas, “Mickey 17” has already made \$34.2 million, bringing its worldwide total to \$53.3 million. But profitability for the film is a long way off: It cost a reported \$118 million to produce, which does not include the costs of marketing and promotion.

Originally set for release in March 2024, Bong’s follow-up to



WARNER BROS. PICTURES

Robert Pattinson, left, stars in “Mickey 17.” Also pictured: Anamaria Vartolomei.

the Oscar-winning “Parasite” faced several delays, which the director has attributed to extenuating circumstances around the Hollywood strikes. Based on the novel “Mickey 7” by Edward Ashton, Pattinson plays an expendable employee who dies on mis-

sions and is reprinted time and time again. Steven Yeun, Naomi Ackie, Toni Collette and Mark Ruffalo also star.

Internationally, it did especially well in Korea, where it made an estimated \$14.6 million.

Second place went to “Captain America: Brave New World,” which added \$8.5 million in North America and \$9.2 million internationally. Its global total currently rests at \$370.8 million.

Rounding out the top five this weekend was “Last Breath” with \$4.2 million, “The Monkey” with \$3.9 million and “Paddington in Peru” with \$3.85 million.

After winning five Oscars, including best picture, “Anora” earned an estimated \$1.9 million, bringing its total grosses to \$18.4 million.

Other news

■ Rising rapper **Doechii** has earned the title of Billboard’s 2025 Woman of the Year, landing her in the same company as Taylor Swift, SZA, Lady Gaga and as last year’s honoree, Karol G. The news arrives just one month after Doechii won the Grammy for best rap album for “Alligator Bites Never Heal,” only the third woman to win in that category. She will be honored at the Billboard Women in Music Awards on March 29.

■ Actor **Emily Osment** has filed for divorce from her husband of less than five months, musician Jack Anthony Farina. Osment, 32, filed the petition to end her marriage to Farina, 42, in Los Angeles Superior Court on March 7. The court filing says the two were mar-

ried on Oct. 12 and separated Dec. 7. It cites irreconcilable differences as the reason. They have no children.

■ A second season of the Duchess of Sussex’s Netflix lifestyles series “**With Love, Meghan**,” has already been shot, the streamer announced. Meghan has said the show, which includes her chatting with celebrity pals, is about finding joy in the little things. Netflix said the second season would air this fall.

■ **D’Wayne Wiggins**, a founding member of the Grammy-nominated group Tony! Toni! Tone! behind the classic 1990s jams “Anniversary,” “It Never Rains (In Southern California)” and (Lay Your Head on My) Pillow,” died March 7. He was 64. Wiggins had suffered from bladder cancer.

SCOREBOARD

COLLEGE BASKETBALL		
Women's conference tournaments America East Conference Semifinals Monday, March 10 Vermont vs. Bryant Albany (NY) vs. Maine Championship Friday, March 14 Semifinal winners American Athletic Conference Second Round Sunday, March 9 Rice 76, UAB 63 Charlotte 71, Tulsa 66 East Carolina 64, Memphis 45 Tulane 69, Wichita St. 63 Quarterfinals Monday, March 10 UTSA vs. Rice Temple vs. Charlotte North Texas vs. East Carolina South Florida vs. Tulane Semifinals Tuesday, March 11 UTSA-Rice winner vs. Temple-Charlotte winner North Texas-East Carolina winner vs. South Florida-Tulane winner Atlantic 10 Conference Championship Sunday, March 9 George Mason 73, Saint Joseph's 58 Atlantic Coast Conference Championship Sunday, March 9 Duke 76, NC State 62 Atlantic Sun Conference Semifinals Tuesday, March 11 Cent. Arkansas vs. Lipscomb Florida Gulf Coast vs. E. Kentucky Big 12 Conference Championship Sunday, March 9 TCU 64, Baylor 59 Big East Conference At Uncasville, Conn. Semifinals Sunday, March 9 UConn 82, Villanova 54 Creighton 73, Seton Hall 44 Championship Monday, March 10 UConn vs. Creighton Big Sky Conference At Boise, Idaho Quarterfinals Sunday, March 9 Montana St. 92, N. Colorado 60 N. Arizona 69, Sacramento St. 65 Monday, March 10 Weber St. vs. Idaho St. Idaho vs. Montana Semifinals Tuesday, March 11 Montana St. vs. Weber St.-Idaho St. winner N. Arizona vs. Idaho-Montana winner Big South Conference Championship Sunday, March 9 High Point 59, Longwood 53 Big Ten Conference Championship Sunday, March 9 UCLA 72, Southern Cal 67 Big West Conference At Henderson, Nev. First Round Wednesday, March 12 UC Santa Barbara vs. Cal Poly	Long Beach St. vs. UC Riverside Quarterfinals Thursday, March 13 UC San Diego vs. UC Santa Barbara-Cal Poly winner UC Davis vs. Long Beach St.-UC Riverside winner Coastal Athletic Conference At Washington, D.C. First Round Wednesday, March 12 Stony Brook vs. Hampton Towson vs. Northeastern Second Round Thursday, March 13 Hofstra vs. William & Mary, Noon Monmouth (NJ) vs. Stony Brook-Hampton winner Delaware vs. UNC-Wilmington Elon vs. Towson-Northeastern winner Conference USA Conference At Huntsville, Ala. First Round Tuesday, March 11 Sam Houston St. vs. Jacksonville St. Kennesaw St. vs. UTEP Horizon League Semifinals Monday, March 10 Green Bay vs. Robert Morris Fort Wayne vs. Cleveland St. Championship Tuesday, March 11 Green Bay-Robert Morris winner vs. Fort Wayne-Cleveland St. winner Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference At Atlantic City, N.J. First Round Tuesday, March 11 Manhattan vs. Canisius St. Peter's vs. Iona Mid-American Conference At Cleveland, Ohio First Round Wednesday, March 12 Ball St. vs. W. Michigan Kent St. vs. Miami (Ohio) Toledo vs. Cent. Michigan Buffalo vs. Bowling Green Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference At Norfolk, Va. First Round Wednesday, March 12 Norfolk St. vs. SC State, Noon Howard vs. Delaware St. Thursday, March 13 Coppin St. vs. NC Central, Noon Md.-Eastern Shore vs. Morgan St. Missouri Valley Conference At Evansville, Ind. First Round Thursday, March 13 Valparaiso vs. Bradley Illinois St. vs. S. Illinois UIC vs. Evansville N. Iowa vs. Indiana St. Mountain West Conference At Las Vegas First Round Sunday, March 9 Boise St. 54, Nevada 48 Air Force 66, Utah St. 59 Fresno St. 67, San Jose St. 62 Quarterfinals Monday, March 10 UNLV vs. Boise St. San Diego St. vs. New Mexico Wyoming vs. Air Force Colorado St. vs. Fresno St. Northeast Conference First Round Monday, March 10 St. Francis (Pa.) vs. Le Moyne Stonehill vs. Wagner CCSU vs. Chicago St.	Fairleigh Dickinson vs. LIU Ohio Valley Conference Championship Saturday, March 8 Tennessee Tech 82, Lindenwood 76 Patriot League Quarterfinals Monday, March 10 Colgate vs. Bucknell Army vs. Lafayette Lehigh vs. Boston U. Navy vs. Holy Cross Southeastern Conference Championship Sunday, March 9 South Carolina 64, Texas 45 Southern Conference Championship Sunday, March 9 UNC-Greensboro 64, Chattanooga 57 Southland Conference At Lake Charles, La. First Round Monday, March 10 Northwestern St. vs. Texas A&M-CC Texas Rio Grande Valley vs. Nicholls Quarterfinals Tuesday, March 11 Incarnate Word vs. Northwestern St.-Texas A&M-CC winner Stephen F. Austin vs. Texas Rio Grande Valley-Nicholls winner Southwestern Athletic Conference At College Park, Ga. First Round Tuesday, March 11 Bethune-Cookman vs. Prairie View Florida A&M vs. MVSU Summit League Championship Sunday, March 9 S. Dakota St. 84, Oral Roberts 68 Sun Belt Conference At Pensacola, Fla. Semifinals Sunday, March 9 James Madison 89, Coastal Carolina 65 Arkansas St. 81, Troy 66 Championship Monday, March 10 James Madison vs. Arkansas St. West Coast Conference At Las Vegas Quarterfinals Sunday, March 9 Oregon St. 61, San Francisco 59 Washington St. 73, Pacific 62 Semifinals Monday, March 10 Gonzaga vs. Oregon St. Portland vs. Washington St. Western Athletic Conference First Round Tuesday, March 11 Utah Tech Trailblazers vs. Seattle Quarterfinals Wednesday, March 12 Grand Canyon vs. Utah Tech-Seattle winner Tarleton State Texans vs. S. Utah Thursday, March 13 Abilene Christian vs. Utah Valley St. Texas-Arlington vs. Cal Baptist NCAA Automatic Bids Tennessee Tech, Ohio Valley Duke, Atlantic Coast UNC Greensboro, Southern Duke, Atlantic Coast George Mason, Atlantic 10 South Carolina, Southeastern South Dakota State, Summit League UCLA, Big Ten TCU, Big 12 High Point, Big South

