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STARS AND STRIPES®

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Impeached President Yoon taken into custody

By **KIM TONG-HYUNG**
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's impeached president, Yoon Suk Yeol, was sent to a detention center near Seoul on Wednesday night, after being questioned by anti-corruption officials who took him into custody over his imposition of martial law last month.

Yoon was detained in a major law enforcement operation at the presidential compound earlier in the day. Yoon defiantly insisted that the country's anti-corruption agency, which led the raid with police, didn't have the authority to investigate his actions, but said he complied to prevent violence.

Yoon, the country's first sitting president to be apprehended, now faces the prospect of a lengthy prison term over potential rebellion charges.

In a video message recorded shortly before he was escorted to the headquarters of the anti-corruption agency, Yoon lamented the "rule of law has completely collapsed in this country."

Yoon had been holed up in the Hannam-dong residence in the capital, Seoul, for weeks while vowing to "fight to the end" the efforts to oust him. He has justified his declaration of martial law Dec. 3 as a legitimate act of governance against an "anti-state" opposition employing its legislative majority to thwart his agenda.

The Corruption Investigation

SEE YOON ON PAGE 13



DIANA GARCIA/U.S. Marine Corps

U.S. Marines with 3rd Intelligence Battalion, III Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group, maneuver toward a checkpoint during an exercise at Jungle Warfare Training Center, Camp Gonsalves, Okinawa, Japan, in December.

Prioritizing the Pacific

Prospective Pentagon chief says he will emphasize a military buildup in the region

By **JOHN VANDIVER**
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The prospective next Pentagon chief says he will prioritize a military buildup in the Pacific in connection with a global force review that will reassess how many troops are needed in other parts of the world.

Pete Hegseth offered a glimpse of his plans and approach to overseas operations in a 75-page written response to lawmaker questions ahead of his testimony Tuesday before the Senate Armed Services Committee in Washington.

During the hearing, Hegseth defended himself against a wide range of accusations related to his personal life and views on women in combat. But the U.S. military's missions abroad largely were glossed over.

However, in written testimony, Hegseth put the U.S. military role in the Pacific front and center.

"We need to accelerate efforts



Hegseth

to strengthen our force posture and increase operational capabilities in the Indo-Pacific, given China's historic and rapid military buildup and the urgent need to reestablish deterrence," Hegseth wrote in testimony released Tuesday.

Hegseth said he would take steps to "urgently strengthen deterrence" across the Pacific and seek funding to make a more formidable force there possible.

Hegseth stopped short of detailing what military assets he would like to move to the region, but his

anticipated force posture review would impact Pentagon missions in Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

Combatant commands that oversee those regions also would be subjected to a review. Hegseth made no mention of adding or cutting resources to U.S. European, Central and Africa commands, saying instead that he would seek to get more support out of allies and partners in those areas.

But officials expected to have

SEE PACIFIC ON PAGE 6

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Jack Daniel's parent paring workforce, closing barrel plant

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Spirits giant Brown-Forman Corp. said Tuesday it's reducing its global workforce by about 12% and closing its hometown barrel-making plant in Louisville.

The cost-cutting moves come as American whiskey producers face stiff challenges from changing consumer trends and renewed tariff threats.

The actions are projected to produce about \$70 million to \$80 million in annualized cost savings,

a portion of which is expected to be reinvested as part of the company's growth strategy, said Louisville-based Brown-Forman, whose flagship brand is Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey.

The company's cooperation, where barrels are made to store and age its spirits, will close by April 25, affecting about 210 hourly and salaried employees, it said. The closure is part of the overall 12% reduction in the company's 5,400-employee global workforce. Laid-off workers will receive sev-

erance, outplacement services and other benefits, the company said.

Brown-Forman said it will source barrels from an external supplier and expects to receive more than \$30 million from selling cooperation assets. The company established its own cooperation in 1945 — raising barrels and honing the craft of using wood to create distinct flavor characteristics to bourbon.

Brown-Forman also announced changes in its executive team.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Commercial rates	
Euro costs (Jan. 16)	0.95	Bahrain (Dinar)	.3769
British pound (Jan. 16)	\$1.20	Britain (Pound)	.8152
Japanese yen (Jan. 16)	153.00	Canada (Dollar)	1.4330
South Korean won (Jan. 16)	1423.00	China (Yuan)	7.3300
		Denmark (Krone)	7.2251
		Egypt (Pound)	50.4554
		Euro	.9683
		Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7853
		Hungary (Forint)	398.33
		Israel (Shekel)	3.6115
		Japan (Yen)	156.26
		Kuwait (Dinar)	.3085
		Norway (Krone)	11.3054
		Philippines (Peso)	58.42
		Poland (Zloty)	4.13
		Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7528
		Singapore (Dollar)	1.3653
		South Korea (Won)	1455.60
Switzerland (Franc)	.9108		
Thailand (Baht)	34.56		
Turkey (NewLira)	35.4673		

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

INTEREST RATES

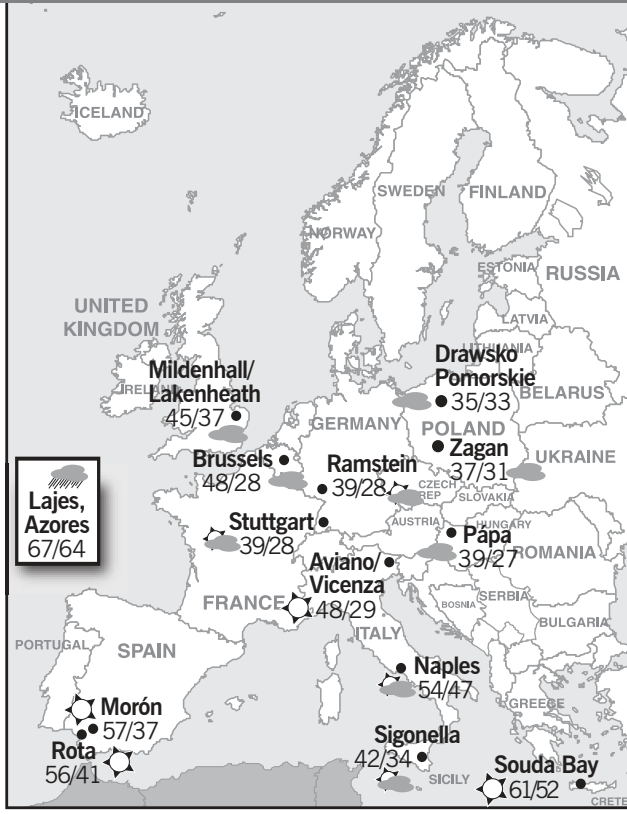
Prime rate	7.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50
Federal funds market rate	4.33
3-month bill	4.32
30-year bond	4.98

WEATHER OUTLOOK

THURSDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



THURSDAY IN EUROPE



FRIDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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MILITARY

DOD expands eligibility for flex spending

National Guard troops on full-time active duty are now eligible to enroll in accounts

By JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

National Guard troops on full-time active duty are now eligible to enroll in a tax-advantaged, health care flexible spending account, according to a spokesman for the Department of Defense.

Guard members on Title 32 duty became eligible for the health care accounts on Nov. 24 for the 2025 plan, spokesperson Joshua Wick wrote in an email this month to Stars and Stripes.

"A Health Care Flexible Spending Account is an optional benefit

that enables service members to set aside up to \$3,300 in pre-tax earnings to pay for health expenses such as co-pays and cost shares, vision, dental, and drug store items," he said.

Title 32 orders are issued by the states, typically in the event of natural disasters, such as the approximately 2,500 California National Guard members called up Sunday to help fight wildfires in the Los Angeles area. Title 10 orders are federal orders calling Guard troops to duty for national defense.

The recent update also includes

all active-duty members of the U.S. Coast Guard, Coast Guard reservists on active duty for more than 180 days and Reserve component managers, Coast Guard Headquarters spokesperson Lt. Krystal Wolfe told Stars and Stripes by email Jan. 9.

"U.S. Coast Guard Reserve Members not on active-duty orders for more than 180 days are not eligible," Wolfe said.

Active-duty service members along with Guard and Reserve members on Title 10 orders are also eligible to participate in the

Health Care Flexible Spending Account and Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account programs, according to fsafeds.gov website.

"Reserve members not performing [Active Guard Reserve] duty are not eligible for either program," Wick said.

The fsafeds.gov website as of Wednesday has been updated to include the recent changes of eligibility for Title 32 and Coast Guard members for the 2025 enrollment season.

A Dependent Care Flexible

Spending Account is also a pre-tax benefit account used to pay for eligible dependent care services, such as preschool, summer day camp, before or after school programs and child or adult day care, according to fsafeds.gov website.

Uniformed service members may enroll in the health care flexible spending account during a special period March 3 to 31.

Afterward, first-year service members may enroll during the normal Federal Benefits Open Season that occurs mid-November to mid-December, Wick said.

US-Japan drill builds on quake response

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

CAMP ZAMA, Japan — U.S. Army aviators and Japanese troops are rehearsing their disaster response techniques, a year after they flew real-world missions for victims of a deadly earthquake on Japan's western coast.

Two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters from U.S. Army Aviation Battalion Japan are operating from Camp Yao, near Osaka, alongside the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, said U.S. Army Japan spokesman Manuel Torres-Cortes.

The aircraft are part of Nankai Rescue, a U.S.-Japan disaster drill that kicked off Monday and concludes Friday, he wrote in an email Wednesday.

The exercise reprises things the aviators did in January 2024 to help victims of a New Year's Day quake on the Noto Peninsula, battalion commander Lt. Col. Nick Franck said Wednesday at Camp Zama, the headquarters of U.S. Army Japan near Tokyo.

The quake collapsed buildings, shredded highways and killed hundreds of people in towns and villages on the peninsula.

Nankai Rescue involves air movement, bilateral expeditionary operations, multi-helicopter operations, long-range communications and forward tactical command, Torres-Cortes said.

The start of the drill coincided with a magnitude 6.7 earthquake that struck southern Japan on Monday evening. The Japan Meteorological Agency on Wednesday advised the public to expect possible tremors in coming days in the wake of that earthquake.

Japan is one of the world's most earthquake-prone countries and sits on the



AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

A UH-60 Black Hawk takes off Wednesday from Camp Zama, Japan.

Ring of Fire, a region of seismic faults around the Pacific.

In March 2011, a massive magnitude 9 quake — the strongest ever recorded in Japan — struck the Tohoku region in the country's northwest.

The quake and ensuing tsunami killed more than 19,000 people and caused a meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. U.S. Forces Japan has pitched in with disaster-relief missions following that and other earthquakes.

In April 2016, U.S. forces airlifted thousands of pounds of supplies to Kumamoto, on the southern island of Kyushu, after a series of quakes killed dozens of people and damaged thousands of homes.



Franck

Franck, who commands 40 soldiers and 40 American and Japanese civilians operating five Black Hawks at Zama and a pair of UC-35 aircraft at nearby Naval Air Facility Atsugi, flew missions during last year's earthquake response.

The American participation in this week's drill reflects "our Japanese partners knowing what our capabilities are," he said, noting that Nankai Rescue mir-

rors what the unit did on the Noto Peninsula.

That mission involved ferrying personnel and supplies from Komatsu Airport in Ishikawa prefecture to Noto Airport, which was too damaged by the quake to accommodate fixed-wing aircraft, recalled Franck, who flew one of the Black Hawks involved in the disaster response.

The seasoned pilot was struck by the organized Japanese relief effort and the damage he saw. He still has photos on his phone showing cracked buildings at Noto Airport.

"It was cold, and they probably couldn't use the road system," he said.

Another pilot in that mission, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jacob Schmidt, also has memories of the damage, including large cracks in the ground visible from the air.

"Being able to immediately respond and bring supplies to a community in need was fulfilling on our end and you could see how appreciative the locals were," he said Wednesday at Zama.

A battalion Black Hawk is scheduled to lift off Thursday from Zama for a "Tiger" formation flight over Tokyo with Japanese helicopters, Ospreys and fixed-wing aircraft marking the start of a new year, Franck said.

5th Fleet honored for years of work to disrupt smuggling

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The 5th Fleet was awarded the Navy Expeditionary Medal on Tuesday for actions disrupting smuggling efforts during a three-year period.

Operation Unified Takedown is an effort to disrupt smuggling networks that fund extremism and contribute to the global circulation of illegal substances.

Sailors and Marines who participated in the operation from Oct. 1, 2021, to Sept. 30, 2024, seized more than 70 tons of explosive propellants, 1,400 weapons, 226,000 rounds of ammunition and 43,000 kilograms of narcotics, the service said in a news release.

"The sailors

and Marines of U.S. 5th Fleet have set an extraordinary standard of excellence and perseverance,"

Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro said in a statement. "Their success in Op-

eration Unified Takedown has not only enhanced maritime security but also strengthened global partnerships and fostered long-term regional stability."

The 5th Fleet's area of responsibility includes the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Arabian Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. U.S. warships and commercial vessels have come under attack there for more than a year.

The Houthis, an Iranian-backed militant group in Yemen, have targeted some 100 merchant vessels transiting the Red Sea with missiles and drones since the war in Gaza started in October 2023, The Associated Press reported. Some missiles and drones have either been intercepted by a U.S.-led coalition in the Red Sea or failed to reach their targets, which have included Western military vessels as well.

The Houthi rebels maintain they target ships linked to Israel, the U.S. or the United Kingdom to force an end to Israel's campaign against Hamas militants in Gaza, according to the AP.

However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the conflict. Houthi leaders have made multiple recent claims, without evidence, of successful attacks against U.S. targets.

More than 70 tons of explosive propellants, 1,400 weapons, 226,000 rounds of ammunition and 43,000 kilograms of narcotics were seized over 3 years

MILITARY

Victims testify in sex abuse court-martial

BY GARY WARNER

Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash. — A former sergeant testified at Maj. Michael Stockin's court-martial for sex abuse charges that he sought pain relief to "stay in the fight" as an infantry unit leader, only to experience "anger, anxiety, irritation" after being molested by the Army doctor at the military base in Washington state.

"It was such a gut-wrenching feeling," he testified.

The sergeant said he had avoided treatment for injuries from combat deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq, and struggled with pain from frequent marching with full gear.

"I couldn't ruck, and if I couldn't ruck, how could I order the soldiers in my unit to ruck," he told those gathered in the courtroom. "I wanted to lead from the front."

So the soldier finally had an appointment with Stockin at which he was told to disrobe and was touched on his genitals. The doctor told him it was part of a standard examination, he said.

That incident drove the soldier to "hang it up" and leave the Army instead of taking a promotion.

"The experience resonated throughout my life, my family," the sergeant said. "I buried my head in the sand."

He was among 17 service members and veterans who testified Friday, Saturday, and Monday in Stockin's court-martial for sexually abusing 41 patients at the Lewis-McChord hospital.

Stockin pleaded guilty last week to 36 counts of abusive sexual contact and five counts of indecent viewing of the naked bodies of service members. The doctor was facing charges that could add up to 250 years in prison.

But under a plea deal, Stockin will be dismissed from the Army, lose all pay and benefits, and be required to register as a sex offender. As a felon, he would likely lose the right to vote or own firearms.



KOMO News-Seattle

Army Maj. Michael Stockin leaves his court-martial at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., on Jan. 7 after pleading guilty to 41 counts of sexual abuse of former patients. Behind him is his lead defense attorney Robert Capovilla.

Col. Larry Babin, the military judge in the trial, told Stockin that pleading guilty meant he had decided to accept a verdict that "will forever stigmatize the character of his service" and damage his "economic and social acceptability."

The judge still must render a sentence, which could include prison time. Prosecutors want him to serve 164 months in jail — just less than 14 years. Stockin's lawyers are seeking 118 months, or less than 10 years.

The victims testified as part of the prosecutor's case for a longer sentence.

Privates, sergeants, warrant officers, lieutenants, and captains came to the stand. Most serve or served in the Army. Stars and Stripes does not name people who identify themselves as victims of sexual abuse unless the person has agreed to be named.

Madigan Army Medical Center at Lewis-McChord is the top military hospital in the Pacific Northwest and serves all troops needing to see doctors in medical specialties — such as pain management — because they might not be able to find the care at their base. Some of Stockin's victims who testified

served in the Navy and Air Force.

The victims sought treatment from Stockin for various reasons — from shoulder pain from loading missiles onto planes on aircraft carriers to hernias from lifting heavy loads to injuries from automobile accidents to spinal compression from "pounding dirt" in overseas deployments.

Many of them said their medical visits were an attempt to handle pain so they could stay in the military.

One captain said chronic nerve pain had him thinking about retiring, but his life had revolved around the military since college and he was loathe to end his career.

"I felt like I had a lot more to give to the Army," he said.

The witnesses told of how Stockin would use his position as a doctor to make the fondling and viewing seem like standard parts of the medical examination, even when the patient's pain was not in their groin area.

"He told me, 'I need you to drop trou,'" a sergeant first class said.

When the sergeant dropped his pants but left his underwear on, the soldier testified Stockin used a more commanding voice to tell the

patient to remove his underwear.

"No, I said I need you to drop trou!" the sergeant told the court. Stockin then fondled him.

Another soldier testified Stockin commented on the size of his penis and said he must be good at pleasing women.

Nearly all the troops said they came away with a loss of trust in doctors and the ability of the military to police its ranks for predator sex offenders.

"Disturbing, disgusting," one service member said.

Stockin had transferred to Lewis-McChord in July 2019 and was removed from seeing patients in February 2022 after initial complaints.

A few of the victims said they spoke out soon after their incidents with Stockin. Another soldier who has since left the Army testified Stockin commented on the size of his penis.

"I told my chain [of command] right away and was surprised when nothing happened," he said.

Others said the exams made them anxious or uneasy, but they told themselves that Stockin was someone in authority whom they were unused to questioning.

"He was a doctor and an officer," said an Army warrant officer, who called Stockin's ability to avoid punishment for so long "a punch in the gut from the government."

When the Army's Criminal Investigation Division contacted him and asked whether he had been a patient at the base pain management clinic, the warrant officer said he knew immediately what and who they were calling about.

Many victims said they hid the full story from their friends and families. Some even persuaded themselves nothing wrong had occurred until faced with the evidence compiled against Stockin.

"I convinced myself that what I thought happened hadn't happened," a sergeant major said.

Others testified they blamed themselves and felt guilt about the incidents.

"I should have known better," a sergeant said. "I thought, maybe it's partially my fault. Did I write a blank check to the doctor to find a solution to my pain?"

Following an 18-month CID investigation, Stockin was initially charged with abusing nearly two dozen patients in September 2023. The reported incidents grew to include 54 charges by the summer of 2024.

Others spoke up only when it became apparent that they were not the only ones who Stockin had abused.

"You don't want to be known as one who was sexually [abused]," said a retired sergeant.

Stockin's plea deal was reached in September 2024.

Many of the witnesses at the court-martial were among 22 service members who have filed \$5 million claims against the Army for negligence in allowing Stockin to commit his crimes. The claims are the first step in trying to sue the Army in civil court.

All the witnesses who were asked about the money said they saw it as a way to call attention to Stockin's crimes and force the Army to face what happened to them as soldiers.

"I wasn't taken seriously when I complained and there were more victims after me," one soldier testified.

Another said he wanted to be loyal to the Army but eventually realized he needed to speak out.

"Why would I pour myself into this organization when someone in that organization can do something like that," one sergeant said.

Another soldier said, "Actions speak louder than words and sometimes it takes action to get attention from a big organization."

A senior Army sergeant testified he was on the stand telling his story publicly because he was fulfilling his enlistment oath to "bear true faith and allegiance" to the Constitution and the Army.

"It is my duty to stop this," he said. "I want to make sure no one can let this happen again to someone else."

Coast Guard members fire at Mexican smugglers off California coast

BY ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

Coast Guard members opened fire off the coast of San Diego to disable a vessel smuggling people into the U.S. after two Mexican men on the boat attempted to evade a service patrol by ramming into them, according to court documents.

The Coast Guard was called to chase down the boat after Border Patrol agents detained four people who got off the vessel at a boat ramp near Mission Bay Drive

Bridge at about 4 p.m. on Jan. 5, according to court documents filed in the U.S. District Court in the Southern District of California.

