

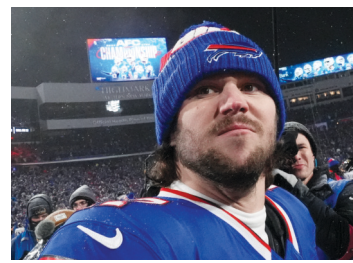
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JULIA DEMAREE NIKHONSON/AP

Donald Trump is sworn in as the 47th president of the United States by Chief Justice John Roberts as Melania Trump holds the Bible during the 60th Presidential Inauguration in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, on Monday.

Trump proclaims golden age

Trump returns in an unprecedented comeback, vows to put America first

From wire reports

After taking an oath as the nation's 47th president Monday, President Donald Trump pledged in a speech to "put America first" and said that "the golden age of America begins right now."

Trump said the United States would "once again consider itself a growing nation" and one that "expands our territory." He criti-

tiqued the Biden administration and started laying out his priorities, including declaring a national emergency at the southern border.

Trump is promising a flurry of actions on Day 1 on immigration, energy production, crime and other issues.

Trump was sworn in Monday by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr.,

officially becoming the 47th president of the United States. JD Vance was sworn in as vice president.

Trump, who overcame impeachments, criminal indictments and a pair of assassination attempts to win another term in the White House, will act swiftly

SEE RETURNS ON PAGE 9

Trump to sign orders on sexes, DEI, immigration

From wire reports

President Donald Trump intended to sign an executive order that recognizes two sexes — male and female — and one ending diversity, equity and inclusion efforts in the federal government — taking action on two cultural issues that galvanized his base.

Trump also was expected to issue a series of orders aimed at re-

making America's immigration policies, ending asylum access, sending troops to the southern border and ending birthright citizenship, an incoming White House official said.

The sex and DEI orders were detailed by an incoming White House official on a call Monday

SEE ORDERS ON PAGE 9

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Officials warn against price gouging amid LA fires

Associated Press

Southern California's expensive housing market is going to get a lot more competitive after deadly firestorms torched more than 12,000 homes and other structures in the Los Angeles area, leaving tens of thousands of people without a place to stay.

Already there are reports of rent-gouging, prompting elected leaders to issue stern warnings against the practice and pleading with the public to report unethical property owners who hike up

rents above the allotted 10% cap.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta said in a statement Saturday that it is illegal for landlords to accept rent that exceeds the cap, even if someone is offering to pay a higher amount.

"You cannot jack up prices and take advantage of disaster victims, plain and simple," he said at a news conference.

A modern three-bedroom condo in a downtown LA high-rise, for example, that was offered at \$5,500 a month in October popped

back up on Zillow this week with a new asking rent of \$8,500. On Saturday, the listing was removed.

The entire state has struggled with the twin crises of housing and homelessness, only recently starting to make inroads to build more affordable homes.

California law prohibits price-gouging after an emergency has been declared, meaning that individuals and businesses cannot increase the price of goods and services such as gas or rentals by more than 10%

EXCHANGE RATES			
Military rates			
Euro costs (Jan. 21)	0.95	Switzerland (Franc)	0.9074
British pound (Jan. 21)	\$1.19	Thailand (Baht)	34.07
Japanese yen (Jan. 21)	152.00	Turkey (NewLira)	35.5549
South Korean won (Jan. 21)	1418.00	(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)	
Commercial rates		INTEREST RATES	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769	Prime rate	7.50
Britain (Pound)	1.2307	Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50
Canada (Dollar)	1.4294	Federal funds market rate	4.33
China (Yuan)	7.3143	3-month bill	4.30
Denmark (Krone)	7.1628	30-year bond	4.86
Egypt (Pound)	50.3005		
Euro	0.9600		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7802		
Hungary (Forint)	395.02		
Israel (Shekel)	3.5670		
Japan (Yen)	155.55		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3082		
Norway (Krone)	11.3021		
Philippines (Peso)	58.09		
Poland (Zloty)	4.08		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7516		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3544		
South Korea (Won)	1443.00		

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MILITARY

No beards: ‘We’re Marines, we’re different’

BY MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Gen. Eric Smith, the Marine Corps commandant, said Marines are different, even when it comes to beards.

Smith told reporters Wednesday that the service would not make any changes to its regulations that would allow Marines to grow beards.

“We’re Marines, and we’re different. We don’t have beards,” he said during a Defense Writers Group discussion. “The Marine Corps has a brand, and we’re making our recruiting mission. We’ve always made our recruiting mission, and what we don’t want to do is tinker with the ethos of the Marine Corps — you joined us, we didn’t join you. You knew that coming in. You signed up. We don’t have beards, and you knew that coming in.”

Some Marines can grow a beard through a waiver process for pseudofolliculitis barbae, which causes painful razor bumps and disproportionately affects Black men.

“That’s a medical waiver, not a fashion waiver,” Smith said. “It’s not a ‘Well, I decided I wanted to.’”

All military services have faced growing legal and internal pressure to relax grooming standards



NICHOLAS PILCH/Department of Defense

Marine Corps Cpl. Jeremy Rojas shaves before a howitzer live-fire event at Fort Barfoot, Va., on Oct. 20.

as debates on social media and in various other forums highlight the struggle to balance tradition and uniformity with individual rights. Military officials have argued facial hair could prevent a perfect seal of a gas mask.

“When I retire, I’m going to grow one,” Smith added. “I won’t have to deal with a ... mask.”

In December 2022, a federal appeals court ruled three Sikh men should be allowed to go through Marine Corps recruit training

with their turbans and beards intact. The panel ruled the Marine Corps had not proved that allowing the recruits to keep their beards and turbans for religious reasons would threaten cohesion and uniformity.

Currently, airmen are not required to shave only if they have a religious exemption or a medical waiver for conditions such as pseudofolliculitis barbae.

In the latest National Defense Authorization Act, the annual must-pass bill that sets policy and spending priorities for the Pentagon, Congress wants the Air Force to examine the pros and cons of allowing airmen to grow beards, with a prospective April 1 deadline for service leaders to deliver findings to lawmakers.

The House Armed Services Committee in May approved an amendment requiring the Navy to brief committee members on a 2023 study by the Naval Health Research Center on the effect of beards on gas mask seals, with the briefing due by March 1.

For years, military branches have carried out various studies on the beard issue to determine whether regulations could be loosened for the rank and file. So far, no branch has taken the step beyond special exceptions.

In the case of the Army, soldiers being clean shaven became a requirement just before World War I when chemical weapons were deemed a serious threat. The Navy and the Coast Guard were the last branches to ban beards, doing so in 1985 and 1986, respectively.

Marine Corps seeks guidance on efforts to curb suicide within ranks

BY BRIAN McELHINEY
Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps is seeking feedback from active-duty troops about its programs to remove or secure the objects that facilitate suicide.

The service released a survey on Jan. 13 seeking Marines’ comments on currently available “lethal means” safety programs and “preferences for safety devices and storage locations,” according to a Marine Corps administration message issued that day.

Suicide remains a stubborn issue for the U.S. military. Last year, 62 Marines were among 363 active-duty service members who took their own lives, according to the Defense Suicide Prevention Office.

The Pentagon in November reported an active-duty suicide rate in 2023 of 28 suicide deaths for every 100,000 service members. That was a 12% increase over the previous year. The report was calculated based on an active-duty force of 1.28 million troops.

“Lethal means safety” refers to programs designed to remove access to objects that can be used to inflict self-harm, such as firearms,

sharp objects, other weapons or medication, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Suicide Prevention Office.

The voluntary survey is open to all active-duty Marines and Marines on active-duty operational support orders and aims to “to gauge awareness and preferences in messaging, safety devices, and location,” U.S. Marine Corps Headquarters’ Manpower and Reserve Affairs spokeswoman Maj. Melissa Spencer told Stars and Stripes by email Thursday.

“Survey results will enable us to tailor suicide-prevention efforts and develop messaging and programs that will be most relevant and impactful to our Marines, Sailors, and families,” she wrote.

The survey, which closes Jan. 31, is part of a larger effort by the Suicide Prevention Office to assess the effectiveness of its outreach and education on suicide prevention and lethal means safety, Spencer said.

The service is aiming to develop “a tailored lethal means safety plan,” she said.

“Results from this study will inform policies, programs, and practices to improve lethal means

safety practices for Marines and inform prevention efforts,” Spencer said.

A timeline for any improvements or changes to programs and outreach will be developed based on the results of the survey, Spencer wrote in a follow-up email Friday.

The survey should take less than 15 minutes and is anonymous, according to the announcement.

Defense Department suicide prevention efforts can be found at <https://www.dspo.mil>, and the Marine Corps also offers information on suicide prevention at www.usmc-mccs.org/news/keep-calm-and-carry-on-safely, Spencer wrote.

Among other resources, the websites have information about suicide hotlines, counseling referrals and tips for securing firearms via cable locks, lock boxes, gun safes and cases.

“Suicide prevention efforts remain a top priority for the Marine Corps, and prevention efforts are ongoing to ensure the Marine Corps is implementing the best ways to support Marines, Sailors, and their families,” Spencer said.

Houthis say they’ll now limit attacks to only Israeli ships

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Yemen’s Houthi rebels have signaled they now will limit their attacks in the Red Sea corridor to only Israeli-affiliated ships, just as a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip entered its second day Monday.

The Houthis’ announcement, made in an email sent to shippers and others on Sunday, likely won’t be enough to encourage global firms to reenter the route that’s crucial for cargo and energy shipments moving between Asia and Europe.

Their attacks have halved traffic through the region, cutting deeply into revenues for Egypt, which runs the Suez Canal linking the Red Sea to the Mediterranean.

“The ceasefire is considered fragile,” said Jakob P. Larsen, the head of maritime security for BIMCO, the largest international association representing shipowners.

“It is assessed that even minor deviations from the ceasefire agreements could lead to hostili-

ties, which would subsequently prompt the Houthis to again direct threats against a broader range of international shipping.”

The Houthis separately planned a military statement on Monday, likely about the decision.

The Houthis made the announcement through their Humanitarian Operations Coordination Center, saying it was “stopping sanctions” on the other vessels it has previously targeted since November 2023.

For Israeli ships, those “sanctions ... will be stopped upon the full implementation of all phases” of the ceasefire, it added.

However, the center left open resuming attacks against both the United States and the United Kingdom, which have launched airstrikes targeting the rebels over their seaborne assaults.

“In the event of any aggression ... the sanctions will be reinstated against the aggressor state,” the center said. “You will be promptly informed of such measures should they be implemented.”

MILITARY

DOD relocations overhaul meets resistance

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department’s effort to streamline its global system of shipping service members’ household goods is meeting resistance from the moving industry and a federal lawsuit challenging the bidding process for a multibillion-dollar contract.

The system overhaul would consolidate oversight and management to a single contractor that oversees and manages all domestic and international relocations for the military, Coast Guard and federal employees.

Single oversight is intended to increase customer satisfaction and tamp down costs, but many in the moving industry have balked. They compare the contract terms unfavorably to the current system.

In November 2021, U.S. Transportation Command awarded a \$20 billion contract to Houston-based HomeSafe Alliance LLC to handle the work being done by more than 900 commercial entities for roughly 300,000 moves a year.

More than three years later, the rollout of the so-called Global Household Goods Contract, or GHC, has made little headway, with growing resistance by much of the industry.

As of Monday, HomeSafe had completed a meager 607 household goods deliveries, according to an email Wednesday from the U.S. Transportation Command in response to a written query.

“Initially, I think industry was kind of split on whether GHC was going to be a good thing or a bad thing,” Katie McMichael, executive director of Movers for America, a coalition pushing back on GHC’s implementation, said in a phone interview Jan. 8.

“But I think what we’ve seen with the rollout of GHC is there have been a lot of areas that really were not well thought out,” she said.

‘Damaged goods’

The effort to streamline moves was sparked by a spate of complaints in 2018 by service members over late arrival of shipments, damaged goods and a lack of clarity on whom to blame for the failures.

Problems arising under the GHC model would rest on the shoulders of the sole entity overseeing relocations: HomeSafe Alliance.

Under GHC, HomeSafe, a joint venture



DANIEL MAYBERRY/U.S. Navy

Household goods inspector Faata Leafa watches a mover with Aloha International pack up a home in Honolulu in 2020.

between Tier One Relocation and KBR, formerly Kellogg Brown & Root, will eventually replace the roughly 900 forwarding agents who have until now handled military moves.

Forwarding agents — sometimes called transportation service providers — orchestrate domestic and international moves by hiring movers, truckers, ocean shippers and warehousing. In some cases, forwarding agents own subsidiaries to do that work.

“They’re creating something that’s never existed,” said Anthony Shipp, president and CEO of Hawaii-based M. Dyer Global, which is among those 900 forwarding companies.

If such an all-encompassing agent could have made a go of it, “it would already exist,” Shipp, who opposes GHC, said during a Jan. 7 phone interview.

“To this day, there’s no player in the market that would do something like that,” he said.

GHC will put his company’s forwarding operations, which account for about 25% of its revenue, “completely out of business,” Shipp said.

“So that’s one reason why we’re opposed,” he said.

The GHC contract for the use of his com-

pany’s trucks and warehouse space come with fixed rates “not favorable to us” and “an enormous amount of liability that doesn’t exist in the current program,” Shipp said.

“So, when you kind of put all that together, it just doesn’t make business sense for us to do it,” he said. “No mover really wants to sign up for that.”

‘Proprietary’ rate info

The Movers for America alliance primarily objects to the payment rates offered under the GHC contract and to complications arising from the federal Service Contract Act that could force moving companies to treat independent truckers as employees.

U.S. Transportation Command is leaving the issue of compensation to HomeSafe.

“Regarding rates, as the prime contractor for GHC, HomeSafe is responsible for building a sub-contractor network to fulfill contract terms to include sub-contractor compensation,” the command wrote in its email.

“It is important to note, specific information on rates is contract proprietary between HomeSafe and the providers in their network,” the email states.

As to the issue of independent contractors

and truckers, little wiggle room exists because GHC is a Federal Acquisition Regulation-based contract, according to the command’s email.

To comply with that regulation, HomeSafe and its subcontractors must pay at least minimum wage and furnish fringe benefits to workers, the email said.

McMichael said the industry has received “no guidance” from the Transportation Command, the Department of Labor or HomeSafe on how this impacts workers.

The bottom line for the alliance is that the entire GHC overhaul is ultimately unnecessary because the current system is working smoothly.

“The current program is seeing record high satisfaction rates,” she said.

“So, at this point, we really don’t support GHC moving forward because it’s over budget and behind in the timeline. It seems like a massive waste of taxpayers’ money.”

Target missed

In a November 2022 news release, the Transportation Command had projected that by the peak 2024 moving season “all domestic and international household goods and unaccompanied baggage shipments” would move under GHC.

After almost entirely missing that target, the command’s current projections are modest and “subject to change.”

“The DOD is planning to activate all installations in the continental U.S. by spring 2025,” the command wrote in its email. “International shipments under GHC are expected to begin no earlier than September 2025.”

A federal lawsuit filed by several moving companies late last year could further slow or even derail GHC.

The Suddath Companies, a major player in military relocations based in Jacksonville, Fla., filed suit Nov. 22 in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims alleging that Transportation Command violated the bidding process for GHC by changing terms after it was awarded.

Two additional companies joined the suit, with the plaintiffs asserting they would have submitted more favorable bids under the altered terms of service.

The lawsuit alleges that HomeSafe has been given almost four times as long to implement the program as was set out in the bid solicitation and provided an additional \$60 million to fund implementation.

Fort Moore trainee dies just weeks before graduation

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

ATLANTA—A 20-year-old Fort Moore trainee died in a “non-training-related incident” on the Georgia Army post about three weeks before he was expected to graduate from the service’s infantry entrance training, base officials said.

Pfc. McCallaster Foley of Alden, Iowa, died Jan. 8 after he was treated by drill sergeants and emergency responders at the scene of the incident in his training company’s living area, according to a statement from Fort Moore. He was

transferred to the installation’s Martin Army Community Hospital where he was pronounced dead, officials said.

The Fort Moore officials declined to provide further information about Foley’s death, citing an ongoing investigation into the incident.

Foley was on pace to graduate with his unit from the Army’s Infantry One State Unit Training, or OSUT, course on Jan. 31. OSUT



Foley

combines the Army’s basic military training and advanced training into a single 22-week infantry training course. Graduates then move into the service as 11B infantrymen or 11C mortarman.

Fort Moore officials said Foley had enlisted in the Army in April 2024 and committed to at least four years in the service.

McCallaster was a 2022 graduate from Iowa Falls-Alden High School in Iowa, according to his obituary. He then completed some coursework at Des Moines Area Community College in Iowa before pursuing his “unwavering passion

to serve” in the military, the obit reads.

“McCallaster had an adventurous, charismatic spirit that brought us all many smiles and laughs from the time he was very little,” his family wrote in the obituary. “He was beloved by those who had the honor of knowing him. He was a protector, passionate, genuine, humorous, determined, heartfelt, was always looking out for others, always willing to help, he loved big and gave the best hugs.”

Foley was passionate about “scuba diving, weightlifting,

snowboarding, constructing zip lines, helping on the farm, riding his motorcycle, assembling Legos, shooting guns and so much more,” his family wrote.

He is survived by his mother, father and three sisters, they said.

The Fort Moore community was “deeply saddened” by Foley’s lost, said Capt. Rachel Hilb, who served as Foley’s OSUT company commander in Fort Moore’s 198th Infantry Brigade.

“This young man was not just a soldier in training, he was a member of our battalion family,” Hilb said in a prepared statement.

MILITARY

Del Toro names 19 ships to end his term

By CAITLYN BURCHETT

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro in recent days has named more than a dozen future ships, including aircraft carriers and submarines, to culminate his time leading the sea service.