DEALS		
Sunday's transactions BASEBALL Major League Baseball American League CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Reassigned RHPs Eric Adler and Grant Taylor and LHP Trey McGough to minor league camp. DETROIT TIGERS — Optioned RHPs Matt Manning, Chase Lee and Tyler Owens to Toledo (IL). KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Optioned RHP Luinder Avila to Omaha (IL). MINNESOTA TWINS — Optioned RHPs Travis Adams, Matt Canterino and Marco Raya and OF Emmanuel Rodriguez to St. Paul (IL). Reassigned RHPs Randy Dobnak, Cory Lewis and Erasmo Ramirez, C Alex Isola and INF Yunior Severino to minor league camp. NEW YORK YANKEES — Reassigned OF Duke Ellis, C Rafael Flores, RHP Erick Leal and INF T.J. Rumfield to minor league camp. Optioned C Jesus Rodriguez to Somerset (EL). SEATTLE MARINERS — Agreed to terms on one-year contracts with RHPs Eduard Bazarodo, Cody Bolton, Matt Brash, Blas Castano, Hagen Danner, Emerson Hancock, Will Klein, Jackson Kowar, Casey Legumina, Seth Martinez, Bryce Miller, Gregory Santos, Collin Snider, Troy Taylor, Carlos Vargas and Bryan Woo, LHP Austin Kitchen, INFs Ryan Bliss, Tyler Locklear, Leo Rivas and Austin Shenton, INF/OFs Sa-	mad Taylor, Miles Mastrobuoni and Luke Raley, OFs Dominic Canzone and Cade Marlowe and Cs Blake Hunt and Nick Raposo. TEXAS RANGERS — Optioned LHPs Jacob Latz and Walter Pennington to Round Rock (PCL). National League CHICAGO CUBS — Optioned INF Ben Cowles to Iowa (IL). Reassigned LHP Brandon Hughes, RHP Cade Horton, Cs Moises Ballesteros and Carlos Perez, INF Nicky Lopez and OF Travis Jankowski to minor league camp. CINCINNATI REDS — Reassigned RHP Luis Mey to minor league camp. COLORADO ROCKIES — Reassigned RHP Gabriel Hughes to minor league camp. MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Optioned RHP Chad Patrick to Nashville (IL). NEW YORK METS — Optioned RHPs Justin Hagenman, Kevin Herget and Austin Warren and INF Jared Young to Syracuse (IL). SAN DIEGO PADRES — Optioned RHP Ryan Bergert to El Paso (PCL). SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Optioned RHPs Carson Ragsdale and Carson Seymour to Sacramento (PCL). BASKETBALL National Basketball Association NBA — Fined Indiana F Pascal Siakam \$25,000 for how he confronted and used	profane language to game officials in a game Saturday. FOOTBALL National Football League ARIZONA CARDINALS — Signed LB Baron Browning to a two-year contract. BUFFALO BILLS — Released DE Von Miller. CLEVELAND BROWNS — Re-signed DE Myles Garrett to a four-year contract extension. MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Agreed to terms with RB Aaron Jones Sr. on a three-year contract. HOCKEY National Hockey League ANAHEIM DUCKS — Recalled G Ville Huso from San Diego (AHL). CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS — Recalled D Artyom Levshunov from Rockford (AHL). NEW YORK ISLANDERS — Reinstated G Marcus Hogberg from injured reserve. Sent G Jakub Skarek to Bridgeport (AHL). UTAH — Recalled G Jaxson Stauber from Tucson (AHL). VANCOUVER CANUCKS — Recalled G Arturs Silovs from Abbotsford (AHL). Reassigned G Nikita Tolopilo to Abbotsford. COLLEGE FLORIDA STATE — Hired Luke Loucks to a five-year contract as head men's basketball coach. NC STATE — Fired head coach Kevin Keatts.