Agents also spotted two men who remained near the boat and who did not comply with their commands. Instead, the men boarded the boat and drove away from the dock trying to escape.

The men on the rogue vessel, which had several fishing poles attached, ignored the Coast Guard's emergency lights and directions

to stop.

"The vessel rammed into the [Coast Guard] vessel, and the two occupants of the vessel began throwing metal objects at the [Coast Guard] boat and its occupants," according to the court documents.

Coast Guard members then fired disabling rounds at the boat's motor and shot pepper balls to subdue the men. Still, the two continued to fight back as the Coast Guard members boarded the disabled boat and used pepper spray

on the men.

The two men — Oscar Eduardo Audelo-Rodriguez and Francisco Brado-Cota, both of Mexico — were arrested and taken to Ballast Point at Naval Base Point Loma, where they were medically cleared and taken into federal custody.

The Coast Guard did not respond Tuesday to a request for information on the incident.

Three of the four people initially arrested told Border Patrol agents that they were from Mexico and

had agreed to pay between \$7,000 and \$19,000 to be smuggled into the United States. They identified Audelo-Rodriguez as the captain of the vessel, and Brado-Cota as the co-captain, according to court documents.

Each year, the Coast Guard encounters roughly 3,000 migrants attempting to enter the U.S. illegally, according to the service. Its members conduct about 1,400 boardings of high-interest vessels designated as posing a greater-than-normal risk to America.

PACIFIC

Marine Corps Osprey makes precautionary landing in Japan

By BRIAN McELHINEY AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

A Marine Corps Osprey made a precautionary landing at a commercial airport in southern Japan on Tuesday after a warning light activated.

The MV-22B tiltrotor aircraft, assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 265, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, was doing routine training when the onboard warning prompted the pilot to land at Okinoerabu Airport in Kagoshima prefecture at 3:54 p.m., wing spokesman Maj. Joseph Butterfield wrote in an email Wednesday.

There were no injuries or damage to the aircraft or airport, Butterfield said.

"The pilots and aircrew performed as trained and prioritized safety by landing the aircraft," he wrote. "The aircrew proceeded to land the aircraft safely in accord-

ance with standard procedures." Okinoerabu Island is 37 miles north of Okinawa and about 330 miles south of Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands.

The tiltrotor returned to its home base — Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Okinawa — without problems after the crew conducted "thorough troubleshooting," Butterfield said. He declined to elaborate on the issue that caused the warning indications.

The Kagoshima Airport Office received a landing request from the Osprey at 3:44 p.m. and forwarded it to the Okinoerabu Airport Office, a spokesman for the Kagoshima office said Wednesday.

The aircraft departed at 4:07 p.m. after it was confirmed safe to do so, said a spokesman for the Kyushu Defense Bureau, an arm of Japan's Ministry of Defense.



MANUEL SERRANO/U.S. Marine Corps

An MV-22 Osprey attached to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 265 flies in formation during an exercise on Okinawa in October.

The incident caused one commercial flight to be delayed for about eight minutes, the spokesman said.

"Operating our aircraft safely and effectively is a top priority, and our aviators take great precautions to ensure the safety of the aircrew and the communities in which we operate," Butterfield said. "... Any decision to divert to alternate landing areas is made out of an abundance of caution to prioritize the safety of both our aircrew and the local community."

Ospreys have faced increased scrutiny following a series of accidents.

The United States and Japan grounded their tiltrotor fleets for nearly three months after eight

airmen were killed when a CV-22B Osprey with Air Force Special Operations Command crashed Nov. 29, 2023, off Japan.

The investigation determined a catastrophic mechanical failure was to blame, compounded by a "lack of urgency" by the crew to address an engine problem.

U.S. tiltrotors were briefly grounded again on Dec. 6 after a CV-22B Osprey from Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., lost an engine but landed safely following warnings about metal gears in the proprotor gearbox.

On Dec. 20, Naval Air Systems Command, which oversees the Osprey program, issued new guidelines for the aircraft's transmission, specifically the metal gears inside the proprotor gearbox.

Diverted KC-135 refueler lands safely at Yokota

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Air Force emergency responders turned out Wednesday morning for an aerial refueler that diverted to this airlift hub in western Tokyo.

A KC-135 Stratotanker taxied to a ramp on the southwest corner of Yokota's airfield, where at 11 a.m. it was surrounded by a half-dozen Yokota Fire Department vehicles, lights turning.

The tanker, assigned to the 909th Air Refueling Squadron at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, had diverted to Yokota due to a maintenance issue, 374th Airlift Wing spokesman Master Sgt. Nathan Allen said in an email.

Allen said there were no injuries. He did not elaborate on the nature of the maintenance issue.

The emergency response occurred within sight of the main road that connects Yokota's central area with its east side and crosses the southern end of the runway. Drivers making midday trips across the base had a front-row view of the tanker and the fire department response.



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MILITARY

DOD ends ban on horizontal flag display at events

By PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

American service members can once again display the U.S. flag horizontally at sporting events and other official ceremonies, the Pentagon said in a memo that reverses restrictions enacted two years ago.

Defense Department personnel may now show the flag, “regardless of its size or position, at eligible public sporting and other community events, provided that such displays are done in a respectful manner,” a DOD memo issued Friday said.

The updated guidelines follow changes to the U.S. Flag Code under the latest National Defense Authorization Act. The purpose of the code is to provide guidance on properly displaying the flag, including details regarding size, placement and handling.

Under the old rules outlined on Feb. 10, 2023, uniformed service members were barred from participating directly in the “unfurling, holding, and/or carrying of giant horizontal U.S. flags.”

Military jump teams also were formerly prevented from incorporating the U.S. flag in their demonstrations if it couldn’t “be caught reliably and handled respectfully by ground personnel.”



MICHAEL SCHWENK/U.S. Army National Guard

The U.S. Navy parachute demonstration team descends into MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J., in 2022. While service members can once again unfurl the American flag horizontally, they are still barred from letting the flag land on the ground during parachute demonstrations in which it is attached to the jumper, according to the Defense Department.

It remains against DOD rules for flags to land on the ground during parachute demonstrations in which they are attached to the jumper, according to the memo, signed by Chris Meagher, assis-

tant to the secretary of defense for public affairs.

The rules must be followed by DOD personnel handling the flag at events in the U.S. and abroad. Service members traditionally

unfurl the flag at the Super Bowl and other major American sporting events.

They have also been used in flag displays at National Football League and Major League Base-

ball games in foreign countries.

The Flag Code is referenced in DOD regulations. According to the code, the Stars and Stripes should never touch anything beneath it, including the ground, floor, water or merchandise.

An exception is made for caskets draped in the flag during funeral honors so long as it isn’t lowered into the grave or allowed to touch the ground.

While the revisions maintain that the flag usually should not be carried flat, they allow for exceptions that “may be necessary in limited circumstances.” That stipulation was absent in the 2023 DOD guidance.

Pentagon officials have been concerned with flag protocol in recent years and addressed troops on the issue in earlier memos.

In 2020, DOD issued a policy that banned the display of unauthorized flags on military installations, buildings and vehicles. It effectively prohibited Confederate flags and other controversial banners without spelling out which flags were off-limits.

In the wake of the 2023 memo that was overturned last week, Meagher encouraged bases “to work with sponsors of community events to develop other ways to showcase the patriotism and capabilities of our military.”

Pacific: 2 Trump DOD picks agree Europe must spend more on defense

FROM PAGE 1

key roles in President-elect Donald Trump’s new administration have made clear that allies in Europe and elsewhere will need to pick up any slack that comes with a sharper military shift to the Pacific.

Hegseth reiterated that position. In the CENTCOM area, partners should be empowered to counter terrorist groups, he said.

“If confirmed, I would also look to increase regional and European cooperation in countering the Iranian (threat),” he said.

In Europe, Hegseth said allies face a threat from Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has “designs for expansion of Russian territory and influence and the degradation of the NATO Alliance.”

The U.S. should seek to deter Russia from acting against U.S. interests in Europe but “also leverage the investments of our allies to provide for their own defense,” he said.

Such views are in line with those of Elbridge Colby, whom Trump has nominated to serve as the Pentagon’s undersecretary of defense for policy. Colby was an architect of national defense strategy in Trump’s first term, and if confirmed he will play a key role in

Mullin: Senators have voted while drunk

New York Daily News

Oklahoma Sen. Markwayne Mullin accused his colleagues of voting while drunk during a heated confirmation hearing for secretary of defense nominee Pete Hegseth.

Much of Tuesday’s drama surrounding Hegseth’s hearing revolved around whether any Republicans on the Senate Armed Services Committee would come out against the former Fox News host who, by his own admission, is an unconventional pick to run the Department of Defense and its \$850 billion budget.

But that didn’t appear to happen as Republicans held their ground while Democrats focused on numerous reports claiming Hegseth showed up to work drunk and has a jarring history with women, including allegations of sexual assault.

Mullin took exception to that line of questioning. “How many senators have showed up drunk to vote at night?” the Republican lawmaker asked. “Have any of you guys asked them to step down and resign from their job? And don’t tell me you haven’t seen it because I know you have.”

Mullin didn’t mention anyone by name or offer examples of times he’s witnessed such things.

“And then how many senators do you know have gotten a divorce for cheating on their wives?” he asked. “Did you ask them to step down? No, but it’s for show.”

While Hegseth seems to have Mullin’s full support, failed Attorney General candidate Matt Gaetz didn’t appear to enjoy that luxury before withdrawing his candidacy amid accusations he paid for sex with an underage woman.

“We’d all seen the videos he was showing on the House floor ... of the girls that he had slept with,” Mullin said in October. “He’d brag about how he would crush E.D. medicine and chase it with an energy drink so he could go all night.”

Gaetz left Congress and denies any wrongdoing. Hegseth — who’s accused of paying to silence a woman who claimed he sexually assaulted her in 2017 while he was going through a divorce and was involved with a different woman — admitted Tuesday he’s “not a perfect person.”

He denies the sexual assault allegation.

shaping the look of the future military footprint overseas.

Colby’s past stated position on the EUCOM mission, along with that of Vice President-elect JD Vance, is that European militaries must ramp up spending so they can provide the bulk of conven-

tional defense forces for NATO.

While neither has called for a withdrawal from Europe, the U.S. military’s focus on the Continent should be providing NATO with its nuclear deterrent and other high-end capabilities, they argue.

Hegseth echoed that outlook.

“At a time when the NATO Alliance faces nuclear saber-rattling from Russia, the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons serves as an important political, strategic, and military link between America and its European allies,” Hegseth’s testimony said.

Japan warns of earthquake aftershocks

By HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Japanese authorities are warning residents to remain alert for strong tremors in the coming days after a magnitude 6.6 earthquake struck southern Japan this week.

The earthquake occurred at 9:19 p.m. Monday in the Hyuganada Sea, 12½ miles east-southeast of Miyazaki prefecture, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency. The quake registered a maximum seismic intensity of lower 5 on Japan’s seismic scale in Miyazaki city and Takanabe and Shintomi, the agency said in a news release. Seismic intensities from 1 to 4 were recorded across central to western Japan.

Officials cautioned that similar tremors could occur soon.

“Please be on the alert for earthquakes with maximum seismic intensity of lower 5 to occur in the next week or so, especially in the next two to three days,” the agency said.

The earthquake triggered aftershocks and a small tsunami, with waves of up to 8 inches observed in parts of Miyazaki and Kochi prefectures. Tsunami advisories were issued but later lifted.

NATION

Rubio vows to put US interests 'above all else'

By ARNOUSH AMIRI
AND MATTHEW LEE

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Florida Sen. Marco Rubio received a warm welcome from Senate colleagues Wednesday as he sketched out his plans for implementing President-elect Donald Trump's "America First" vision as secretary of state.

"I hope I can earn your support, whether it's because you believe I would do a good job, or because you want to get rid of me," Rubio joked in testimony the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where he served for 14 years.

But in between the niceties, Rubio painted a dark image of the dangers of facing the U.S., most specifically from China, who he said is America's "biggest threat."

He blamed this growing risk on America's shift to globalism, which he says "is now a weapon being used against us." He said the U.S. must begin placing "our core national interests above all

else."

It's a remarkable opening salvo from Rubio, who was born in Miami to Cuban immigrants and who, if confirmed, would become the first Latino to serve as the nation's top diplomat.

The confirmation hearing begins a new chapter in the political career of the 53-year-old Florida Republican, whose relationship with Trump has evolved over the last decade. Once rivals trading schoolyard insults as they campaigned for president in 2016, the two men became close allies as Trump campaigned for another White House term last year.

Unlike many of Trump's Cabinet selections, Rubio is expected to easily win confirmation, notching support not only from Republicans but also Democrats who endorse him as a "responsible" pick to represent the U.S. abroad. Many expect he will be among the first of Trump's Cabinet picks approved.

Democratic Sen. Brian Schatz,



ALEX BRANDON / AP

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., tapped to serve as Secretary of State in Donald Trump's administration, addresses the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during his confirmation hearing Wednesday.

who served alongside Rubio on the Foreign Relations Committee, said he has high hopes that the Florida Republican will reject the

isolationist approach of other Trump allies.

"I think Marco is a hawk, but he's also an internationalist, and I

think the challenge for him will be to maintain the long bipartisan tradition of America being indispensable in world affairs," the Hawaii lawmaker told The Associated Press. "And there are people in the Trump world who want us to run away from being the leaders of the free world. And I'm hoping that Marco's instincts towards American strength will win the day."

Rubio's approach to foreign affairs is grounded in his years of service on the Foreign Relations committee and the Senate Intelligence panel. In his speeches and writings, he's delivered increasingly stern warnings about growing military and economic threats to the United States, particularly from China, which he says has benefited from a "global world order" that he characterizes as obsolete.

China, Rubio told the committee, has "lied, cheated, hacked, and stolen their way to global superpower status, at our expense."

CIA pick: Agency must do better job

By DAVID KLEPPER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump's pick to lead the CIA told senators during his confirmation hearing Wednesday that the nation's premier spy agency must do a better job of staying ahead of global threats posed by Russia, China and other adversaries.

John Ratcliffe, who served as director of national intelligence during Trump's first term, told lawmakers that if confirmed, he would push the agency to do more to use technologies like artificial intelligence while also expanding the agency's use of human intelligence collection.

"We're not where we're supposed to be," Ratcliffe told the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Republicans praised Ratcliffe's experience, but Democrats struck a more skeptical tone, asking Ratcliffe if his loyalty to Trump would conflict with his duties to follow intelligence wherever it leads. Ratcliffe assured the lawmakers that he would put the CIA's mission first.

"My record of speaking truth to power and defending the intelligence community is very clear," he said.



JOHN McDONNELL / AP

John Ratcliffe, President-elect Donald Trump's choice to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, appears before the Senate Intelligence Committee for his confirmation hearing Wednesday.

Ratcliffe is a former federal prosecutor and conservative member of Congress representing a district in Texas. He was a fierce defender of Trump during his first impeachment proceedings in the House.

His hearing before the Senate Intelligence Committee is part of a weeklong marathon as the Republican-led Senate rushes to have some of Trump's nominees ready to be confirmed by the full Senate as soon as Inauguration Day on Monday.

Ratcliffe's experience as director of national intelligence, and his Senate confirmation for that post, are expected to boost his chances in the Senate this year, especially compared with Trump's nomination of Tulsi Gabbard as intelli-

gence chief. Gabbard, a former congresswoman from Hawaii, has faced bipartisan criticism over past comments supportive of Russia and 2017 meetings with former Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Trump and other Republicans have criticized the work of the CIA and other spy agencies, saying it's focused too much on issues like climate change or the diversity of its workforce. The committee chairman, Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., cited the recent attack in New Orleans as one example of a deadly incident that occurred without any warning from intelligence officials.

The calls for sweeping changes have worried some current and former intelligence officials who say the changes could make the country less safe.

Attorney general pick: Trump 'targeted' by DOJ

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Pam Bondi, Donald Trump's pick for attorney general, insisted at her Senate confirmation hearing Wednesday that the president-elect had been targeted by years of investigations and pledged that she would not "politicize" the Justice Department if confirmed as the country's chief federal law enforcement officer.

The statements echoed Trump's claims that the Justice Department had been weaponized against him and came as Democrats express concern that the president-elect will look to use the agency's law enforcement powers to exact retribution against his adversaries, including the investigators who investigated him.

"They targeted Donald Trump," Bondi said. "They went after him — actually starting back in 2016, they targeted his campaign. They have launched countless investigations against him." She added: "If I am attorney general, I will not politicize that office."

The suggestion that the investigations into Trump were politically motivated has been sharply contested by Attorney General Merrick Garland and by special counsel Jack Smith, who in a report released this week said politics played no part in his decisions and that the evidence his team gathered was sufficient for Trump to have been convicted at trial on charges of scheming to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential

election.

Democrats focused their questions on whether Bondi would be prepared to say "no" to Trump if asked to do something unethical or illegal.

She sought to allay those concerns by saying that her only client was the American people, not the president.

When asked by Sen. Chris Coons, a Delaware Democrat, what she would do if her career

prosecutors recommended bringing a criminal case but the White House said no, she did not answer directly but said: "If I thought that that would happen, I would not be sitting here today."

Republicans, by contrast, eagerly welcome her as a course correction to a Justice Department they believe has pursued an overly liberal agenda and unfairly pursued Trump through investigations and a special counsel appointment resulting in two indictments.

Bondi, a corporate lobbyist who spent 18 years in the Hillsborough County State Attorney's Office in Florida, was named to the attorney general position after Trump's first pick, former Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz, withdrew from consideration during fallout over a federal sex trafficking investigation that ended without charges.



Bondi

NATION

Firefighters in LA report progress, winds picking up

BY JAIMIE DING,
JULIE WATSON
AND JOHN SEEWER
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Millions of Southern Californians nervously kept watch as winds began picking up Wednesday during a final round of dangerous wildfire weather forecast for the region where two massive blazes have killed at least 25 people and destroyed thousands of homes.

A day after firefighters got a reprieve with lighter winds than expected, gusts were hitting up to 35 mph on the coast and in valleys and 55 mph in the mountains before dawn, National Weather Service meteorologist Todd Hall said. They were expected to increase through the morning.

“This is really just the last push of these winds here today,” Hall said. “Hopefully, if we get through today, we’re going to have some better conditions for late week, especially into Friday and Saturday.”

The more manageable winds on Tuesday allowed firefighters to make headway on controlling the most deadly and destructive fires that have been burning for just over a week. Almost half of the Eaton Fire just north of Los Angeles has been contained, and one-fifth of the fire that destroyed much of the seaside LA neighborhood of Pacific Palisades is now surrounded.

Both of those fires broke out Jan. 7 in conditions similar to what’s expected Wednesday. High winds last week pushed flames at remarkable speed and carried fire-sparking embers for miles.

The weather service issued red-

flag warnings — indicating temperatures are warm, humidity is low and strong winds are expected — from 3 a.m. to 3 p.m. from the Central Coast 275 miles south to the border with Mexico. A “particularly dangerous situation” was in effect for an area that includes parts of Los Angeles and Ventura counties.

Weary and anxious residents were told to be ready to flee at a moment’s notice. They remained vigilant, keeping an eye on the skies and on each other: Police announced roughly 50 arrests, for looting, flying drones in fire zones, violating curfew and other crimes.

Of those, three people were arrested on suspicion of arson after being seen setting small fires that were immediately extinguished, LA Police Chief Jim McDonnell said. One was using a barbecue lighter, another ignited brush and a third tried to light a trash can, he said. All were far outside the disaster zones. Authorities have not determined a cause for any of the major fires.

Among nine people charged with looting was a group that stole an Emmy award from an evacuated house, Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman said.

The biggest worry remained the threat from intense winds. Now backed by firefighters from other states, Canada and Mexico, crews were deployed to attack flareups or new blazes. The firefighting force was much bigger than a week ago, when the first wave of fires began destroying thousands of homes in what could become the nation’s costliest fire disaster.