A total of 19 Navy ships have been named by Del Toro in the past two weeks. The ships span two aircraft carriers, four submarines, five destroyers, two fleet replenishment oilers, a frigate, an amphibious ship, an expeditionary medical ship, two ocean surveillance ships and a first-in-class amphibious ship.

The latest slew of ships to be named included the future USS



Del Toro

McClung, the first ship in the new McClung-class of medium landing ships. The Navy's Medium Landing Ship program, previously called the Light Amphibious Warship program, seeks to purchase and build 18 to 35 new amphibious ships to support Marine Corps operations. The ships are meant to transport troops and equipment from ship to shore. The first-in-class ship honors Maj. Megan McClung, a Marine Corps public affairs officer who was killed in action while serving in Iraq. This will be the first Navy vessel to bear her name.

"[The ship] will be an asset to the Marine Corps' amphibious capabilities, designed to greatly enhance operational flexibility and combat readiness," Del Toro said.

Also announced Thursday were the future USNS Joshua L. Goldberg and USNS Thomas D. Parham Jr. — two future John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oilers. The oilers will supply fuel and dry cargo to deployed warships while at sea.



EJ HERSOM/Department of Defense

Sailors practice a commissioning ceremony for the Arleigh Burke-class Flight III guided-missile destroyer USS Jack H. Lucas in Tampa, Fla., in 2023.

The day before Del Toro announced the names of three Flight III Arleigh Burke-class, guided-missile destroyers and one Constellation-class, guided-missile frigate. Those warships are future destroyers USS Ray Mabus, USS Kyle Carpenter, and USS Robert R. Ingram and future frigate USS Everett Alvarez Jr.

The three destroyers honor former Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, and Medal of Honor recipients Lance Cpl. Kyle Carpenter and Navy Corpsman Robert Ingram.

The destroyers join two others named earlier in the month — the future USS Robert Kerrey and USS Intrepid. Arleigh Burke-class destroyers incorporate stealth techniques, allowing these ships to conduct a variety of operations with a wide range of air, surface and underwater warfighting abilities.

Future frigate USS Everett Alvarez Jr. pays tribute to the first American aviator shot down over Vietnam and the longest-held prisoner of war in North Vietnam, according to the Navy History and Heritage Command. The constellation-class, guided-missile frigate represents the Navy's next-generation small surface combat vessel. This ship class is designed to be a multi-mission warship capable of operations in deep water or near shore.

"Everywhere that these ships sail it will represent the legacies of these four leaders and heroes who placed country over self and service above all else," Del Toro said Wednesday at the Naval Surface Force National Symposium in Arlington.

Del Toro announced Monday that the names of the Navy's next two Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft

carriers, which will honor former presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. The future USS William J. Clinton and USS George W. Bush will be the fifth and sixth Ford-class carriers.

Ford-class ships are the Navy's newest aircraft carriers, packed with never-before-seen technology meant to carry the service into the 21st century. The Ford-class carriers are being outfitted with electromagnetic-powered aircraft launch systems and advanced arresting gear. The technology, the Navy said, means the air-wing can get into the air — and return to the battle after rearming and refueling — faster than with the traditional steam-and-hydraulics systems that have been the mainstay for decades.

The same day, the names of four future submarines were announced in a video message to the Navy's submarine community.

"Today's submarine force is the most capable force in the world and in the history of U.S. Navy," Del Toro said. "It is my honor and privilege to announce the names of the future submarines which will protect us from deep below the ocean's waves."

The next Columbia-class submarine will be the USS Groton, named for the Connecticut town considered to be the submarine capital of the world because it is where Navy submarines are built. The Columbia-class submarine is a new class of nuclear subs designed to replace the Navy's Ohio-class submarines. They serve as a launch platform for ballistic missiles. The Groton will be the third Columbia submarine.

Additionally, three Virginia-class submarines were named the future USS Potomac, USS Norfolk and USS Brooklyn. Virginia-class submarines are attack warships designed to seek and destroy enemy submarines and surface ships, conduct intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and engage in

mine warfare. The ships are armed with Tomahawk cruise missiles and carry special operation forces that can deploy from the submarine.

Last week, Del Toro named a future San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock USS Travis Manion, along with two T-AGOS — the first two ships in the newly named Explorer class of ocean surveillance ships — the future USNS Don Walsh and the future USNS Victor Vescovo. Operated by the Military Sea Lift Command, the Explorer-class ships are designed to play a role in the Navy's anti-submarine warfare operations.

The amphibious ship, which embarks Marines and their equipment, honors a Marine who was ambushed while searching a suspected insurgent house in Iraq's Anbar province. As he led a counterattack, Manion was fatally wounded by a sniper while aiding his fellow Marines.

He deliberately exposed himself to heavy enemy fire to draw fire away from other wounded Marines. For his actions, he received the Silver Star and the Bronze Star with valor.

Del Toro also named a future Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ship USNS Portsmouth during a ship naming ceremony last week at the Naval Medical Center in Portsmouth, Va. Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ships are designed to optimize hospital-level medical care in support of maritime operations.

Del Toro was sworn in as the Navy's top civilian leader in 2021 under President Joe Biden's administration. As Biden's presidency comes to a close, so does Del Toro's time as leading the sea service.

President-elect Donald Trump, who enters office Monday, has tapped businessman and mega donor John Phelan as his pick for the next Navy secretary.

Officials: Accidents, not Russia, behind undersea cable damage

The Washington Post

LONDON — Ruptures of undersea cables that have rattled European security officials in recent months were likely the result of maritime accidents rather than Russian sabotage, according to several U.S. and European intelligence officials.

The determination reflects an emerging consensus among U.S. and European security services, according to senior officials from three countries involved in ongoing investigations of a string of incidents in which critical seabed energy and communications lines have been severed.

The cases raised suspicion that Russia was targeting undersea infrastructure as part of a broader campaign of hybrid attacks across Europe, and prompted stepped-up security measures including an announcement last week that NATO would launch new patrol and surveillance operations in the Baltic Sea.

But so far, officials said, investigations involving the United States and a half-dozen European security services have turned up no indication that commercial ships suspected of dragging anchors across seabed systems did so intentionally or at the direction

of Moscow.

Instead, U.S. and European officials said that the evidence gathered to date — including intercepted communications and other classified intelligence — points to accidents caused by inexperienced crews serving aboard poorly maintained vessels.

U.S. officials cited "clear explanations" that have come to light in each case indicating a likelihood that the damage was accidental, and a lack of evidence suggesting Russian culpability. Officials with two European intelligence services said that they concurred with U.S. assessments.

Despite initial suspicions that Russia was involved, one European official said there is "counter evidence" suggesting otherwise. The U.S. and European officials declined to elaborate and spoke on the condition of anonymity, citing the sensitivity of ongoing investigations.

The probes center on three incidents over the past 18 months in which ships traveling to or from Russian ports were suspected of severing key links in a vast underwater network of conduits that carry gas, electricity and internet traffic to millions of people across northern Europe.

In the most recent case, Finland seized an oil tanker suspected of dragging its anchor across an undersea power line connecting Finland and Estonia. Finnish authorities said the vessel, the Eagle S, is part of a "shadow fleet" of tanker ships helping Moscow sell oil on global markets in violation of international sanctions.

Previous cases involved a Hong Kong-registered container ship, the NewnewPolar Bear, that ruptured a natural gas pipeline in the Gulf of Finland in October 2023, and a Chinese ship, the Yi Peng 3, that cut two data cables in Swedish waters in November last year.

MILITARY

US OKs \$39M sale of standoff missiles to Japan

BY SETH ROBSON AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO—Japan’s counterstrike capabilities are set to receive a boost from the U.S. Defense Department, which on Wednesday backed a \$39 million sale of air-to-surface missiles for the country’s F-15J and F-35 fighters.

The Defense Security Cooperation Agency notified Congress that it approved the sale of 16 joint air-to-surface standoff missiles with extended range, or JASSM-ER, according to a notice on the agency’s website.

The U.S. Air Force has fielded the JASSM-ER, which has a range of 500 nautical miles, since 2014, according to manufacturer Lockheed Martin.

“A 2,000-pound class weapon, JASSM can be employed in adverse weather conditions, day or night, using a state-of-the-art infrared seeker and enhanced digital anti-jam Global Positioning System (GPS) to dial into specific target aimpoints,” the weapons maker states on its website.

Japan stations F-35A Lightning II fighters at Misawa Air Base in the country’s northeast and has committed to purchasing 147 of the multirole stealth jets.



A Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile Extended Range, or JASSM-ER, is launched for the first time from an F-16 Fighting Falcon over the Gulf of Mexico, on Sept. 19, 2018. The U.S. Defense Department is backing a \$39 million sale of the air-to-surface missiles for Japan’s F-15J and F-35 fighters.

The country’s military also wants to arm its F-15 air superiority fighters with the new missiles, the Ministry of Defense said in a July 4 statement. It has 200 Mitsubishi F-15s, according an annual defense

paper released last summer.

Sixty-eight of the fighters are being upgraded to mount standoff missiles, according to a report posted on the ministry’s website. Standoff missiles allow fighters to reach

enemy targets while remaining beyond the range of anti-air missiles.

In recent years, China has rapidly expanded its military and pressed territorial claims in Taiwan and in the South and East Chi-

na seas. Japan has moved to reinterpret its pacifist constitution to allow its forces counterstrike capability against enemies in times of war.

China has more than 1,900 ballistic missiles that can reach Japan, according to a 2022 Pentagon report on Beijing’s military capabilities.

The approval for Japan’s air-to-ground missile purchase comes just over a year after the U.S. approved a \$2.35 billion sale of 400 Tomahawk missiles to Japan.

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

The Tomahawks, also used by the U.S. Navy, can be launched from Aegis destroyers of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force. A Tomahawk can strike targets at a range of 1,000 miles, according to its maker, Raytheon Technologies.

The air-to-ground missile sale includes training munitions, anti-jam global positioning receivers, support equipment, spare parts, accessories, repair and return support, software, personnel training, and airlift and transport support, according to the U.S. sale approval.

Former Army JAG School attorney sentenced for Russia contact

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

A former Army first lieutenant is going to prison for unlawfully deleting training materials and lying to investigators about a call he made to the Russian diplomatic mission in Washington.

Manfredo Martin-Michael Madrigal, 38, was handed a term of four years and six months Thursday during his sentencing in a federal court in Virginia, according to a Justice Department statement the same day.

He had pleaded guilty in July to one count of destroying Army materials and three counts of making false statements.



Madrigal

Madrigal, an attorney who was assigned to a staff position at the Judge Advocate General’s Legal Center and School in Charlottesville, was under investigation by the Army in early 2022 for not disclosing a previous DUI arrest, the statement said.

Amid the investigation, he filmed himself deleting online JAG training materials without authorization and “graphically describing ill will toward the Army,” according to the DOJ statement, which didn’t give the date of that

crime.

The training materials were related to national security, the Charlotte (N.C.) Observer reported in July, citing an FBI affidavit. Madrigal sent the video he took of himself deleting the materials to a woman described as a former romantic partner, according to the affidavit.

Later the same day, Madrigal called the Russian Embassy in Washington. The Justice Department statement doesn’t provide further details about the call, which lasted about 2 minutes and 26 seconds, the Observer reported.

Madrigal told the woman that Moscow wanted to know what he knew and also that he was planning to travel to Russia, according to

court filings.

On Feb. 22, 2022, Madrigal was discharged from the JAG School, and in an exit statement he denied that he had been in contact with any foreign nationals, according to the Justice Department statement.

Days before his separation from the Army, Madrigal told the woman that the Russians had reached out to him, but a search of his phone records did not show any incoming calls from Russian officials, according to the affidavit cited by the Charlotte Observer.

FBI agents interviewed him in April and May of 2022. He repeated the lie about his contact with foreign nationals and also denied any involvement in the deletion of the

Army materials, the DOJ said.

Madrigal had an active security clearance and served overseas on sensitive operations before working at the JAG School, the Justice Department added.

Madrigal’s attorney, John N. Maher, sent McClatchy News a statement in July saying the case was launched because of authorities’ “suspicion” of espionage.

“What the facts truly prove is that First Lieutenant Madrigal distinguished himself as an 82nd Airborne Paratrooper and a senior non-commissioned officer with the 75th Ranger Regiment, having conducted onerous and life threatening missions our country asked him to perform,” Maher said.

Ultrasound, fetal DNA test used to convict soldier of sex assault

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

An ultrasound and a DNA test on a female soldier after she fainted in formation led to the conviction of another soldier for sexual assault two years after they served together in Poland, according to Army officials.

Sgt. Trent Goines, a 31-year-old petroleum supply specialist with the 101st Brigade Support Battalion of the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, faced a court-mar-

tial for the sexual assault of the female soldier, and he was convicted Dec. 6 by a jury at Fort Riley in Kansas.

Goines and the female soldier were serving in Gdynia, Poland, on June 12, 2022, when they went out together after work with another friend, according to the Army Office of Special Trial Counsel, which prosecuted the case. The three drank alcohol late into the night and decided to share a hotel room.

The female soldier fell asleep first and woke up several times to find Goines touching her but had no memory of sexual intercourse, according to prosecutors. The next morning, Goines texted her asking what she remembered from the night before.

Her memory was fuzzy, and she told him that she could only remember a few details. Goines assured her that they did not have sex, prosecutors said.

But in September 2022, the fe-

male soldier passed out during formation and soon discovered she was pregnant. An ultrasound determined the conception date was June 12, 2022. Later, fetal DNA testing confirmed Goines was the biological father of the unborn baby, according to prosecutors.

Col. Alexander Pickands, the military judge in the case, sentenced Goines to 15 months in prison along with a reduction in rank to E-1 and a dishonorable discharge.

He will be required to register as a sex offender upon his release.

An attorney for Goines did not respond to a request for comment.

“Trust and confidence in one’s fellow soldiers are of paramount importance within our ranks,” Capt. Molly Sevcik, prosecutor on the case, said in a statement Wednesday. “When a noncommissioned officer sexually assaults another soldier, it erodes the organizational structure and trust and jeopardizes the mission.”

MILITARY

Afghanistan still looms large for security adviser

Green Beret who served 2 combat tours has said US should have kept Bagram, troops in country

By CRAIG WHITLOCK
The Washington Post

In February 2020, Rep. Michael Waltz, then a first-term GOP lawmaker, received a coveted invitation to fly to his home state of Florida aboard Air Force One. During the flight, he seized the opportunity to lobby President Donald Trump about an issue to which he had devoted most of his career: the war in Afghanistan.

Trump had just approved a conditional peace agreement with the Taliban that called for the full withdrawal of U.S. troops within 14 months. Waltz, a Green Beret who had served two combat tours in Afghanistan, pleaded with the president to reconsider, arguing that the Taliban couldn't be trusted and that the U.S. military needed to stay indefinitely. Yet Trump, who had campaigned on a promise to end the war, was unmoved. "We've been there so long," he told Waltz, according to the congressman's recently published memoirs. "It's time."

Despite their fundamental disagreement over the war, Trump has tapped Waltz to return with him to the White House as national security adviser. The job does not require Senate confirmation but is one of the most powerful posts in Washington. In an administration that Trump is stacking with figures who share his isolationist leanings, Waltz stands out

as the opposite: a post 9/11 veteran who still favors long-term commitments of U.S. troops to fight al-Qaida, Islamic State and other terrorist groups overseas.

Waltz's views are a reminder that sharp differences exist within Trump's inner circle about how his "America first" campaign rhetoric should apply to myriad national-security challenges facing his administration.

In a recent interview with The Washington Post, Waltz, 50, downplayed his differences with Trump over Afghanistan and pledged to faithfully execute the boss's wishes, pointedly drawing a contrast with aides who tried to obstruct Trump's foreign policy decisions during his first term. "He welcomes disagreement. He welcomes the vigorous debate. But when he makes the decision, he expects you to implement it, and I will do that," Waltz said.

At the same time, Waltz has made clear that his National Security Council staff at the White House—including career government employees—must be loyal to Trump. He recently told Breitbart News that he would ensure all staffers "are 100 percent aligned with the president's agenda."

Brian Hughes, a spokesman for Trump's transition team, described Waltz's difference of opinion with Trump over the 2020 deal with the Taliban as "not a dis-

agreement but a discussion. Rep. Waltz clearly agreed with President Trump that there had to be a political solution in Afghanistan."

With his move into his West Wing office on Monday, Waltz is responsible for coordinating U.S. policy on the world's most pressing flash points, including relations with China, Russia, Ukraine and Iran. But he—and Trump—will also have to confront lingering fallout from Afghanistan and who should be held responsible for the war's many failures.

During last year's presidential campaign, Trump promised to fire generals and diplomats who oversaw the 2021 pullout, excoriating them—and President Joe Biden—for the disastrous retreat.

Waltz also has criticized the Biden administration for botching the U.S. exit from Afghanistan. But unlike Trump, he has said it was a mistake for U.S. troops to leave and that they should have stayed for decades, if necessary, to deter jihadis and to maintain control over Bagram.

In interviews, televised appearances and his writings, Waltz has repeatedly warned that terrorists are regrouping in Afghanistan and will try to attack America again as they did on 9/11. He has suggested the Pentagon may have to send forces back to Afghanistan eventually, just as it did to Iraq to fight the Islamic State three years after



Michael Waltz

Michael Waltz served as a Green Beret in Helmand province, Afghanistan, in 2006.

pulling out of that country in 2011.

"If we don't fight the war on terrorism in places like Kandahar, that war will come to places like Kansas City," Waltz wrote in "Hard Truths: Think and Lead Like a Green Beret," a memoir that he published in October. "That's not hyperbole—it is historical fact."