AUTO RACING		
Shriners Children's 500 NASCAR Cup Sunday At Phoenix Raceway Lap length: 1.00 miles Start position in parentheses Avondale, Ariz. 1. (11) Christopher Bell, Toyota, 312. 2. (10) Denny Hamlin, Toyota, 312. 3. (17) Kyle Larson, Chevrolet, 312. 4. (4) Josh Berry, Ford, 312. 5. (13) Chris Buescher, Ford, 312. 6. (1) William Byron, Chevrolet, 312. 7. (32) Alex Bowman, Chevrolet, 312. 8. (15) Kyle Busch, Chevrolet, 312. 9. (26) Zane Smith, Ford, 312. 10. (6) Chase Elliott, Chevrolet, 312. 11. (24) Ross Chastain, Chevrolet, 312. 12. (21) Austin Dillon, Chevrolet, 312. 13. (2) Joey Logano, Ford, 312. 14. (36) John Hunter Nemechek, Toyota, 312. 15. (28) Ryan Preece, Ford, 312. 16. (25) Ty Dillon, Chevrolet, 312. 17. (27) Todd Gilliland, Ford, 312. 18. (5) Erik Jones, Toyota, 312. 19. (14) Austin Cindric, Ford, 312. 20. (9) Tyler Reddick, Toyota, 312. 21. (22) Ricky Stenhouse Jr., Chevrolet, 311. 22. (16) AJ Allmendinger, Chevrolet, 311. 23. (31) Daniel Suarez, Chevrolet, 308. 24. (35) Cody Ware, Ford, 306. 25. (34) Ty Gibbs, Toyota, Accident, 304. 26. (33) Noah Gragson, Ford, 303. 27. (7) Michael McDowell, Chevrolet, 290. 28. (12) Ryan Blaney, Ford, Engine, 289. 29. (19) Bubba Wallace, Toyota, Accident, 265. 30. (37) Katherine Legge, Chevrolet, Accident, 210. 31. (29) Shane Van Gisbergen #, Chevrolet, Accident, 100. 32. (23) Cole Custer, Ford, Accident, 99. 33. (20) Brad Keselowski, Ford, Accident, 99. 34. (8) Justin Haley, Chevrolet, Accident, 98. 35. (30) Chase Briscoe, Toyota, Accident, 98. 36. (3) Carson Hocevar, Chevrolet, Accident, 98. 37. (18) Riley Herbst #, Toyota, Accident, 98. Race statistics Average Speed of Race Winner: 92.141 mph. Time of Race: 3 Hrs, 23 Mins, 10 Secs. Margin of Victory: .049 Seconds. Caution Flags: 10 for 73 laps. Lead Changes: 17 among 6 drivers. Lap Leaders: W. Byron 0;J. Logano 1;W. Byron 2-9;J. Logano 10-13;W. Byron 14-87;A. Cindric 88-93;W. Byron 94;C. Bell 95-128;J. Logano 129-177;C. Bell 178-189;J. Logano 190-216;C. Bell 217-235;R. Preece 236-269;C. Bell 270-294;D. Hamlin 295;C. Bell 296-309;D. Hamlin 310-311;C. Bell 312. Leaders Summary (Driver, Times Lead, Laps Led): Christopher Bell 6 times for 105 laps; William Byron 3 times for 83 laps; Joey Logano 4 times for 81 laps; Ryan Preece 1 time for 34 laps; Austin Cindric 1 time for 6 laps; Denny Hamlin 2 times for 3 laps.	GOLF	
	Arnold Palmer Invitational	
	PGA Tour Sunday At Bay Hill Club Orlando, Fla. Purse: \$20 million Yardage: 7,466; Par: 72 Final Round	
	Russell Henley, \$4,000,000	72-68-67-70—277 -11
	Collin Morikawa, \$2,200,000	71-68-67-72—278 -10
	Corey Connors, \$1,400,000	69-70-69-71—279 -9
	Michael Kim, \$1,000,000	75-69-67-69—280 -8
	Keegan Bradley, \$800,000	69-72-76-64—281 -7
	Sepp Straka, \$800,000	77-66-69-69—281 -7
	Shane Lowry, \$700,000	69-67-76-70—282 -6
	Byeong Hun An, \$600,667	76-69-70-68—283 -5
	Jason Day, \$600,667	76-64-69-74—283 -5
	Justin Rose, \$600,667	70-73-71-69—283 -5
	Tommy Fleetwood, \$451,250	75-72-69-68—284 -4
	Robert Macintyre, \$451,250	74-71-68-71—284 -4
	Aaron Rai, \$451,250	74-72-67-71—284 -4
	Scottie Scheffler, \$451,250	71-72-71-70—284 -4
	Daniel Berger, \$349,000	78-69-68-70—285 -3
	Jacob Bridgeman, \$349,000	75-73-69-68—285 -3
	Rory McIlroy, \$349,000	70-70-73-72—285 -3
	Denny McCarthy, \$309,000	73-73-73-67—286 -2
	C. Bezuidenhout, \$269,333	69-75-70-73—287 -1
	Sungjae Im, \$269,333	76-67-74-70—287 -1
	Si Woo Kim, \$269,333	70-72-73-72—287 -1
	Ludvig Aberg, \$178,111	72-71-77-68—288 E
	Wyndham Clark, \$178,111	67-71-76-74—288 E
	Matt Fitzpatrick, \$178,111	78-69-69-72—288 E
	Max Greyserman, \$178,111	70-71-75-72—288 E
	M. Hughes, \$178,111	73-70-72-73—288 E
	Chris Kirk, \$178,111	74-73-72-69—288 E
	H. Matsuyama, \$178,111	73-72-74-69—288 E
	Patrick Rodgers, \$178,111	74-74-70-70—288 E
	Will Zalatoris, \$178,111	75-72-72-69—288 E
	Ludvig Aberg, \$178,111	72-71-77-68—288 E
	Patrick Cantlay, \$126,000	71-74-75-69—289 +1
	J.J. Spaun, \$126,000	75-71-73-70—289 +1
	Nick Taylor, \$126,000	75-72-69-73—289 +1