ETHAN SWOPE/AP

A California Department of Corrections hand crew works containment lines ahead of the Palisades Fire on Tuesday, in Santa Monica. More manageable winds on Tuesday allowed firefighters to make headway on controlling the most deadly and destructive fires that have been burning for just over a week.

Kaylin Johnson and her family planned to stay at their home, one of the few left standing in Altadena, near Pasadena. They hoped to ward off looting and to hose down the house and her neighbors’ properties to prevent flareups.

“Our lives have been put on hold indefinitely,” Johnson said via text message, adding that they cannot freely come and go because of restrictions on entering the burn areas. “But I would rather be here and not leave than to not be allowed back at all.”

Residents said they were ready to make a hasty escape.

Javier Vega, who said he feels like he has been “sleeping with one eye open,” and his girlfriend have planned out how they can quickly pack up their two cats, eight fish and leopard gecko if they get orders to evacuate.

“Typically on any other night, hearing helicopters flying overhead from midnight to 4 in the morning, that would drive anyone crazy,” Vega said. But figuring they

were helping firefighters to keep the flames from threatening their neighborhood, he explained, “it was actually soothing for me to go to sleep.”

The two biggest fires haven’t spread very much in the past couple days.

Planes have been dousing homes and hillsides with bright pink fire-retardant chemicals, while crews and fire engines deployed to particularly vulnerable spots with dry brush in case new fires broke out.

Thomas Martin works with Calvary Disaster Relief, a group that responds to disasters all over the world. He was recently in Florida and North Carolina helping with the recovery from Hurricane Helene.

Most times, he shows up after floods, tornadoes and hurricanes, helping people repair their roofs and rip out soggy carpet and walls.

“This is different,” he said. “This is total devastation. There’s nothing much we can do other than pray for the folks.”

With almost no rain in more than eight months, the brush-filled region has had more than a dozen wildfires this year, mostly in the greater Los Angeles area.

Firefighters have jumped on small blazes that popped up, quickly smothering several in Los Angeles County, including a blaze Tuesday evening in the Angeles National Forest.

The four largest fires around the nation’s second-biggest city have scorched more than 63 square miles, roughly three times the size of Manhattan.

The death toll is likely to rise, according to Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna. Nearly 30 people were still missing, he said Tuesday. Some people reported as missing earlier have been found.

Hollywood’s awards season has been put on hiatus because of the crisis. The Oscar nominations have been delayed twice, and some organizations postponed their awards shows and announcements without rescheduling.

As LA burns, Hollywood’s Oscar season turns into a pledge drive

BY JAKE COYLE
AND LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

When the Palisades Fire broke out in Los Angeles last week, Hollywood’s awards season was in full swing. The Golden Globes had transpired less than 48 hours earlier and a series of splashy awards banquets followed in the days after.

But the enormity of the destruction in Southern California has quickly snuffed out all festiveness in the movie industry’s high season of celebration. At one point, the flames even encroached on the hillside above the Dolby Theatre, the home of the Academy Awards.

The fires have struck at the very

heart of a movie industry still trying to stabilize itself after years of pandemic, labor turmoil and technological upheaval. Not for the first time this decade, the Oscars are facing the question of: Should the show go on? And if it does, what do they mean now?

“With ALL due respect during Hollywood’s season of celebration, I hope any of the networks televising the upcoming awards will seriously consider NOT televising them and donating the revenue they would have gathered to victims of the fires and the firefighters,” “Hacks” star Jean Smart, a recent Globe winner, wrote on Instagram.

The Oscars remain as scheduled, but it’s certain that they will be transformed due to the wildfires, and that most of the red-carpet pomp that typically stretches between now and then will be curtailed if not altogether canceled. With so many left without a home by the fires, there’s scant appetite for the usual self-congratulatory parades of the season.

Focus has turned, instead, to what the Oscars might symbolize for a traumatized Los Angeles. The Oscars have never meant less, but, at the same time, they might be more important than ever as a beacon of perseverance for the reeling movie capital.

The film academy on Monday for the second time delayed its nominations announcement. Nominations will now be announced virtually on Feb. 23. The academy also canceled its annual nominees luncheon and said it’s planning to honor frontline workers and to support relief efforts.

“We will get through this together and bring a sense of healing to our global film community,” vowed Bill Kramer, academy chief executive, and Janet Yang, academy president.

Some telethon-like element seems sure to accompany the Oscars. In recent days, many throughout the industry have voiced sug-

gestions for how the broadcast could be reconsidered. A not dissimilar process happened during the 2021 Oscars, which were postponed to late April because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Oscars have been moved a few times throughout history, including in 1938, when the show was delayed a week due to historic flooding in Los Angeles.

Several high-profile TV series were forced to pause production because of the fires but notably few movie shoots were affected. That, in itself, is a reflection of a Hollywood that has seen the majority of film production seek tax incentives in other states.

NATION

Trump announces entity to collect tariff funds

By JACOB BOGAGE
AND JEFF STEIN
The Washington Post

President-elect Donald Trump said Tuesday that he will create an “External Revenue Service” to collect revenue from tariffs, a signal of his determination to impose sweeping duties on imports.

In a post on Truth Social, his social media platform, Trump said the External Revenue Service will collect revenue from tariffs starting Monday, after he is inaugurated for a second term.

The structure of the new government operation was unclear from his post, although two outside advisers, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss matters they weren’t authorized to share publicly, suggested it could involve renaming an existing office within the Treasury Department.

Trump’s statement reflected his long-standing desire to enact far-reaching tariffs on imports, despite numerous reports that his advisers are discussing more-limited plans than he proposed during the 2024 presidential campaign. Trump campaigned on tariff rates as high as 20% on every imported good. Some estimates have projected that those could raise hundreds of billions of dollars in new revenue, although economists warn they could also reignite inflation and raise prices, particularly for low-income consumers.

“For far too long, we have relied on taxing our Great People using the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Through soft and pathetically weak Trade agreements, the American Economy has delivered growth and prosperity to the World, while taxing ourselves. It is

time for that to change,” Trump said on Truth Social. “I am today announcing that I will create the EXTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE to collect our Tariffs, Duties, and all Revenue that come from Foreign sources. We will begin charging those that make money off of us with Trade, and they will start paying, FINALLY, their fair share.”

His announcement sparked immediate confusion about how such an office would work in practice. U.S. Customs and Border Protection currently administers tariff policy, which is set by the president and Congress. Importers self-classify and declare the value of their goods, and CBP officials review and audit that paperwork before collecting any duties, penalties and fees, according to the Congressional Research Service.

Those funds are deposited into the U.S. General Fund, run by the Treasury Department. The government collected about \$80 billion in tariffs and duties in 2023, according to a White House estimate.

Steve Bannon, a former chief Trump strategist, told Politico on Tuesday that the External Revenue Service should look at other possible foreign sources in addition to tariffs. Bannon on his podcast had previously suggested an external revenue agency, before Trump announced the idea.

“You wouldn’t just look at tariffs, you look at everything about how you can charge fees essentially, whether that’s on investment, whether that’s on other things of access to this country,” Bannon told Politico.

Some supporters of Trump’s policies say a new Treasury divi-

sion focused on tariff revenue could help ensure the effectiveness of his proposals. Charles Benoit, a trade attorney at the Coalition for a Prosperous America, which supports higher tariffs, said Treasury is not sufficiently focused on ensuring tariff revenue is maximized.

Benoit also said news reports are consistently underestimating the push by Trump and Howard Lutnick, Trump’s pick to lead the Commerce Department, to enact major new import duties. The Washington Post previously reported that Trump’s aides are studying new tariffs only on critical imports, though they would apply to all countries. Bloomberg News reported this week that Trump was also considering a gradual set of tariff policies covering all sectors.

Ballot results mean minimum wage to go up in many states

By KEVIN HARDY
Stateline.org

The minimum wage will increase in nearly half the states this year even as the federal wage floor remains stuck at \$7.25 per hour.

In many states, the minimum wage is automatically adjusted upward as inflation rises. But voters in several states, including deeply red ones such as Alaska and Missouri, chose in November to significantly increase their minimum wages this year.

Michigan will see its minimum wage jump from \$10.33 to \$12.48 on Feb. 21 after the state Supreme Court concluded the legislature subverted residents when it adopted but then significantly amended voter-initiated ballot measures in 2018 to raise the minimum wage and mandate paid sick time.

Michigan’s wage floor is set to rise to \$14.97 by 2028 — more than double the federal minimum wage, which has not increased since 2009. That’s the longest period without a federal increase since Congress first set a minimum wage in 1938.

A total of 30 states and the District of Columbia have set their own minimum wage higher than the federal rate. And 67 localities — including Denver; Flagstaff, Ariz.; and Los Angeles — have raised their minimum wage above the state minimum, according to the Economic Policy Institute, a left-leaning think tank.

Currently, 10 states have a minimum wage of \$15 or higher: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Washington.

Alaska, Florida, Hawaii, Missouri and Nebraska are on track to reach the \$15 benchmark in the coming years. Such movement in



HANS PENNINK/AP

Rosemary Rivera, of Citizen Action of New York, stands with protesters urging lawmakers to raise New York’s minimum wage during a 2023 rally at the state Capitol, in Albany. A total of 30 states and the District of Columbia have set their own minimum wage higher than the federal rate of \$7.25 per hour.

red states should prompt Republicans who control Congress and soon the White House to move the national wage floor, argued Richard von Glahn, the political director at the labor advocacy group Missouri Jobs with Justice.

“We should have Republican legislators looking and seeing what their own voters are telling them and say, ‘You know, maybe they’re onto something here and maybe I should follow their lead,’” he said.

Von Glahn led a successful campaign to raise Missouri’s minimum wage from 2024’s rate of \$12.30 to \$15 per hour next January through a November ballot initiative that also guaranteed sick leave for many workers.

While a tight labor market forc-

es many employers to pay above minimum wage to compete, von Glahn noted many workers still earn at or near the lowest legal rate. The Economic Policy Institute estimates that more than half a million Missouri workers will see raises as the state’s minimum wage increases.

“That sort of proves the point as to why this is so necessary, why these guardrails are so important,” he said.

Inflation has significantly eroded the buying power of the stagnant federal minimum wage. Advocates say raising the wage floor helps low-wage workers cover the rising cost of essentials and boosts the economy by putting more money into the pockets of people who are likely to spend it. But many em-

ployers, especially retailers and restaurants, counter that raising the minimum wage forces them to cut workers or raise prices.

In December, President-elect Donald Trump said he would consider a national increase in the minimum wage. Trump won 19 of the 20 states — all but New Hampshire — still subject to a \$7.25 minimum wage. In an NBC News interview, he acknowledged the \$7.25 rate was “a very low number,” but said raising the minimum wage too much would decrease employment.

“There is a level at which you can do it,” he said, without specifying a number.

Earlier this month, Alaska’s minimum wage went up 18 cents thanks to an automatic inflation-

based bump.

But the state’s current \$11.91 rate will increase to \$13 this July, thanks to the passage of a November ballot measure. Under the measure, the wage will increase to \$14 in July 2026 and \$15 in July 2027, followed by inflation-adjusted increases starting in 2028.

The ballot measure drew fierce opposition from business groups but won approval by 58%-42%. The new law also mandates employers provide up to seven paid sick days per year — a major concern particularly in seasonal industries, including tourism.

Before November’s election, members of the Alaska Cabaret, Hotel, Restaurant and Retailers Association said passage of the ballot measure would result in higher prices and lead to layoffs and reduced hours for workers, said Sarah Oates Harlow, president and chief executive officer of the organization.

“I guarantee you we will be seeing prices going up across the board,” she said. “Groceries are going to be more expensive. Eating out is going to be more expensive.”

But Mark Robokoff, who owns the pet supply store AK Bark in Anchorage, sees a higher wage floor as good for business. He said the minimum wage increase will put more money into the pockets of his customers.

“It’s not like there’s no benefit to this cost,” Robokoff said.

To attract the best staff, he said, employee wages start at \$17 per hour. But he expects to ratchet that figure up as the state’s minimum wage increases.

“That’s why it needed to be a law,” he said. “It only works if we all do it. Then we all get more revenue and pay our employees a little bit more.”

NATION

Official warns of ongoing terror threats on US

By ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

McLEAN, Va. — Brett Holmgren got woken up early on New Year's Day by alerts that a driver had plowed into a crowd of revelers in New Orleans.

The rampage, which killed 14 people, was the deadliest attack on U.S. soil in years and was inspired by the Islamic State group. The National Counterterrorism Center, which Holmgren leads, sprang into action to help the FBI run down information on the culprit from Texas and his plot.

It was a rare recent example of a mass attack motivated by religious extremism to hit the U.S. homeland. But it didn't occur in a vacuum, coming at a time when a terror threat that has waxed and waned in the two decades since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks is decidedly on the rise around the world.

"We are in a period where we are facing an elevated threat environment," Holmgren said.

The NCTC emerged in the aftermath of 9/11 as a centralized U.S. government hub to collect and analyze data and intelligence on the international terrorism threat, providing information to the White House and other agencies to shape policy decisions and protect against attacks.

A former counterterrorism analyst and assistant secretary of state, Holmgren was named its acting director last July and intends to step aside at the conclusion of the Biden administration. At that point, new leadership un-

der President-elect Donald Trump will grapple with managing some of the global hot spots like Syria that have vexed officials in recent months and that the NCTC has been tracking.

Holmgren cites multiple factors for why the threat is higher than before, including passions arising from the Israel-Hamas war. He also points to mass migration from the Russia-Ukraine war that has sent central Asians, some with ties to the Islamic State group, to countries including Turkey, Syria, Iraq and even the U.S.

Around the world, officials are monitoring tensions in Africa, which Holmgren called potentially the greatest long-term threat to U.S. security given that Islamic State has a large footprint on the continent and is investing resources there.

He says the "most potent overseas threat facing the United States" right now is the group's Afghanistan-based affiliate, known as Islamic State-Khorasan.

One ongoing spot of concern is Syria, where an insurgent group named Hayat Tahrir al-Sham led a lightning offensive last month that toppled the government of President Bashar Assad.

Through vast intelligence collection, hardened defenses and overseas counterterrorism operations, the U.S. has made the risk of another large-scale attack like Sept. 11 lower than it's ever been.

"But if we get complacent as a country," he warned, "it will come back to bite us."

Inflation rose in December

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. inflation picked up last month as prices rose for gas, eggs, and used cars, yet underlying price pressures also showed signs of easing a bit.

Wednesday's report from the Labor Department showed that the consumer price index rose 2.9% in December from a year ago, the highest since July. It was the third straight increase after inflation fell to a 3½ year low of 2.4% in September.

Yet excluding the volatile food and energy categories, so-called core inflation declined to 3.2%, after remaining stuck at 3.3% for three months in a row.

The slowdown in core price increases comes as a relief as many

economists and investors have worried that inflation has gotten stuck above the Fed's 2% target, after a steady decline in prices in 2023 and for much of last year.

Such concerns have sent interest rates on Treasury securities higher, which has also pushed up borrowing costs for mortgages, cars, and credit cards, even as the Fed has cut its key rate.

Any uptick can fuel concerns among many economists and in financial markets that inflation has become stuck above the Fed's 2% target. That anxiety has sent interest rates on Treasury securities higher, which has also pushed up borrowing costs for mortgages, cars, and credit cards, even as the Fed has cut its key rate.



PHOTOS BY ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP

A couple shares a romantic moment Friday in a cave at Ice Castles in North Woodstock, N.H.

Tourists drawn to dazzling Ice Castles in several states

Associated Press

NORTH WOODSTOCK, N.H. — An annual architectural celebration of ice is up and running again in New Hampshire and several other states.

Ice Castles, which are both temporary art installations and tourist attractions, feature towers, tunnels, archways and caves, all created by growing, harvesting and arranging thousands of icicles and then blasting them with sprinklers.

The company behind the displays has expanded since its first installation in 2011. This year it has operations in Utah, Minnesota, two locations in Colorado and New Hampshire, where the site includes a snow tubing hill and ice bar.

After a mild winter last year, officials were thrilled that temperatures were cold enough to open earlier this season.

"It's one of the biggest ice castles we've ever built," said Jared Henningsen, the company's vice president for operations.

"We're looking at about 25 million pounds of ice spread over two acres."

As a winter storm brought biting cold and wet snow to the South, visitors to the New Hampshire castle bundled up to explore its twists and turns Friday.

Julia Jones of Gloucester, Mass., said she travels to northern New Hampshire several times a year but had not experienced the



A boy peaks into an igloo at the Ice Castles in North Woodstock.

ice castles until her opening-day visit.

"I've never seen anything like this before," she said. "Honestly I didn't think it was gonna be this big."

Jessica Sullivan, of Fairhaven, Mass., also was surprised, and not just by the frozen environment. Her boyfriend, Brian Jacques, proposed to her during their visit.

"It's a beautiful place," said Jacques, who got the "yes" he was

hoping for. "I definitely thought, this is the time and place to do it."

By day the walls and other structures shine with a pale blue hue.

After darkness falls, lights embedded within the ice glow pink, purple and green.

"Once you enter into an ice castle, you're transitioning into something that's totally immersive and unlike something that most guests have ever seen," Henningsen said. "I think it inspires people."

NATION



JO NEL ALECCIA/AP

A man uses a measuring tape on his waist in California on Jan. 9.

Obesity won't be solely defined by BMI under new recommendations

Associated Press

A group of global experts is proposing a new way to define and diagnose obesity, reducing the emphasis on the controversial body mass index and hoping to better identify people who need treatment for the disease caused by excess body fat.

Under recommendations released Tuesday night, obesity would no longer be defined solely by BMI, a calculation of height and weight, but combined with other measurements, such as waist circumference, plus evidence of health problems tied to extra pounds.

Obesity is estimated to affect more than 1 billion people worldwide. In the U.S., about 40% of adults have obesity, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"The whole goal of this is to get a more precise definition so that we are targeting the people who actually need the help most," said Dr. David Cummings, an obesity expert at the University of Washington and one of the 58 authors of the report published in *The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology* journal.

The report introduces two new diagnostic categories: clinical obesity and pre-clinical obesity.

People with clinical obesity meet BMI and other markers of obesity and have evidence of organ, tissue or other problems caused by excess weight. That could include heart disease, high blood pressure, liver or kidney disease or chronic severe knee or hip pain. These people would be eligible for treatments, including diet and exercise interventions and obesity medications.

People with pre-clinical obesity are at risk for those conditions, but have no ongoing illness, the report says.

BMI has long been considered a flawed measure that can over-diagnose or underdiagnose obesity, which is currently defined as a BMI of 30 or more. But people with excess body fat do not always have a BMI above 30, the report notes. And people with high muscle mass — football players or other athletes — may have a high BMI despite normal fat mass.

Under the new criteria, about 20% of people who used to be classified as obese would no longer meet the definition, preliminary analysis suggests. And about 20% of people with serious health effects but lower BMI would now be considered clinically obese, experts said.

"It wouldn't dramatically change the percentage of people being defined as having obesity, but it would better diagnose the people who really have clinically significant excess fat," Cummings said.

The new definitions have been endorsed by more than 75 medical organizations around the world, but it's not clear how widely or quickly they could be adopted in practice. The report acknowledges that implementation of the recommendations "will carry significant costs and workforce implications."

A spokesman for the health insurance trade group AHIP, formerly known as America's Health Insurance Plans, said "it's too early at this point to gauge how plans will incorporate these criteria into coverage or other policies."

There are practical issues to consider, said Dr. Katherine Saunders, an obesity expert at Weill Cornell Medicine and co-founder of the obesity treatment company FlyteHealth. Measuring waist circumference sounds simple, but protocols differ, many doctors aren't trained accurately and standard medical tape measures aren't big enough for many people with obesity.

USDA describes insects, slime at Boar's Head sites

By JO NEL ALECCIA
Associated Press

Government inspectors documented unsanitary conditions at several Boar's Head deli meat plants, not just the factory that was shut down last year after a deadly outbreak of listeria poisoning, federal records show.

Newly released reports from Boar's Head plants in New Castle, Ind.; Forrest City, Ark.; and Petersburg, Va., described multiple instances of meat and fat residue left on equipment and walls, dripping condensation falling on food, mold, insects and other problems dating back roughly six years. Last May, one inspector documented "general filth" in a room at the Indiana plant.