In his interview with The Post, Waltz declined to specify how U.S. policy toward Afghanistan might change under Trump or to elaborate on scenarios under which U.S. forces could return there. But he emphasized that the United States needed to improve its ability to collect intelligence from inside the country.

Ever since Waltz rejoined the U.S. Army in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the war in Afghanistan has shaped his entire career in the military, politics, media and business. His extensive experience in the field left him more hawkish on Afghanistan than Trump.

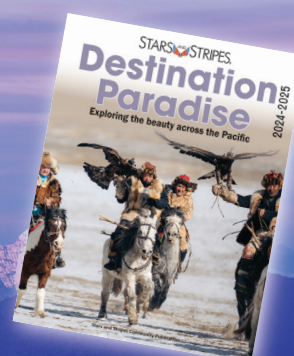
Colleagues and friends say the lessons Waltz drew from Afghanistan have influenced his worldview and given him credibility with Trump, even if he and the president have disagreed on the war.

"If you look at the breadth and depth of his experience, this guy has done it all, from the street level to the pinnacle of national security and his time in Congress," said Ryan McCarthy, who served as Secretary of the Army during Trump's presidency and has known Waltz since the 1990s, when they attended Virginia Military Institute, or VMI. "National security runs through his veins. It's his passion, his life."

Michael Vickers, a former senior U.S. intelligence official and Green Beret who worked with Waltz during the Bush and Obama administrations, said his main challenge as national security adviser would be to serve as "an hon-

SEE ADVISER ON PAGE 8

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MILITARY

Adviser: Lawmaker's world view shaped by time in Afghanistan

FROM PAGE 7

est broker" in the decision-making process at the White House and as a conduit between Trump and senior members of his Cabinet. He said Waltz was well-qualified for the role.

Florida to Afghanistan

A native Floridian, Waltz grew up in Jacksonville, raised by a single mother. In 1992, he moved to Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains to attend VMI, a state-supported military college known for its exacting academic, physical and disciplinary standards.

Of the 430 "rats" — VMI's term for new cadets — who enrolled with him, fewer than half made it to graduation four years later, he said in an oral-history interview for the Library of Congress. "You get your head shaved every Monday. You get the crap beat out of you by the upperclassmen. And eventually, at the end, you're recognized as a human being," he added.

Waltz received an Army ROTC scholarship and majored in international relations. He studied abroad at the University of Valencia and became fluent in Spanish. He also boxed for the VMI club team.

One of his roommates, Jon Sherrod, said Waltz thrived on the challenges that the school threw at them. "Mike chose VMI because of its rigorous standards. At 18, he was more clear-eyed about that than I ever was," Sherrod recalled.

Upon graduation, Waltz was commissioned into the Army and assigned to an armored cavalry unit. He graduated from the Army's Ranger school, and was selected to join the Special Forces and become a Green Beret.

In October 2000, Waltz left the Army to take a job as a management trainee with a diamond company. But a year later, after the 9/11 attacks, he rejoined the military as a part-time soldier in the Army National Guard, he said in his interview with The Post.

His introduction to Afghanistan came when he deployed with a Special Forces unit to Central Asia in 2003. From a base in Uzbekistan, he made brief trips into Afghanistan that didn't involve combat, he told The Post.

When his call-up with the National Guard ended the following year, he landed a civilian staff job at the Pentagon in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, focusing on counternarcotics policy. Because Afghanistan produced most of the world's opium, he wrote in his memoir, the country demanded much of his time.

In September 2005, his National Guard unit returned to Afghanistan for a year-long deployment. As a captain with the 20th Special Forces Group, Waltz led a team of



ALEX BRANDON/AP

Rep. Michael Waltz, R-Fla., left, speaks about Pete Hegseth as President Donald Trump's choice to be Defense secretary, appears before Hegseth's confirmation hearing, at the Capitol on Jan. 14.

Green Berets that served as a liaison to NATO forces and other allies in southern Afghanistan.

Conditions had deteriorated since his last call-up. In remote areas, U.S. troops began to find themselves outnumbered by the resurgent Taliban.

'You're in the buzz saw'

In May 2006, Waltz and five other U.S. Special Forces personnel were guiding about three dozen allied troops from the United Arab Emirates on a mission to Musa Qala, in northern Helmand province, to scout a location for a new firebase, according to an account provided by Waltz in "Warrior Diplomat," another book that he published in 2014.

An operations officer at command headquarters had warned Waltz not to go, saying the route was too risky because of an influx of Taliban fighters. But Waltz and the UAE forces, which were part of the U.S.-led military coalition in Afghanistan, resolved to press ahead anyway, he wrote.

After a few hours, their convoy ran into an ambush in Sangin, where Taliban armed with mortars and rocket launchers pinned them down. The convoy became separated and struggled to fight its way out, Waltz wrote.

As Waltz's armored Humvee hurtled along a dirt track, a Taliban sniper hit Gordon Cook, a Special Forces medic riding in the exposed rear of the vehicle. Cook was hit in the chest, right arm and left thigh, opening his femoral artery. In an interview with The Post, Cook said he remained conscious, but began to bleed out.

Under fire, Waltz crawled into the back of the Humvee and applied a tourniquet to Cook's leg just below the crotch, according to Cook. The wounded medic said he was drenched in blood and in the "worst pain of my life." But the tourniquet worked and the bleeding slowed.

Yet they weren't out of danger. Moments later, Cook recalled, he saw Waltz briefly knocked cold by a Taliban rocket that landed near-

by. "I looked over and he had dirt and black s— all over his face and eyelids," Cook said. "But then he got up, kind of shook it off and started returning fire."

Miraculously, the convoy escaped without any fatalities. Cook and two UAE soldiers were evacuated by helicopter to a field hospital.

Despite the ambush, Waltz and the UAE commander wanted to continue their original mission, according to his book. The convoy regrouped and prepared to drive to Musa Qala, 30 miles north.

When Waltz radioed their plan to headquarters, however, the staff warned him that the firefight in Sangin was just a taste of what lay ahead. Surveillance aircraft showed a larger Taliban force massing nearby, according to Scott Mann, an Army lieutenant colonel who was on the headquarters staff.

"Of course, like a good Special Forces captain, he wanted to push on," Mann, now retired, recalled in an interview. "I said, 'Hey man, you're going into a buzz saw. In fact, you're in the buzz saw.'"

Waltz listened and the convoy turned around. Over the following 12 hours, his team narrowly eluded Taliban fighters in close pursuit, thanks in part to a U.S. Air Force AC-130 gunship that wiped out two groups of insurgents.

For his actions, Waltz was awarded a Bronze Star with a "V" device. Cook, the medic, said he thought Waltz deserved additional recognition.

Years later, he offered to help nominate Waltz for a Silver Star, the U.S. military's third-highest war decoration, for gallantry in action. But Waltz demurred. "He just said something to the effect of, 'I'm not a medal chaser. Don't do that,'" Cook recalled.

Cook said he remains a fervent admirer of Waltz — even though he's not a fan of Trump.

"I'm not at all on the same political wavelength as Mike Waltz, but he saved my life that day and his bravery was unquestionable," he said.

'They were full of it'

Waltz returned to his civilian job at the Pentagon in late 2006 and grew frustrated by a disconnect between how senior officials in Washington viewed the war and what he had observed in the field.

In his first book, Waltz wrote that the war had become "rudderless" because the Bush administration was preoccupied with the war in Iraq and had "basically outsourced" Afghanistan to NATO allies. Waltz strongly felt NATO was not up to the task. He had dealt with French, Dutch and other NATO troops in Afghanistan and found them risk-averse, difficult to coordinate and badly equipped.

Waltz to The Post his experiences with NATO forces left a lasting impression — one that echoes Trump's harsh criticism of the military alliance.

"NATO was a phenomenal alliance in deterring the Cold War," Waltz said. "But to see what a sad state their equipment has become and how politicized their chain of command was operationally in the field has certainly impacted my views now."

At the Pentagon, Waltz took a new policy job as a country director for Afghanistan, then was detailed to the White House to work on counterterrorism issues for Vice President Dick Cheney.

As a junior White House staffer, however, he often bit his tongue in briefings when generals gave rosy assessments about how the war was unfolding, he said in his oral history interview. He became especially irked when they exaggerated their progress in training the Afghan security forces, a keystone of the U.S. war strategy.

Waltz said he witnessed "general after general saying, 'Mr. President, I can turn this military, this Afghan army, around on my watch.' And I knew they were full of it."

At the outset of the Obama administration, Waltz briefly returned to his civilian job at the Pentagon. In March 2009, however, his National Guard unit mobilized again and he deployed for a third time to Afghanistan, this time as a major. Obama had campaigned on a promise to fix the war and eventually boosted the number of U.S. troops to 100,000. In his books, Waltz wrote that the wave of reinforcements created a new set of problems, including a top-heavy and unresponsive chain of command.

He also disagreed with Obama's strategy for exiting Afghanistan, according to his memoirs. Waltz felt the United States needed to make an open-ended military commitment and not let up in Afghanistan. Unlike many in Washington, he still believed the Taliban could be defeated outright.

"The underlying theme of ev-

everything we were discussing seemed to be how to end the war rather than how to win it," he wrote in "Warrior Diplomat."

Security firms, interviews

Disenchanted with Obama's policies, Waltz resigned from his civilian government job in 2011. While he remained a reservist in the Army, he co-founded two private-sector companies in the field of national security. One was Askari Associates LLC, a small geopolitical consulting firm. The other was Metis Solutions LLC, a Virginia-based defense contractor that ultimately earned him millions of dollars, documents show.

According to federal contracting records, Metis operated primarily at first as a services provider for the U.S. Special Operations Command. In 2016, a Northern Virginia venture capital firm, Blue Delta Capital Partners, invested in Metis, fueling an expansion. With Waltz as CEO, the company grew from a handful of staff to 400 employees, with operations in 20 states and nine countries, according to a podcast interview that Waltz gave last year.

Waltz sold his stake in the company when he ran for Congress in 2018, ultimately netting him between \$5 million and \$26 million, according to a financial disclosure form he submitted in 2020.

Meanwhile, Waltz's credentials as a Green Beret and Afghanistan veteran opened doors for him in the media. The impetus was a 2014 deal negotiated by the Obama administration for the release of Bowe Bergdahl, an Army private whom the Taliban had held prisoner for five years. When Bergdahl was freed, Obama met with his parents in the Rose Garden and praised the soldier as a hero.

The description angered Waltz, who went public in interviews with his concerns. Waltz had led Special Forces teams that carried out an intensive — and risky — search for Bergdahl in 2009 when he went missing from a tiny outpost in eastern Afghanistan.

A telegenic Green Beret, Waltz soon found a regular home on Fox News, where he became a national security commentator and a critic of Obama's foreign policy.

Waltz became the first Green Beret to win a seat in Congress in November 2018. Though Waltz did not deploy again to Afghanistan, he remained in the Army National Guard until 2023, when he retired as a colonel.

During his first term in Congress, Waltz bonded with Trump on a May 2020 trip to Cape Canaveral, Fla. Their relationship strengthened during last year's presidential campaign.

Waltz was one of the loudest voices to defend Trump in August after a dustup at Arlington National Cemetery.

NATION

Returns: Some goals may be hard to achieve

FROM PAGE 1

after the ceremony. Dozens of executive orders have already been prepared for his signature to clamp down on border crossings, increase fossil fuel development and end diversity and inclusion programs across the federal government.

Declaring that government faces a “crisis of trust,” Trump said in his inaugural address that under his administration “our sovereignty will be reclaimed. Our safety will be restored. The scales of justice will be rebalanced.”

Trump claimed “a mandate to completely and totally reverse a horrible betrayal,” promising to “give the people back their faith, their wealth, their democracy and indeed their freedom.”

“From this moment on,” he added, “America’s decline is over.”

The executive orders are the first step in what Trump is calling “the complete restoration of America and the revolution of common sense.”

Other goals will prove more difficult, perhaps testing the patience of supporters who were promised quick success. Trump has talked about lowering prices after years of inflation, but his plans for tariffs on imports from foreign countries could have the opposite effect.

Frigid weather rewrote the pageantry of the day. Trump’s swearing-in was moved indoors to the Capitol Rotunda — the first time that has happened in 40 years — and the inaugural parade was replaced by an event at a downtown arena. Throngs of Trump support-

ters who descended on the city to watch the inaugural ceremony outside the Capitol from the National Mall were left to find other places to view the festivities.

At the Capitol, Vance was sworn in first, taking the oath read by Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh on a Bible given to him by his great-grandmother. Trump followed moments after noon, using both a family Bible and the one used by President Abraham Lincoln at his 1861 inauguration as Chief Justice John Roberts administered his oath.

A cadre of billionaires and tech titans — including Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos, Tim Cook and Sundar Pichai — were given prominent positions in the Capitol Rotunda, mingling with Trump’s incoming team before the ceremony began. Also there was Elon Musk, the world’s richest man, who is expected to lead an effort to slash spending and federal employees.

Trump and his wife, Melania, were greeted at the North Portico of the executive mansion by outgoing President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden for the customary tea and coffee reception. It was a stark departure from four years ago, when Trump refused to acknowledge Biden’s victory or attend his inauguration.

“Welcome home,” Biden said to Trump after the president-elect stepped out of the car. The two presidents, who have spent years bitterly criticizing each other, shared a limo on the way to the Capitol. After the ceremony, Trump walked with Biden to the



KENNY HOLSTON, THE NEW YORK TIMES/AP

President Donald Trump, center, celebrates with Barron Trump, from left, Melania Trump, Eric Trump, Ivanka Trump and Tiffany Trump after being sworn in at the 60th Presidential Inauguration in the Rotunda of the Capitol in Washington on Monday.

building’s east side, where Biden departed via helicopter to begin his post-presidential life.

Trump’s inauguration realized a political comeback without precedent in American history. Four years ago, he was voted out of the White House during an economic collapse caused by the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. Trump denied his defeat and tried to cling to power. He directed his supporters to march on the Capitol while lawmakers were certifying the election results, sparking a riot that interrupted the country’s tradition of the peaceful transfer of power.

But Trump never lost his grip on the Republican Party and was undeterred by criminal cases and two assassination attempts as he steamrolled rivals and harnessed voters’ exasperation with inflation

and illegal immigration.

Trump used his inaugural address to repeat his claims that he was targeted by political prosecutions, and he promised to begin “fair, equal and impartial justice.”

He also acknowledged that he was taking office on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which honors the slain civil rights hero. Trump said, “We will strive together to make his dream a reality,” and he thanked Black and Latino voters for their support in November.

Now Trump is the first person convicted of a felony — for falsifying business records related to hush money payments — to serve as president. He pledged to “preserve, protect and defend” the Constitution from the same spot that was overrun by his supporters on Jan. 6, 2021. He’s said that

one of his first acts in office will be to pardon many of those who participated in the riot.

Trump has pledged to go further and move faster in enacting his agenda than during his first term, and already the country’s political, business and technology leaders have realigned themselves to accommodate Trump.

Democrats who once formed a “resistance” are now divided over whether to work with Trump or defy him.

Billionaires have lined up to meet with Trump as they acknowledge his unrivaled power in Washington and his ability to wield the levers of government to help or hurt their interests.

The Washington Post and The Associated Press contributed to this report

Orders: Executive orders would rename Gulf of Mexico, highest US peak

FROM PAGE 1

ahead of Trump’s swearing-in ceremony. The president has vowed to take action on a slew of orders on the first day of his second term.

While the exact scope of the orders is still unclear, they are likely to invite legal challenges.

The gender order was cast by the official as intended to protect women from gender ideology. The effort defines two sexes and would require agencies to give force to the definitions and terms in the order when applying statutes and regulations.

Trump campaigned on rolling back transgender protections, including in women’s sports.

His campaign highlighted the issue in particular, spending millions on anti-trans campaign ads and at rallies, where Trump regularly claimed transgender athletes had an unfair advantage over their competitors.

The order seeks to mandate that agencies will use the term sex not gender and would have the secretaries of State, Homeland Security and other agencies ensure that official documents, including passports and visas, reflect sex accurately, according to the incoming official.

It would also seek to ensure that Americans’ rights to free speech and religious freedom are being protected, according to the official, and that taxpayer funds are not being used for transition health care.

The order would also protect spaces for women in facilities, including in prisons and rape shelters.

The attorney general would also provide explicit guidance on the order, the official added.

The second order would end DEI initiatives in the federal government, targeting diversity practices that have drawn the ire of

conservatives, who have cast the measures as discriminatory against white Americans.

The backlash to those programs has seen a number of prominent companies halt or scale back their DEI efforts in recent months.

Conservative activists have challenged corporate diversity efforts aimed at boosting underrepresented groups, following the U.S. Supreme Court’s ban on affirmative action in college admissions in 2023.

Additional actions on DEI are forthcoming, the official said.

Concerning immigration, it’s unclear how Trump would carry out some of his executive orders, including ending automatic citizenship for everyone born in the country, while others were expected to be immediately challenged in the courts.

The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to preview some of the orders expected later Mon-

day.

Immigrant communities were bracing for the crack-down that Trump, a Republican, had been promising throughout his campaign and again at a rally Sunday just ahead of his inauguration.

The official previewed a sweeping update of what was to come as the Trump administration gears up to make do on a campaign promise to crack down on illegal immigration and carry out mass deportations. The measures seemed designed to bolster border security including sending an undetermined amount of troops to the southern border.

One of the key announcements is the effort to end birthright citizenship — one of Trump’s most sweeping immigration efforts yet to redefine what it means to be American.

Birthright citizenship means anyone born in the United States

automatically becomes an American citizen. It’s been in place for over a century and applies to children born to someone in the country illegally or in the U.S. on a tourist or student visa who plans to return to their home country. Trump’s effort to end it is certain to face legal challenges, and there was no information provided on how he intends to carry it out.