PRO SOCCER		
MLS Eastern Conference W L T Pts GF GA Philadelphia 3 0 0 9 10 3 Inter Miami CF 2 0 1 7 7 3 Columbus 2 0 1 7 5 2 Cincinnati 2 1 0 6 4 4 D.C. United 1 0 2 5 6 5 Charlotte FC 1 1 1 4 4 3 New York 1 1 1 4 2 1 Chicago 1 1 1 4 7 7 NYC FC 1 1 1 4 4 4 Nashville 1 1 1 4 2 2 Atlanta 1 1 1 4 3 4 Orlando City 1 2 0 3 7 8 New England 0 2 1 1 0 3 Toronto FC 0 2 1 1 4 8 CF Montreal 0 3 0 0 2 6 Western Conference W L T Pts GF GA Vancouver 3 0 0 9 8 2 San Diego FC 2 0 1 7 5 1 San Jose 2 1 0 6 6 2 Minn. United 2 1 0 6 2 1 LA FC 2 1 0 6 4 5 St Louis City 1 0 2 5 3 0 Colorado 1 0 2 5 4 3 Seattle 1 1 1 4 7 6 FC Dallas 1 1 1 4 6 7 Austin FC 1 2 0 3 1 2 Real Salt Lake 1 2 0 3 3 7 Portland 1 2 0 3 2 6 Houston 0 2 1 1 2 6 Sporting KC 0 3 0 0 2 5 LA Galaxy 0 3 0 0 1 7 Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie. Saturday's games Houston 0, Columbus 0, tie Seattle 5, Los Angeles FC 2 New York 0, Atlanta 0, tie Cincinnati 2, Toronto FC 0 D.C. United 2, Sporting Kansas City 1 Philadelphia 2, New England 0 New York City FC 2, Orlando City 1 Colorado 1, Austin FC 0 Chicago 3, FC Dallas 1 Nashville 2, Portland 0 San Diego FC 3, Real Salt Lake 1 Vancouver 2, CF Montreal 0 Minnesota 1, San Jose 0 Sunday's games Miami 1, Charlotte FC 0 St Louis City 3, LA Galaxy 0 Saturday, March 15 Orlando City at New York Chicago at Toronto FC Austin FC at Los Angeles FC Cincinnati at Charlotte FC CF Montreal at D.C. United New England at New York City FC Minnesota at Sporting Kansas City Vancouver at FC Dallas Real Salt Lake at Houston Seattle at St Louis City Columbus at San Diego FC Colorado at San Jose Sunday, March 16 Nashville at Philadelphia LA Galaxy at Portland Miami at Atlanta	TENNIS	
	BNP Paribas Open	
	Sunday At Indian Wells, Calif. Surface: Hardcourt outdoor Seedings in parentheses Men's Singles Round of 32 Tallon Griekspoor, Netherlands, def. Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard (29), France, 7-6 (3), 6-3. Tommy Paul (10), United States, def. Cameron Norrie, Britain, 6-3, 7-5. Stefanos Tsitsipas (8), Greece, def. Matteo Berrettini (28), Italy, 6-3, 6-3. Daniil Medvedev (5), Russia, def. Alex Michelsen (31), United States, 2-0, ret. Marcos Giron, United States, def. Alexei Popyrin (26), Australia, 5-7, 6-3, 6-3. Holger Rune (12), Denmark, def. Ugo Humbert (18), France, 5-7, 6-4, 7-5. Arthur Fils (20), France, def. Lorenzo Musetti (15), Italy, 3-6, 7-6 (4), 6-3. Yosuke Watanuki, Japan, def. Frances Tiafoe (16), United States, 6-4, 7-6 (6).	
	Women's Singles Round of 32 Iga Swiatek (2), Poland, def. Dayana Yastremska, Ukraine, 6-0, 6-2. Marta Kostyuk (18), Ukraine, def. Caroline Dolehide, United States, 6-3, 6-3. Elena Rybakina (7), Kazakhstan, def. Katie Boulter (25), Britain, 6-0, 7-5. Karolina Muchova (15), Czechia, def. Katerina Siniakova, Czechia, 7-5, 6-1. Jessica Pegula (4), United States, def. Wang Xinyu, China, 6-2, 6-1. Elina Svitolina (23), Ukraine, def. Danielle Collins (14), United States, 6-2, 6-4. Mirra Andreeva (9), Russia, def. Clara Tauson (22), Denmark, 6-3, 6-0. Zheng Qinwen (8), China, def. Lulu Sun, New Zealand, 6-4, 7-5.	

AUTO RACING/MLB

Bell holds off Hamlin for third straight Cup victory

By JOHN MARSHALL
Associated Press
AVONDALE, Ariz. — Christopher Bell was just ahead of Joe Gibbs Racing teammate Denny Hamlin after a late restart, in good position to win his third straight NASCAR Cup Series race.

Another restart led to some tense moments — enough to make his team owner feel a bit queasy. Bell survived a late drag race with Hamlin to become the first NASCAR Cup Series driver to win three straight races in the Next-Gen car, edging his teammate by 0.049 seconds to win the second-closest race in Phoenix Raceway history on Sunday.

“It worked out about as opposite as I could have drawn it up in my head,” Bell said. “But the races that are contested like that, looking back, are the ones that mean the most to you.”

Bell started 11th in the 312-mile race after winning at Atlanta and Circuit of America the previous two weeks. The JGR driver moved toward the front early and remained there most of the afternoon, taking the lead out of the pits on a late caution.

Bell stayed out front on two late restarts, holding off his teammate by the nose of his car on the final one to become the first driver to win three straight races since Kyle Larson in 2021. He’s the fourth driver in Cup Series history to win three times in the first four races, and the first since Kevin Harvick in 2018.

“We’ve had four races this year, put ourselves in position in all four and managed to win three, which is a pretty remarkable batting average — something that will be hard to maintain, I believe,” Bell’s crew chief Adam Stevens said.

The Phoenix race was the first since Richmond last year to give teams two sets of option tires. The option red tires have much better grip, but start to fall off after about 35 laps, creating an added strategic element.

Bell was among those who had a set of red tires left for the final stretch and used it to his advantage, pulling away from Hamlin on a restart with 17 laps left.

Hamlin pulled alongside Bell’s No. 20 Toyota over the final two laps after the restart and seemed to be slightly ahead at the white flag. The teammates bumped a couple times while jockeying for position, but Bell barely managed to keep ahead of Hamlin, crossing the checkered flag with a wobble for his 12th career Cup Series win. He led 105 laps.

“I kind of had position on the 20, but I knew he was going to ship it



DARRYL WEBB/AP

Katherine Legge signs autographs before the NASCAR Cup Series race at Phoenix Raceway on Sunday in Avondale, Ariz.

Legge spins out twice in series debut, finishes 30th

Associated Press
AVONDALE, Ariz. — Katherine Legge spent 25 years working her way through professional motorsports before getting her shot at driving a NASCAR Cup Series car.

Her first go-round was a bumpy ride.

The first woman to drive a Cup Series car in seven years, Legge spun out twice and didn’t finish the race in her debut at Phoenix Raceway on Sunday.

“It was baptism by fire,” Legge told Fox Sports. “I think there’s a lot of positives to take from it. Obviously, there were mistakes made, but I learned so much. Hopefully, I get to come back.”

Legge had raced everything from dirt bikes to IndyCars during her climb through the ranks, learning she would get her Cup Series shot about 10 days before Sunday’s race. The English driver had limited experience on ovals, spending much of her prep time in a simulator in North Carolina before

becoming the first female driver on the circuit since Danica Patrick in the 2018 Daytona 500.

Legge struggled in qualifying at the mile oval in the desert, so she and the Live Fast Motorsports team opted to make several overnight changes to her No. 78 Chevrolet.

It didn’t work out quite how they wanted.

Fighting the car from the start, Legge spun out on lap 4 of the 312-mile race before returning to the field. She struggled to make up any ground and spun again late in the race after bumping off another car, taking out Daniel Suarez with her.

Legge couldn’t continue to race and finished 30th.

“I was so loose. I was hanging onto it,” she said. “We kept making adjustments. We kept making the car way more stable for me. At the end there, I think we were relatively quick, so it wasn’t bad. I wish we hadn’t made the changes. It was a rough start.”

in there,” Hamlin said. “We just kind of ran out of race track there.”

Kyle Larson finished third, Josh Berry fourth and Chris Buescher rounded out the top five.

Logano’s mistake

Logano started on the front row in his first race at Phoenix since capturing his third Cup Series win at the track last fall.

A mistake on an early restart dropped the Team Penske driver to the back of the field.

Trying to get a jump on William Byron, Logano barely dipped his No. 22 Ford below the yellow line at the start/finish. NASCAR officials reviewed the restart and forced him to take a pass through on pit road as the entire field passed him on the track.

“No way,” Logano said on his radio. “That’s freakin’ ridiculous.”

Logano twice surged to the lead after switching to the red tires, but started falling back on the primary tires following a restart. He finished 13th.



ROSS D. FRANKLIN/AP

Dodgers first baseman Freddie Freeman, who had offseason ankle surgery, has hit three home runs this spring through Sunday.

Japan: Teams will have expanded travel rosters

FROM PAGE 24
Sasaki was dominant in his first spring outing with five strikeouts over three scoreless innings.