The U.S. Agriculture Department released the inspection records in response to Freedom of Information Act requests from The Associated Press and other news organizations.

The problems documented at the three factories echo some of the violations found at the Jarratt, Va., plant linked to the food poisoning outbreak. The newly released reports describe:

- Equipment "covered in meat scraps" in 2019.

- "Dry crusted meat from the previous day's production" and "dark, stinky residue" left behind in 2020.

- A doorway covered in "dried meat juices and grime" in 2021.

- Green mold and flaking paint in 2022.

- "Unidentified slime" and "an abundance of insects" in 2023.

- A puddle of "blood, debris and trash" in 2024.

Boar's Head officials said in an email Monday that the violations documented in the three factories "do not meet our high standards." The company's remaining plants continue to operate under normal USDA oversight, they added. The Sarasota, Fla.-based company has marketed itself for decades as a

premier provider of deli meats and cheeses, advertising "excellence that stands apart in every bite."

Records from a fourth Boar's Head plant in Holland, Mich., do not show similar problems.

Boar's Head stopped making liverwurst and shuttered its Jarratt, Va., plant in September after listeria poisoning tied to the product sickened more than 60 people in 19 states, including 10 who died.

Health officials in Maryland initially discovered listeria contamination in a package of unopened liverwurst. The company recalled more than 7 million pounds of ready-to-eat deli meat and poultry sold nationwide. About 2.6 million pounds was eventually recovered, according to the Agriculture Department's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

The conditions revealed at the other Boar's Head plants are "really concerning," said Thomas Gremillion, director of food policy at the Consumer Federation of America, a nonprofit advocacy group.

"It's reasonable for some people to decide they don't want to eat deli meat," he said. "Companies like Boar's Head, they should have to earn consumers' trust."

Boar's Head faces multiple lawsuits connected to the outbreak.

"This makes me extremely angry and sad," said Garrett Dorman, whose mother, Linda Dorman, 73, of Oxford, Pa., died in July after eating Boar's Head liverwurst. She had cancer, and liverwurst was one of the few foods she would eat, he said. He is suing the company, according to court documents filed by Marler Clark, a Seattle law firm.

"I believe Boar's Head needs to completely revamp their program at all of their facilities," Dorman said in an email. "Boar's Head needs to put the welfare of people as their highest priority."

House approves ban on transgender students in women's, girls' sports

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
WASHINGTON — The U.S. House has passed a bill that would prohibit federal funding from flowing to schools unless they ban transgender athletes from women's and girls' sports.

Two Democrats, Texas Reps. Henry Cuellar and Vicente Gonzalez, voted with Republicans in

favor of the legislation.

"As a grandfather to six wonderful, capable granddaughters, this is important to me," said Rep. Buddy Carter, R-Ga., who backed the bill. "This bill would safeguard and uphold the integrity and safety of women's sports and the true intention of Title IX by allowing all women the opportunity to achieve

excellence in sports."

Democrats said the bill unfairly targeted transgender women and girls, infringing on their rights through fearmongering and bullying. After the vote, U.S. Rep. Lucy McBath, D-Ga., said she opposed the legislation because it requires the federal government to interfere with decisions families have

made about their children.

"I'm really concerned about what this opens up for our young people," McBath said. "I'm concerned about who's going to be doing all of the checking and who's going to be doing all of the observing. And I just think these are really going to be problematic questions for families, and we

need to just protect our children as much as we can."

A similar bill is pending in the Senate, but no vote has been scheduled.

Discussions on transgender girls competing in sports is happening not just in Congress but at the local level in states across the country.

WAR IN UKRAINE

North Korean troops adapt on battlefield

BY HANNA ARHIROVA
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — For weeks, Ukrainian troops braced for an unfamiliar enemy: North Korean soldiers sent to bolster Moscow's forces after Ukraine launched a lightning-fast incursion and seized territory in Russia's Kursk region over the summer.

Their arrival marked a new and alarming phase in the war. And while initially inexperienced on the battlefield, North Korean troops have adapted quickly — a development that could have far-reaching consequences as they gain combat knowledge in the war against Ukraine.

Unlike the Russian troops Ukraine has been battling for nearly three years, Kyiv's forces were uncertain about what to expect from this new adversary, drawn into the war after Moscow and Pyongyang signed an agreement pledging military assistance using "all means" if either were attacked.

One Ukrainian soldier who has witnessed North Koreans in battle described them as disciplined and highly methodical, saying they were more professional than their Russian counterparts. The soldier spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the sensitive military issue.

However, other soldiers, including Ukrainian special forces, have shared battlefield drone footage on the Telegram messaging app mocking their tactics as outdated.

Nevertheless, there is consensus among Ukrainian soldiers, military intelligence and others monitoring developments on the ground: While Pyongyang's troops lacked battlefield experience when they arrived, that has been changing quickly.

With 1.2 million troops, North Korea's military ranks among the largest standing armies globally. But its post-Korean War foreign engagements have been limited, leaving them inexperienced with modern warfare technologies like drones.

"For the first time in decades, the North Korean army is gaining real military experience," said Andrii Yusov, spokesperson for Ukraine's military intelligence agency. "This is a global challenge — not just for Ukraine and Europe, but for the entire world."

Despite Ukrainian, U.S. and South Korean assertions that Pyongyang has sent 10,000-12,000 troops to fight alongside Russia in the Kursk border region, Moscow has never publicly acknowledged the North Korean forces.

While reports of their presence first emerged in October, Ukrainian troops only confirmed engagement on the ground in December.

Analysts say that without the influx of



JON CHOL JIN/AP

Soldiers rally to welcome the 8th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea at Kim II Sung Square in Pyongyang, North Korea, in October 2020.



GAVRIIL GRIGOROV, SPUTNIK/AP

Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un meet in Pyongyang in June.

North Korean troops, Russia would have struggled to pursue its strategy of overwhelming Ukraine by throwing large numbers of soldiers into the battle for Kursk.

While Moscow's counterattack in Kursk has inflicted thousands of Ukrainian casualties, Kyiv's overstretched forces have managed to hold on to about half of the 380 square miles seized in August, though the situation remains dynamic. Besides the symbolic impact of Ukraine's success capturing Russian territory, control of Kursk could also be a bargaining chip in any cease-fire negotiations.

According to Ukraine's intelligence agency, the North Korean soldiers are operating alongside Russian units, with the latter providing reconnaissance and electronic warfare support.

The North Koreans wear Russian military uniforms with fake military IDs in their pockets, according to a report by a Ukrai-

nian military unit that has observed them on the battlefield, and they could easily be mistaken for Russian soldiers.

The subterfuge means Moscow and "its representatives at the U.N. can deny the facts," said Yusov, the Ukrainian military intelligence spokesperson.

Among the things proving their presence is that they have been heard speaking Korean with North Korean accents in intercepted communications, Yusov said.

He said the North Korean troops are using their own weapons and equipment and have learned to cope with the improvised explosives-laden drones that have become emblematic of the war, first-hand experience even some NATO-member countries don't have.

"This is a new level of threat," Yusov said. "Regional countries must prepare for what this means in the future."

The North Koreans' early missteps were largely caused by inexperience, such as moving in large groups in open terrain, making them easy targets for drones and artillery strikes.

According to the Ukrainian military unit's report, the North Korean soldiers were spotted easily as they moved in single-file columns through forest in groups of three, with 3 to 5 yards between soldiers. On open terrain, they moved in dispersed formations of five to 15 soldiers, making them vulnerable and leading to heavy losses.

However, during night operations, their movements were swift and units oriented themselves using red flashlights along

routes, the report said.

"They're fast, physically well-prepared, and act strictly according to their algorithms," said the Ukrainian soldier who spoke to the AP. "If you drill the same routines for years, to the point where they can be executed blindfolded, it will yield results."

Despite their discipline, their lack of combat experience hindered their effectiveness. The Ukrainian military reported that North Korean troops often sustained heavy losses, with many killed by drones.

On Thursday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy put the number of killed or wounded North Koreans at 4,000, though U.S. estimates are lower, at around 1,200.

"Much of their military doctrine and training is based on strategies and experiences from over half a century ago," said Glib Voloskyi, a military analyst with the Ukrainian think tank CBA Initiatives Center.

The large-group formations date to when artillery accuracy was significantly lower, and observing troop movements much more difficult. Today, reconnaissance and so-called first-person view drones, or FPVs, that transmit video allowing soldiers to strike targets in real time have made the battlefield highly transparent, and anyone stepping onto it without cover, let alone moving in groups, is immediately spotted.

"But it is only a matter of time before they acquire the necessary skills to improve their combat effectiveness, which, combined with their discipline and training, could make them a significant military force," Voloskyi said.

After weeks of fighting, Ukrainian soldiers have taken only two prisoners of war. In announcing the capture Saturday, Zelenskyy said taking them alive "was not easy" because of efforts to conceal the North Koreans' presence and avoid their interrogation by Ukraine.

North Korean soldiers avoid surrendering at all costs, Zelenskyy said.

This may stem from North Korean internal propaganda that portrays capture as the ultimate disgrace, analysts said.

"To be captured alive is considered a betrayal of the country, the leader and everything they stand for," said Seongmin Lee of the New York-based Human Rights Foundation, who defected from North Korea in 2009.

This belief is instilled from a young age and reinforced throughout military training, he said. "Because of the disgrace associated with the capitulation, heroic soldiers are supposed to save the last of their bullets to kill themselves," Lee said.

Major Russian missile attack forces Ukraine to shut down power grid

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia on Wednesday launched a major ballistic and cruise missile attack on regions across Ukraine, targeting energy production and compelling authorities to shut down the power grid in some areas despite freezing winter weather, officials said.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that it launched a strike on

"critically important facilities of gas and energy infrastructure that ensure the functioning of Ukraine's military industrial complex." It didn't give the target locations or other details.

The barrage came a day after the Russian Defense Ministry vowed a response to what it said was an attack on Russian soil using multiple Western-supplied missiles.

Kyiv hasn't confirmed that attack, though it said Tuesday that it hit an oil refinery and a fuel storage depot, a chemical plant producing ammunition and two anti-aircraft missile systems, in a missile and drone attack that reached around almost 700 miles into Russia.

Long-range attacks have been a feature of the nearly three-year war, where on the front line snaking

about 600 miles from northeast to southern Ukraine, the armies have been engaged in a war of attrition. Russia has been advancing on the battlefield over the past year, though its progress has been slow and costly.

Russia attacked Ukraine with 43 missiles and 74 drones overnight, the Ukrainian Air Force said. A total of 30 missiles and 47 drones were shot down, and 27

drones failed to reach their target, it said.

The Russian missiles sought out targets from the Lviv region in western Ukraine near Poland to Kharkiv in northeast Ukraine bordering Russia. The state energy company Ukrenergo reported emergency power outages in six regions. It often shuts down production during attacks as a precaution.

WORLD

Yoon: President questioned for 10 hours

FROM PAGE 1

Office for High-Ranking Officials said Yoon was brought into custody about five hours after investigators arrived at the presidential compound and about three hours after they successfully entered the residence, in their second attempt to detain him over his imposition of martial law.

Hundreds of Yoon's conservative supporters rallied near the anti-corruption agency's office as he underwent questioning, shouting slogans and holding signs that read: "We will fight alongside President Yoon Suk Yeol."

Also on Wednesday, an unidentified man was in life-threatening condition after an apparent self-immolation near the site, according to the Gyeonggi provincial fire department.

After he was questioned for more than 10 hours, a vehicle carrying Yoon arrived at a detention center in Uiwang, near Seoul, escorted by police and presidential security vehicles. Yoon could be held in custody for weeks, possibly even months or longer.

The anti-corruption agency, which is leading a joint investigation with the police and the military over whether Yoon's martial law declaration amounted to an attempted rebellion, has 48 hours to request a court order for his formal arrest.

If it fails to do so, Yoon will be released. If Yoon is formally arrested, investigators can extend his detention to 20 days before transferring the case to public prosecutors for indictment.

If prosecutors indict Yoon on rebellion and abuse of power charges, which are the allegations



AHN YOUNG-JOON / AP

Supporters of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol attend a rally Wednesday to oppose his impeachment in Gwacheon, South Korea.

examined by investigators, he could remain under arrest until the initial court ruling, which is typically made within six months, said Park Sung-bae, an attorney specializing in criminal law.

Under South Korean law, the leader of a rebellion can face the death penalty or life imprisonment, if convicted.

Yoon's defense minister, police chief and several top military commanders already had been arrested over their roles in the enforcement of martial law.

The detention warrant for Yoon, issued by the Seoul Western District Court, said there were substantial reasons to suspect that he committed crimes as a "ringleader of a rebellion."

The anti-corruption agency told reporters that Yoon, during several hours of questioning through Wednesday evening, exercised his right to remain silent.

Yoon's presidential powers were suspended when parliament

impeached him on Dec. 14. The impeachment case now rests with the Constitutional Court, which could formally remove Yoon from office or reject the case and reinstate him.

In a separate message posted on his Facebook account after he was detained, Yoon said that "martial law is not a crime," saying his declaration was necessary to raise awareness about an opposition that was exercising "legislative dictatorship by blocking laws and budgets" and "paralyzing" state affairs.

He denied the rebellion accusations, describing his impeachment as "fraud."

As they began the detention operation in the early morning, the anti-corruption investigators and police officers engaged in an hourslong standoff at the compound's gate with presidential security forces, but otherwise encountered no meaningful resistance.

Israel, Hamas agree to ceasefire deal

Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — Israel and Hamas agreed to a ceasefire deal, mediators announced Wednesday, pausing a devastating 15-month war in the Gaza Strip and raising the possibility of winding down the deadliest and most destructive fighting between the bitter enemies.

The deal, coming after weeks of painstaking negotiations in the Qatari capital, promises the release of dozens of hostages held by Hamas in phases, the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners in Israel and would allow hundreds of thousands of people displaced in Gaza to return to what remains of their homes. It also would flood badly needed humanitarian aid into a devastated territory.

Three officials from the U.S. and one from Hamas confirmed that a deal had been reached, while a senior Israeli official said details are still being ironed out.

All three U.S. officials and the Hamas official requested anonymity to discuss the contours of the deal before the official announcement by mediators in Doha.

Any agreement still needs to be approved by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Cabinet, but is expected to go into effect in the coming days.

The deal is expected to deliver an initial six-week halt to fighting that is to be accompanied by the opening of negotiations on ending the war altogether.

Over six weeks, 33 of the nearly

100 hostages are to be reunited with their loved ones after months in captivity with no contact with the outside world, though it's unclear if all are alive.

It remained unclear exactly when and how many displaced Palestinians would be able to return to what remains of their homes and whether the agreement would lead to a complete end to the war and the full withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza — key Hamas demands for releasing the remaining captives.

Many longer-term questions about postwar Gaza remain, including who will rule the territory or oversee the daunting task of reconstruction.

Still, the announcement offered the first sign of hope in months that Israel and Hamas may be winding down the war.

Hamas triggered the war with its Oct. 7, 2023, cross-border attack, which killed some 1,200 Israelis and took 250 others hostage. Israel responded with a fierce offensive that has killed over 46,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, displaced an estimated 90% of Gaza's population and sparked a humanitarian crisis.

The U.S., along with Egypt and Qatar, have brokered months of indirect talks between the bitter enemies that finally culminated in this latest deal. It comes after Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah agreed to a ceasefire in November, after more than a year of conflict.

STARS AND STRIPES

SERVICE DIRECTORY

The Daily Guide to Navigating The Military Business Market

Transportation

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Owner: Bird flu in raw milk killed 2 cats

CA SAN BERNARDINO — A California man whose two cats died after drinking raw milk recalled for bird flu risk says he meant to keep his beloved pets healthy, but his efforts tragically backfired.

“It’s horrible when you realize that you’re the one that actually gave them the milk that killed them,” said Joseph Journell, 56, of San Bernardino.

Journell lost his 14-year-old tabby, Alexander, and Tuxsie, a 4-year-old tuxedo cat, in late November. A third cat, 4-year-old Big Boy, was hospitalized for a week before tests showed the animal was infected with the H5N1 bird flu virus.

The cats drank unpasteurized milk from lots recalled by Raw Farm, of Fresno, whose dairy products were pulled from California store shelves in December after health officials found the virus in milk for sale, he said. The animals’ deaths were confirmed by state and county health officials. The cats were kept indoors, with no access to potentially infected birds, and ate conventional, not raw, pet food, the owner said.

Journell said he had been drinking Raw Farm milk himself for several months because he heard it had “better immunity and healing properties” than pasteurized milk.

Basketball fans’ vehicles broken into near campus

MI ANN ARBOR — More than two dozen vehicles in a high school parking lot had their windows smashed and were broken into during a men’s college basketball game at nearby University of Michigan.

Ann Arbor police said the break-ins occurred Sunday, WXYZ-TV reported. Damage was reported to 27 vehicles. No arrests have been made.

Fans watching the Wolverines defeat the Washington Huskies at Crisler Arena discovered the damage as they returned to the lot at Pioneer High School. Cash, purses, wallets and other items were taken from the vehicles, police said.

“Everything was great until we got back out to the car after the game and saw glass everywhere,” Joe Weitz told the TV station.

Governor plans to add to fireworks infractions

HI HONOLULU — Hawaii Gov. Josh Green on Monday proposed a range of new penalties to crack down on those who flout the state’s fireworks laws, nearly two weeks after a fireworks explosion at a Honolulu home on New Year’s Eve killed four people and injured about 20 others.



JON ELSWICK/AP

Presidential preparations

Master Sgt. Matthew Nall stands in for President-elect Donald Trump during a rehearsal Sunday on the West Front of the U.S. Capitol ahead of Trump’s upcoming inauguration in Washington.

The potential new measures include \$300 tickets police could issue to those who shoot off fireworks and class A felony charges and decades in prison for those whose use of fireworks leads to serious injury or death. The governor planned to include the proposals in a bill he will send lawmakers for the new legislative session beginning Wednesday.

State and county officials have struggled for years to contain illegal fireworks in Hawaii. Law enforcement officers have seized 227,000 pounds of fireworks since 2023.

Florida schedules first execution of 2025

FL TALLAHASSEE — A Florida man convicted of murdering a husband and wife during a fishing trip nearly 30 years ago is set to be executed next month in the state’s first scheduled execution of 2025.

Gov. Ron DeSantis signed the death warrant for James Ford on Friday. Ford is slated to be put to death on Feb. 13 at Florida State Prison.

Ford was given the death penalty for the killings of Greg and Kimberly Malnory, whose bodies were found at the South Florida Sod Farm in a remote part of Charlotte County on April 7, 1997. According to court documents, the Malnorys had been bludge-

oned and shot, with both suffering multiple blunt force head injuries.

Kimberly had also been raped. Her body was found near the couple’s truck, where their 22-month-old baby had been left for more than 18 hours, exposed to the elements and covered in her mother’s blood.

Ex-university worker gets 1 year for bomb hoax

MA BOSTON — A former Northeastern University employee who lied to the FBI about a package blowing up in his arms at the Boston campus has been sentenced to just over a year in prison for the hoax.

Jason Duhaime, 47, from San Antonio, was convicted on the federal charges in June of intentionally conveying false and misleading information related to an explosive device and two counts of making materially false statements to a federal law enforcement agent. He was sentenced Monday.

Duhaime worked as the university’s new technology manager and director of the Immersive Media Lab. In September 2022, he called the university police to say he’d collected several packages from a mail area, including two Pelican hard plastic cases, and that when he opened one of the cases, it exploded and sharp

objects flew out and injured his arms.

City closing complex where armed gang seen

CO AURORA — A Colorado apartment complex where armed members of a Venezuelan gang were caught on video entering a unit last summer is expected to close in about a month under an emergency court order, city officials said Monday.

The city of Aurora had pursued a lawsuit to declare all but one building at the complex a criminal nuisance. Officials last week asked a judge to close the property in the meantime, arguing the situation reached a “breaking point” following the violent kidnapping and assault of two residents last month.