Trump also will sign an order renaming the Gulf of Mexico, making it the Gulf of America. And the highest mountain in North America, now known as Mount Denali, will revert back to Mount McKinley, its name until President Barack Obama changed it. The renaming is to honor “American greatness,” according to a preview of the orders posted online by Trump’s incoming press secretary.

Bloomberg News and The Associated Press contributed to this report..

NATION



EVAN VUCCI/AP

President-elect Donald Trump dances with The Village People at a rally ahead of the 60th Presidential Inauguration, on Sunday, in Washington. Eight years ago, Trump reportedly struggled to enlist stars to be part of the swearing-in and the various glitzy balls that follow.

Stars not avoiding Trump's second inauguration like they did in 2017

BY LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Carrie Underwood might not be Beyoncé or Garth Brooks in the celebrity superstar ecosystem. But the singer's participation in President Donald Trump's inauguration is nevertheless a sign of the changing tides, where mainstream entertainers, from Nelly to The Village People are more publicly and more enthusiastically associating with the new administration.

Eight years ago, Trump reportedly struggled to enlist stars to be part of the swearing-in and the various glitzy balls that follow. The concurrent protest marches around the nation had more famous entertainers than the swearing-in, which stood in stark contrast to someone like Barack Obama, whose second inaugural ceremony had performances from Beyoncé, James Taylor and Kelly Clarkson and a series of starry onlookers.

There were always some celebrity Trump supporters, like Kid Rock, Hulk Hogan, Jon Voight, Rosanne Barr, Mike Tyson, Sylvester Stallone and Dennis Rodman, to name a few. But Trump's victory this time around was decisive and while Hollywood may always skew largely liberal, the slate of names participating in his inauguration weekend events has improved.

Kid Rock, Billy Ray Cyrus, The Village People and Lee Greenwood all performed at a MAGA style rally Sunday. Those performing at inaugural balls include the rapper Nelly, country music band Rascal Flatts, country singer Jason Aldean and singer-songwriter Gavin DeGraw.

"The people who are coming out and participating directly are still a

small subset of the entire universe of what we call celebrity," said Robert Thompson, a professor of pop culture at Syracuse University. "But we're seeing a lot more celebrities who are coming out and supporting Trump. There may not be that distinct division that we saw before."

Even some who have publicly criticized Trump in the past seem to have changed course. One of the highest-profile examples is the rapper Snoop Dogg, who in a 2017 music video pretended to shoot a Trump lookalike, and then this weekend performed at a pre-Inaugural event called The Crypto Ball. When a social media user posted a video of his performance, his name quickly became a trending topic on social media with a fair amount of disbelief and outrage.

There may still be a tinge of stigma, however. Thompson pointed to the statement from The Village People, in which they offered a justification for their involvement, which he likened to an apology.

Also, Thompson said, "the idea of being featured in a big national civic ritual perhaps can transcend political identity."

The participation of people like Underwood is not going to change anyone's mind about Trump, Thompson said. It could, however, change minds about the artist. On social media, some declared they were going to delete Underwood's songs from their playlists.

Where Trump once emphasized the otherness of a Hollywood that largely shunned him, he's now turned his attention back to the entertainment capital as a project to be saved. He named Stallone, Voight and Mel Gibson as his chosen "am-

bassadors" for the mission. Thompson said it sounds like an Onion headline or something on "Saturday Night Live." That, or a logline for the latest installment in the "Expendables" franchise.

Following the election, celebrity detractors have also been quieter than in 2017, when nationwide marches brought out the likes of Cher, Madonna, Katy Perry, Alicia Keys and Janelle Monáe. The People's March in D.C. on Saturday did not boast about any celebrity participants. At the recent Golden Globe Awards, Trump's name was not mentioned on stage — a stark contrast to 2017, when Meryl Streep used her lifetime achievement award speech to decry Trump before his first term began.

"They've gone through these processes, and it turned out that none of it ever made any bit of difference," Thompson said. "All of this celebrity talking against Trump and all of the celebrities going for (Joe) Biden and speaking about the future of democracy not only didn't make any difference toward the outcome of the election, but one could argue that it actually meant that things moved in the other direction."

On Friday night in D.C., the non-partisan nonprofit The Creative Coalition brought together some actors to raise money for and celebrate organizations that support military servicemembers and their families.

"I'm a big fan of things that are nonpartisan, nonpolitical," said comedian Jeff Ross. "I talk smack for a living and I'm a big believer in free speech. The military protects my right."

The entertainers stayed largely focused on the event at hand, not the incoming administration.

Scores of career diplomats resign as instructed

BY JOHN HUDSON
The Washington Post

Scores of senior career diplomats are resigning from the State Department effective at noon on Monday after receiving instructions to do so from President Donald Trump's aides, said three U.S. officials familiar with the matter.

The forced departures, aimed at establishing a decisive break from the Biden administration, will see an exodus of decorated veterans of the Foreign Service, including John Bass, undersecretary for management and acting undersecretary for political affairs, and Geoff Pyatt, assistant secretary for energy resources, said the officials, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss personnel decisions ahead of the inauguration.

Requesting the resignations, the prerogative of any incoming administration, indicates a desire to quickly shift the tone and makeup of the State Department as Trump seeks to upend the global diplomatic chess board after four years of President Joe Biden. Key priorities for Trump include imposing sweeping tariffs on allies and adversaries, ending the war in Ukraine, solidifying the wobbly ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, and deporting millions of undocumented immigrants.

"It is entirely appropriate for the transition to seek officials who share President Trump's vision for putting our nation and America's working men and women first. We have a lot of failures to fix and that requires

a committed team focused on the same goals," said a spokesperson for the transition team.

The State Department declined to comment.

On Friday, the Trump team made clear to many of the department's career officials serving as assistant secretaries and in other high-level positions that they would not be needed beyond Monday.

Some incoming presidents choose to keep a larger stable of career diplomats in senior roles until handpicked political appointees receive Senate confirmation. Instead, Trump has authorized the selection of more than 20 "senior bureau officials" to take over various divisions where leadership posts are being vacated this week. A number of those officials served in key roles in the State Department and the National Security Council during Trump's first term, and some have been pulled out of retirement, said officials familiar with the matter.

Trump campaigned on dismantling what he has called the "deep state" of federal bureaucrats whom he views as lacking loyalty and undermining his agenda. He has pledged to kill workforce protections for thousands of government employees in a move expected to face significant legal challenges.

His pick for secretary of state, Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., said the State Department needs to prioritize Trump's "America First" agenda, and he vowed to make the department "relevant again."

FBI deputy retiring instead of serving as acting chief

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Paul Abbate, who as the FBI's longtime deputy director had been expected to replace Director Christopher Wray on an acting basis, is retiring from the bureau, according to an email he sent to senior executives that was obtained by The Associated Press on Monday.

It's unclear who will run the FBI while Senate confirmation proceedings get underway for Kash Patel, who is President Donald Trump's pick for FBI director.

"When the Director asked me to stay on past my mandatory date for a brief time, I did so to help ensure continuity and the best transition for the FBI. Now, with new leadership inbound, after nearly four years in



Abbate

the deputy role, I am departing the FBI today," Abbate wrote.

Abbate's email did not say who would replace him atop the bureau.

The FBI does have a succession plan, according to a person familiar with the situation who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Wray's final day was Sunday. Wray was named by Trump during his first term and had been director for more than seven years. Wray announced his retirement after Trump picked Patel to be director.

NATION

Biden pardons Milley, Fauci and his family

BY SABRINA RODRIGUEZ
AND MATT VISER
The Washington Post

Outgoing President Joe Biden issued preemptive pardons Monday to retired Gen. Mark A. Milley, Anthony S. Fauci, members and staff of the Jan. 6 congressional committee and police officers who testified before the panel, an extraordinary move just hours before President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration.

He also pardoned several of his immediate family members.

In a lengthy statement, Biden said that he was issuing the pardons not because of any wrongdoing by those individuals but to protect them from potential political prosecution. Trump has repeatedly threatened to go after those who have crossed him politically or attempted to hold him accountable for his efforts to overturn the 2020 election results.

"These public servants have served our nation with honor and distinction and do not deserve to be the targets of unjustified and politically motivated prosecutions," Biden said. "I believe in the rule of law, and I am optimistic that the strength of our legal institutions will ultimately prevail over politics. But these are exceptional circumstances, and I cannot in good conscience do nothing."

In a more personal act, Biden also preemptively pardoned his siblings — James Biden, Frank Biden and Valerie Biden Owens — as well as their spouses, John Owens and Sara Biden.

"My family has been subjected to unrelenting attacks and threats, motivated solely by a desire to hurt me — the worst kind of partisan politics," Biden said. "Unfortunately, I have no reason to believe these attacks will end."

The unprecedented actions — a president has never pardoned people neither charged with nor suspected of wrongdoing — reflected the historic uncertainties of the moment, as a president takes office having regularly threatened the imprisonment of his political opponents.

It also gave a glimpse of the fear and anger underlying the stately ceremonies of Inauguration Day, as the White House made the announcement hours before Biden was scheduled to welcome Trump there for a tea-and-coffee reception.

Biden, hours from the end of a decades-long political career in Washington, did not name Trump in his statement, but he repeated-

ly alluded to the incoming president's actions and his attacks on those now being pardoned.

"Rather than accept accountability, those who perpetrated the January 6th attack have taken every opportunity to undermine and intimidate those who participated in the Select Committee in an attempt to rewrite history, erase the stain of January 6th for partisan gain, and seek revenge, including by threatening criminal prosecutions," he said.

Milley, a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he was "deeply grateful" for Biden's decision.

"After forty-three years of faithful service in uniform to our Nation, protecting and defending the Constitution, I do not wish to spend whatever remaining time the Lord grants me fighting those who unjustly might seek retribution for perceived slights," Milley said in a statement. "I do not want to put my family, my friends, and those with whom I served through the resulting distraction, expense, and anxiety."

Trump has falsely stated that phone calls, authorized by then-Trump administration officials at the time, in which Milley sought to reassure Chinese officials that the United States was stable during the last presidential transition were a "treasonous act."

Trump has repeatedly threat-

ened to retaliate against members of the House committee that investigated the Jan. 6, 2021, attack, including former congresswoman Liz Cheney, one of his most prominent Republican critics.

Harry Dunn, a former U.S. Capitol Police officer who was on the front lines when Trump supporters breached the Capitol, also expressed gratitude for Biden extending him a preemptive pardon and "for his leadership and service to this nation." Dunn resigned from the police force to run for a congressional seat in Maryland but lost in the Democratic primary.

Michael Fanone, a former D.C. police officer who was beaten unconscious and threatened with his own gun during the riot, said Monday morning he had heard about the pardons but has not received official notification.

"I think it's f—ed up that I live in a country where a president feels that it's necessary to preemptively pardon a police officer for testifying truthfully for what they experienced on January 6th, to protect them from another president who incited January 6th and is about to take office," Fanone said.

Fanone, who resigned from the police force a year after the attack, became a spokesman and advocate for officers injured in the riot. He was unapologetic about criticizing his own department, which he asserted had ostracized him for speaking out.

Because such pardons are unprecedented, they have not been tested in court. But the courts have often been deferential in allowing presidents to exercise authorities explicitly granted to them in the Constitution — such as the pardon power — as they see fit.

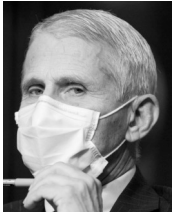
Recipients of the preemptive pardons include Fauci, former director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, who was a public face of the government response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fauci has faced years of investigation by congressional Republicans who allege that the longtime civil servant was not forthcoming about the possible origins of the pandemic.

Trump and other conservatives also blame Fauci and other public health officials for recommending measures that they say were overly harsh.

Fauci has dismissed the allegations that he participated in a coverup as "preposterous" and has said he was appropriately transparent about his agency's role.



Milley



Fauci

Wildfire-ravaged Calif. braces for high winds

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Southern Californians were bracing for gusty winds and a heightened risk of wildfires, less than two weeks after the outbreak of deadly blazes that have killed at least 27 people and charred thousands of homes.

The National Weather Service issued a warning of a "particularly dangerous situation" for parts of Los Angeles and Ventura counties from Monday afternoon through Tuesday morning due to low humidity and damaging Santa Ana winds.

Gusts could peak at 70 mph along the coast and 100 mph in the mountains and foothills.

Windy weather and single-digit humidity were expected to linger through Thursday, said Rich Thompson, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service. He said the fire risk is also elevated because the region hasn't seen rain since April.

Critical fire weather with wind gusts up to 60 mph was also forecast for Southern California communities stretching to San Diego on Monday and Tuesday, with res-

idents urged to take steps to get ready to evacuate such as creating an emergency kit and keeping cars filled with at least a half tank of gas.

A windblown dust and ash advisory was also issued, as high winds could disperse ash from existing fire zones across Southern California.

The warnings came as firefighters continue to battle two major blazes in the Los Angeles area, the Palisades and Eaton fires, which have destroyed more than 14,000 structures since they broke out during fierce winds on Jan. 7.

The Palisades fire was 52% contained on Sunday and the Eaton fire 81% contained, according to fire officials.

Firefighters have made progress on the perimeter of the Palisades fire, which has blackened more than 37 square miles near the Pacific coast, but there are areas in the interior that continue to burn, said Dan Collins, a spokesperson for the Palisades fire incident.

"There is always a possibility in a red flag warning something hot,



DAMIAN DOVARGANES/AP

Joel Parkes, a teacher with the Los Angeles Unified School District returns to his destroyed home in the aftermath of the Eaton Fire on Sunday in Altadena, Calif.

or some type of burning material from the interior, could be perhaps whipped up and blown across the containment lines," Collins said.

While firefighters are fairly confident the Eaton fire further inland will remain contained,

there are concerns a new fire could break out with vegetation especially dry for this time of year, said Carlos Herrera, an Eaton fire spokesperson.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom has positioned fire engines, water-dropping aircraft and hand crews

across the region to enable a quick response should a new fire break out, according to the governor's office of emergency services.

Damage estimates have continued to climb for the Palisades and Eaton fires nearly two weeks since they began.

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WORLD

Joy, trepidation for Israelis and Palestinians as ceasefire begins

Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank — After 15 months of collective grief and anxiety, three Israeli hostages left Hamas captivity and returned to Israel, and dozens of Palestinian prisoners walked free from Israeli jail, leaving both Israelis and Palestinians torn between celebration and trepidation as the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took hold Sunday.

The skies above Gaza and Israel were silent for the first time in over a year, and Palestinians began returning to what was left of the homes they fled across the war-ravaged enclave, started to check on relatives left behind and, in many cases, to bury their dead. After months of tight Israeli restrictions, more than 600 trucks carrying humanitarian aid rolled into the devastated territory.

The ceasefire that went into effect Sunday morning stirred modest hopes for ending the Israel-Hamas war.

But in Israel, the joy of seeing freed hostages Emily Damari, Romi Gonen, and Doron Steinbrecher reunited with their families was tempered by major questions over the fate of the nearly 100 others abducted in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack, still in captivity in Gaza.

Damari, Gonen and Steinbrecher were the first among 33 Israeli hostages who are meant to be released in the coming six weeks in a deal that includes a pause in fighting, the release of nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and increased fuel and aid deliveries for Gaza.

What happens after the deal's first phase of 42 days is uncertain. The agreement's subsequent stages call for more releases of hostages and prisoners and a permanent end to the war.



ISRAELI ARMY/AP

Romi Gonen, right, and her mother, Merav, hold each other near kibbutz Reim, southern Israel, after Romi was released from captivity by Hamas militants in Gaza on Sunday.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was pressured by the outgoing Biden administration and incoming Trump administration to secure a deal before the president-elect's inauguration Monday in Washington, has said he received assurances from Trump that Israel could continue fighting Hamas if necessary.

On Sunday, many Israelis stayed glued to TV screens all afternoon to glimpse the women being released through the windows of the Red Cross ambulance. Footage showed them thronged by thousands of jostling Palestinians, including Hamas gunmen wearing green headbands, as militants handed them over to the Red Cross on a packed street in Gaza City.

Teen pleads guilty in fatal stabbings at dance class

Associated Press

LONDON—A British teen pleaded guilty Monday to murdering three girls and attempting to kill 10 other people in a stabbing rampage at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class in England last summer.

Axel Rudakubana, 18, entered the surprise plea at the start of his trial at Liverpool Crown Court.

He pleaded guilty to three counts of murder, 10 counts of attempted murder and additional charges related to possessing the poison ricin and for having an al-Qaida manual.

The July 29 stabbings sent shock waves across the U.K. and led to a week of widespread rioting across parts of England and Northern Ireland after the suspect was falsely identified as an asylum-seeker who had recently arrived in Britain by boat. He was born in Wales.

Rudakubana faces life imprisonment when sentenced Thursday, Justice Julian Goose said.

Defense lawyer Stanley Reiz said he would present information to the judge about Rudakubana's mental health that may be relevant to his sentence.

Rudakubana had consistently refused to speak in court and did so once again when asked to identify himself at the start of the proceedings.

ings. But he broke his silence when he was read the 16-count indictment and asked to enter a plea, replying "guilty" to each charge.

The surviving victims and family members of those killed were absent in court because they had expected to arrive Tuesday for opening statements.

Goose asked the prosecutor to apologize on his behalf that they were not present to hear Rudakubana plead guilty.

Prosecutors haven't said what they believe led Rudakubana —

Rudakubana who was days shy of his 18th birthday — to commit the atrocities.

The rampage occurred on the first day of summer vacation when the little girls at the Hart Space, a sanctuary hidden behind a row of houses, were in a class to learn yoga and dance to the music of Taylor Swift.