Yamamoto was scheduled to throw Monday and Sasaki on Tuesday in their final spring training starts.

Dodgers first baseman Freddie Freeman has smacked three homers so far in the Cactus League, appearing to recover well from offseason ankle surgery. Mookie Betts has been solid in his transition to a role as the full-time shortstop.

Both teams will have a 31-man travel roster in Japan that will be reduced to 26 for the two regular-season games. All 31 players will be available to play in exhibition games against Japanese teams on March 15 and 16.

The Cubs are close to full strength, although the team has said that second baseman Nico Hoerner will remain in the U.S. as he continues to focus on being ready for the domestic opening day on March 27. Hoerner is recovering from surgery on his right forearm in October.

Chicago’s plan is to start Imanaga in the opener, with lefty Justin Steele pitching the second game.

Imanaga was sharp in his latest spring training outing, throwing four scoreless innings against the Padres, giving up just two hits and striking out three. He was scheduled to have one more outing in Arizona on Monday.

The left-hander had an excellent debut season in MLB in 2024, finishing with a 15-3 record and a 2.91 ERA. Another Japanese player, Seiya Suzuki, is expected to be Chicago’s designated hitter in Tokyo after hitting 21 homers last season.

Manager Craig Counsell said most of the team’s players came to spring training in late January — far before the team’s Feb. 9 report date — in an effort to have normal preparation time before the trip to Japan.

“It’s created some urgency for our players,” Counsell told reporters Friday. “Our pitching department did a fabulous job over the offseason in getting these guys ready.”

One thing to watch for the Cubs is the status of top prospect Matt Shaw, who is trying to win the job as the team’s starting third baseman. Shaw was slowed by oblique soreness early in camp, but has played in four spring training games through Saturday.

ROUNDUP

Caps top Kraken, Ovi gets 886th goal

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Alex Ovechkin scored his 886th career goal into an empty net to seal the Washington Capitals’ 4-2 victory over the Seattle Kraken on Sunday, moving nine back of breaking Wayne Gretzky’s NHL record and helping the Eastern Conference leaders win their fourth game in a row.

Ovechkin backhanded the puck in from center ice with 1:31 left, sending the crowd into jubilation and chants of “Ovi! Ovi!” His 33rd goal of the season was also his 1,600th career point.

Connor McMichael scored the go-ahead goal a few minutes earlier, not long after a line brawl nearly broke out and all five skaters on each team were sent to the penalty box, where players kept jawing at each other before Washington’s Brandon Duhaime was escorted to the bench and down the tunnel to the locker room for his 10-minute misconduct. The post-whistle pushing and shoving kept flaring up and went on for some time as officials worked to keep Tom Wilson and John Hayden from fighting.

Martin Fehervary and Dylan Strome also scored and Charlie Lindgren made 30 saves for Capitals, who padded their comfortable lead atop the East and the Metropolitan Division.

Shane Wright and Jordan Eberle scored and Joey Daccord stopped 20 of the 23 shots he faced for the Kraken, who were unable to string together back-to-back wins on the weekend.

Devils 3, Flyers 1: Cody Glass scored a goal in his first game with New Jersey, helping his new team defeat host Philadelphia.

Glass, who was acquired in a trade with Pittsburgh at the deadline Friday, scored 11:10 into the first period, snapping a wrist shot



TERRANCE WILLIAMS/AP

Washington Capitals left wing Alex Ovechkin scored his 886th career goal to move eight back of tying and nine back of breaking Wayne Gretzky’s all-time NHL record. The goal came in a 4-2 victory for the Capitals.

past Philadelphia goalie Ivan Fedotov to open the scoring.

Penguins 3, Wild 1: Sidney Crosby scored twice, Evgeni Malkin also had a goal and Tristan Jarry made 30 saves and had an assist to help visiting Pittsburgh snap a four-game skid with a victory over Minnesota.

Jarry made his first start since being sent to the minors Jan. 16 as the Penguins won for only the second time in regulation in their last 11 games.

Hurricanes 4, Jets 2: Mark Janowski scored two goals and host Carolina beat Winnipeg.

Logan Stankoven and Seth Jarry also scored for the Hurricanes, who won their fourth straight game. Frederik Andersen

stopped 20 shots.

Blue Jackets 7, Rangers 3: Adam Fantilli scored three goals for his second career hat trick, and visiting Columbus beat New York.

Mathieu Olivier had one goal, Dante Fabbro added a goal and an assist, and Justin Danforth also scored as the Blue Jackets won for the fifth time in seven games. Zach Werenski and Dmitri Voronkov each had two assists, and Daniil Tarasov stopped 30 shots.

Kings 6, Golden Knights 5: Adrian Kempe scored the winner in visiting Los Angeles’ victory over Vegas.

Quinton Byfield, Warren Foegele, Anze Kopitar, Trevor Moore and Brandt Clarke also scored for the Kings. David Rittich stopped

27 shots in the win.

Stars 4, Canucks 1: Mikael Granlund scored his first goal for Dallas and the visiting Stars beat Vancouver.

Thomas Harley, Jason Robertson and Mikko Rantanen also scored for Dallas. Ceci and Matt Duchene each contributed a pair of assists.

Ducks 4, Islanders 1: Sam Colangelo scored twice, Lukas Dostal stopped 31 shots and host Anaheim beat New York. Drew Helleeson and Mason McTavish also scored for the Ducks.

Tony DeAngelo spoiled Dostal’s shutout bid with just under 5 minutes remaining, and Marcus Hogberg finished with 23 saves for the Islanders.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Florida	64	40	21	3	83	213	172
Toronto	63	38	22	3	79	202	187
Tampa Bay	63	37	22	4	78	224	169
Ottawa	62	32	25	5	69	178	179
Detroit	63	30	27	6	66	181	202
Montreal	63	30	27	6	66	186	208
Boston	65	29	28	8	66	176	204
Buffalo	62	24	32	6	54	196	218

Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	64	42	14	8	92	232	167
Carolina	64	38	22	4	80	204	175
New Jersey	65	34	25	6	74	193	165
Columbus	63	31	24	8	70	214	208
N.Y. Rangers	64	31	27	6	68	195	197
N.Y. Islanders	63	29	27	7	65	173	188
Philadelphia	65	27	30	8	62	186	219
Pittsburgh	66	25	31	10	60	187	242

Western Conference

Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Winnipeg	65	44	17	4	92	228	152
Dallas	64	42	20	2	86	221	166
Colorado	64	38	24	2	78	216	190
Minnesota	64	36	24	4	76	179	185
St. Louis	65	31	27	7	69	187	194
Utah	63	28	25	10	66	179	187
Nashville	63	24	32	7	55	167	209
Chicago	64	20	35	9	49	178	224

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	63	38	19	6	82	213	174
Edmonton	63	37	22	4	78	205	186
Los Angeles	62	33	20	9	75	177	168
Calgary	63	30	23	10	70	164	182
Vancouver	63	29	23	11	69	172	191
Anaheim	63	28	28	7	63	169	193
Seattle	65	27	34	4	58	192	212
San Jose	65	17	39	9	43	171	245

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.