The city’s request was granted Friday ahead of a court hearing Monday.

Governor pledges to rebuild after Helene

NC RALEIGH — North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein kicked off his term in office Saturday by praising the resilience of the state’s residents following Hurricane Helene and pledging to “cut through red tape to help people rebuild quicker.”

The Democrat also offered an upbeat message, expressing his

willingness to work with the Republican-controlled General Assembly on a host of issues, from creating jobs and recruiting teachers to smashing drug rings and combating the devastating effects of fentanyl.

The new governor invoked “North Carolina Strong” and created a picture of state lawmakers “working together across our differences to get things done.”

\$2B Powerball jackpot winner loses LA home

CA LOS ANGELES — The Altadena resident who won the largest ever Powerball jackpot and used some of his winnings to buy homes in exclusive Los Angeles County neighborhoods has lost at least one of those properties to the wildfires.

Edwin Castro won Powerball’s \$2 billion jackpot in 2023, which equated to about \$1 billion in winnings after taxes, and purchased homes in Malibu, another in Altadena and a third in the Hollywood Hills, according to property records reviewed by the Los Angeles Times.

By the night of Jan. 8, two of the homes sat in evacuation zones and the third had burned to the ground, according to a review of satellite imagery from Airbus reviewed by the Times.

FACES

All the ladies' singles

Women pop artists top US charts as 2024 music streams hit nearly 5T

By MARIA SHERMAN
Associated Press

More music, more listeners, no problems.

The global music industry hit 4.8 trillion streams in 2024, a new single-year record, Luminate's 2024 Year-End Report found. That's up 14% from 2023, which held the previous record.

If you streamed a lot more music in 2024 — and in particular, a lot of women pop performers — you are not alone. In the U.S., on-demand audio streams grew at a rate of 6.4%, totaling 1.4 trillion.

Contemporary music is fueling the growth. The overwhelming majority of U.S. plays — 79.5% — were from songs released in 2010 or later. Songs released between 2020 and 2024 accounted for nearly half of all streams.

And Taylor Swift, 2024's most-streamed songwriter worldwide, is only partially responsible.

Pop rules

Midway through 2024, Luminate determined that Latin music had become the fastest-growing streaming genre in the United States — up 15.1% from summer 2023 — followed by pop, rock and country.

A lot can change in half a year, because now pop leads, followed by rock and Latin.

"We saw some interesting trends within the U.S.," said Jaime Marconette, Luminate's vice president of music insights and industry relations.

"Latin was the fastest-growing U.S. streaming genre in the first half of the year based on growth of genre streaming share. However, due to a shift of streaming activity in the second half of the year, pop took the No. 1 spot ... Female solo artists led this surge in pop consumption, as streams of their mu-

sic were responsible for nearly two-thirds of all audio streams among the top 100 pop artists in the U.S."

The shift is led by six women who dominated pop's streams in the U.S.:

1. Taylor Swift, 12.8 billion
2. Billie Eilish, 4.46 billion
3. Sabrina Carpenter, 3.71 billion
4. Ariana Grande, 3.12 billion
5. Olivia Rodrigo, 2.76 billion
6. Chappell Roan, 2.49 billion

That's at least partially reflected in the top 10 global streaming songs as well:

1. "Beautiful Things," Benson Boone
2. "Espresso," Sabrina Carpenter,
3. "Birds of a Feather," Billie Eilish,
4. "Lose Control," Teddy Swims,
5. "Die with a Smile," Lady Ga-



TNS photos

Sabrina Carpenter, left, Billie Eilish and Taylor Swift topped the list of pop artists streamed in the United States in 2024.

ga and Bruno Mars

6. "Gata Only," FloyyMenor
7. "A Bar Song (Topsy)," Sha-boozezy,
8. "Too Sweet," Hozier
9. "Cruel Summer," Taylor Swift
10. "Please Please Please," Sabrina Carpenter

Regional Mexican grows

In 2024, regional Mexican music overtook Latin pop as the largest Latin subgenre in the U.S.

"Latin still grew by both volume and its share of total U.S. audio streaming during the course of 2024," Marconette said. "When looking at Latin subgenre activity, Regional Mexican dominated in terms of growth."

Regional Mexican music — encompassing mariachi, banda, corridos, norteño, sierrano and more — has become a global phenomenon over the past few years.

The genre reached 28.57 billion streams in 2024, followed by Latin pop with 24.09 billion.

Rap and R&B are forever

When it comes to overall music streaming in the U.S., R&B and hip-hop still lead, accounting for more than one in every four streams stateside.

In 2024, rap and R&B accounted for 341.63 billion on-demand audio streams, followed by rock with 234.22 billion, pop with 165.49 billion, country with 117.58 billion and Latin with 113.02 billion.

Carrie Underwood, Village People set for inauguration

Associated Press

Country music star Carrie Underwood will perform "America the Beautiful" at Donald Trump's inauguration next week and the 1970s hitmakers Village People will play at two inaugural events.

Underwood, who launched her career on "American Idol," is to perform shortly before Trump takes the oath of office at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 20, according to a copy of the inaugural program.

"I love our country and am honored to have been asked to sing at the Inauguration and to be a small part of this historic event," Underwood said in a statement Monday. "I am humbled to answer the call at a time when we must all come together in the spirit of unity and looking to the future."

Village People made a name for themselves in the late '70s for their chant-along dance-pop hits and their colorful on-stage personas.

The group's best-known hit, "Y.M.C.A.," became a staple of Trump's rallies in the last election, along with their hit "Macho Man."

The American disco group is set to perform at one of Trump's inaugural balls and a rally he's holding in Washington the day before he's sworn in.

Other inauguration ceremony performers include two of the president-elect's musical favorites, country singer Lee Greenwood and opera singer Christopher Macchio.



KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH/AP

An art handler displays one of 90 guitars of Jeff Beck's on Tuesday in London before an auction next week.

Rock icon Jeff Beck's guitars on display in London before being sold at auction

Associated Press

Some of the most iconic guitars in rock history are going on display in London before they go under the hammer at auction.

Auctioneer Christie's held a preview on Tuesday for the collection of the late Jeff Beck, who died in January 2023 at age 78. The public can now view 90 guitars and dozens of other items that belonged to Beck, whom Christie's calls "the ultimate guitarist's guitar hero," until they are sold on Jan. 22.

One of a group of 1960s guitar heroes that included Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix, Beck was twice inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame — with his 1960s band Yardbirds and as a solo artist. Renowned for his unique sound and improvisational skill, he played over the years with everyone from

Rod Stewart to Davie Bowie, Stevie Wonder, Tina Turner and Johnny Depp.

Valued at more than \$1.2 million, the collection includes an oxblood 1954 Gibson Les Paul that Beck bought in Memphis in 1972 and played for the rest of the decade. The guitar, which is featured on the cover of Beck's Grammy-winning 1975 jazz-fusion album "Blow by Blow," is expected to sell for between \$425,000 and \$610,000.

The sale includes a Telecaster-Gibson hybrid "Tele-Gib" valued at between \$122,000 and \$183,000 and Beck's 1954 Sunburst Fender Stratocaster, valued at between \$61,000 and \$98,000.

Beck's widow, Sandra Beck, said it was a "massive wrench" to part with the collection, but that "I know Jeff wanted for me to share this love."

'Conclave' gets 12 BAFTA nominations

Papal thriller "Conclave," which stars Ralph Fiennes as a cardinal overseeing the election of a new pope, leads the race for the British Academy Film Awards, with nominations in 12 categories, one more than the genre-busting trans musical "Emilia Perez."

The awards ceremony is scheduled to take place on Feb. 16 at the Royal Festival Hall in central London and will be hosted by David Tennant.

The five films nominated for best film were "Conclave," "Emilia Perez," the 215-minute postwar epic "The Brutalist," the Palme d'Or-winning comedy/drama "Anora" and the Bob Dylan biopic "A Complete Unknown."

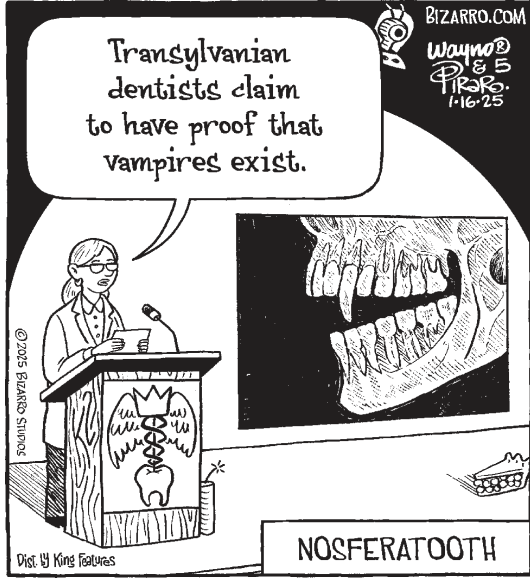
"The Brutalist" ended up with nine nominations, including leading actor for Adrien Brody, who faces stiff competition from Fiennes and Timothee Chalamet, who plays the young Dylan in "A Complete Unknown."

The other actors nominated are Hugh Grant for "Heretic," Colman Domingo for "Sing Sing" and Sebastian Stan for "The Apprentice."

"Anora," sci-fi epic "Dune: Part Two" and "Wicked" each received seven nominations. "A Complete Unknown" received six nominations, as did "Kneecap," the Irish-language hip-hop drama.

The prizes, Britain's equivalent of Hollywood's Academy Awards, will be watched closely for hints of who may win at the Oscars on March 3.

Bizarro

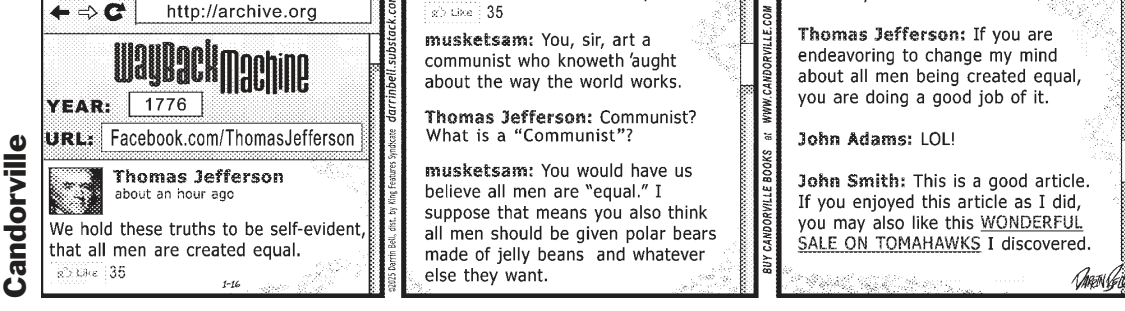


Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11
12					13					14		
15					16					17		
18								19	20			
			21			22	23					
24	25	26			27				28		29	30
31					32					33		
34			35		36				37			
		38		39				40				
41	42						43			44	45	46
47					48	49	50					
51					52					53		
54					55					56		



- ACROSS**
- 1 Supergirl's first name
 - 5 Platter
 - 9 Author Tolstoy
 - 12 Lay ,Â the line
 - 13 Cold War initials
 - 14 Days of yore
 - 15 Citrus producer
 - 17 Avril follower
 - 18 At hand
 - 19 Unmanned plane
 - 21 Apt. cooler
 - 22 Rid of wool
 - 24 Coconut juice
 - 27 "Nova" subj.
 - 28 Feed the piggy bank
 - 31 Hearty quaff
 - 32 Klutz
 - 33 Actor Patel
 - 34 Mater lead-in
 - 36 Roman 1051
 - 37 Big party
 - 38 Chose
 - 40 Undergrad deg.
 - 41 Ford or Hudson
 - 43 Parlor piece
 - 47 PC key
 - 48 Tangy, custard-like spread
 - 51 Employ
 - 52 "Zounds!"
 - 53 Novelist Brontë
 - 54 Grazing tract
 - 55 Activist Parks
 - 56 Adolescent
- DOWN**
- 1 Pottery oven
 - 2 Suit to ,Ä
 - 3 Capital of Italia
 - 4 Parka
 - 5 Obligation
 - 6 Medit. nation
 - 7 Away from NNW
 - 8 Words to live by
 - 9 Picnic drink
 - 10 Panache
 - 11 Garfield's pal
 - 16 "The Wall" network
 - 20 B&O and others (Abbr.)
 - 22 Burn with steam
 - 23 LP player
 - 24 Goat's cry
- 25 Under the weather
 - 26 Throat-soothing drink
 - 27 Not all
 - 29 Bird doc
 - 30 Cain's mom
 - 35 Earth Day mo.
 - 37 Nabob
 - 39 10th U.S. president
 - 40 "Gandhi" star Kingsley
 - 41 Move, as freight
 - 42 Otherwise
 - 43 Pop
 - 44 Melody
 - 45 Sea eagle
 - 46 Paradise
 - 49 Id counterpart
 - 50 Pas' mates

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

1-16 CRYPTOQUIP

U DFMH TWB TYRAHA QDFQ U

VDWRYA BHMHL FLKRH EUQD

BUBHQ C-AHKLHH FBKYHV.

QDHC' LH FYEFCV LUKDQ.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: HAVING SOME DIFFICULTY MAKING OUT SOUNDS, THE SILVERY FISH DECIDED TO TAKE A HERRING TEST.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals D

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OPINION

Micro-deportations are more likely, more worrisome

By JAMES WITTE AND MARISSA KISS
Tribune News Service

With President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration days away, much attention is focused on the rhetoric and reality surrounding his first day back in office. Per one count, Trump has made 41 day-one promises, with mass deportation topping the list. We should be more worried about micro-deportations.

The mass deportation rhetoric is loud and clear. At an October rally, Trump promised "the largest program in American History" on day one. The 1798 Alien Enemies Act, Trump claimed, would be invoked to protect the nation from invasion by millions of illegal aliens.

This would trigger long and lengthy legal challenges and, in the meantime, a broader understanding among Americans of mass deportation's consequences.

Costs and logistics are a starting point. The American Immigration Council puts the one-time, immediate fiscal costs — identification, arrest, detention, legal proceedings and removal — of deporting an estimated 13 million unauthorized migrants at \$315 billion.

For perspective, this migrant population is more than six times that of all inmates currently in America's local, county, state and federal prisons and jails. This could not happen quickly, and if implemented within a decade would cost close to \$1 trillion.

Mass deportation would also leave a painful hole in America's workforce. While wages would rise, supply chains and production would be disrupted, particularly where unauthorized migrants play essential roles. For example, there would be shortages of home health workers in the Northeast or farm workers in California and Florida.

Nowhere would the disruption be more pronounced than in construction. Census data

show 40% of construction workers as foreign-born and 31% as noncitizens. The unauthorized share is estimated at 23% (or nearly 466,000 workers) by the Center for American Progress.

Thus, mass deportation would bring localized pain. After 98 residents died in a 2021 condo collapse, more than 900,000 condo units in southern Florida were identified for inspection and repair. Among construction workers in the Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach areas, 77% are foreign-born and 55% are noncitizens. If unauthorized laborers are removed, who will do the work?

The same applies nationwide. Less than 40% of the five-year, \$1.2 trillion Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has been even allocated to announced projects. Bidding, contracting and building on the long-awaited infrastructure is still to come.

Finally, Americans' openness to mass deportation would be tested once the enormous human and social costs become real: millions of lives upended, dreams shattered, and families separated. Suspicion and mistrust would heighten, as would anxiety and desperation, for any immigrant whose status is not apparent to suspicious neighbors and public officials. This climate of fear would extend to citizens living with unauthorized migrants in "mixed-status" households. There would be protests, counter protests and polarization unlike any in memory.

Quite simply, legal and political opposition and a taste of the economic and social costs make mass deportation unlikely. However, micro-deportations seem inevitable.

Separate from Trump's day-one promises, the Republican-led House of Representatives has placed five immigration-related measures in an initial package of rules. Included are provisions that could set up an early vote to cut federal aid to "sanctuary cities" that do not

cooperate with federal removal efforts.

Already in 2025, the House passed the Laken Riley Act authorizing deporting undocumented immigrants "charged with, arrested for, convicted for, or admits to having committed acts that constitute the essential elements of burglary, theft, larceny, or shoplifting." Definitions of this broad make overzealous prosecution and disregard for due process real possibilities.

These provisions, central to many Republican campaigns, are likely to pass and would grant the executive branch legal authority and policy levers to immediately pursue a more robust micro-deportation strategy.

Prisons and jails would be obvious starting points. Transitory housing facilities and homeless encampments would follow. Tom Homan, Trump's incoming border czar, has called for family detention centers that could include children in mixed-status families, and that parents subject to deportation with U.S.-citizen children "are going to have to make a decision what you want to do... take your child with you or leave the child here in the United States with a relative."

Speaking on behalf of Mexican Americans, who constitute the largest share of unauthorized migrants, former Illinois Rep. Luis Guterres says, "They're coming to our schools, they're coming to our hospitals, they're coming to our churches and sanctuaries on Sundays."

Though differing in scale from mass deportation, micro-deportations will yield a smaller, more localized, and more likely mix of economic and social disruption. Fewer individuals, families and communities may feel the pain, and it may receive less attention, but it will be widespread and very real.

James Witte is an affiliated research fellow with the Mercatus Center at George Mason University and director of the Institute for Immigration Research. Marissa Kiss is a postdoctoral research fellow with the Institute.

To truly save the planet, stop eating free-range beef

By EDUARDO PORTER
Special to The Washington Post

I'm a little late to the New Year's resolutions rush for 2025. But in case some of you are still pondering which rules to embrace and which pleasures to forgo in the name of a higher purpose, I want to put an unorthodox option on the table: To save the world from climate change, stop eating organic. If you truly think the world is on the verge of a climate catastrophe, cut the grass-fed, free-range, hormone-free, happy-cow steak.

Admittedly, it would be better for the environment if the world went off steak (and lamb) altogether. Doing so would cut down on the methane belches while curbing one of the main causes of deforestation, which itself releases tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Beef production generates 310 kilograms of carbon dioxide per kilo of protein — on average seven times as much as chicken.

But ending beef consumption won't happen anytime soon. There is a lot of pent-up demand for meat, with vast populations that have never had a bite. If the denizens of Brooklyn, Berkeley and other enlightened spots all slashed their beef intake, plenty of people in less-advantaged places would welcome the falling prices as an opportunity to order steak.

A second-best solution, then, would be to let go of the idyllic image of a family farm we all have somewhere in our mind's eye — of a denim-clad farmer walking from a barn to a

pasture, calling out the names of his pampered cows. We need to instead embrace the reality that this guy's operation does more damage to the climate per pound of beef than corporate farms do. Factory farms are better for the environment.

Grass-fed cows grow more slowly than those fattened with grain, burping methane the whole time. Moreover, organic feed also requires more land to produce, further encouraging deforestation. An evaluation by the World Resources Institute of studies on the carbon impact of farming concluded that grass-fed, organic and free-range meat and dairy production systems used more land per gram of protein 90% of the time and emitted more greenhouse gases in 70% of the cases.

There are, to be sure, other reasons to prefer organic meat. Corporate cows get fed a lot more antibiotics. If most of us ate grass-fed animals instead, antimicrobial resistance might not be as much of a problem. Still, in terms of impact on the climate, land use trumps every other consideration.

This is not merely a beef about beef, by the way. The thought applies to all of our food. Indeed, agriculture accounts for over 25% of all greenhouse gas emissions. And deforestation, which converts native forests critical to sequestering carbon from the air into pasture and cropland, is a big part of this. According to the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization, 38% of the world's land is devoted to agriculture. About one-third of this is devoted to

cropland and two-thirds to pastures and meadows for livestock.

The orthodox disgust for Big Ag and its industrialized, fertilizer- and herbicide-heavy approach to food somehow ignores how effective it has been at reducing the impact of food production on natural ecosystems. In 1961, 0.45 hectares were devoted to cropland for each person on the planet. By 2016 that had dropped to 0.21 hectares, according to the FAO. But a growing population must be fed. According to a new study, as the population expanded by 21%, to 7.7 billion, the world's cropland area expanded by 9% from 2003 to 2019, to 1.24 billion hectares. And the rate of expansion has accelerated sharply over the past two decades. Research by WRI found that based on current trends, land twice the size of India will be converted for agriculture between 2010 and 2050. The world desperately needs to produce more food on less land.