What was supposed to be a day of joy turned to terror and heartbreak when Rudakubana, armed with a knife, attacked the girls and their teacher in the seaside town of Southport in northwest England.



Rudakubana



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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Battery plant fire raises air quality concerns

CA SAN FRANCISCO — A fire at the world’s largest battery storage plant in Northern California smoldered after sending plumes of toxic smoke into the atmosphere, leading to the evacuation of up to 1,500 people. The blaze also shook up the young battery storage industry.

The fire at the Vistra Energy lithium battery plant in Moss Landing generated huge flames and significant amounts of smoke but had diminished significantly, Fire Chief Joel Mendoza of the North County Fire Protection District of Monterey County said. Vistra is based in Texas.

“There’s very little, if any, of a plume emitting from that building,” Mendoza said. Crews are not engaging with the fire and are waiting for it to burn out, he said. Letting lithium-ion battery fires burn out is not unusual because they burn very hot and are hard to put out.

Jury says CNN defamed Navy vet in Afghan story

FL PANAMA CITY — After a Florida jury found that CNN defamed a U.S. Navy veteran who helped rescue endangered Afghans, the network reached a settlement to avoid a punishing order that it pay punitive damages.

The jury in Panama City, Fla., ruled in favor of Zachary Young. Young blamed CNN for destroying his business through a 2021 story on Jake Tapper’s broadcast about a “black market” of extracting desperate Afghans following the Taliban takeover.

The jury awarded Young \$5 million in compensatory damages. A second phase of the trial, to award punitive damages, was underway before Circuit Court Judge William S. Henry interrupted proceedings to announce a settlement. Terms were not disclosed.

Young’s business helped smuggle people out of Afghanistan, but he said he worked exclusively with deep-pocketed outside sponsors like Bloomberg and Audible. CNN showed his face in a story that primarily raised questions about contractors who were charging Afghans themselves fees as much as \$10,000 to get out.

He testified that the term “black market” implied he was involved in something illegal. “It’s devastating if you’re labeled a criminal all over the world,” he testified during the trial.

Man rescues dog floating along freezing river

VT BERLIN — Spotting a dog struggling to stay afloat in a icy Vermont River, Chris MacRitchie never hesitated.

He jumped into the frigid waters and waded over to the dog, gently pulling it ashore where his wife, Erica, draped it with a sweatshirt. The dramatic rescue of the



KSBW/AP

Flames rising after a major fire erupted Thursday afternoon at the Moss Landing Power Plant, located about 77 miles south of San Francisco.

dog in Berlin, Vt., was caught on video by his son and has been shared widely on social media.

MacRitchie’s son, Ace, first spotted the dog as they were going through the drive-thru of a nearby Dunkin’ Donuts.

When they reached the river embankment, the father of two felt he had no choice but to save the pooch.

After retrieving the dog, MacRitchie called the dog’s owner, Morgan Cerasoli, whose number was listed on the dog tag.

Cerasoli said she had been looking for her dog, a 7-year-old mutt who had originally been rescued from the side of the road in South Carolina.

Case on LGBTQ books in schools goes to high court

DC WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court agreed to hear an appeal from parents in suburban Washington who want to pull their children from elementary school classes that use books featuring LGBTQ characters.

The justices will review an appeals court decision that went against parents in Montgomery County, Md.

The parents claim that the policy violates their constitutional religious rights by not allowing them to opt out of lessons that include the storybooks.

The stories include a family’s attendance at a pride parade, a

girl’s introduction to her uncle’s husband-to-be, a prince’s love for a knight amid their battle against a dragon, a girl’s anxiety about giving a valentine to another girl and a transgender boy’s decision to share his gender identity with his family.

The parents argue that public schools can’t force kids to participate in instruction that violates their faith. They point to opt-out provisions in sex education and note that the district originally allowed parents to pull their children when the storybooks were being taught, before abruptly reversing course.

Breastfeeding women exempt from jury duty

AL BIRMINGHAM — Breastfeeding women in Alabama will be excused from jury duty, the state’s highest court ordered unanimously, in response to public outcry from a mother who said that she was threatened with child protective services for bringing her nursing infant into court.

The Alabama Supreme Court issued an administrative order that requires Alabama judges to have written procedures excusing breastfeeding mothers from jury duty. Previously, state code did not specifically make exemptions for nursing mothers.

“A nursing mother of an infant child clearly qualifies for the excuse from jury service” under the

existing court codes, the order read. The justices added that the process of approving exemption “may be submitted by telephone, electronic mail, or in writing” ahead of jury selection. All nine justices concurred with the order.

Twenty-two states in the U.S. have bills that make specific exemptions for nursing mothers, according to a 2021 report by the National Conference of State Legislators. A similar bill was introduced in the Alabama legislature in 2022, but it was killed before it reached a vote.

Parade of planets to be visible in January sky

NY NEW YORK — Six planets grace the sky in what’s known as a planetary parade, and most can be seen with the naked eye.

These planetary hangouts happen when several planets appear to line up in the night sky at once.

“They’re not in a straight line, but they’re pretty close together on one side of the sun,” said Hannah Sparkes, planetarium supervisor at the Bishop Museum of Science and Nature in Florida.

The astronomical linkup is fairly common and can happen at least every year depending on the number of planets.

A similar parade took place last June, but only two planets could be seen without any special equipment.

Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Sat-

urn are visible to the naked eye this month and for part of February. Uranus and Neptune can be spotted with binoculars and telescopes.

College game flagged for unusual gambling activity

MI YPSILANTI — Eastern Michigan played two men’s college basketball games this season that were flagged for unusual betting, a university spokesperson confirmed.

The Eagles’ game at Central Michigan and against Wright State on Dec. 21 had suspicious gambling activity that prompted betting firm Integrity Compliance 360 to alert its clients, ESPN first reported.

Eastern Michigan University spokesman Greg Steiner said the school became aware of the matter.

“At this time, we do not know anything further about what may have precipitated the suspicious activity,” Steiner said. “We are working with the Mid-American Conference and will provide further details as we learn additional information.”

The betting firm alerted clients that a bettor attempted to place their largest wager to date on Central Michigan to cover the spread in the first half of a Mid-American Conference game against the Eagles.

FACES

Audio series honors legacy of boxing's Ali

Champion's widow co-hosting show on Audible

By JONATHAN LANDRUM, JR.
Associated Press

The late Muhammad Ali's wife is set to honor his legacy with a new audio series, featuring a lineup of special guests that include popular figures from Will Smith to Mike Tyson.

Lonnie Ali and the legendary boxer's close friend, John Ramsey, will host the new audio series "Ali in Me," debuting Jan. 23 on Audible. The series was announced by Mercury Studios and Treefort Media on Jan. 17 — the boxer's 83rd birthday. The eight-part series will delve into Muhammad Ali's lasting impact beyond the boxing ring through his own words in never-before-heard audio and explore his commitment to fighting injustice.

Lonnie Ali and Ramsey want to draw listeners into Ali's humanity through their personal memories. Along with Smith and Tyson, the series will involve conversations with other guests including Billy Crystal, Common, Rosie Perez, Killer Mike, Bob Costas and Ali's daughter Laila Ali.

"It brings him back into the forefront of America's collective consciousness at a time when our country is really experiencing increased polarization, divisiveness and toxic discourse," said Lonnie Ali of her husband, who died at age 74 in 2016. She said unification is vital in the U.S., harking back to the emotional, iconic moment when Muhammad Ali, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, surprised the crowd when he lit the cauldron at the 1996 Atlanta Games.

Lonnie Ali has been promoting the humanitarian ideals that dominated his life after he left the boxing ring.

"He reigned in the consciousness of what America stood for: hope, compassion, kindness and aspirational goals that all Americans have to be great and achieve their best," she said.

Lonnie Ali said her husband's voice is still powerful. She believes the series will draw listeners into Muhammad Ali's world, fusing original music, sound design and poetry.



Boxing great Muhammad Ali, left, appears with his wife, Lonnie, at a celebration for his 70th birthday Jan. 14, 2012, in Louisville, Ky.

"You can put his words in text, write them out, but when you hear them come from the man himself, it's a truly powerful delivery of his message," she said. "That's what I love about it."

Ramsey was fascinated by guests' stories, such as Tyson getting emotional about his love for Muhammad Ali to Smith detailing a moment while filming the 2001 movie "Ali." Ramsey believes the stories will keep Ali's legacy alive and relevant.

"I found our guests' thoughts and interactions with Muhammad were very personal to them, but the impact was contagious," Ramsey said.

Muhammad Ali fought in three different decades as he won and defended the heavyweight championship in epic fights with Sonny Liston, George Foreman and Joe

Frazier. He spoke loudly on behalf of Black people and famously refused to be drafted into the Army during the Vietnam War because of his Muslim beliefs.

Lonnie Ali said the audio series will capture the full scope of her husband's extraordinary life, offering something meaningful — even for those who never saw him in the boxing ring.

"But they are aware of who he is," said Lonnie Ali, who created and co-executive produced the series with Ramsey and Josh Wakeley for Grace: A Storytelling Company. "He's a man of our time, and I'm hoping that, as people listen to this podcast, they are inspired to follow in Muhammad's footsteps and understand the impact he continues to have — not just when he was alive, but that he still has today."

'One of Them Days,' 'Mufasa' top box office

By LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

The Keke Palmer buddy comedy "One of Them Days" opened in first place on the North American box-office charts on a particularly slow Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend.

The R-rated Sony release earned \$11.6 million, according to studio estimates Sunday, beating Disney's "Mufasa: The Lion King" by a hair. By the end of Monday's holiday, "Mufasa" was expected to have the edge, however.

"One of Them Days" cost only \$14 million to produce, which it is expected to earn by Monday. The very well-reviewed buddy comedy stars Palmer and SZA as friends and roommates scrambling to get money for rent before their landlord evicts them. Notably it's the first Black female-led theatrical comedy since "Girls Trip" came out in 2017 and it currently carries a stellar 96% rating on Rotten Tomatoes.

But the marketplace was also quite weak overall. The total box office for Friday, Saturday and Sunday added up to less than \$80 million, according to data from Comscore, making the weekend one of the worst Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekends since 1997.

"For an individual film like 'One of Them Days,' this was a great weekend," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "You can still find success stories within what is overall a low-grossing weekend for movie theaters."

The Walt Disney Co.'s "Mufasa" was close by in second place with \$11.5 million from the weekend, its fifth one in theaters. Globally, the Barry Jenkins-directed prequel has made \$588 million. It even beat a brand-new offering, the Blumhouse horror "Wolf Man," which debuted in third place with \$10.6 million.

Writer-director Leigh Whannell's monster tale starring Christopher Abbott and Julia Garner cost a reported \$25 million to make and was expected to reach \$12 million by the end of Monday.

"Sonic the Hedgehog 3" was in fourth place with \$8.6 million and "Den of Thieves 2" rounded out the top five with \$6.6 million.

In specialty releases, Brady Corbet's 215-minute postwar epic "The Brutalist" expanded to 388 screens where it made nearly \$2 million over the weekend. The studio A24 reported that it sold out various 70mm and IMAX showings. The studio also rereleased its Colman Domingo drama "Sing Sing" in theaters and prisons, where more than 1 million incarcerated people in 46 states were able to view the film.

Draft lyrics to 'Mr. Tambourine Man' sell for \$508K

Associated Press

Draft lyrics to Bob Dylan's song "Mr. Tambourine Man" went for more than a half-million dollars as part of a weekend sale of dozens of items related to the iconic American singer-songwriter.

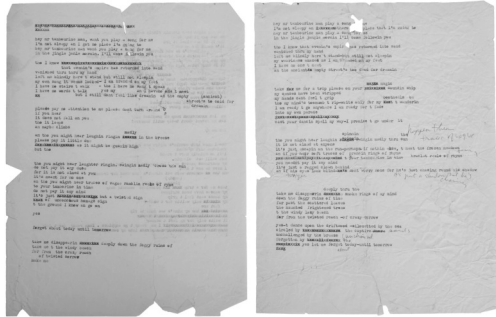
About 60 Dylan items — including photos, music sheets, his guitar, pencil drawings and an oil painting composed by the Nobel Prize for literature winner — were sold on Jan. 18 in Nashville through Julien's Auctions.

The items generated nearly \$1.5 million in sales overall through in-person and online bidding, the auction house said. Julien's said 50 of the items, including the lyrics that received the highest sale price, came from the personal collection of late music journalist Al Aronowitz.

The typewritten lyrics, which covered three drafts of the 1965 song, were written on two sheets of yellow paper, with Dylan's annotations on the third draft.

Dylan wrote the original draft lyrics in the journalist's New Jersey home, according to Julien's, citing a 1973 newspaper article by Aronowitz.

Dylan sat "with my portable typewriter at my white formica breakfast bar in a swirl of chain-lit cigarette smoke, his bony, long-nailed fingers tapping the words out" on copy paper,



JULIEN'S AUCTIONS/AP

Musician Bob Dylan's lyrics for famed song "Mr. Tambourine Man" were auctioned off for more than a half-million dollars on Jan. 18.

Aronowitz was quoted as writing.

The third draft, while close to the final version, still had significant variations from the final lyrics, the auction house said on its website.

The song appeared as the lead track on the acoustic side of his 1965 "Bringing It All Back Home" album and was the first Dylan composition to reach No. 1 in the United States and the United Kingdom, Julien's said.

Other high-selling items included a 1968 Dylan-signed oil-on-canvas painting for \$260,000 and a custom 1983 Fender guitar that he owned and played for \$225,000.

Sting, Lady Gaga, Billie Eilish among benefit concert performers

Sting, Billie Eilish, Lady Gaga and the Red Hot Chili Peppers are among the performers slated to take the stage at FireAid, a benefit concert for Los Angeles-area wildfire relief taking place Jan. 30 at two LA-area venues.

It will be streamed live on Apple Music, Apple TV+, Max, iHeartRadio, KTLA+, Netflix/Tudum, Paramount+, Prime Video, the Amazon Music Channel on Twitch, SiriusXM, Spotify, SoundCloud, Veeps and YouTube.

According to a press release, contributions to FireAid will "be distributed ... for short-term relief efforts and long-term initiatives to prevent future fire disasters."

The lineup also includes Joni Mitchell, Katy Perry, Lil Baby, Pink, Rod Stewart, Gwen Stefani, Green Day, Jelly Roll, Gracie Abrams, Stephen Stills, Stevie Nicks, Tate McRae and Earth, Wind & Fire.

Dave Matthews and John Mayer will perform live together for the first time.

On Sunday night, it was announced that Olivia Rodrigo, Peso Pluma, Alanis Morissette, Anderson .Paak, Dawes, Graham Nash, John Fogerty, Stevie Wonder and the Black Crowes have also joined the lineup.



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OPINION

Trump lacks a mandate, but has executive orders

BY GEORGE F. WILL
 The Washington Post

When our first populist president, Andrew Jackson, claimed that his 1832 reelection constituted a broad mandate for his entire agenda, his nemesis Sen. Henry Clay demurred: “Sir, the truth is, that the reelection of the president proves as little an approbation by the people of all the opinions he may hold . . . as it would prove that if the president had a carbuncle . . . they meant, by reelecting him, to approve of his carbuncle.”

Donald Trump, reelected, promises a flurry of transformative improvements to the nation, immediately (“on day one”), if not sooner. He has perhaps been rereading the Federalist Papers: “To reverse and undo what has been done by a predecessor, is very often considered by a successor as the best proof he can give of his own capacity and desert.” (Alexander Hamilton, No. 72)

Four years ago, Casey Burgat, of George Washington University, and Matt Glassman, of Georgetown University, wrote in National Affairs that the presidency “changes more abruptly than other governing institutions.” A “strong disruptive incentive” grows stronger as presidents, impatiently disdaining Congress as an impediment to the flowering of their reputations, increasingly resort to achieving changes unilaterally, by executive orders.

Barack Obama unilaterally ratified the Paris Agreement on climate change as an “executive agreement” rather than achieving something — e.g., a treaty — affirmed by Congress. Trump unilaterally undid what Obama did.

On Inauguration Day 2021, Joe Biden’s 11-

page enumeration of “Day One Executive Actions” included rejoining the Paris Agreement. And an executive order decreeing “a whole-of-government” initiative “rooting out systemic racism.” Trump’s executive orders can un-rejoin the Paris Agreement, and un-decree permeating government with racial calculations.

We are almost two centuries from Jackson’s invention of the theory of the plebiscitary presidency. It is: Because the entire nation votes for presidents, they are uniquely entitled to claim vast mandates. Today, Americans are inured to presidents’ finding large mandates in slender majorities. But remember this:

Since Ronald Reagan’s 58% of the popular vote in 1984, no president has received more than George H.W. Bush’s 53% in 1988. The numbers wizards at the Cook Political Report note that 2024 saw the popular vote decided by 229,766 (out of 155.2 million nationally) in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

Granted, 229,766 is five times the 42,919 by which Joe Biden in 2020 won the decisive three — Arizona, Georgia, Wisconsin. In 2024 Texas (13.7 percentage points) and Florida (13.1) favored Trump almost as decisively as Kansas (16.1) did. Trump increased his support from 2020 in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Americans by the millions are rendering a mandate — albeit a negative one — as much with their feet as with their ballots. The mandate is in domestic migration from progressive states. Edward Pinto of the American Enterprise Institute notes that between 1990 and 2021 net migration subtracted 13 million residents from California, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York, and added 13

Is Trump really going to practice military restraint?

BY IVAN R. ELAND
 Tribune News Service

The three popular pillars of Donald Trump’s electoral success have been grievances about immigrants, unfair trade practices by other countries, and American “forever wars” overseas.

The last one of these beefs was legitimate and fueled by the interventionist U.S. super-power’s major quagmires or debacles in Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Iran, Lebanon, Somalia, Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan.