Sunday's games

New Jersey 3, Philadelphia 1
Washington 4, Seattle 2
Pittsburgh 3, Minnesota 1
Carolina 4, Winnipeg 2
Columbus 7, N.Y. Rangers 3
Los Angeles 6, Vegas 5
Dallas 4, Vancouver 1
Anaheim 4, N.Y. Islanders 1

Monday's games

Edmonton at Buffalo
Detroit at Ottawa
Chicago at Colorado
Toronto at Utah

Tuesday's games

Columbus at New Jersey
Florida at Boston
Ottawa at Philadelphia
Vegas at Pittsburgh
Tampa Bay at Carolina
Colorado at Minnesota
N.Y. Rangers at Winnipeg
Montreal at Vancouver
Washington at Anaheim
N.Y. Islanders at Los Angeles
Nashville at San Jose

Avs forward MacKinnon closes in on 1K-point milestone

By PAT GRAHAM

Associated Press

DENVER — Let’s make this quick: Nathan MacKinnon’s fast. Every defenseman and goaltender around the league knows about his elite speed all too well.

Knowing that doesn’t make containing the hard-charging, fast-flying Colorado Avalanche forward any easier.

MacKinnon’s swiftness on the ice has led to a quick pace through the record books. With his next goal or assist, he will join Hall of Famers Joe Sakic and Peter Stastny as the only skaters in franchise history to reach 1,000 points.

The reigning NHL MVP is the first player in the league this season to reach 100 points.

“He continues to impress me,” said Avalanche coach Jared Bednar, whose team was 5-0 on a six-game homestand going into Monday’s finale against Chicago. “He’s grown a lot as a player, as a leader, his con-



MacKinnon

sistency, the way he’s dangerous every time he touches the ice.

“It’s a tough league, and he still finds a way every night to get on the board and make an impact on the offensive side, all while being a good defender and growing his defensive game, too.”

MacKinnon’s not one to focus on individual milestones, as he’d rather talk about team success. He likes the makeup of this new-look Colorado squad, which in recent days acquired Charlie Coyle, Brock Nelson, Ryan Lindgren, Jimmy Vesey and former teammate Erik Johnson.

“It’s great to get some veterans in, honestly,” MacKinnon said Saturday night after a 7-4 win over Toronto in which he had two goals. “They come in, they’re chatting, they’re getting to know everybody, they’re

not shy at all, they’ve been around and they’re great players. ... It’s a big change. It’s pretty cool how well we played.”

MacKinnon’s proven a quick study, too. When the Avs sent Mikko Rantanen to Carolina for Martin Necas on Jan. 24, MacKinnon brushed up on the tendencies of his newest linemate.

It’s led to quick chemistry with Necas, who has five goals and 11 assists in 15 games.

“He’s an elite player,” Necas said of MacKinnon. “So fun to watch him.”

Unless, of course, you’re the opposition. “If you don’t respect (his speed), he’s going to burn right by you,” said San Jose rookie Macklin Celebrini, last year’s No. 1 pick.

MacKinnon had 27 goals and 73 assists going into Monday to reach 100 points for a third straight season. The only other Avalanche/Nordiques player to accomplish a streak like that was Stastny, who had six straight 100-point seasons.

The top pick in 2013, the 29-year-old MacKinnon is also on the precipice of becoming the first player in his draft class to reach 1,000 points (362 goals, 637 assists). The next closest is Florida center Alexander Barkov — the second overall pick — with 771 points.

In addition, MacKinnon has notched at least a point in 19 straight home games. It’s the second-longest home points streak of the season, trailing only Zach Werenski’s 22-game string for Columbus.

“We kind of see it every night, so we’re used to it almost,” teammate Jonathan Drouin said. “Someone that watches him once or every two weeks is probably like, ‘Oh, wow.’ For us, we’re used to how he plays, and you kind of expect that from him.

“We’re going to look back when we’re all done playing, look back at those years he had, and that’s when you will know how special of player he is.”

NBA

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference				
Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	46	18	.719	—
New York	40	23	.635	5½
Philadelphia	22	41	.349	23½
Brooklyn	21	42	.333	24½
Toronto	21	43	.328	25
Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	30	34	.469	—
Orlando	30	35	.462	½
Miami	29	34	.460	½
Charlotte	15	48	.238	14½
Washington	13	49	.210	16
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Cleveland	54	10	.844	—
Milwaukee	36	27	.571	17½
Indiana	35	27	.565	18
Detroit	36	29	.554	18½
Chicago	26	38	.406	28
Western Conference				
Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	40	24	.625	—
Houston	39	25	.609	1
Dallas	32	33	.492	8½
San Antonio	26	36	.419	13
New Orleans	17	48	.262	23½
Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	53	11	.828	—
Denver	41	23	.641	12
Minnesota	37	29	.561	17
Portland	28	37	.431	25½
Utah	15	49	.234	38
Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	40	22	.645	—
Golden State	36	28	.563	5
L.A. Clippers	35	29	.547	6
Sacramento	33	30	.524	7½
Phoenix	30	34	.469	11

x-clinched playoff spot

Sunday's games

Oklahoma City 127, Denver 103
Phoenix 125, Dallas 116
Memphis 107, New Orleans 104
Philadelphia 126, Utah 122
Minnesota 141, San Antonio 124
Cleveland 112, Milwaukee 100
Detroit 119, Portland 112
L.A. Clippers 111, Sacramento 110, OT

Monday's games

Charlotte at Miami
L.A. Lakers at Brooklyn
Philadelphia at Atlanta
Utah at Boston
Washington at Toronto
Denver at Oklahoma City
Indiana at Chicago
Orlando at Houston
Phoenix at Memphis
Dallas at San Antonio
Portland at Golden State
New York at Sacramento

Tuesday's games

Brooklyn at Cleveland
Washington at Detroit
Milwaukee at Indiana
L.A. Clippers at New Orleans

ROUNDUP

Clippers beat Kings in OT at buzzer

Associated Press

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — Kawhi Leonard’s hook shot at the buzzer lifted the Los Angeles Clippers over the Sacramento Kings 111-110 in overtime on Sunday night to tighten their grip on eighth place in the West.

Leonard dribbled to the top of the key with 21.6 seconds remaining and let the clock tick down before making his winning move through defenders in the lane. The ball bounced on the rim before going in. He finished with 17 points.

“Players make big-time plays and he’s done it throughout his entire career,” teammate James Harden said. “For him to step up and hit a game winner like that, it shows the confidence in the type of player he is.”

Leonard punched his fist in the air and ran to his jubilant teammates.

“We need these wins down the stretch,” he said. “I think this will help us be a better team moving forward. Everybody was excited and know we needed it.”

Harden had 29 points, nine rebounds and 11 assists for the Clippers, who won their third in a row. Ivica Zubac had 22 points and 14 rebounds.

DeMar DeRozan had 31 points and 10 assists and Zach LaVine added 30 points for the ninth-place Kings. They fell to 0-3 against Los Angeles this season. Jonas Valanciunas had 17 rebounds.