There are a variety of things that can be done to take pressure off the land. But reviving the family farm is not among them. Agriculture needs more science — more high-tech crops, fertilizers and herbicides. It needs more genetic engineering, not less.

Meanwhile, if you plan to keep splurging on rib-eyes, make sure they're not free-range and grass-fed.

Eduardo Porter is an editorial writer and columnist at The Washington Post. He is the author of "American Poison" and "The Price of Everything."

SCOREBOARD/COLLEGE FOOTBALL

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Tuesday's men's scores

EAST

Louisville 85, Syracuse 61
St. John's 63, Georgetown 58

SOUTH

Auburn 88, Mississippi St. 66
Belmont 71, Valparaiso 64
Clemson 70, Georgia Tech 59
Duke 89, Miami 54
Kentucky 81, Texas A&M 69
LSU 78, Arkansas 74
Mississippi 74, Alabama 64
Missouri 83, Florida 82
North Texas 69, East Carolina 60
VCU 78, Saint Louis 62

MIDWEST

Akron 85, Toledo 78
Bowling Green 79, Buffalo 61
Cent. Michigan 82, E. Michigan 63
Creighton 84, Providence 64
Illinois 94, Indiana 69
Marquette 85, DePaul 83, OT
Miami (Ohio) 84, N. Illinois 69
N. Iowa 73, Evansville 56
Ohio 86, Ball St. 71
Texas Tech 61, Kansas St. 57
UALR 73, SE Missouri 71
W. Michigan 94, Kent St. 53
Wichita St. 68, Charlotte 89
Wisconsin 70, Ohio St. 68
Xavier 69, Villanova 63

SOUTHWEST

UTSA 90, Rice 84

FAR WEST

Arizona 81, Baylor 70
BYU 85, Oklahoma St. 69
Boise St. 96, Wyoming 55
Nevada 68, Air Force 62
San Diego St. 75, Colorado St. 60
San Jose St. 71, New Mexico 70
Southern Cal 99, Iowa 89
UCF 95, Arizona St. 89

Men's Top 25 schedule

Thursday's games

No. 16 Gonzaga (14-4) at Oregon St. (13-5)
No. 18 Memphis (13-3) at Temple (10-6)
No. 20 Michigan (13-3) at Minnesota (8-8)

Saturday's games

No. 1 Auburn (15-1) at No. 23 Georgia (14-2)
No. 2 Iowa St. (14-1) at West Virginia (12-3)
No. 3 Duke (14-2) at Boston College (9-7)
No. 4 Alabama (14-2) at No. 8 Kentucky (13-3)
No. 5 Florida (15-1) vs. Texas (11-5)
No. 6 Tennessee (15-1) at Vanderbilt (13-3)
No. 7 Marquette (14-2) vs. Xavier (10-7)
No. 9 Kansas (12-3) vs. Kansas St. (7-8)
No. 10 Houston (12-3) at UCF (11-4)
No. 11 Texas A&M (13-3) vs. LSU (11-5)
No. 13 Oregon (15-2) vs. No. 17 Purdue (13-4)
No. 14 UConn (13-4) vs. Creighton (10-6)
No. 15 Mississippi St. (14-2) vs. No. 21 Mississippi (14-2)
No. 16 Gonzaga (14-4) vs. Santa Clara (12-6)
No. 24 Wisconsin (13-3) at Southern Cal (10-6)

Sunday's games

No. 12 Michigan St. (14-2) vs. No. 19 Illinois (12-4)
No. 18 Memphis (13-3) at Charlotte (7-10)
No. 20 Michigan (13-3) vs. Northwestern (10-6)
No. 25 Baylor (11-4) vs. TCU (9-6)

Tuesday's women's scores

EAST

Maryland 99, Minnesota 92

SOUTH

UAB 62, South Florida 61

MIDWEST

Butler 63, Georgetown 53
Iowa St. 71, Texas Tech 58
UALR 67, SE Missouri 63

SOUTHWEST

Baylor 70, Utah 61
Houston 79, Oklahoma St. 76
TCU 90, UCF 81

Women's Top 25 schedule

Thursday's games

No. 2 South Carolina (16-1) at No. 19 Alabama (16-2)
No. 3 Notre Dame (14-2) vs. No. 17 Georgia Tech (15-2)
No. 7 Texas (16-2) at Auburn (9-8)
No. 9 Ohio St. (16-0) at Wisconsin (10-7)
No. 11 Kansas St. (17-1) vs. Arizona (11-7)
No. 13 Oklahoma (14-3) vs. Missouri (11-8)
No. 14 North Carolina (15-3) at SMU (10-7)
No. 15 Tennessee (14-2) vs. Mississippi St. (15-3)
No. 16 Duke (13-4) vs. No. 18 California (16-2)
No. 21 NC State (12-4) vs. Pittsburgh (9-9)

Friday's game

No. 10 TCU (17-1) vs. No. 23 Utah (13-3)

Saturday's game

No. 24 Oklahoma St. (14-2) at UCF (7-8)

DEALS

Tuesday's transactions

BASEBALL

Major League Baseball American League

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Agreed to terms with RHP Jonathan Heasley on a minor-league contract.
MINNESOTA TWINS — Promoted Alex Hassan, Sean Johnson and Josh Kalk to assistant general manager.
SEATTLE MARINERS — Designated C Nick Raposo for assignment.

National League

CHICAGO CUBS — Traded INF/OF Miles Mastrobuoni to Seattle in exchange for cash considerations.
PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Agree to terms with RHPs Nabil Crismatt, José Cuas, Joel Kuhnle, Griff McGarry, John McMillon, Nicholas Padilla, Austin Schuller and Guilllo Zuñiga, LHP Nick Vespi, C Payton Henry and INF Rafael Lantigua on minor league contracts.

BASKETBALL

National Basketball Association

NEW YORK KNICKS — Assigned C Ariel Hukporti to the Westchester Knicks of the G League.
PHILADELPHIA 76ERS — Signed F Pete Nance to a two-way contract.

FOOTBALL

National Football League

ATLANTA FALCONS — Signed C Matthew Cindric, DT Junior Aho, OL Matthew Cindric, WRs Phillip Dorsett II, Dylan Drummond, Jesse Matthews and Makai Polk, RB Elijah Dotson, OGS Joey Fisher and Joavaughn Gwyn, DBs Lamar Jackson and Benny Sapp III, QB Emory Jones, DE Khalid Kareem, OT Tyrone Wheatley Jr to reserve/futures contracts.
CLEVELAND BROWNS — Promoted Tommy Rees to offensive coordinator. Signed G Brady Latham and DT Ralph Holley to reserve/futures contracts.

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Signed CB Isaiah Dunn, WR Tulu Griffin, CB Kaleb Hayes, C Trey Hill, TE Johnny Lumpkin, DLs Keith Randolph and Nesta Jade Silvera to reserve/futures contracts.

HOUSTON TEXANS — Released WR Diontae Johnson. Placed TE Cade Stover on injured reserve.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Signed S Emory Johnson to a reserve/futures contract.

NEW YORK JETS — Signed K Anders Carlson and TE Neal Johnson to reserve/futures contracts.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Signed WR Parris Campbell to the active roster and LB Nick Morrow and WR Elijah Cooks to the practice squad. Released WR Joseph Ngata from the practice squad Placed LB Nakobe Dean on injured reserve.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Signed QB Skylar Thompson, DB Joshua Bledsoe, OL Dylan Cook, DTs Domenique Davis and Jacob Slade, LBs Devin Harper, Eku Leota, Thomas Rush and Julius Welschhof, RBs Evan Hull and Aaron Shampklin, DBs D'Shawn Jamison and Kyle McMichael, WRs Brandon Johnson and Lance McCutcheon and Gs Steven Jones and Doug Nester to reserve/futures contracts.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Signed S Marcus Banks, WRs Marquez Callaway, Dennis Houston and Tanner Knuce, CB Dalis Flowers, DL Mike Greene, OLs Garrett Greenfield, Luke Haggard, Lorenz Metz and Raigwon O'Neal, LBs Antonio Grier Jr., Daniel Grzesiak and Deion Jones, QB Michael Pratt, TE Tanner Taula, RB DJ Williams and S Rashad Wisdom to reserve/futures contracts.

HOCKEY

National Hockey League

BOSTON BRUINS — Moved D Hampus Lindholm to long-term injured reserve. Promoted D Michael Callahan from Providence (AHL). Recalled C Matthew Poitras from Providence. Placed C Mark Kastelic and D Charlie McAvoy on injured reserve.

CAROLINA HURRICANES — Recalled DTy Smith from Chicago (AHL). Placed G Fredrik Andersen on injured reserve.

EDMONTON OILERS — Recalled C Noah Philip from Bakersfield (AHL).

NEW YORK RANGERS — Activated LW Chris Kreider from injured reserve.

PITTSBURGH PENGUINS — Activated C Evgeni Malkin from injured reserve.

SAN JOSE SHARKS — Activated LW Igor Chernyshov from the injured non-roster list and assigned to San Jose (AHL).

TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Recalled F Jack Finley from Syracuse (AHL). Sent F Gage Goncalves to Syracuse.

UTAH HOCKEY CLUB — Placed RW Dylan Guenther on injured reserve.

SOCCER

Major League Soccer

D.C. UNITED — Acquired M Randall Leal off waivers.

INTER MIAMI CF — Signed F Tadeo Alende on a one-year loan from Spanish La Liga side Real Club Celta de.

NASHVILLE SC — Exercised a buyout option on a retained portion of M Randall Leal's contract.

NEW ENGLAND REVOLUTION — Signed D Wyatt Omsberg to a one-year contract.

NEW YORK CITY FC — Signed G Greg Ranjitsingh to a two-year contract.

SAN ANTONIO FC — Re-signed G Richard Sanchez.

SAN DIEGO FC — Signed M Alejandro Alvarado Jr. to a two-year contract.

SAN JOSE EARTHQUAKES — Signed D Reid Roberts to a one-year contract.

TENNIS

Australian Open

Wednesday
At Melbourne Park
Melbourne, Australia
Purse: AUD43,250,000
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Seedings in parentheses
Men's Singles
Second Round

Jiri Lehecka (24), Czechia, def. Hugo Gaston, France, 6-3, 3-1, ret.
Carlos Alcaraz (3), Spain, def. Yoshihito Nishioka, Japan, 6-0, 6-1, 6-4.
Tomas Machac (26), Czechia, def. Reilly Opelka, United States, 3-6, 7-6 (1), 6-7 (5), 7-6 (4), 6-4.
Benjamin Bonzi, France, def. Francesco Passaro, Italy, 6-2, 6-4, 3-6, 6-4.
Nuno Borges, Portugal, def. Jordan Thompson (27), Australia, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4.
Novak Djokovic (7), Serbia, def. Jaime Faria, Portugal, 6-1, 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-2.
Roberto Carballes Baena, Spain, def. James Duckworth, Australia, 6-4, 6-2, 7-5.
Arthur Fils (20), France, def. Quentin Halys, France, 6-2, 4-6, 7-6 (2), 7-5.
Jakub Mensik, Czechia, def. Casper Ruud (6), Norway, 6-2, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4.
Ugo Humbert (14), France, def. Hady Habib, Lebanon, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4.
Aleksandar Vukic, Australia, def. Sebastian Korda (22), United States, 6-4, 3-6, 2-6, 6-3, 7-5.
Jacob Fearnley, Britain, def. Arthur Cazaux, France, 3-6, 7-5, 6-2, 6-3.
Alexander Zverev (2), Germany, def. Pedro Martinez, Spain, 6-1, 6-4, 6-1.
Jack Draper (15), Britain, def. Thanasi Kokkinakis, Australia, 6-7 (3), 6-3, 3-6, 7-5, 6-3.
Tommy Paul (12), United States, def. Kei Nishikori, Japan, 6-7 (3), 6-0, 6-3, 6-1.
Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, Spain, def. Felix Auger-Aliassime (29), Canada, 6-7 (7), 6-7 (5), 6-4, 6-1, 6-3.

Women's Singles

Second Round

Olga Danilovic, Serbia, def. Liudmila Samsonova (25), Russia, 6-1, 6-2.
Clara Tauson, Denmark, def. Tatjana Maria, Germany, 6-2, 6-2.
Jessica Pegula (7), United States, def. Elise Mertens, Belgium, 6-4, 6-2.
Magdalena Frech (23), Poland, def. Anna Blinkova, Russia, 0-6, 6-0, 6-2.
Aryna Sabalenka (1), Belarus, def. Jessica Bouzas Maneiro, Spain, 6-3, 7-5.
Laura Siegemund, Germany, def. Zheng Qinwen (5), China, 7-6 (3), 6-3.
Belinda Bencic, Switzerland, def. Suzan Lamens, Netherlands, 6-1, 7-6 (3).
Mirra Andreeva (14), Russia, def. Moyuka Uchijima, Japan, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (8).
Naomi Osaka, Japan, def. Karolina Muchova (20), Czechia, 1-6, 6-1, 6-3.
Leylah Annie Fernandez (30), Canada, def. Cristina Bucsa, Spain, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4.
Diana Shnaider (12), Russia, def. Ajla Tomljanovic, Australia, 6-4, 7-5.
Coco Gauff (3), United States, def. Jodie Burrage, Britain, 6-3, 7-5.
Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (27), Russia, def. Anastasia Potapova, Russia, 7-6 (2), 2-6, 6-2.
Marta Kostyuk (17), Ukraine, def. Jule Niemeier, Germany, 6-3, 6-0.
Donna Vekic (18), Croatia, def. Harriet Dart, Britain, 4-6, 6-0, 6-2.
Paula Badosa (11), Spain, def. Talia Gibson, Australia, 6-1, 6-0.

Men's Doubles

First Round

Ariel Behar, Uruguay, and Robert Gallo-way, United States, def. Alexander Bublik, Kazakhstan, and Alexander Shevchenko, Russia, 6-4, 6-1.
Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori (3), Italy, def. Hendrik Jebens and Constantin Frantzen, Germany, 6-3, 6-4.
Jamie Murray, Britain, and John Peers (12), Australia, def. Borna Gojo, Croatia, and Miomir Kecmanovic, Serbia, 6-3, 6-7 (5), 6-3.
Adam Walton and Tristan Schoolkate, Australia, def. Yuki Bhambri, India, and Albano Olivetti, France, 6-2, 7-6 (3).
Diego Hidalgo, Ecuador, and Luciano Darder, Italy, def. Marco Bortolotti and Flavio Cobolli, Italy, 7-5, 6-4.
Marc Polmans and Matthew Christopher Romios, Australia, def. Arthur Rinderknech and Manuel Guinard, France, 7-6 (2), 3-6, 6-3.
Botic Van de Zandschulp and Tallon Griekspoor, Netherlands, def. Christopher O'Connell, Australia, and Roman Safiullin, Russia, 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

Women's Doubles

First Round

Shuko Aoyama and Eri Hozumi, Japan, def. Caroline Dolehide and Ashlyn Krueger, United States, 6-4, 6-2.
Viktoria Tomova, Bulgaria, and Rebecca Sramkova, Slovakia, def. Wang Yafan and Xinyu Jiang, China, 6-2, 7-5.
Sara Sorribes Tormo, Spain, and Kamilla Rakhimova, Russia, def. Irina Khromacheva, Russia, and Anna Danilina (8), Kazakhstan, 6-3, 6-1.
Timea Babos, Hungary, and Nicole Melichar-Martinez (13), United States, def. Cathy McNally and Hailey Baptiste, United States, 7-6 (2), 6-4.
Gabriela Dabrowski, Canada, and Erin Routliffe (2), New Zealand, def. Danielle Collins and Desirae Krawczyk, United States, 4-6, 6-4, 6-3.
Zhang Shuai, China, and Kristina Mladenovic (9), France, def. Arantxa Rus, Netherlands, and McCartney Kessler, United States, 5-7, 6-3, 7-5.
Taylor Townsend, United States, and Katerina Siniakova (1), Czechia, def. Fanny Stollar, Hungary, and Lulu Sun, New Zealand, 6-2, 6-4.
Maia Lumsden, Britain, and Anna Siskova, Czechia, def. Oksana Kalashnikova, Georgia, and Varvara Gracheva, Russia, 6-4, 7-5.



GARETH PATTERSON/AP

Quarterback Quinn Ewers passed for 9,128 yards and 68 TDs and led Texas to the College Football Playoff twice in his career.

Ewers enters draft, turning Texas reins over to Manning

By JIM VERTUNO

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Texas junior quarterback Quinn Ewers declared for the NFL Draft on Wednesday, ending a Longhorns career in which he led the program to a Big 12 championship and twice to the College Football Playoff but was not always embraced by a fan base eagerly waiting for Arch Manning to take over.

Ewers passed for 9,128 yards and 68 touchdowns in a career that few Texas quarterbacks can match. He had hinted before the season ended that it would be his last in college.

“These past three years have been some of the best years I could have imagined,” Ewers said in social media post announcing his decision. “The relationships I’ve built between coaches and teammates will last forever.”

His 27 career wins rank fourth as a starting quarterback at Texas, and he led the Longhorns to their first Big 12 title in 14 years in 2023 before the program moved to the Southeastern Conference. In their first season in the SEC, the Longhorns rose to their first No. 1 ranking since 2008 and played in the league championship game.

Ewers’ biggest legacy will be leading the program to the playoff semifinals in consecutive years, though it fell short of the championship game. He had a fumble on a sack that led to a game-clinching touchdown for Ohio State on Jan. 10 in the Cotton Bowl.

Ewers, who grew up in the Dallas suburbs, was the top-rated high school quarterback in the

country when he signed with Ohio State and left school early to the join the Buckeyes for the 2021 season. But after one season spent deep on the Ohio State depth chart, Ewers transferred to Texas, which had just finished 5-7 in coach Steve Sarkisian’s first season.

He was the starter by the season opener in 2022 and led the team through seasons of 8-5, 12-2 and 13-3 records. But he was dogged by various shoulder, abdomen and ankle injuries and missed at least two games each season. An abdomen strain this season allowed Manning to start twice and earn the program’s first SEC win, which came against Mississippi State.

Ewers’ departure sets the stage for Manning to take over in 2025.

The son of Cooper Manning, the grandson of former NFL quarterback Archie Manning and the nephew of Super Bowl-winning QBs Peyton and Eli Manning passed for 939 yards and nine touchdowns and ran for four TDs this season but has seen only limited playing time since September.

Texas fans have been eagerly awaiting his chance to be the full-time starter. Manning will get it with a rebuilt offense.

Top receivers Matthew Golden and Isaiah Bond have declared for the draft and senior tight end Gunnar Helm completed his eligibility. Running back Jaydon Blue, who scored a team-high 14 touchdowns including four in the playoffs, and starting tackles Kelvin Banks Jr. and Cam Williams also left for the NFL.