As an example, a recent op-ed by John F. Sopko, who, as special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction since 2012, chronicled the profligate waste of lives and money during the latter half of the two-decade U.S. fiasco in Afghanistan, convincingly argued that bureaucratic incentives in the U.S. military and other agencies to claim success rendered the truth of failure to long be kept from American taxpayers. That problem can be found in the other American catastrophic failures as well.

To his credit, during his first presidential term Trump had concluded the Afghan War was a loser, signed an agreement with the Taliban to withdraw U.S. forces from Afghanistan, but failed to carry it out before he left office. Joe Biden, his successor, after a short delay, agreed with Trump about the war and took a big hit in the popularity of his new administration when the U.S.-supported Afghan regime collapsed rapidly during the American troop withdrawal, leading to some chaos and more American and Afghan deaths.

Biden’s bad experience is why politicians and bureaucrats stay in foreign quagmires; because they don’t want to be tarred with the almost inevitable friction and blame that comes with cutting national losses and exiting.

Thus, during his second term, because of his prior campaign rhetoric about ending forever wars, Trump might be expected to be leery of using threats or intimidation that could lead to armed conflict or even a long-term military bog abroad. Yet during the interregnum between his recent election and inauguration, he has complained about high fees to transit the Panama Canal and threatened to take it back, menacingly demanded to buy Greenland, and joked about making Canada the 51st state.

Finally, during the campaign, Trump was asked by Fox News about launching cross-border military attacks on Mexican drug cartels and replied, “Mexico is gonna have to straighten it out really fast, or the answer is absolutely.” Mark Esper, one of Trump’s defense secretaries during his first term, claims Trump asked for military options against the cartels and was barely talked out of ordering them. Trump’s current aides are building the case for employing such drastic options during a second term.

Most of Trump’s implicit or explicit threats so far have been directed at much weaker countries in the Western Hemisphere. Yet during his first term, he also threatened countries in East Asia and the Middle East and took aggressive action in the latter region. Before doing an about face and trying to negotiate with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, Trump had implicitly threatened nuclear war

million to Arizona, Florida, Nevada, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. Entrepreneurial federalism — states competing for attractive economic and cultural climates — disfavors progressive policies.

At their peril, progressives disparage this as a “race to the bottom.” Particularly regarding their cultural aggressions, progressives should heed the late Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the four-term Democratic senator from New York: “Liberals have simply got to restrain their enthusiasm for civilizing others. It is their greatest weakness and ultimate disease.”

The greatest weakness of the U.S. government in the 21st century is the bipartisan embrace of executive strength — of unfettered presidents. Perhaps if 19th-century presidents had experienced the 21st-century exhilaration of governing by executive orders, Zachary Taylor would not have been so reluctant to become one.

In 1848, Taylor was at home on his Louisiana plantation when the Whig Party, unconcerned that he had no interest in politics and had never even voted, gave him its presidential nomination. From Joel Richard Paul’s “Indivisible: Daniel Webster and the Birth of American Nationalism”:

“When a letter from the Whig convention informing him of his nomination arrived postage due, he was such a tightwad that he refused to pay the postage. His nomination letter was sent to the dead-letter office. Weeks later, when they had not heard from him, the Whigs sent a follow-up letter, postage prepaid.”

He accepted the letter, and the nomination. Big mistakes. He died after less than 17 months in office, and about 15 decades before the fun of governing by executive orders.

with the hermit kingdom by saying that North Korea would be “met with fire and fury and frankly power, the likes of which this world has never seen before.”

In the Middle East, Trump rashly canceled the multilateral agreement with Iran to limit its nuclear program in exchange for the relaxation of economic sanctions and later assassinated the second most powerful Iranian official when he visited Iraq, thus roiling relations with both countries. His proposed appointees for secretary of defense, Pete Hegseth, and ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, oppose Palestinian self-determination and seem to embrace a “Greater Israel.” This view usually advocates annexing the West Bank and resettling Gaza after Palestinians are removed. Finally, Trump has vowed to put fewer limits on weapons exports to Israel than even the few the Biden administration imposed.

Thus, in a second term, even if Trump avoids U.S. military quagmires on the ground, he may still take or allow allied countries to undertake aggressive military action.

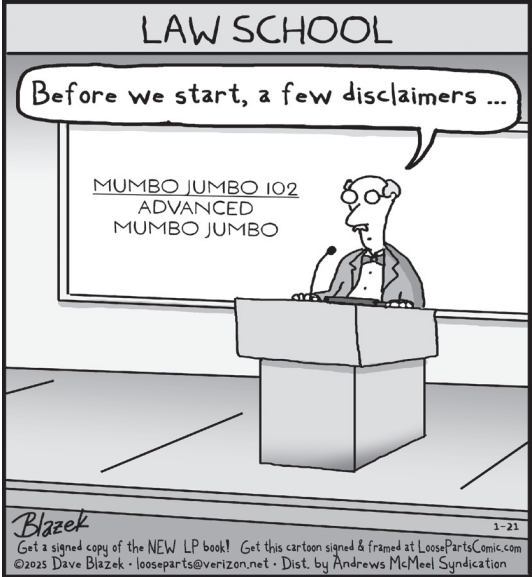
Let’s hope his bluster against friendly countries in the hemisphere or adversaries further abroad is just to get some sort of negotiating advantage, because even limited military actions — such as, cross-border attacks against Mexican drug cartels, especially without the Mexican government’s consent — could turn into disastrous bogs if things don’t go well; Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan come to mind.

Ivan R. Eland is Senior Fellow at the Independent Institute and director of the Independent Institute’s Center on Peace & Liberty.

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		

ACROSS

- 1 Idle of Monty Python
5 Homer's lament
8 Grate
12 Sprint
13 Geological period
14 Intro studio class
15 Met melody
16 Knee cartilage
18 Cough drop flavor
20 Valerie Harper sitcom
21 Light brown
22 Fluffy neckpiece
23 Streep of "The Post"
26 Patching up
30 Lab eggs
31 Witty one
32 Wrigley product
33 Protégés
36 Accra's country
38 Stein filler
39 Zadora of "Hairspray"
40 Huge success
43 H.L. — (The Sage of Baltimore)
47 Cites
49 Comic actor Danny
50 Oklahoma tribe
51 Nonsense
52 French 101 verb

- 53 Military VIPs
54 GI's address
55 Marsh plant

- 25 Campaigned
26 More, to Manuel star Swiatek
27 Polish tennis
28 Convent head
29 "Today" rival, briefly
31 Pint-sized
34 Flavors
35 K thru 12
36 Tom Collins liquor
37 Website invader
39 Green sauce
40 Urban haze
41 Apportion
42 Shortly
43 L-Q bridge
44 Designer Spade
45 Literary Jane
46 Must have
48 British singer Rita

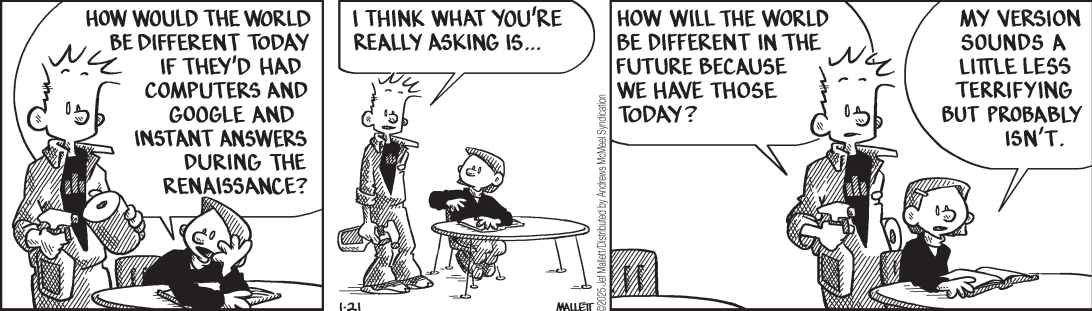
DOWN

- 1 Dutch cheese
2 Exceptional
3 "The doctor —"
4 Talkative
5 Fiend
6 Pitcher Hersher
7 Solo in space
8 Actress Phylicia
9 With the bow, musically
10 Poker type
11 Galileo's birthplace
17 Pressing need
19 Actor Linden
22 Plead
23 Soccer —
24 Prior night

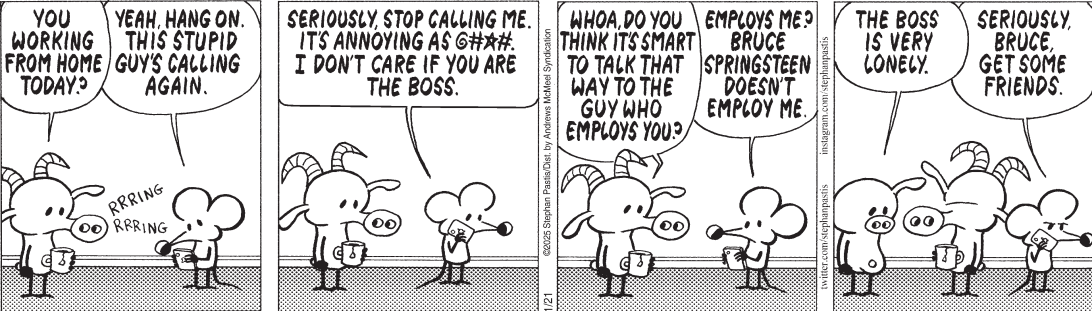
Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

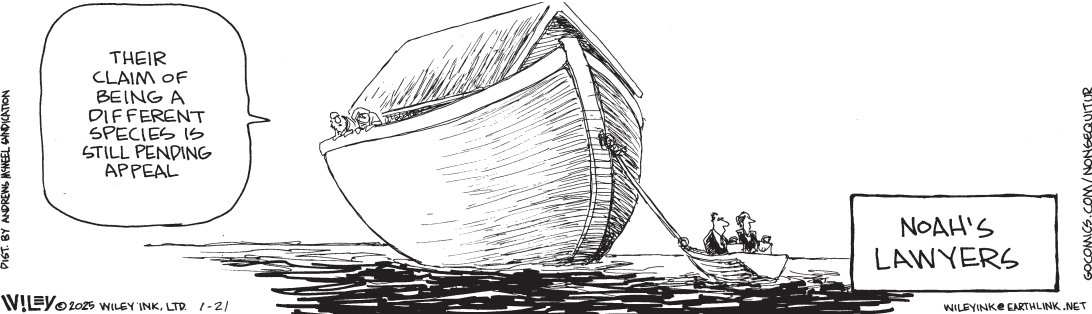
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



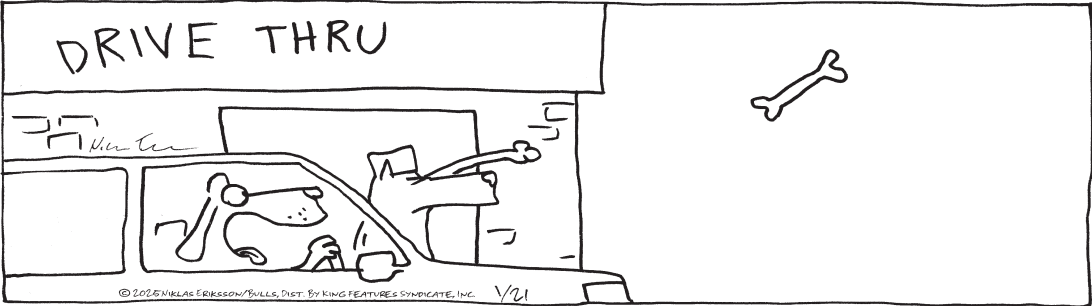
Non Sequitur



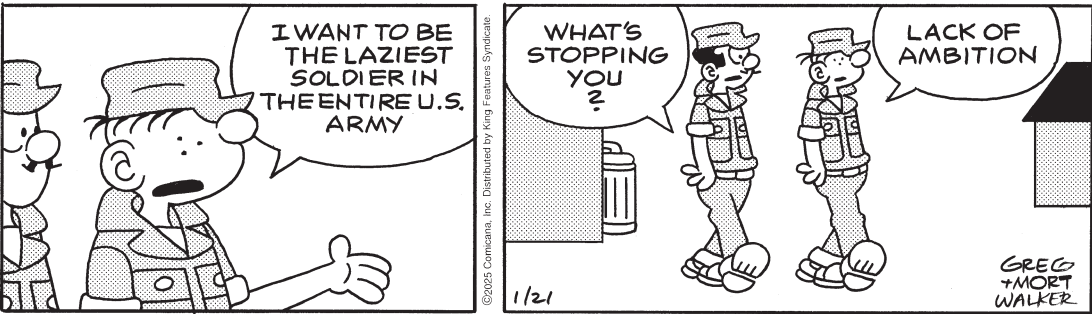
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



1-21

CRYPTOQUIP

VI Z DJLHQXCZUVJL NQDPVLQC,
IQUDR Z YVE JXZLEQ EJWXN.
URZU'PP EVHQ URQO SWOSGVL
UJ UZPG ZYJWU.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN THE CIRCLE WAS DOING STUPID THINGS, WHAT DID THE TRIANGLE SAY TO IT? "YOU'RE POINTLESS."
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: R equals H

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference								
Atlantic Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Toronto	47	29	16	2	60	147	134	
Florida	47	27	17	3	57	153	142	
Tampa Bay	44	25	16	3	53	162	123	
Ottawa	46	24	18	4	52	132	127	
Montreal	46	23	19	4	50	142	155	
Boston	47	22	19	6	50	127	150	
Detroit	46	21	21	4	46	131	150	
Buffalo	45	17	23	5	39	138	153	

Metropolitan Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Washington	46	31	10	5	67	164	114	
New Jersey	49	26	17	6	58	148	125	
Carolina	46	27	16	3	57	152	129	
Columbus	46	22	17	7	51	156	155	
N.Y. Rangers	46	22	20	4	48	134	142	
Philadelphia	47	21	20	6	48	146	161	
Pittsburgh	48	19	21	8	46	143	179	
N.Y. Islanders	45	18	20	7	43	121	137	

Western Conference								
Central Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Winnipeg	47	31	13	3	65	165	113	
Dallas	46	29	16	1	59	148	115	
Minnesota	46	27	15	4	58	137	133	
Colorado	47	28	18	1	57	159	147	
St. Louis	47	22	21	4	48	133	139	
Utah	45	19	19	7	45	127	137	
Nashville	45	16	22	7	39	115	139	
Chicago	46	15	28	3	33	120	158	

Pacific Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Vegas	46	29	14	3	61	156	127	
Edmonton	46	29	14	3	61	151	126	
Los Angeles	43	25	13	5	55	128	105	
Calgary	45	22	16	7	51	120	132	
Vancouver	45	20	15	10	50	129	143	
Seattle	47	20	24	3	43	137	150	
Anaheim	46	18	22	6	42	111	145	
San Jose	48	14	28	6	34	122	169	

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.

- Saturday's games**
- Philadelphia 3, New Jersey 1
 - Ottawa 6, Boston 5, SO
 - Colorado 6, Dallas 3
 - Florida 3, Anaheim 0
 - Calgary 3, Winnipeg 1
 - Washington 4, Pittsburgh 1
 - N.Y. Rangers 1, Columbus 0, SO
 - Tampa Bay 5, Detroit 1
 - Toronto 7, Montreal 3
 - N.Y. Islanders 4, San Jose 1
 - Chicago 5, Vegas 3
 - Nashville 6, Minnesota 2
 - Utah 4, St. Louis 2
 - Seattle 4, Los Angeles 2
 - Vancouver 3, Edmonton 2
- Sunday's games**
- Ottawa 2, New Jersey 1
 - Montreal 5, N.Y. Rangers 4, OT
 - Dallas 4, Detroit 1
- Monday's games**
- San Jose at Boston
 - Minnesota at Colorado
 - Buffalo at Seattle
 - St. Louis at Vegas
 - Columbus at N.Y. Islanders
 - Tampa Bay at Toronto
 - Carolina at Chicago
 - Winnipeg at Utah
 - Pittsburgh at Los Angeles
- Tuesday's games**
- Detroit at Philadelphia
 - Ottawa at N.Y. Rangers
 - Tampa Bay at Montreal
 - Carolina at Dallas
 - San Jose at Nashville
 - Washington at Edmonton
 - Florida at Vancouver
 - Buffalo at Anaheim

Scoring leaders				
Through Sunday				
	GP	G	A	PTS
Nathan MacKinnon, COL	47	17	56	73
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	46	33	36	69
Nikita Kucherov, TB	42	21	47	68
Connor McDavid, EDM	43	20	45	65
Mitch Marner, TOR	47	14	50	64
Mikko Rantanen, COL	47	25	38	63
Kyle Connor, WPG	47	26	34	60
Jack Eichel, LV	45	11	45	56
Jack Hughes, NJ	49	18	37	55
Travis Konecny, PHI	47	21	33	54
Mark Scheifele, WPG	47	27	26	53
Cale Makar, COL	47	15	37	52
Jesper Bratt, NJ	49	15	37	52

ROUNDUP

Canadiens outlast Rangers in OT

Associated Press

MONTREAL — Patrik Laine scored 3:20 into overtime and the Montreal Canadiens beat the New York Rangers 5-4 on Sunday night.

Brendan Gallagher and Christian Dvorak had a goal and an assist, and Nick Suzuki and Juraj Slafkovsky also scored for the Canadiens, who trailed 4-3 heading into the third period. Jakub Dobes had 23 saves, including two highlight-reel stops before Laine ended the game, to improve to 5-0 for his career.

Alexis Lafrenière, Will Cuyllé, Mika Zibanejad and Chris Kreider scored, and Adam Fox had two assists for the Rangers, who snapped a two-game win streak. Jonathan Quick, who was in search of his 400th career NHL win, made 33 saves.