Thunder 127, Nuggets 103: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 40 points and host Oklahoma City defeated Denver in a matchup between the top two teams in the Western Conference.

Gilgeous-Alexander had eight assists and made all eight of his free throws for the West-leading Thunder, who won their seventh straight game and improved to 53-11. Jalen Williams added 26 points, nine rebounds and eight assists.



Los Angeles Clippers forward Kawhi Leonard dunks as Sacramento Kings forward Jake LaRavia defends Sunday in Inglewood, Calif.

The Nuggets’ Nikola Jokic, who along with Gilgeous-Alexander is a top contender in the NBA MVP race, had 24 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists. He was coming off the league’s first 30-20-20 triple-double during his team’s 149-141 overtime victory over the Phoenix Suns on Friday night. Michael Porter Jr. had 24 points and 15 rebounds for Denver.

Suns 125, Mavericks 116: Devin Booker scored 24 points, Kevin Durant had 21 points, nine rebounds and eight assists and visiting Phoenix beat injury-depleted Dallas.

Bradley Beal scored 19 points and Grayson Allen added 17 as the Suns pulled within 1½ games of the Mavericks for the 10th seed in the Western Conference, the final spot in the play-in tournament.

Cavs’ Atkinson makes case for Mitchell, praises team depth

By STEVE MEGARGEE
Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Cleveland Cavaliers coach Kenny Atkinson takes issue with the notion that his team doesn’t have a legitimate MVP contender.

But he also realizes that it’s the NBA-leading Cavs’ depth that has played the chief role in helping them produce three extended win streaks during this magical season.

“It’s the reason we have the best record in the league, because we’re deep,” Atkinson said Sunday after Cleveland (54-10) beat the Milwaukee Bucks 112-100 for



Atkinson

Mitchell

its 14th straight victory. “I keep saying we go 13 deep. I think you wear people down that way.”

Yet he also believes one of those 13 should get more MVP consideration.

Atkinson fielded a question Sunday about how the Cavaliers have put together this remarka-

ble season without anyone who’s likely to finish in the top three or perhaps even in the top five in the MVP voting. The presumed favorites are Oklahoma City’s Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Denver’s Nikola Jokic.

That’s when Atkinson made his case for six-time All-Star guard Donovan Mitchell, who entered Sunday’s action scoring 24.4 points per game and shooting a career-best 38.8% from 3-point range.

“If you look at Shai, and Shai’s having a great year, but Donovan, we think he’s right there, just for argument’s sake,” Atkinson said.

“Best team, best player on best team.”

Mitchell’s banner season has helped Cleveland produce three winning streaks lasting at least a dozen games. The Cavs won 15 straight to open the season and 12 in a row from Dec. 13 to Jan. 9.

This current 14-game win streak is particularly notable because Cleveland has scored at least 110 points in each of those victories. The only other team to win 14 straight games while scoring 110-plus points in each of them was the Boston Celtics during their 1985-86 championship season.

Grizzlies 107, Pelicans 104: Ja Morant scored 32 points and Desmond Bane added 30 to lead visiting Memphis past New Orleans.

Morant also had six assists and three steals for the Grizzlies, who came back from a 64-57 deficit at halftime.

Timberwolves 141, Spurs 124: Anthony Edwards scored 25 points on 10-for-15 shooting to lead host Minnesota past San Antonio for their fifth consecutive victory and highest score this season.

Naz Reid had 20 points and seven rebounds and Julius Randle added 14 points, 10 assists and seven rebounds for the Timberwolves, who never trailed on their way to a season-best eight games above the .500 mark (37-29).

Cavaliers 112, Bucks 100: Max Strus had 17 points to lead a balanced scoring attack as NBA-leading Cleveland defeated host Milwaukee for its 14th consecutive victory.

The Bucks’ Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 30 points and moved into 50th place on the NBA’s career scoring list. He increased his career total to 20,077 to pass Tom Chambers, who scored 20,049 from 1981-98.

76ers 126, Jazz 122: Lonnie Walker IV and Quentin Grimes scored 25 points apiece and host Philadelphia earned a victory over Utah.

Walker added 11 rebounds and five assists in 34 minutes off the bench for the 76ers (22-41). Grimes made going 6-for-13 from the floor, including 4-for-9 from 3-point range, and 9-for-9 from the free-throw line while adding six assists.

Pistons 119, Trail Blazers 112: Cade Cunningham scored 28 points, Tobias Harris added 20 points on 9-for-13 shooting and visiting Detroit defeated Portland.

Jalen Duren finished with 18 points and 12 rebounds for the Pistons (36-29).

“We’re not really focused on that,” All-Star forward/center Evan Mobley said. “We’re just trying to keep stacking wins.”

This latest victory showcased Cleveland’s extraordinary depth. Mitchell shot just 4 of 15, yet the Cavs still won decisively on the road. Eight different players scored at least nine points.

“We just keep finding ways to win,” said Max Strus, who led Cleveland with 17 points, matching his season high. “That’s the most dangerous thing about this team, is any given night, anybody could step up and help us win a game.”

COLLEGE BASKETBALL/NFL



High Point head coach Alan Huss waves the net after winning the Big South Championship game against Winthrop on Sunday in Johnson City, Tenn. The Panthers secured their first trip to the NCAA Tournament.

CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUNDUP

High Point tops Winthrop for Big South title, 1st NCAA bid

Associated Press

JOHNSON CITY, Tenn. — Bobby Pettiford scored 17 points off the bench and High Point rallied from a 15-point second half deficit to defeat Winthrop 81-69 in the Big South championship Sunday, giving the Panthers their first trip to the NCAA Tournament.

The Eagles led by 10 points at halftime and 48-33 with 15 minutes remaining. Pettiford nailed a 3-pointer and followed it with a layup to start a 14-0 run that got High Point within 48-47. Three and a half minutes later, Trae Benham's 3-pointer broke a 52-all tie and the Panthers led for the first time since they were 14-13.

High Point (29-5) led the rest of the way although Winthrop was within 75-69 with a minute to go. The Eagles did not score again, however, and the Panthers went 6-for-6 from the free-throw line to close out their first Big South Championship title. High Point has won the Big South regular season title six times.

The Panthers' 14th straight win was due in large part to 50 points from their bench, 44 in the second half. In addition to Pettiford's 17, Abdoulaye Thiam had 12, Benham had eight points and 10 rebounds, and Terry Anderson added eight points. Kezza Giffa, who scored 16, was the only starter with more than six points.

Winthrop (23-11) had five players scored in double digits, led by Kelton Talford's 15.

Missouri Valley

Drake 63, Bradley 48: Bennett Stirtz scored 24 points, Tavion Banks added 13 and the top-seeded Bulldogs defeated the No. 2-seed Braves to win Arch Madness for the third consecutive time.

Drake (30-3) will be making its eighth NCAA Tournament appearance and fourth in five years. It won the Missouri Valley Conference regular-season championship for the first time since 2019.

A 3-pointer by Demarion Burch gave Bradley a 27-24 lead with four minutes left in the first half, but the Braves did not score again until 15:20 remained in the second half. The Bulldogs finished the first half with a 7-0 run to lead 31-27 and Drake added the first six points of the second half.