NHL

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference						
Atlantic Division						
	GP	W	L	OT Pts	GF	GA
Toronto	45	27	16	2	56	136
Florida	45	26	16	3	55	148
Tampa Bay	42	23	16	3	49	153
Boston	46	22	19	5	49	122
Ottawa	43	22	18	3	47	124
Montreal	42	20	18	4	44	126
Detroit	43	20	19	4	44	124
Buffalo	43	16	22	5	37	132

Metropolitan Division						
	GP	W	L	OT Pts	GF	GA
Washington	44	29	10	5	63	159
New Jersey	46	26	15	5	57	143
Carolina	44	26	15	3	55	147
Columbus	44	21	17	6	48	152
Philadelphia	45	19	20	6	44	138
Pittsburgh	46	18	20	8	44	137
N.Y. Rangers	42	20	20	2	42	122
N.Y. Islanders	43	17	19	7	41	114

Western Conference						
Central Division						
	GP	W	L	OT Pts	GF	GA
Winnipeg	45	30	12	3	63	162
Minnesota	44	27	13	4	58	132
Dallas	43	28	14	1	57	140
Colorado	44	26	17	1	53	147
St. Louis	45	21	20	4	46	127
Utah	42	18	17	7	43	117
Nashville	43	14	22	7	35	106
Chicago	44	14	28	2	30	113

Pacific Division						
	GP	W	L	OT Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	44	29	12	3	61	151
Edmonton	43	27	13	3	57	140
Los Angeles	41	24	12	5	53	121
Calgary	43	21	15	7	49	116
Vancouver	43	19	14	10	48	125
Anaheim	44	18	21	5	41	108
Seattle	45	19	23	3	41	132
San Jose	46	14	26	6	34	120

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

Monday's games	
Philadelphia 4, Florida 3	Calgary 5, Chicago 2
Edmonton 1, Los Angeles 0	

Tuesday's games	
Washington 3, Anaheim 0	San Jose 6, Detroit 3
Dallas 4, Toronto 1	Seattle 4, Pittsburgh 2
Columbus 3, Philadelphia 2, St. Louis 0	Boston 6, Tampa Bay 2
Ottawa 2, N.Y. Islanders 0	Florida 2, New Jersey 1, St. Louis 2, Calgary 1
Winnipeg 6, Vancouver 1	Nashville 5, Vegas 3
Colorado 3, N.Y. Rangers 2, Montreal 5, Utah 3	

Wednesday's games	
Carolina at Buffalo	Edmonton at Minnesota

Thursday's games	
Anaheim at Tampa Bay	Detroit at Florida
New Jersey at Toronto	San Jose at Columbus
Washington at Ottawa	Philadelphia at N.Y. Islanders
Calgary at St. Louis	Chicago at Nashville
Montreal at Dallas	Seattle at Winnipeg
N.Y. Rangers at Utah	Edmonton at Colorado
Los Angeles at Vancouver	

Friday's games	
Pittsburgh at Buffalo	Vegas at Carolina

Saturday's games	
Philadelphia at New Jersey	Boston at Ottawa
Dallas at Colorado	Anaheim at Florida
Calgary at Winnipeg	Columbus at N.Y. Rangers
Detroit at Tampa Bay	Pittsburgh at Washington
Toronto at Montreal	San Jose at N.Y. Islanders
Minnesota at Nashville	Vegas at Chicago
St. Louis at Utah	Edmonton at Vancouver
Los Angeles at Seattle	

Sunday's games	
Ottawa at New Jersey	N.Y. Rangers at Montreal
Detroit at Dallas	

ROUNDUP

Connor's 1st-period hat trick lifts Jets

Associated Press

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Kyle Connor scored a natural hat trick in the first period to spark the Winnipeg Jets to a 6-1 victory over the Vancouver Canucks on Tuesday night.

The left-winger's sixth career hat trick came in a span of 6:38, making it the third fastest in Jets-Thrashers' history.

Mark Scheifele, Neal Pionk and Nino Niederreiter each had a goal and assist for the Jets, who became the first team to win 30 games this season.

Gabriel Vilardi recorded three assists and Cole Perfetti added two to give him 100 NHL career points.

Connor Hellebuyck made 23 saves to pick up his league-leading 27th win of the season for Winnipeg, which is 3-1-2 in its season-long, eight-game homestand.

Nils Hoglander scored a third-period goal for the Canucks, who finished a five-game road trip going 1-2-2. Kevin Lankinen stopped 27 shots for Vancouver.

Blue Jackets 3, Flyers 2 (SO): Kent Johnson and Kirill Marchenko scored in the shootout as Columbus rallied to defeat visiting Philadelphia.

Zach Werenski scored twice for Columbus, including the tying goal with 4:37 left in regulation. The Blue Jackets earned their first win against Philadelphia in three matchups this season.

Daniil Tarasov made 23 saves, helping the Blue Jackets earn a season-high fifth straight victory, their longest streak since the 2019-20 season.

Capitals 3, Ducks 0: Logan Thompson stopped all 18 shots he faced for his first shutout of the season as host Washington beat Anaheim.

Making a second consecutive start and playing in his third in a row since Charlie Lindgren was injured, Thompson made a handful of saves on quality scoring chances and many timely ones to improve to 19-2-3 since joining the Capitals.

Brandon Duhaime had a goal and an assist and John Carlson and Ethen Frank also scored for the Capitals, who have won two games in a row after alternating wins and losses in their previous nine dating to Dec. 23.

Sharks 6, Red Wings 3: William Eklund had a goal and two assists and San Jose ended host Detroit's seven-game win streak.

Nico Sturm scored a short-handed goal, and Jan Rutta, Mikael Granlund, Tyler Toffoli and Mario Ferraro added goals for San Jose, which snapped a three-game losing streak. Rookie Macklin Celebrini had two assists as the



FRED GREENSLADE, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Jets left wing Kyle Connor, left, scores his third goal against Vancouver Canucks goaltender Kevin Lankinen in the first period Tuesday night in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Jets won 6-1.

Sharks won for just the fourth time in 18 games. Alexandar Georgiev made 25 saves.

Kraken 4, Penguins 2: Jamie Oleksiak and Eeli Tolvanen scored 49 seconds apart in the third period to erase a one-goal deficit and rally visiting Seattle past Pittsburgh.

Joey Daccord stopped 31 shots and assisted on Chandler Stephenson's short-handed goal. Kaapo Kakko added an empty-netter as Seattle won for just the second time in seven games.

The Penguins lost in regulation for the first time this season when leading after two periods thanks to a couple of defensive breakdowns.

Stars 4, Maple Leafs 1: Logan Stankoven had two goals and an assist to lead Dallas to a victory at Toronto.

Matt Duchene added a goal and two assists, and Mavrik Bourque also scored for Dallas, which bounced back with a victory after having its seven-game win streak halted against Ottawa on Sunday. Jake Oettinger made 27 saves.

Auston Matthews scored for Toronto. Joseph Woll stopped 19 shots.

Bruins 6, Lightning 2: David Pastrnak had a goal and two assists and Parker Wotherspoon scored his first NHL goal to help host Boston open a four-goal lead and hold on to beat Tampa Bay.

Jeremy Swayman made 43 saves for the Bruins, who have won back-to-back games after losing six in a row — their longest losing streak in a decade.

Conor Geekie and Victor Hed-

man scored in the second period to cut a four-goal deficit in half. Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 18 shots for Tampa Bay, which had won three of its previous four games.

Senators 2, Islanders 0: Leevi Merilainen made 24 saves for his second shutout in three games as Ottawa won at New York.

Adam Gaudette and Artem Zub scored as the Senators won their third in a row while stopping New York's winning streak at three.

Marcus Hogberg stopped 23 shots in his second consecutive start for the Islanders, who dropped the opener of a seven-game homestand. Ilya Sorokin was available but didn't play due to illness, and Semyon Varlamov is on injured reserve.

Panthers 2, Devils 1 (SO): Anton Lundell scored the shootout winner and Spencer Knight made 26 saves as Florida downed host New Jersey.

After Florida's Aleksander Barkov and New Jersey's Paul Cotter traded goals to start the shootout, Lundell beat Devils goalie Jacob Markstrom in the third round to end New Jersey's six-game home winning streak.

Following two scoreless periods, Jesper Boqvist gave Florida a 1-0 lead 41 seconds into the third with his 10th goal of the season. Boqvist played four seasons with the Devils after he was drafted by New Jersey in 2017.

Predators 5, Golden Knights 3: Steven Stamkos scored two goals and assisted on another to lead Nashville past visiting Las Vegas. Filip Forsberg had a goal and an

assist, Justin Barron and Ryan O'Reilly also scored and Justus Annunen made 19 saves for the Predators, who snapped a two-game skid.

Pavel Dorofeyev had his first career hat trick and Ilya Samsonov made 18 saves for Vegas, which has lost three of four.

Blues 2, Flames 1: Radek Faksa scored the tiebreaking goal in the third period as St. Louis beat visiting Calgary.

Faksa tipped in a shot by Tyler Tucker with 8:49 left. It was Faksa's third goal of the season and first since Nov. 17.

Colton Parayko also scored and Jordan Binnington made 26 saves as the Blues won their fifth straight against the Flames. St. Louis is 9-1-0 in its last 10 games against Calgary.

Avalanche 3, Rangers 2 (OT): Devon Toews scored 4:23 into overtime after Artturi Lehkonen tied the game late in regulation, and Colorado began a five-game homestand by beating New York.

Cale Makar had an assist to reach 50 points for the fifth time in his career. It's the most 50-point seasons by a defenseman in franchise history.

Canadiens 5, Utah 3: Kirby Dach scored twice as Montreal won at Utah.

Mike Matheson, Patrik Laine and Cole Caufield also scored for Montreal, which has won eight of its last 10.

Logan Cooley, Josh Doan and Nick Bjugstad scored for Utah. Clayton Keller had two assists. Karel Vejmelka made 21 stops.

NBA

76ers' season could be slipping away

Philadelphia, minus injured Embiid, Maxey and George, stumbles against Thunder

By DAN GELSTON
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Full of championship ambition, the 76ers' slogan for this season was "Made for This."

As boos filled the arena — the first ones heard when an injury report as long as the closing credits on a blockbuster movie appeared on the big screen — Sixers fans had a more irked saying in mind. "We Paid for This?"

Joel Embiid, out again.

Paul George, not tonight.

Tyrese Maxey, sorry, hurt hand.

Kyle Lowry, Caleb Martin, KJ Martin, Andre Drummond and Jared McCain — all starters or key role players at some point this season — did not play for the Sixers in Tuesday's game against Oklahoma City.

The end result was a predictable one: Thunder 118, 76ers 102.

Sure, led by Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, the Thunder are 33-6 and are going to be a tough out on any night.

The 76ers, with their hefty injury reports, are in trouble on most game nights these days. The Sixers started 3-14, have lost three straight, six of eight and at 15-23 are closer to a spot in the draft lottery than postseason play.

Maybe A.J. Brown could suggest a good book to pass the time during Sixers games.

The season could get worse: The Knicks are in town on Wednesday, followed by a three-game road trip with stops in Indiana, Milwaukee and Denver. All of those teams have winning records.

How about a soft landing back at home? Ah, try a Jan. 24 date



MATT SLOCUM/AP

Oklahoma City's Cason Wallace, bottom, passes the ball against the 76ers' Ricky Council IV, right, and Guerschon Yabusele during the first half Tuesday night in Philadelphia. The Thunder won 118-102.

against the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Maxey sprained his left hand in Sunday's loss at Orlando. George had ankle soreness. A two-time NBA scoring champion, Embiid missed his 25th game of the season. Embiid has played in just 13 games. The Sixers are 7-6 with Embiid and 8-17 without him.

Embiid missed his fifth straight game with a sprained left foot. He's also missed games due to left knee soreness, a sinus fracture and a three-game suspension for an altercation with a reporter in the locker room.

"There's still like (44) games to go," coach Nick Nurse said. "That's a lot. It's a lot of games. We got out of the 3-14 and played some really good basketball. I'm just trying to work really hard to keep them together, keep the guys that we know need to improve on stuff improving, giving some guys chances that we think can also help us if we ever do get back to a kind of whole healthy situation and trying to be mindful of what that may look like."

Embiid is listed as day-to-day. Nurse called the late news that

George and Maxey weren't available a "gut punch" and had no update on the All-Star trio's playing status against the Knicks.

After the woeful start, the 76ers seemed to get themselves right by winning 10 of 13 games that included a Christmas win in Boston. Embiid hurt his foot against the Celtics and played in four more games — but none since Jan. 4

The 76ers were being cautious with the 7-footer's playing time this season as he worked his way back from a knee injury. There are no minutes restrictions on Embiid when no minutes are being played.

"I was hoping we were kind of on a roll," Nurse said. "You can't account for now a foot injury, or whatever other things that have happened are going on. I think as far as the plan with the knee, you know, going pretty good."

Not long after a lineup that included Ricky Council IV making his first start of the season, Eric Gordon and Reggie Jackson was posted, the Thunder moved to 16½-point favorites, according to BETMGM Sportsbook.

As soon as Gilgeous-Alexander hit a 3 that gave Oklahoma City a 32-11 lead in the first quarter, the 76ers were booed off the court headed into a timeout.

The B-team Sixers — with Justin Edwards and Jeff Dowtin Jr. as the leading scorers — scrapped and turned the fans back on their side when they pulled to 91-87.

The Thunder easily closed out the 76ers in the waning moments of the fourth.

The Sixers can only hope now Nurse was right and the season can somehow be salvaged.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	28	11	.718	—
New York	26	15	.634	3
Philadelphia	15	23	.395	12½
Brooklyn	14	26	.350	14½
Toronto	9	31	.225	19½

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	23	18	.561	—
Miami	20	18	.526	1½
Atlanta	20	19	.513	2
Charlotte	8	28	.222	12½
Washington	6	32	.158	15½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	34	5	.872	—
Milwaukee	21	17	.553	12½
Indiana	22	19	.537	13
Detroit	21	19	.525	13½
Chicago	18	22	.450	16½

Western Conference

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	26	12	.684	—
Memphis	25	15	.625	2
Dallas	22	18	.550	5
San Antonio	19	19	.500	7
New Orleans	9	32	.220	18½

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	33	6	.846	—
Denver	24	15	.615	9
Minnesota	21	18	.538	12
Portland	13	26	.333	20
Utah	10	28	.263	22½

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Clippers	21	17	.553	—
L.A. Lakers	20	17	.541	½
Sacramento	20	20	.500	2
Phoenix	19	20	.487	2½
Golden State	19	20	.487	2½

Monday's games

Minnesota 120, Washington 106
Toronto 104, Golden State 101
Detroit 124, New York 119
Houston 120, Memphis 118
L.A. Clippers 109, Miami 98
San Antonio 126, L.A. Lakers 102

Tuesday's games

Oklahoma City 118, Philadelphia 102
Cleveland 127, Indiana 117
Atlanta 122, Phoenix 117
Milwaukee 130, Sacramento 115
New Orleans 119, Chicago 113
Denver 118, Dallas 99
Brooklyn 132, Portland 114

Wednesday's games

New York at Philadelphia
Boston at Toronto
Atlanta at Chicago
Dallas at New Orleans
Memphis at San Antonio
Orlando at Milwaukee
Charlotte at Utah
Houston at Denver
Golden State at Minnesota
Miami at L.A. Lakers
Brooklyn at L.A. Clippers

Thursday's games

Indiana at Detroit
Phoenix at Washington
Cleveland at Oklahoma City
Houston at Sacramento
L.A. Clippers at Portland

Friday's games

Orlando at Boston
Minnesota at New York
Charlotte at Chicago
Denver at Miami
Toronto at Milwaukee
Utah at New Orleans
Oklahoma City at Dallas
Memphis at San Antonio
Brooklyn at L.A. Lakers

Saturday's games

Phoenix at Detroit
Atlanta at Boston
Philadelphia at Indiana
Washington at Golden State
Cleveland at Minnesota
Houston at Portland

Sunday's games

San Antonio at Miami
Denver at Orlando
Philadelphia at Milwaukee
Brooklyn at Oklahoma City
L.A. Lakers at L.A. Clippers
Chicago at Portland
Washington at Sacramento

ROUNDUP

Murray scores 45 as Nuggets beat Mavericks

Associated Press

DALLAS — Jamal Murray scored 32 of his season-high 45 points in the first half and led the Denver Nuggets to a 118-99 victory over the Dallas Mavericks on Tuesday night.

Murray surpassed his previous season-best of 34 points, scored against Detroit on Dec. 28.

Murray shot 18-for-26 from the floor, including 5-for-9 from 3-point distance, and added six assists and two steals. He headed to the bench with just under four minutes remaining, five points shy of his career high of 50 points against Cleveland on Feb. 19, 2021.

Michael Porter Jr. scored 13 points and Nikola Jokic had 10 points and 14 rebounds.

Kyrie Irving was back in the lineup after missing five games with a lumbar back sprain. He finished with 11 points on 4-for-18 shooting for Dallas. Daniel Gafford scored 13 points and Naji Marshall had 11.

Hawks 122, Suns 117: Trae Young scored a season-high 43 points and Atlanta overcame

Devin Booker's 35 to beat visiting Phoenix.

Kevin Durant scored 14 of his 31 points in the third quarter for Phoenix (19-20), which lost for the 11th straight time in Atlanta. Durant added nine rebounds.

The Hawks (20-19) were without forwards De'Andre Hunter (left foot soreness), Larry Nance Jr. (right hand) and Jalen Johnson (right shoulder inflammation), who missed his fourth consecutive game.

Cavaliers 127, Pacers 117: Donovan Mitchell scored 35 points as Cleveland won at Indiana.

Darius Garland scored 24 points and Evan Mobley added 22 points and 13 rebounds for the Cavaliers.

Pascal Siakam scored 23 points and Benedict Mathurin 19 for the Pacers, who had their six-game winning streak halted. Myles Turner added 17 points.

Bucks 130, Kings 115: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 30 points, 13 assists and 11 re-

bounds for his 50th career triple-double as Milwaukee snapped visiting Sacramento's seven-game winning streak.

Damian Lillard had 24 points, Brook Lopez 21 and A.J. Green 16 for the Bucks, who never trailed and led by as many as 28.

DeMar DeRozan scored 28 and De'Aaron Fox 20 for Sacramento. Domantas Sabonis had 16 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists.

Pelicans 119, Bulls 113: Trey Murphy III scored 32 points and Zion Williamson added 21 as New Orleans beat host Chicago.

Zach LaVine, limited to two points in the first half, finished with 25 points for the Bulls. Nikola Vucevic had 22 points and 15 rebounds, and Coby White scored 22.

Nets 132, Trail Blazers 114: Cam Johnson returned from a five-game absence with a right ankle sprain and scored 24 points in Brooklyn's victory at Portland.

Scot Henderson had a career-high 39 points for the Blazers.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

TOP 25 ROUNDUP

Even without Broome, No. 1 Auburn rolls

Associated Press

AUBURN, Ala. — Chad Baker-Mazara scored 20 points as No. 1 Auburn beat No. 15 Mississippi State 88-66 on Tuesday night in its first game without star center John Broome.

Chaney Johnson, who replaced Broome in the starting lineup, had 17 points, eight rebounds and four blocks for Auburn (16-1, 4-0 Southeastern Conference). Broome is out indefinitely with a left ankle sprain that he sustained last Saturday in Auburn's 66-63 victory at South Carolina.

Auburn set the tone early by going on a 10-0 run to open the game, with Baker-Mazara scoring the final eight points.

Baker-Mazara shot 8-for-11, including 3-for-5 on 3-pointers. Miles Kelly and Denver Jones both scored 13, while Tahaad Petiford added 12.

Auburn had as many blocks (9) as Mississippi State had made field goals in the first half, allowing the Tigers to go into the break with a 19-point lead.

Mississippi State (14-3, 2-2) shot just 35%. Josh Hubbard scored 17 points but was only 2-for-12.

No. 3 Duke 89, Miami 54: Freshman Kon Knueppel had season highs of 25 points and six 3-pointers to help the host Blue Devils stay unbeaten in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Khaman Maluach had 12 points and 15 rebounds for Duke (15-2, 7-0), which shot 54.8% and made 17 of 32 3-pointers, with 11 coming before halftime. Duke led by 24 at the break and never let Miami closer than 19 again.

Duke's Cooper Flagg — named The Associated Press men's college basketball national player of the week earlier Tuesday after scoring an ACC freshman record 42 points against Notre Dame — had 13 points, seven rebounds and six assists.

Lynn Kidd scored 20 points for the Hurricanes (4-13, 0-6).

No. 21 Mississippi 74, No. 4 Alabama 64: Malik Dia's 23 points, 19 rebounds and two blocks led the visiting Rebels to a win over the Crimson Tide.

Sean Pedulla scored 12 points and had three steals and Matthew Murrell scored 11. Jaylen Murray and Jaemyn Brakefield each scored 13 points off the bench for Ole Miss (15-2, 4-0 Southeastern Conference).

Aden Holloway led Alabama (14-3, 3-1) with 15 points, and Mark Sears added 11.