New York's Matt Rempe and Montreal's Arber Xhekaj dropped gloves and exchanged punches early in the second period.

Slafkovsky accepted a feed from linemate Cole Caufield before crashing into the goal, knotting the game at 4-4 with 7:08 left in regulation. It was Slafkovsky's second goal in his last three games after having gone 10 straight games without a goal.

Senators 2, Devils 1: Artem Zub and Zack Ostapchuk each scored a goal and Anton Forsberg stopped 25 shots to lead visiting Ottawa to a win over New Jersey.

Zub snapped a 1-1 tie in the third period with his second goal of the season.

Ostapchuk scored his first career NHL goal that provided the Senators with a brief 1-0 lead in the second period. Michael Ama-



GRAHAM HUGHES, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

The Canadiens' Juraj Slafkovsky scores against New York Rangers goaltender Jonathan Quick (32) as the Rangers' Vincent Trocheck defends during the third period in Montreal on Sunday. The Canadiens won 5-4.

dio and Matthew Highmore, Ostapchuk's linemates on the fourth line, had the assists.

Tomas Tatar scored for the Devils, who have lost four in a row and are 2-6-3 in their past 11 games.

Stars 4, Red Wings 1: Jason Robertson had one of three first-period goals plus a third-period assist and Jake Oettinger made 33 saves as host Dallas beat Detroit.

Wyatt Johnston and rookies

Matej Blumel and Mavrik Bourque also scored for the Stars, who are 10-3-1 in their last 14 games.

Simon Edvinsson pulled the Red Wings within 3-1 with 7:59 to play, but Johnston answered 2:08 later on Robertson's assist.

Avs' Makar 5th-fastest defenseman to get 100 goals

By PAT GRAHAM
Associated Press

DENVER — Cale Makar deflects not only shots, but any mention of milestones related to him as well.

It's just the nature of the Colorado Avalanche's dynamic defenseman. He's not a big spotlight person even if he constantly finds himself in the limelight.

Makar accomplished his latest milestone Saturday when the Canadian scored his 100th career goal in his 362nd career NHL game. By doing so, he became the fifth-fastest defenseman since 1943-44 to reach that particular mark. The only blue liners speedier are Hall of Famers: Bobby Orr (299 games), Paul Coffey (300), Ray Bourque (329) and Denis Potvin (348).

In typical Makar fashion, he downplayed the impending achievement.

"I guess just another thing along the way," Makar modestly said two days before reaching the 100-goal mark. "I don't really look at (milestones) like that. I wish it would come and go."



Makar

That's OK. His teammates will gladly do the boasting for the 26-year-old from Calgary, Alberta, who is the top point-producing defenseman (15 goals, 37 assists) in the league this season.

"You kind of forget how special he actually is," said forward Mikko Rantanen, who has played alongside the defenseman since Makar broke into the league during the playoffs in 2018-19 and followed it up by winning the Calder Trophy the next season. "He's one of the best 'D' ever to play the game."

With 101 career goals — he scored twice Saturday — and 287 assists, Makar is averaging 1.07 points a game. Should he keep up that pace, it would rank up there with the likes of Orr (1.39) and Coffey (1.09) for the highest marks over a career by a defenseman in NHL history.

"I'm a little biased, but you're watching one of the best defensemen that's ever played the game," coach Jared Bednar said of Makar, the

MVP of the 2022 playoffs when Colorado hoisted the Stanley Cup. "The league has a handful of guys that are super dynamic right now. I think that's a trend that we're going to see moving forward. But in my opinion, he's the best of the best."

He is relied on heavily, too, averaging 25 minutes, 37 seconds of ice time a game, which is the third-most in the league.

"The stuff he does on the ice, it's incredible," fellow defenseman Keaton Middleton said. "He's one of a kind."

Middleton listens to whatever Makar tells him, especially when it comes to generating offense. The 26-year-old from Edmonton, Alberta, is hoping the knowledge pays off as he searches for his first NHL goal.

"If he's saying, 'Try and shoot here,' I'm going to be like, 'OK, I'm listening to him.' Just try and learn as much as I can," Middleton said. "I'm not going to try and play like him, because that's not my role. But I definitely could take what he knows and his knowledge and his skill and try to apply it to myself."

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

‘Lucky’ breaks help Sinner survive Rune

By Howard Fendrich
Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia—First came the medical timeouts, one each for Jannik Sinner and Holger Rune with the temperature above 90 degrees Fahrenheit at the Australian Open.

Then came the bizarre sight of a 20-minute delay because the net at Rod Laver Arena detached from the court after being hit by a big Sinner serve.

In the end, the breaks in action were “lucky,” Sinner said, because they gave him a chance to catch his breath, put his struggles aside and emerge with the victory — as he keeps doing, no matter the site or the circumstances. The defending champion moved into the quarterfinals at Melbourne Park on Monday by eliminating the 13th-seeded Rune 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-2.

“I don’t want to talk so much (about) how I felt today. I was not feeling really well. I think we saw that today. I was struggling physically,” Sinner said, declining to say exactly what was wrong. “Playing against a tough opponent, but also playing against myself a little bit.”

The No. 1-ranked Sinner occasionally tried to cool off by pressing a cold towel to his face or pouring water down the back of his neck. He was far better down the stretch, after both a 10-minute-plus delay in the third set when he went to the locker room for medical attention and after a 20-minute holdup in the fourth when the screw connecting the net to the blue playing surface came undone.

“It was a bit helpful. I at least felt slightly better when I went back on court,” Sinner said about seeing a doctor. “I felt like the face looked a little bit better, the color was a little bit back.”

Sinner has won 18 consecutive tour-level matches, dating back to late 2024. Last sea-

son, he went 73-6 with eight titles, the first man with that many tournament championships in a single year since Andy Murray in 2016.

That haul included Sinner’s first two Grand Slam trophies, at the Australian Open in January and the U.S. Open in September, the latter shortly after he was exonerated for testing positive for an anabolic steroid twice in March. His case is still unresolved, though, with a hearing scheduled for April in the World Anti-Doping Agency’s appeal of the ruling.

In the women’s fourth round, 2017 U.S. Open runner-up Madison Keys eliminated 2022 Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina 6-3, 1-6, 6-3, and now plays Elina Svitolina, a 6-4, 6-1 winner over Veronika Kudermetova. Five-time major champion Iga Swiatek had — no surprise here — an easy time beating “lucky loser” Eva Lys 6-1, 6-0 in just 59 minutes.

Swiatek, who will face No. 8 Emma Navarro next, compiled a 28-7 edge in winners and has ceded a grand total of 11 games through four matches in the tournament. Contrast that to Navarro’s path: Her 6-4, 5-7, 7-5 win against No. 9 Daria Kasatkina was the American’s fourth three-setter in four matches in Melbourne, and she has dropped more than 60 games while spending more than 10 hours on court.

Sinner will play No. 8 Alex de Minaur of Australia, who defeated unseeded Alex Michelsen of the United States 6-0, 7-6 (5), 6-3 at night to reach the quarterfinals at his home Grand Slam tournament for the first time. A second Italian joined Sinner in the quarterfinals when 55th-ranked Lorenzo Sonego got that far at a major tournament for the first time by ending the run of American qualifier Learner Tien 6-2, 6-3, 3-6, 6-1.

Sonego will go up against No. 21 Ben Shel-



ASANKA BRENDON RATNAYAKE/AP

Jannik Sinner gestures as he talks with medical staff during his fourth-round match against Holger Rune at the Australian Open. Both players needed a medical timeout.

ton, who advanced when 38-year-old Gael Monfils of France quit because of an injury early in the fourth set. The 22-year-old American was leading 7-6 (3), 6-7 (3), 7-6 (2), 1-0 after nearly three hours when Monfils, who is married to Svitolina, called a halt to the match.

The men’s quarterfinals Tuesday will be Novak Djokovic vs. Carlos Alcaraz, and Alexander Zverev vs. Tommy Paul.

Sinner said he showed up late at Melbourne Park and didn’t hit before his match because he wasn’t feeling great. The first obvious signs of trouble came at 3-all in the second set.

After lunging for a shot behind the baseline and stumbling slightly, Sinner clutched at his upper left leg and looked as though he might be bothered by some sort of discomfort, although it wasn’t entirely clear what was going on.

After Rune held there, Sinner walked slowly to the sideline for the ensuing changeover and was breathing heavily during the time between games.

When play resumed, Rune earned his first

break point of the match, and Sinner handed it over with a double-fault that made his deficit 5-3.

It was a muggy afternoon, and long, physical points left both players spent. After a pivotal, 37-stroke exchange in the third — claimed by Sinner with a cross-court swinging forehand volley passing winner after bringing Rune forward with a drop shot — each man leaned over with hands on his knees, gasping for air.

Then, during the changeover at 3-2 in the third set, Sinner asked for a trainer and told a ball kid to bring him something to drink from his team. Sinner’s pulse was checked, and then he trudged off with a towel draped around his neck and a bottle in each hand.

When action resumed, Rune was the one playing a bit recklessly and without an effective game plan, and he got broken to trail 5-3 — then immediately requested his own medical check, during which his right knee was massaged by a trainer.

“It was, for sure,” Sinner said, “very, very tough.”

WADA won’t appeal ruling in Swiatek’s drug case

By Howard Fendrich
Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Iga Swiatek’s one-month suspension for failing a drug test will not be appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency because her explanation “is plausible,” WADA announced on Monday.

WADA released its decision just minutes after Swiatek, a five-time Grand Slam champion and former No. 1-ranked women’s tennis player, sealed a 6-0, 6-1 victory against Eva Lys to reach the Australian Open quarterfinals.

“Well, for sure, I’m just satisfied that I can get closure, kind of,” Swiatek said, “and I can just move on and finish this whole process, because I just want to play tennis and focus on the tournament.”

Unlike the Swiatek case, WADA did appeal the exoneration of current men’s No. 1 Jannik Sinner and a hearing is scheduled in April.



VINCENT THIAN/AP

Iga Swiatek plays a forehand return to Eva Lys during their fourth-round match on Monday. Swiatek won 6-0, 6-1.

Sinner was not suspended because the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) determined he was not negligent for two positive tests for an anabolic steroid in

March.

The resolution of Swiatek’s case was made public by the ITIA in late November. She had already been sidelined provisionally, mis-

sing three tournaments in October, and finished her ban during the sport’s offseason.

“WADA sought advice from external legal counsel, who considered that the athlete’s contamination explanation was well evidenced, that the ITIA decision was compliant with the World Anti-Doping Code and that there was no reasonable basis to appeal it to the CAS,” Monday’s statement from WADA said.

Swiatek accepted a one-month suspension after testing positive for trimetazidine, a heart medication known as TMZ.

Swiatek failed an out-of-competition drug test in August, and the ITIA accepted her explanation that the result was unintentional, and caused by the contamination of the non-prescription medication melatonin that she was taking for issues with jet lag and sleeping.

The ITIA said it determined her

level of fault was “at the lowest end of the range for no significant fault or negligence.”

That “scenario,” WADA said Monday, “is plausible and that there would be no scientific grounds to challenge it.”

On the eve of the Australian Open, Swiatek described the initial period she was sidelined, which she chalked up at the time to personal reasons, as “pretty chaotic” and said, “For sure, it wasn’t easy; it was probably, like, the worst time in my life.”

“It got pretty awkward. Like, we chose for the first tournament to say ‘personal reasons’ because we honestly thought the suspension is going to be lifted soon,” Swiatek said in Melbourne. “From the beginning it was obvious that something was contaminated because the level of this substance in my urine was so low that it had to be contamination.”

COLLEGE FOOTBALL/COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Questions galore as wacky season comes to a close

By EDDIE PELLs
Associated Press

ATLANTA — A quarterback moving from Tulane to Duke doesn't raise eyebrows. The \$8 million that boosters at a basketball school paid for a football player does.

A veteran NFL coach finding a career lifeline at a college program that doesn't win a lot shouldn't surprise anyone. It does feel like a shock that the coach is Pro Football Hall of Fame-bound Bill Belichick.

Transactions nobody ever dreamed of became everyday occurrences this season in college football's trip through the looking glass. Even so, one of the most tumultuous years in history ended with two schools whose traditions are as old as the game itself — Ohio State and Notre Dame — playing for a national championship.

Monday night's final (even that's a fairly novel concept for a sport defined by its bowl games for decades) marks the latest finish to a season in college football's 155-year history. It's a product of the new 12-team playoff worth billions.

What comes after the game — with player payments, the transfer portal, tweaks to the playoff, Title IX issues and more — will determine how much wackiness persists next year and beyond.

"It's a lot to consider, it's a lot to try to navigate," said Illinois athletic director Josh Whitman, who is the chair of the NCAA's Division I policymaking board. "It's hard, because you have a sense of what's coming, but you don't have as much clarity as you'd like."

QB's journey indicative of changing landscape

There is perhaps no better way to illustrate these changing times than by telling the story of quarterback Darian Mensah.

Mensah was a two-star recruit out of California in high school who got scholarship offers from three schools: San Jose State, Lindenwood (in Missouri) and Tulane. He chose Tulane and threw for 2,723 yards and 22 touchdowns. He kept the Green Wave in the College Football Playoff conversation through much of the year.

Then, in December, with the transfer portal open and players leaving their schools for better offers in droves, in swooped a third-

party collective affiliated with Duke.

A school known for basketball was the landing place for a quarterback who will reportedly receive \$8 million — a record, but one that will probably be broken soon.

"It's a prestigious university, and a great education is also important to me," Mensah said. "It's just a family out here. I wanted to be part of that."

That Duke family, never considered the cradle of quarterbacks, has nonetheless lost two starters to the portal in two years. One of them is Riley Leonard, who started Monday for Notre Dame.

College looks like pros, so Belichick takes leap

Perhaps an even bigger head-scratcher had to do not with a player, but rather a coach.

Why would Belichick, an out-of-work 72-year-old and owner six Super Bowl rings with the New England Patriots, give up on returning to the NFL to run a UNC program with scant tradition and coming off a soap opera-y firing of its coach, Mack Brown?

Well, Belichick's dad coached there in the 1950s. And in his introductory news conference, he insisted he'd always wanted to coach college ball. More enlightening was what he told Pat McAfee while the negotiations were ongoing: That college football was starting to look very much like the pros.

"It would be a professional program — training, nutrition, scheme, coaching, techniques — that would transfer to the NFL," Belichick said.

Some things remain unchanged up top

All these players moving. All this budding talent showing up at places never known for football. It seems like any school can go from nothing into a college football powerhouse now, right?

Well, maybe not so fast. Even though the Southeastern Conference, which had won six of the last nine national titles, didn't fare as well this year, Ohio State (five titles) and Notre Dame (11) are hardly new to this.

Some of the teams in the newly expanded playoff were not regulars — see Boise State, Indiana and Arizona State. But by the time the field had whittled to four, it was four traditional programs



MIKE BUSCHER/AP

Tulane quarterback Darian Mensah runs during a game against Navy on Nov. 16. Mensah threw for 2,723 yards and 22 touchdowns and then transferred to Duke, and will reportedly receive \$8 million.

with national followings left standing: Penn State, Texas, the Buckeyes and the Fighting Irish.

"Everything is about recruitment and development and, now, retention," said Indiana coach Curt Cignetti, reflecting on what it takes to stay at the top. "Every year you've got to start over now in college football. It's not quite the NFL, but it's getting close."

More uncertainty to come after opening madness

Among the questions that don't have answers yet:

■ The transfer portal: Most coaches detest the December window for players to transfer. It was set up with the school calendar in mind — if education matters, then players should have time to enroll for the spring semester at their new school — but also promotes players leaving before their seasons are over.

"At some point we need to look at our whole system so we can avoid circumstances like that, because that was not fair to anybody involved," said Iowa coach Kirk Ferentz, who was hardly an outlier after losing more than a dozen players to the portal.

■ Roster limits: The soon-to-be-adopted 105-player limit for football means schools can give 20 more scholarships, but this will ultimately cut the number of total roster spots, a few dozen of which go to walk-ons. The same will happen on a smaller scale to all sports across athletic programs.

■ Player payments and Title IX: Under terms of the House settlement that is reshaping college sports, schools were pivoting toward paying players directly for their name, image and likeness (NIL) beginning next year. Then

came Thursday's memo from the Department of Education that those payments had to be treated the same as financial assistance. That means if schools spend most of the \$20.5 million they're allowed on male athletes, they'll be in violation of Title IX.

"We've been building plans on top of plans for some time now," said Whitman, the AD at Illinois. "And this is the most recent example of where we're going to take the guidance under advisement and figure out what, if any, changes we have to make to the strategies we've developed."

Coaches agree, game has been changed forever

Missouri coach Eli Drinkwitz said the confusion over the House settlement, combined with constant threats about lawsuits and a dispersed array of decision-makers — the NCAA, conference commissioners, athletic directors — makes the entire industry hard to understand.

"I worry that the game that I love and have dedicated 30 something years of my life to is slowly getting taken away from us," he said.

But at the core, all these changes are coming against the backdrop of something that felt long overdue: Players have a right to make money for the product they produce. That product is placing record amounts of money into school coffers, even if all of it is creating chaos.

"I'm an optimist. I think we're moving in the right direction," Ferentz said. "I think the proposed model right now is solid. The question is, can we enforce it, really make it a reality? I'll believe that when I see it."

TOP 25 ROUNDUP

Spartans win 11th straight

Associated Press

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Tre Holloman had 17 points, including two free throws in the closing seconds, Coen Carr and Frankie Fidler scored 11 each and No. 12 Michigan State held on to beat No. 19 Illinois 80-78 on Sunday.