Hannah led Bradley with 19 points that included 7-of-11 shooting. The Braves shot 52% in the first half and 28% in the second, finishing at 42% for the game.

Atlantic Sun Conference

Lipscomb 76, North Alabama 65: Joe Anderson scored 12 of his team-high 23 points in the final four minutes to help power the top-seeded Bisons over the Lions to win the Atlantic Sun Conference tournament championship and claim an automatic berth into the NCAA Tournament.

Lipscomb (25-9) finished tied with North Alabama (24-10) for the regular-season championship

with 14 wins and was the No. 1 tournament seed. The Bisons needed overtime to get past sixth-seeded Queens in the semifinals. The Lions were seeded second and beat fourth-seeded Jacksonville to reach the final.

Jacari Lane's jumper gave North Alabama the lead with 11:46 left and Donte Bacchus converted a three-point play for a 53-49 edge. Jacob Ognacevic hit three of four free throws, Will Pruitt hit from 3 for a 55-53 lead and Gyasi Powell hit a 3 with 4:13 left to put Lipscomb in front for good.

Anderson hit from deep to make it 65-60 and hit from 3 in a 7-0 run to take a 10-point lead with 1:34 left, converting 3 of 4 from the line in the final minute.

Summit League

Omaha 85, St. Thomas-Minnesota 75: JJ White scored 29, Marquel Sutton had 22 points and a career-high 18 rebounds and the Mavericks beat the Tommies in the championship game of the Summit League Tournament.

Top-seeded Omaha (22-12) had already earned the automatic NCAA Tournament berth because No. 2 seed St. Thomas (24-10) is in its final year of postseason ineligibility after making a rare leap from Division III to Division I.

The Mavericks will play in the tournament for the first time after transitioning to D-I play in 2011. Omaha's 22 victories this season are its most since the move up.

NFL BRIEFS

Bills reportedly give Allen \$330M with new contract through 2030

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — NFL MVP Josh Allen was rewarded Sunday with a contract extension worth \$330 million, including an NFL record \$250 million guaranteed, which makes him among the league's highest-paid players.

The Buffalo Bills announced the agreement, while two people with knowledge of the deal revealed the contract's value to The Associated Press. The people spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity because the Bills did not release that figure, which was first reported by ESPN.com.

The deal adds two years to Allen's contract and locks the 28-year-old in through the 2030 season.

Cleveland quarterback DeShaun Watson's five-year contract signed in 2022 set the previous record in featuring \$230 million in guarantees, per Spotrac.com. The total value of Allen's new contract ranks second behind Kansas City's Patrick Mahomes, who signed a 10-year, \$450 million deal in 2020.

Allen's new contract follows his seventh NFL season in which he became the third Buffalo player to earn NFL MVP, and first since running back Thurman Thomas did so in 1991.

Garrett gets biggest deal for non-QB with Browns

Myles Garrett is staying in Cleveland after the Browns gave him a record four-year contract extension that makes the four-time All-Pro edge rusher the highest-paid non-quarterback in NFL history.

A person with knowledge of the details told The Associated Press that Garrett's deal includes \$122.8 million guaranteed, an average annual salary of \$40 million with a total value of \$204.8 million. The person spoke Sunday on condition of anonymity because Cleveland hadn't announced terms.

Garrett, the 2023 AP Defensive Player of the Year, had asked for a trade last month but the Browns were adamant about keeping the 29-year-old star in Cleveland.

Garrett, a first-round pick in 2017, had 14 sacks and 22 tackles for loss last season. He has 102½ sacks in his eight seasons with the Browns.

Adams agrees to 2-year, \$46M deal with Rams

LOS ANGELES — Receiver Davante Adams agreed to terms on a two-year deal with the Los Angeles Rams on Sunday, bringing the three-time All-Pro back to his native California.

Adams' deal could be worth up to \$46 million with the Rams, who will move on from Super Bowl 56 MVP Cooper Kupp with Adams and Puka Nacua as the primary playmakers for Matthew Stafford.

Adams has been one of the NFL's best receivers for nearly a decade, starting with his decorated tenure with the Packers. He has six career 1,000-yard receiving seasons, including an active streak of five consecutive years, along with two 997-yard seasons.

Sources: Metcalf leaving Seattle for Pittsburgh

PITTSBURGH — The Steelers finally have their established big-play wide receiver.

The Seattle Seahawks are sending two-time Pro Bowler D.K. Metcalf to Pittsburgh for at least a second-round pick, sources with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press on Sunday night.

Metcalf had requested a trade from the Seahawks last week. His exodus comes during a tumultuous stretch for Seattle, which released Tyler Lockett — the franchise's second all-time leading receiver — last Wednesday and then dealt quarterback Geno Smith to the Las Vegas Raiders late Friday.



Buffalo Bills quarterback Josh Allen speaks during the NFL Honors award show after being named AP MVP on Feb. 6 in New Orleans.

SPORTS



Big money players

Sources: Bills QB Allen, Browns DE Garrett get record deals » **Page 23**



MLB



ROSS D. FRANKLIN/AP

Shota Imanaga, coming off a 15-3 season with a 2.91 ERA, will start for the Chicago Cubs in the opener against the Dodgers.

Short spring winding down

Dodgers, Cubs making final preparations for opening games in Japan

DARRYL WEBB/AP

Two-way star Shohei Ohtani makes his way to the dugout before the Los Angeles Dodgers' spring-training game against the Chicago White Sox on Saturday in Phoenix. The reigning NL MVP, recovering from surgery on his non-throwing shoulder, won't pitch in either game at the Tokyo Dome next week.

By DAVID BRANDT
Associated Press

GLENDAL, Ariz. — Shohei Ohtani's bat is ready for the Los Angeles Dodgers while Shota Imanaga has looked good on the mound for the Chicago Cubs with less than 10 days remaining before baseball's regular-season opener in Japan.

The teams will play two games at the Tokyo Dome on March 18 and 19.

The early start to the season — more than a week before the schedule begins domestically — has led to a truncated spring



Roberts

schedule for the Dodgers and Cubs, though both teams have managed to navigate the shorter preparation time in fairly good health.

They're trying to keep it that way as they navigate a fun, but unique week that includes long flights to and from Japan, along with a 15-hour time difference between the two locations.

"It's two games and we're not going to ex-

haust everything to get ready for two games," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said early in camp. "But also, we want to be ready and prepared to win two games in Tokyo while appreciating that when we come back, we'll have time to get ready for the domestic opener."

All eyes have been on Ohtani, the reigning National League MVP, who is still recovering from offseason surgery on his left (non-throwing) shoulder. The 30-year-old has looked fine at the plate during Cactus League play with a .357 average in 14 at-

bats, including a double and a homer.

The two-way star won't pitch in Japan and has slowed his work on the mound in recent days as he concentrates on being the designated hitter in Tokyo. Roberts believes that Ohtani could return to the mound in May, though the manager said he's keeping the timeline intentionally vague.

Yoshinobu Yamamoto and rookie Roki Sasaki are expected to start on the mound for the Dodgers in the regular-season

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