Missouri 83, No. 5 Florida 82: Caleb Grill scored 22 points, including two free throws with 5 seconds remaining, and the Tigers stunned the Gators, ending their



BUTCH DILL/AP

Auburn guard Chad Baker-Mazara reacts after making a basket against Mississippi State during the second half on Tuesday in Auburn, Ala. Baker-Mazara shot 8-for-11, including 3-for-5 on 3-pointers to lead the Tigers with 20 points.



ERIN HOOLEY/AP

Marquette guard Kam Jones, left, and guard Tre Norman celebrate after beating DePaul in overtime on Tuesday in Chicago. The Golden Eagles escaped with their sixth straight win.

16-game home winning streak.

Mark Mitchell added 15 points and eight rebounds for the Tigers (14-3, 3-1 Southeastern Conference), who notched their first road win against a top-five team since 2012.

Anthony Robinson II chipped in 12 points for Mizzou, which dominated the first half while building a 19-point lead.

Grill hit four 3-pointers in the first 10 minutes, including three on consecutive possessions, as the

Tigers kept pulling away. He also hit a 3 with 2:23 to play — although replays showed his foot was on the line.

Nonetheless, the 24-year-old graduate student missed two free throws a minute later. He redeemed himself with the game on the line.

No. 7 Marquette 85, DePaul 83 (OT): David Joplin made two of his seven 3-pointers in overtime, and the visiting Golden Eagles outlasted the Blue Demons for a

rugged victory.

Joplin finished with 30 points on 9-for-17 shooting. Kam Jones had 18 points and 11 assists for Marquette (15-2, 6-0 Big East), which earned its sixth consecutive win.

Joplin's two 3s at the beginning of overtime lifted the Golden Eagles to a 73-67 lead. Two second-chance baskets by Stevie Mitchell made it 77-69 with 1:22 to go.

Chase Ross had 15 points for Marquette, and Ben Gold finished with 14.

CJ Gunn led DePaul with 21 points. Isaiah Rivera added 20, and Conor Enright finished with 11 points and 11 assists.

No. 8 Kentucky 81, No. 11 Texas A&M 69: Jaxson Robinson scored 22 points to lead the host Wildcats to a victory over the Aggies.

Robinson made five of Kentucky's nine 3-pointers, including four in the first half as the Wildcats (14-3, 3-1 Southeastern Conference) improved to 5-0 against ranked opponents this season.

Andrew Carr added 13 points and Otega Oweh finished with 11 for Kentucky.

Zhuric Phelps led the Aggies (13-4, 2-2) with 21 points, followed by Pharrel Payne with 15 and Manny Obaseki with 12.

No. 19 Illinois 94, Indiana 69: Kylan Boswell scored 22 points,

Kasparas Jakucionis added 21 and the visiting Illini opened a 28-point halftime lead in a blowout of the Hoosiers.

Tomislav Ivisic had 17 points and 11 rebounds as Illinois (13-4, 5-2 Big Ten) bounced back from a double-digit loss at home to Southern California.

This time, Illinois left no doubt as Jakucionis and Ivisic combined for 34 first-half points to give the Illini a 60-32 halftime lead thanks largely to their dominance inside.

Indiana scored the first 10 points of the second half but never got closer than 16.

No. 24 Wisconsin 70, Ohio State 68: John Tonje scored 17 points and the host Badgers stayed off a late rally by the Buckeyes, extending their winning streak to six.

Ohio State trailed 37-20 at the half but cut it to 65-64 on Micah Parrish's layup with 16 seconds left before Tonje helped the Badgers stay ahead from the foul line.

Tonje's 3-pointer put Wisconsin up 65-57 with just over four minutes remaining.

John Blackwell added 15 points and Steven Crawl 14 for Wisconsin (14-3, 4-2 Big Ten) to give coach Greg Gard his 200th victory.

Bruce Thornton had 21 points and Devin Royal 12 for Ohio State (10-7, 2-4).

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Gauff into 3rd round, still unbeaten in '25

By HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Coco Gauff stretched her unbeaten start to 2025 to seven matches and 14 sets by moving into the third round at the Australian Open with a 6-3, 7-5 victory over 173rd-ranked Jodie Burrage of Britain at Rod Laver Arena on Wednesday.

Gauff, the 2023 U.S. Open champion and a semifinalist at Melbourne Park a year ago, went through a bit of a rough patch in the second set, struggling with double-faults and dropping four games in a row to go from a break up at 3-1 to a break down at 5-3.

But when Burrage served for the second set, Gauff got back in control, using a four-game run of her own to end the contest.

"It was tough. She was serving really well, so I was just trying to manage that, honestly," the No. 3-seeded Gauff said. "She really stepped her level up in the middle of the second set, so I was just trying to be of-

fensive when I could."

Gauff hit six of her seven double-faults in the second set, but was far steadier at the baseline overall, finishing the 1½-hour match with 11 groundstroke unforced errors, compared to 37 for Burrage.

Each of Burrage's final two service games ended with a double-fault; there were two in a row that made it 6-5.

From there, Gauff finished the job as she continues to try to find improvements with her serve and forehand, two shots she has been focusing on since late last season.

"She was returning well, so it put pressure on me on my serve," Gauff said. "If I landed anything short, she was landing a winner."

Add in four wins in a row en route to the title at the WTA Finals in November — including straight-set victories over No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka and No. 2 Iga Swiatek — and Gauff's winning streak is now at 11 matches.



VINCENT THIAN/AP

Coco Gauff, of the U.S., plays a backhand return to Jodie Burrage of Britain during their second-round match at the Australian Open on Wednesday.

Also a part of that run was a win at the United Cup team competition against the 20-year-old American's next opponent: No. 30 Leylah Fernandez, who was the runner-

up to Emma Raducanu at the 2021 U.S. Open.

Fernandez came back to defeat Cristina Bucsa 3-6, 6-4, 6-4 on Wednesday.

Osaka in 3rd round of Slam for 1st time in 3 years

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Naomi Osaka's second-round match at the Australian Open could not possibly have started in a worse way. All of 21 minutes in, she sailed a forehand service return well long and, just like that, trailed 5-0.

Osaka strode to the sideline for the changeover, plopped herself down and draped a white towel over her head, blocking out all sights and leaving her with just her thoughts. She stayed like that throughout the break between games, even maneuvering a water bottle under that towel to take a drink.

This was not a match against some unknown opponent, someone Osaka knew for sure she could beat. It was against 20th-seeded Karolina Muchova, the runner-up at the 2023 French Open and a three-time semifinalist at other majors, including at Melbourne Park in 2021.

Muchova also had defeated Osaka in their two most recent matchups. None of that mattered on this afternoon, though: Osaka forgot about that disappointing start and came all the way back to win 1-6, 6-1, 6-3 on Wednesday.

What was her mindset? "Just be aware and try not to get so negative on yourself. I think, for me, the score in the first set was very dramatic, but there was key points that I could have maybe won a game here or there," Osaka explained. "So I kept trying to tell myself that."

This was, in some ways, a significant moment for Osaka, who once reigned atop women's tennis, win-



ASANKA BRENDON RATNAYAKE/AP

Naomi Osaka, of Japan, reacts after defeating Karolina Muchova, of the Czech Republic, on Wednesday. The victory sent Osaka into the third round of a major for the first time since 2022.

ning four Grand Slam titles — two at the Australian Open, two at the U.S. Open — and ascending to No. 1 in the WTA rankings. The victory allowed her to reach the third round at a major tournament for the first time since the 2022 season.

Getting to that stage was not considered a big deal at one point for her. But time off because of mental health breaks and then a pregnancy — Osaka's daughter, Shai, was born in July 2023 — changed things.

Since returning to action a year

ago, Osaka has shown signs of getting her game back together, including a memorable and narrow loss to then-No. 1 Iga Swiatek at the French Open. This, though, followed a win against 2022 U.S. Open semifinalist Caroline Garcia in Melbourne and meant the progress is real.

"It definitely was something that is a goal of mine, especially after last year; I wasn't able to beat a seed in a Grand Slam," Osaka said. "I'm obviously very thankful that happened so early this year."

She also joked about gaining a

"It definitely was something that is a goal of mine, especially after last year; I wasn't able to beat a seed in a Grand Slam."

Naomi Osaka

measure of "revenge" by defeating Garcia — who eliminated Osaka in Melbourne a year ago — and Muchova in consecutive matches.

Next for Osaka is a matchup against Tokyo Olympics gold medalist Belinda Bencic, who is also a mother; her daughter, Bella, was born last year. Both Osaka and Bencic are big hitters.

"It's going to be a fun match," Bencic said.

Muchova wasn't the highest-seeded player to exit Wednesday. That was No. 5 Zheng Qinwen, the runner-up to Aryna Sabalenka last year and the gold medalist at the Paris Games last August. Zheng lost a bit of focus after being called for a time violation and never managed to counter 97th-ranked Laura Siegemund's strokes, bowing out 7-6 (3), 6-3 at John Cain Arena.

After the chair umpire cited her for taking too long to serve, Zheng hit her next offering so poorly it bounced way before reaching the net.

"I knew," the 36-year-old Siege-

mund said, "I just had to play more than my best tennis."

The player who beat Zheng in the final 12 months ago, Sabalenka, stretched her Melbourne Park winning streak to 16 matches as she eyes a third consecutive title, beating No. 54 Jessica Bouzas Ma-neiro 6-3, 7-5 at Rod Laver Arena.

Other women's winners included No. 3 Coco Gauff, No. 7 Jessica Pegula, No. 14 Mirra Andreeva and No. 30 Leylah Fernandez.

Novak Djokovic added to his record collection by playing in his 430th career Grand Slam match — one more than Roger Federer — and, though he dropped a set for the second outing in a row with new coach Andy Murray by his side, moved into the third round with a 6-1, 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-2 win over Jaime Faria.

Other men advancing included No. 3 Carlos Alcaraz, who joked that he is now a "serve bot" after hitting 14 aces while dismissing Yoshihito Nishioka 6-0, 6-1, 6-4.

"The serve's about confidence and feeling," Alcaraz said. "Today I felt great."

Seeded losers included No. 6 Casper Ruud, a three-time major finalist; No. 22 Sebastian Korda and No. 27 Jordan Thompson.

Ruud was eliminated by 19-year-old Jakub Mensik of the Czech Republic 6-2, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4. Mensik equaled his best Grand Slam showing by getting to the third round and joined 18-year-old João Fonseca — who upset No. 9 Andrey Rublev on Tuesday — as the first pair of teens to beat top-10 men at the same Grand Slam tournament since Djokovic and Murray did it at Wimbledon in 2006.

NFL PLAYOFFS

Rested Lions spared rematch in round 2

After bye week, No. 1 seed Detroit preparing for Commanders instead of facing Rams or Vikings again

BY LARRY LAGE
Associated Press

ALLEN PARK, Mich. — The Detroit Lions kicked back and relaxed during a three-day weekend, enjoying the benefits of having the NFC's No. 1 seed and being one step closer to possibly playing in the Super Bowl.

The rest helped, but not more than simply not needing to win to advance to the divisional round of the playoffs.

"The odds say that's one less game that you're playing to get to your ultimate goal," Detroit coach Dan Campbell said. "That's the benefit, really."

The top-seeded Lions (15-2) also hope home field gives them another advantage against the sixth-seeded Washington Commanders (13-5) on Saturday night.

Washington's win over third-seeded Tampa Bay spared Detroit a rematch with the Matthew Stafford-led Los Angeles Rams or a third game against NFC North rival Minnesota.

"I do like the newness of it," Campbell said.

The Lions are also new to the Commanders, who have won five straight — each time on a last-minute or last-second play. But they haven't seen anything quite like Detroit's big-play ability on the ground and through the air.

"A lot of challenges, whether it's speed and ability at wide receiver or their running back tandem, the quarterback who can rip it, an excellent O-line, the defense plays a lot of man-to-man and plays aggressive," Washington coach Dan Quinn said. "We'll definitely have our work cut out for us."

The Commanders' 23-20 win eliminated the Buccaneers, one of



SCOT TUCKER/AP

Detroit Lions coach Dan Campbell said that not needing to win a game in the first round of the playoffs, and being one step closer to the Super Bowl, is the greatest benefit of earning a bye.



JASON BEHNKEN/AP

Washington Commanders coach Dan Quinn, like Campbell, is a contender for Coach of the Year.

the two teams to defeat Detroit during the regular season. The Buffalo Bills also beat the Lions, winning 48-42 a month ago.

That doesn't mean Detroit, an 8½-point favorite according to BetMGM Sportsbook, thinks it will have an easy evening against a Washington team led by rookie quarterback Jayden Daniels.

"We've got a really good opponent here," Campbell said. "They've got a dynamic quarterback. They're playing good offense, good defense, really good coaching."

"We've got our work cut out for us."

The game will feature candidates for NFL Coach of the Year,

and Campbell is well aware of Quinn's ability to lead a team after facing him at their previous stops.

Quinn led the Atlanta Falcons from 2015 through the early part of the 2020 season, overlapping with Campbell's time as an assistant with the New Orleans Saints.

"It's not like we hang out on a daily basis or anything or talk like that, but I've known him for a while," Campbell said. "Certainly when he was in Atlanta, having to play him twice a year, you gain a high level of respect for what they do."

"His teams are always going to be competitive and they're going to be ready to go and they're going to try to do things the right way."



DUANE BURLESON/AP

The Lions expect running back David Montgomery to return from a knee injury Saturday.

"I've got a lot of respect for what he's done, and I'm not surprised that they're where they're at just knowing kind of the way he builds things, the way his attitude is."

While Campbell downplayed the significance of the bye week for his banged-up team, there's no doubt the break will allow at least one player to return to the field and others such as cornerback Terrion Arnold to get healthier.

The Lions expect running back David Montgomery to play against Washington — coming back from a knee injury that was originally expected to end his season — and rejoin Jahmyr Gibbs in perhaps the NFL's best backfield.

Montgomery finished with 1,116 yards from scrimmage and scored 12 TDs in 14 games, the last of which was against the Bills a month ago.

"He's a huge part of us," Campbell said. "He a bell cow. He's a tone-setter. He's a catalyst."

"There's a place for him here, so there'll be a place for him in this game. So, it's going to be good to get him back."

Scoreboard

Playoffs

Wild-card Playoffs

Saturday, Jan. 11
Houston 32, L.A. Chargers 12
Baltimore 28, Pittsburgh 14

Sunday, Jan. 12

Buffalo 31, Denver 7
Philadelphia 22, Green Bay 10
Washington 23, Tampa Bay 20

Monday, Jan. 13

L.A. Rams 27, Minnesota 9

Divisional Playoffs

Saturday, Jan. 18

Houston at Kansas City. **AFN-Sports, 10:30 p.m. Saturday CET, 6:30 a.m. Sunday JKT**

Washington at Detroit. **AFN-Sports, 2 a.m. Sunday CET, 10 a.m. Sunday JKT**

Sunday, Jan. 19

L.A. Rams at Philadelphia. **AFN-Sports, 9 p.m. Sunday CET, 5 a.m. Monday JKT**

Baltimore at Buffalo. **AFN-Sports, 12:30 a.m. Monday CET, 8:30 a.m. Monday JKT**

Conference Championships

Sunday, Jan. 26

AFC

AFC lowest remaining seed at AFC highest remaining seed

NFC

NFC lowest remaining seed at NFC highest remaining seed

Injuries: Reid chose rust over risk in regular-season finale

FROM PAGE 24

The Chiefs struggled mightily to protect Mahomes' blind side this season, cycling through rookie Kingsley Suamataia and second-year pro Wanya Morris. They ultimately signed former Pro Bowl left tackle D.J. Humphries, and while he hurt his hamstring in his season debut, he is healthy now and gives Kansas City some depth at a crucial position.

In the secondary, the Chiefs lost cornerback Jaylen Watson to a fractured ankle that at first looked as if it would be a season-ender. To provide some depth, they reached out to veteran Steven Nelson and signed him out of retirement, and now he could be a part of the mix even with Watson returning to practice — and potentially able to return for the postseason.

The trick now is to make sure all those pieces are sharp whenever the Chiefs play again.

Coach Andy Reid chose to risk rust rather than injury in his team's regular-season finale, ultimately sitting Mahomes and a bevy of starters in a 38-0 loss in Denver. That means many of them will have gone at least 24 days between games when they step on the field at Arrowhead Stadium on Saturday for the divisional round of the playoffs.

The Chiefs will host the Houston Texans, who beat the San Diego Chargers in the wild-card round.

The Chiefs beat the Texans the weekend before Christmas, and they have won four in a row over Houston dating to the 2020 playoffs.

"The primary thing is to make sure we stay sharp at all areas," Reid said last week. "We want to stay sharp mentally and physically, and that's our responsibility to do that. How we manage the time — I make sure I do that practice-wise, and then the guys go out and work on that, keeping themselves in the right timing, the right way."

Job interviews

It was a busy bye week for coaches and front-office staff. Chiefs offensive coordinator Matt Nagy interviewed for the Jets head job, and defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo has been linked openings with the Jets, Raiders and Jaguars. Meanwhile, the Titans have interviewed longtime front office ace Mike Borgonzi for their GM position.

Playoff opponents

The Chiefs went 7-2 against playoff teams this season. One of those losses — Week 18 against Denver — gets a massive asterisk given who sat out the game.

Pro Bowl picks

The Chiefs had five players picked to the Pro Bowl, including their entire interior offensive line: left guard Joe Thuney, center Creed Humphrey and right guard Trey Smith. Defensive tackle Chris Jones and tight end Travis Kelce also were picked. More curious was those left off the team: All-Pro cornerback Trent McDuffie, who was designated as a first alternate, along with star linebacker Nick Bolton and top defensive end George Karlaftis.

SPORTS



Sixers' season slipping away

Free-falling Philadelphia loses to OKC, with tough road ahead » **NBA, Page 20**

NFL PLAYOFFS



Ed Zurga/AP

Kareem Hunt, above, was acquired when Isiah Pacheco suffered a fractured fibula in Week 2. Now he is part of a potent tandem with the healthy Pacheco.

Jacob Kufferman/AP

Chiefs wide receiver DeAndre Hopkins catches a touchdown pass against the Carolina Panthers on Nov. 24 in Charlotte, N.C. Kansas City traded for the three-time All-Pro after Marquise Brown and Rashee Rice went down with injuries. Brown has returned, and he and Hopkins have given the No. 1 seed in the AFC a formidable 1-2 punch.

Chiefs improved by injuries

KC, chasing Super Bowl three-peat, built deeper roster with each replacement that stepped up

By Dave Skretta
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The injuries and adversity that Kansas City had to overcome on its way to earning the No. 1 seed in the AFC playoffs and a first-round bye could be exactly what propels the Chiefs to an unprecedented third consecutive Super Bowl title.

Not just because they've been forced to develop mental resilience, either.

But because the result was a roster that is simply better.

Every time the Chiefs lost someone to injury, they managed to find a capable re-



Mahomes

placement. And when whoever was hurt was able to return, the Chiefs were left with a deeper and more talented position group that they will carry into the postseason.

Start with wide receiver. The Chiefs lost Marquise Brown to a shoulder injury on the first play of the preseason, then Rashee Rice to a season-ending knee injury in Week 4. Almost out of desperation, they traded with the Titans for three-time All-Pro DeAndre Hopkins. And now that Brown is back on the

INSIDE

Lions prepare to face Commanders instead of Vikes or Rams rematch

Page 23

field, he and Hopkins give Kansas City a formidable one-two punch.

Then consider running back. When Isiah Pacheco fractured his fibula in Week 2, the Chiefs signed erstwhile star Kareem Hunt, who was recovering from offseason sports

hernia surgery. Hunt became a stalwart in the backfield until Pacheco returned 2½ months later, and now those two give Kansas City a dangerous thunder-and-lightning tandem.

"We've built up to the perfect spot. We've gotten better and better," quarterback Patrick Mahomes said. "When you have that many weapons out there, it's hard for the defense to account for."

It's not just wide receiver and running back, either, though those are the two most obvious positions.

SEE INJURIES ON PAGE 23

Gauff advances, remains unbeaten in '25

» Australian Open, Page 22