The Spartans (16-2, 7-0 Big Ten) extended their winning streak to 11 games, their longest run since the 2018-19 season.

The Fighting Illini (13-5, 6-2) took a 10-point lead in the first half and were trailing by one with possession when Kylan Boswell turned over the ball with 5.9 seconds left.

Holloman made two free throws on the ensuing possession.

Izzo told his players to foul Boswell instead of giving up a 3-pointer. Boswell made the first free throw and after missing the second intentionally, he got to the ball and shot it from the baseline over the backboard, and the officials waved it off.

Illinois star Kasparas Jakucionis was held to season lows in points (three) and minutes (nine) because of foul trouble.

Fellow freshman Will Riley came off the bench to pick up the scoring slack in the first half, scoring 16 points in eight minutes and finishing with 19.

No. 18 Memphis 77, Charlotte 68: PJ Haggerty scored 18 points, Tyrese Hunter added 15 points and the visiting Tigers used a strong first half to set the tone in a win over the 49ers.

Dain Dainja added 14 points and nine rebounds for Memphis (14-4, 4-1 American Athletic Conference), which bounced back from a loss to unranked Temple 88-81 on Thursday night.

Haggerty finished 7-for-14 from the field.

No. 20 Michigan 80, Northwestern 76 (OT): Valdislav Goldin scored 31 points, Nimari Burnett added 13 and the host Wolverines rallied to win in overtime.

Michigan made 9 of 10 free throws in the final 1:20 to finish off the Wildcats (11-7, 2-5).

TCU 74, No. 25 Baylor 71: Brendan Wenzel made a 3-pointer from the left corner with six seconds left and the Horned Frogs, after overcoming a double-digit deficit in the second half, ended the Bears' 10-game home winning streak.

Ernest Udeh Jr. had a career-high 16 points and season-high 15 rebounds for TCU (10-7, 3-3 Big 12), and his fourth blocked shot was on Jayden Nunn's attempted 3-pointer to end the game.

NFL PLAYOFFS

Give: Excessive turnovers cost Ravens, Rams spots in conference title games

FROM PAGE 24

Eagles held on to beat the mistake-prone Rams in the snow in Philly. They'll host Jayden Daniels and the Washington Commanders in the NFC championship game.

Barkley ran for 205 yards and TD runs of 62 and 78 yards, but Philadelphia's defense didn't seal it until Jalen Carter made consecutive big plays on the final drive. Carter sacked Matthew Stafford for a 9-yard loss to the 22 on third down. Then he pressured Stafford into an incomplete pass on fourth-and-11.

Like the Ravens, Los Angeles gave the ball and the game away.

Stafford and Kyren Williams each lost fumbles on consecutive drives that led to a pair of field goals in the second half. Stafford also botched a handoff to Williams on first down from the Eagles 8. Williams recovered it for a 7-yard loss and the Rams ended up settling for a field goal.

"There were some times where some uncharacteristic things, just in terms of the ball handling," Los Angeles coach Sean McVay said. "We had two turnovers that probably don't necessarily occur in different elements."

Winter weather was a bigger factor for the Rams than the other teams since they're not used to it.

"Yeah, it was difficult," Stafford said. "There were some moments where it was a little bit tougher than others. I think it was probably tougher to catch it than maybe it was to throw it. But, yeah, I mean, certainly that ball that we had a missed exchange on in the third quarter, on the right side, handing that ball off, I mean, last second, that one shot out of my hand. So it was difficult. You were going to have to deal with it. We knew that. But for the most part, we just battled."

Falling short in the conference championship leaves a different feeling for Los Angeles than Balti-

Scoreboard

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	
Kansas City 23, Houston 14	
Washington 45, Detroit 31	
Sunday, Jan. 19	
Philadelphia 28, L.A. Rams 22	
Buffalo 27, Baltimore 25	
Conference Championships Sunday, Jan. 26	
AFC	
Buffalo at Kansas City	
NFC	
Washington at Philadelphia	
Super Bowl LIX Sunday, Feb. 9	
At New Orleans	
Buffalo or Kansas City vs. Washington or Philadelphia	

more. The Rams weren't expected to reach this point and were underdogs in a convincing wild-card win over the Minnesota Vikings that followed a difficult week amid the wildfires in Los Angeles. Stafford and McVay already won a Super Bowl together, so their resumes aren't missing that important accomplishment.

Jackson, like Allen, is still seeking his first Lombardi trophy so losing has a bigger impact on his legacy, even though football is the ultimate team game.

Of course, Allen and the Bills now have to beat Mahomes and the Chiefs or they'll be in the same position next week. Buffalo has lost to Kansas City in the playoffs three times in the past four years, including the AFC title game in January 2021.

"A lot of pride in that locker room," Allen said. "We don't listen to the outside noise. Everyone was saying this and that about us. Our guys continue to work hard. We are internally driven."



GENE J. PUSKAR/AP

Baltimore Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson fumbles the football as he is tackled by Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin during the second quarter of a divisional playoff game Sunday in Orchard Park, N.Y.



TERRANCE WILLIAMS/AP

Eagles running back Saquon Barkley runs for a 78-yard touchdown during the fourth quarter against the Los Angeles Rams on Sunday in Philadelphia. Barkley ran for 205 yards in the Eagles' 28-22 win.

Dashing through the snow

Barkley runs for 2 long TDs as Eagles advance over Rams

By DAN GELSTON
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Saquon Barkley blew through a hole and ran untouched in the wintry mix, the Eagles' 2,000-yard rusher smacking his helmet with his hand on his final snowy steps of a 78-yard touchdown run.

The Rams had braced for gusty winds and a heightened chance of snow on a trip to Philadelphia.

They were blown over by Barkley.

Barkley waved his arms in celebration as he scampered along the back of the end zone before he slid into the snow in the late-game playoff celebration.

Barkley dashed through the snow for touchdown runs of 78 and 62 yards and finished with 205 yards rushing. Jalen Hurts had a 44-yard scoring run and the Eagles held on against turnover-happy Los Angeles 28-22 on Sunday to reach the NFC championship game for the second time in three years.

"This is the reason why I came here," Barkley said. "This was the best opportunity to play in a game like this."

Barkley, who left the Giants in free agency to sign a three-year deal for \$26 million guaranteed, ran for a 62-yard score in the first half and stretched the lead in the fourth on the 78-yard score that gave him four touchdowns of 60-plus yards in two games this season against the Rams.

Barkley gave Hurts a little heads up before the snap that a special play was about to develop.

"It was fun, It was a play that I

asked for," Barkley said. "It's a beautiful thing when stuff like that happens."

These Philly Snow Birds had cause for celebration — they will host the NFC championship game Sunday against Washington after the Commanders stunned No. 1 seed Detroit on Saturday.

Los Angeles kept the upset threat alive — caused in large part by two missed extra points by Eagles kicker Jake Elliott.

Matthew Stafford, who threw for 324 yards with sore ribs, kept the Rams in it with a 4-yard TD pass to Colby Parkinson that made it 28-22. Los Angeles got the ball back with two minutes left and Stafford completed consecutive passes of 11 and 37 yards to move the ball into Philadelphia territory.

But Stafford was sacked by Jalen Carter on third down and threw an incomplete pass on fourth down to end the threat.

That came after the Rams suffered from a flurry of fumbles in the fourth quarter, one by running back Kyren Williams that led to a field goal for the Eagles and a strip-sack of Stafford that led to another kick by Elliott to give Philadelphia a 22-15 lead.

The Eagles are set to host the NFC championship game for the fifth time since Lincoln Financial Field opened in 2003.

Philadelphia defenders frolicked in the winter mess and made snow angels in the end zone to celebrate the turnovers. Stadium workers used snow blowers to clear yard lines and hash marks, while Eagles players scooped and

kicked away snow to clear a circle for Elliott's field goal attempts.

Hurts threw for just 128 yards, his mobility hampered in the second half after he was fitted for a knee brace. He didn't miss any snaps, but was easily mauled on the safety. He was sacked seven times.

Hurts suffered a concussion that cost him in two games in a loss at Washington in December. It was Philadelphia's only loss after returning from the bye with a 2-2 record.

Hurts said he expected to play against the Commanders.

Barkley had 118 total yards at the break, but Los Angeles' defense — coming off a nine-sack effort against Minnesota — sacked Hurts three times in the half. Hurts was sacked on consecutive plays to end the first half, a total loss of 16 yards that knocked the Eagles out of field goal range.

Philadelphia borrowed from the playbook used in its November win over the Rams when big plays — Barkley had touchdown runs of 70 and 72 yards — helped it cruise to a comfortable win.

Hurts rushed for the longest TD of his career, a 44-yarder on the fifth play of the game that sent a cold crowd still buzzing from the pregame theatrics into a frenzy. Elliott missed an extra point for the second straight playoff game.

After converting a fourth down on the drive, Stafford hit Tyler Higbee for a 4-yard TD that made it 7-6. Only six days earlier, Higbee spit up blood in the playoff win over Minnesota and was taken to the hospital with a chest injury.

NFL PLAYOFFS

Allen outduels Jackson as Bills top Ravens

By JOHN WAWROW

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — Josh Allen heard the “MVP! MVP!” chants directed at him from the stands, but the Bills quarterback deflected the credit following Buffalo’s hard-fought victory in the divisional playoff round.

This season’s Bills were thought to be thin on both sides of the ball. And it wasn’t one player or one unit that led to Buffalo beating Lamar Jackson and the Baltimore Ravens 27-25 on Sunday night, ending its string of three straight losses at this stage of the postseason and moving on to play the two-time defending champion Kansas City Chiefs in the AFC title game next Sunday.

It was everyone.

“What a complete win,” Allen said. “All year, this team has heard we’ve got no talent, we’re too small, we can’t stop the run, we’re not good enough to compete. We’ve just put our head down and worked hard. I’m so proud of our defense. I’m so proud of our offense and special teams.”

Allen rushed for touchdowns of 1 and 4 yards, but he threw for only 127 yards and rushed for 20. The Bills finished with a modest 273 yards of offense that included rookie Ray Davis scoring on a 1-yard run.

How about that often maligned defense, which gave up 271 yards rushing in a 35-10 loss to the Ravens in Week 4?

On Sunday, Buffalo allowed 176 yards rushing and 416 overall to Baltimore, but compensated by forcing three turnovers.

“We were motivated all week, man,” said linebacker Terrel Bernard, who forced and recovered Mark Andrews’ fumble to set up



GENE J. PUSKAR/AP

Buffalo Bills quarterback Josh Allen carries the ball into the end zone to score a touchdown against the Baltimore Ravens during the second quarter of a divisional playoff game Sunday in Orchard Park, N.Y.

Tyler Bass’ 21-yard field goal with 3:29 left. “We put a lot of work into it. And to see the results start to pay off right now, I can’t say enough about this team.”

The Bills made fewer mistakes than the Ravens on a snow-slicked field and hung on when the usually sure-handed and wide-open Andrews dropped a 2-point conversion pass from Jackson, allowing the ball to bounce off his chest with 1:33 left. Jackson connected with a sliding Isaiah Likely for a 24-yard touchdown to give Baltimore a chance to tie it.

The Ravens tried an onside kick and cornerback Rasul Douglas fielded the ball on two hops.

Buffalo closed its season 10-0 at home, including a 30-21 win over the previously unbeaten Chiefs in Week 11. Now the Bills head to Kansas City, where they’ve been eliminated twice in the past four years — more recently in an unforgettable finish three years ago, when Buffalo blew a three-point lead in the final 13 seconds of regulation and lost 42-36 in overtime.

“We know what they are. They’re the perennial of what you

want to be in the NFL,” Allen said. “You’ve got to beat them to get past them. So, you know, we’re going to enjoy this one tonight.”

Baltimore had one of the NFL’s most productive offenses in the regular season but fell a win short of reaching the conference title game, which they lost to the Chiefs a year ago. Scrutiny of Jackson’s playoff performances will only increase as he fell to 3-5 in the postseason.

The Ravens fell to 5-8 in the divisional round, including 1-4 in their last five.

Jackson finished 18-for-25 for 254 yards and two touchdowns, including a 16-yarder to Rashod Bateman to cap Baltimore’s first possession.

In a showdown of MVP candidates, Jackson lost the turnover battle with an interception and a fumble, while Allen enjoyed his 11th turnover-free game of the season.

“It was uncharacteristic to have turnovers like that. There were opportunities for us to not have those, but we had them,” Ravens coach John Harbaugh said. “You try to bounce back from them in the course of the game. You can’t take them back.”

Andrews did not make himself available after his critical drop, but got plenty of support from his teammates.

“One play doesn’t define anybody. He’s the all-time leading touchdown receiver in Ravens history,” safety Kyle Hamilton said. “He’s been a consistent beacon of success the whole time he’s been here.”

The Bills leaned on the complementary football that allowed them to match a franchise record with 13 regular-season wins, become the NFL’s first team to score 30 touchdowns passing and rushing, and do so without a receiver gaining 900 yards.

Defensively, Buffalo finished the regular season with a league-best plus-24 turnover differential. The Bills limited Derrick Henry to 84 yards rushing and a touchdown on 16 carries after he had a season-high 199 yards in Week 4.

“The mindset is what it’s all about,” coach Sean McDermott said. “These guys believed, played to win, and you find a way, right?”

Turnovers, drop end another promising season for Baltimore

By JONAH BRONSTEIN

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — Lamar Jackson gave the Baltimore Ravens a chance to tie the game and a shot at a possible come-from-behind victory for a second straight berth in the AFC championship game, only to have the opportunity slip through their fingers.

Mark Andrews’ fingers, to be exact in a 27-25 loss to the Buffalo Bills in the divisional round of the playoffs on Sunday night.

The game was decided with 1:33 left when the usually sure-handed and wide-open tight end had Jackson’s pass glance off his hands and chest and fall incomplete on what would have been a tying 2-point conversion. Baltimore had a chance to change its recent narra-

tive of struggling in the playoffs, but ultimately went home with more questions than answers.

“We’ve got to get over this,” Jackson said. “Because we’re right there. I’m tired of being right there. We need to punch that ticket.”

Jackson, who threw an interception and lost a fumble in the first half, refused to blame Andrews.

“I don’t think it’s his fault,” Jackson said. “All of us played a factor in the game. It’s a team effort. We’re not going to put that on Mark. Because he’s been battling all season. All the great things he’s been doing all season. It don’t always go our way. We win as a team. But the times when it’s not going our way, we need to figure that out.”

Three turnovers, an 11-point halftime deficit and two failed 2-point conversion attempts were too much for Jackson and the Ravens to overcome.

Jackson’s postseason record dropped to 3-5, and 1-5 when he has a turnover, and Baltimore fell short of reaching the conference championship game for the fourth time in its past five playoff appearances since Jackson’s arrival in 2018.

This time, the Ravens squandered a year in which they gained the third-most yards in NFL history, became the first team to top 4,000 yards passing and 3,000 yards rushing, and featured the league’s best rush defense.

“We didn’t end up doing the things we needed to do to win the game. We played well enough to



GENE J. PUSKAR/AP

Buffalo Bills linebacker Terrel Bernard strips the ball from Baltimore Ravens tight end Mark Andrews during the fourth quarter Sunday.

win, but we didn’t make the plays in certain circumstances,” coach John Harbaugh said.

As for Andrews, Harbaugh is convinced the player will bounce back.

“There’s nobody that has more heart and cares more or fights

more than Mark. We wouldn’t be here without Mark Andrews,” Harbaugh said. “Mark will handle it fantastic like he always does, because he’s a high-character person, he’s a tough person, and he’s a good person. I’m proud of him just like I’m proud of all the guys.”

SPORTS



Delays give relief

Medical breaks, net issues ultimately help Sinner outlast Rune » Australian Open, Page 20

ON FOOTBALL

Something had to give

Allen goes on, Jackson carries burden of another playoff loss

By ROB MAADDI
Associated Press

Lamar Jackson or Josh Allen had to lose. Allen played a cleaner game, so he's advancing with the Buffalo Bills to face Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs in the AFC championship game.

Turnovers were the difference in both divisional playoff games on Sunday. The Bills had none in a 27-25 victory over the Baltimore Ravens. The Philadelphia Eagles also didn't have any in a 28-22 win over the Los Angeles Rams.

Allen was efficient, ran for two scores and made sure he protected the ball in tough, wintry conditions.

Jackson had multiple giveaways for the first time this season with an interception and fumble. Mark Andrews, who dropped the game-tying 2-point conversion with 1:33 remaining, also lost a fumble that led to a field goal.

Now, Jackson has to carry the burden of not being able to win the biggest game. He's a two-time NFL MVP and is the betting favorite to win the award again this season, but the Ravens haven't reached a Super Bowl with him and twice they had the No. 1 seed in the AFC.

Jackson earned his second straight All-Pro selection and third overall after his best statistical season — 4,172 yards passing, 41 TDs, four interceptions, 119.6 passer rating, 915 yards rushing and four TDs. Still, Baltimore ended up with the No. 3 seed and had to face Buffalo on the road. They beat the Pittsburgh Steelers in the wild-card round before hurting themselves on a cold, wet, slippery field.

"Turnovers, we can't have that," Jackson said. "That's why we lost the game because, as you can see, we're moving the ball wonderfully. It's just hold onto the ... ball. It's annoying. Tired of that."

Earlier in the day, Jalen Hurts, Saquon Barkley and the

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INSIDE

Snow can't stop Barkley as Eagles beat Rams, move to NFC championship game
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Buffalo Bills quarterback Josh Allen (17) is tackled by Baltimore Ravens defensive tackle Nnamdi Madu-buike (92) during the first quarter of a divisional playoff game Sunday in Orchard Park, N.Y.

ADRIAN KRAUS/AP

Laine pushes Canadiens past Rangers in OT » NHL, Page 19

