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Honored ex-Marine enlists in Reserve

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Sgt. Dakota Meyer, a Medal of Honor recipient, recommitted to serve his country Thursday during an enlistment ceremony hosted by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

Meyer joining the Marine Corps Reserve comes nearly 15 years after he received the nation's highest military award for combat valor in 2011 from former President Barack Obama for his actions during an ambush in the Ganjgal Valley of Afghanistan.



Meyer

At the time of the ambush in 2009, Meyer was a 21-year-old corporal serving as a turret gunner with an embedded training team from the III Marine Expeditionary Force out of Okinawa, Japan. Meyer left active-duty service in 2010 and has since become a firefighter and motivational speaker.

"The mission never left me," said Meyer, now 36. "You might hang up the uniform and you might continue that fight on in other ways — as a civilian, as a veteran, as a firefighter, all those things — but I just don't think the warrior inside you is ever going to go away."

Meyer fought down a mountain-side in Afghanistan to rescue wounded troops and recover the bodies of those already killed. He ventured into direct enemy fire to reach the troops, defying orders to stay in a safer position. Marine

SEE ENLISTS ON PAGE 5



TRENTON PALLONE/U.S. Army

U.S. Army infantrymen sweep for landmines along the M2 Highway during a patrol in the Deconfliction Zone, Syria, on Feb. 3. The Pentagon has announced that troops will begin consolidating operations in the country, shutting down some bases and reducing force numbers.

US to cut forces in Syria

About 600 troops to withdraw, bases to shut amid consolidation efforts

BY MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — U.S. troops in Syria will begin to consolidate their operations in the country, shutting down some bases in the coming months and leaving fewer than 1,000 service members there, the Pentagon announced Friday.

"This consolidation reflects the significant steps we have made toward degrading [the Is-

lamic State's] appeal and operational capability regionally and globally," Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said in a statement.

The military is closing three of its eight small operating bases in Syria's northeast region, The New York Times reported. The bases are Mission Support Site Green Village, M.S.S. Euphrates and a third much smaller facility.

About 600 troops will be pulled out from Syria, according to an Associated Press report

that cited an unnamed U.S. official.

The withdrawal will return the U.S. force combating ISIS in Syria to a level not seen for more than a year. The U.S. had maintained about 900 troops in the country to ensure ISIS militants did not regain a foothold, but also to prevent Iranian-backed militants from trafficking weapons across southern Syria.

SEE FORCES ON PAGE 6

Baby products will get more expensive with tariffs

President Donald Trump exempted some baby products, including car seats and high chairs, from import taxes during his first administration. But he hasn't said whether he would consider doing so again.

Prime rate	7.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50
Federal funds market rate	4.38
3-month bill	4.33
30-year bond	4.81

CHINA

RUSSIA

N. KOREA

S. KOREA

Seoul 64/53

Osan 65/53

Busan 62/55

Sasebo 69/59

Iwakuni 68/63

Misawa 51/46

Tokyo 74/62

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Guam 89/79

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MILITARY

Ousted Hegseth aides decry ‘baseless attacks’

By TARA COPP
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Three former senior advisers to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth decried on Saturday what they called “baseless attacks” after each was escorted from the Pentagon in an expanding probe on information leaks.

Dan Caldwell, a Hegseth aide; Colin Carroll, chief of staff to Deputy Defense Secretary Stephen Feinberg; and Darin Selnick, Hegseth’s deputy chief of staff were among four officials in Hegseth’s

inner circle who were ousted this past week.

While the three initially had been placed on leave pending the investigation, a joint statement shared by Caldwell on X said the three were “incredibly disappointed by the manner in which our service at the Department of Defense ended. Unnamed Pentagon officials have slandered our character with baseless attacks on our way out the door.”

“At this time, we still have not been told what exactly we were investigated for, if there is still an ac-

tive investigation, or if there was even a real investigation of ‘leaks’ to begin with,” the post said.

Former Pentagon spokesman John Ulyot also announced he was resigning last week. The Pentagon said, however, that Ulyot was asked to resign.

The upheaval comes less than 100 days into the Trump administration where the Pentagon has found itself frequently in the epicenter of controversial moves — from firings of senior military and civilian staff to broad edicts to purge content that promoted di-

versity, equity or inclusion. That led to images or other online content of heroes like the Tuskegee Airmen and Jackie Robinson being temporarily removed from the military’s websites, causing public uproar.

Last month, Hegseth announced that the Pentagon’s intelligence and law enforcement arms were investigating what it says are leaks of national security information following reports that Elon Musk was set to receive a classified briefing on potential war plans with China.

In the announcement by Hegseth’s chief of staff, Joe Kasper, the office warned that Defense Department personnel could face polygraphs in the probe.

The departures also follow the firings of senior military officers, including Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. CQ Brown; Chief of Naval Operations Lisa Franchetti; National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command director Gen. Tim Haugh; and Vice Adm. Shoshana Chatfield, the U.S. military representative to the NATO Military Committee.

IG: Navy falls short in adoption of suicide crisis response plans

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The Navy has no way of knowing whether its commanders have created a suicide crisis plan in the face of persistently alarming numbers of sailor suicide deaths, a Defense Department Inspector General audit found.

That’s because the service lacks a dedicated office to track the plans and ensure that they include essential elements, such as mental health resources and contact information, the agency said in a report released Tuesday.

“Commands may not have the procedures in place to respond appropriately in a timely manner to a sailor in crisis, validate that lethal means of suicide are restricted and ensure that sailors in crisis have sufficient oversight,” the report stated.

The Navy has struggled for more than a decade with rising suicides, as underscored by three USS George Washington sailors who killed themselves during one week in April 2022 as the aircraft carrier was undergoing extended maintenance.

That year, 71 active-duty and seven reserve sailors, respectively, took their lives, according to Navy statistics. In 2023, 68 active-duty and eight reserve sailors died by suicide.

The service has worked to better identify and help sailors at risk, including increasing its suicide prevention budgets for 2024 and 2025, according to the report.

But of 277 commanders in U.S. Fleet Forces Command and U.S. Pacific Fleet surveyed by the DOD IG, 39 did not have a local crisis response plan, according to the report.

An additional 38 said they had a plan but did not submit it for review, and two more did not answer questions about whether they had a plan, the DOD IG said.

The Navy pushed back on the



Sailors form a human ribbon on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush in support of Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month.

finding that a lack of a central oversight office was to blame.

Establishing such an office is impractical and would undermine a commander’s authority and responsibility as well as pose an undue burden on the fleet, said Rear Adm. Jay Clark, director of the Navy’s Culture and Force Resilience Office.

“In this specific case, centralized reporting for crisis response plans would do little to ensure a command’s ability to effectively respond in a crisis,” Clark said in a March 19 response to the report.

Clark agreed that having the plans is critical and that they “should be treated with the same level of care as warfighting tactic, technique or procedure.”

The Navy will continue to emphasize the importance of crisis response to its commanders and update its policy to better highlight their responsibilities, he said.

The review included 277 survey responses from commanding officers, of whom 198 submitted their local crisis plans for evaluation.

Nearly half of those plans did not include a reporting requirement to the Sailor Assistance and Intercept for Life, or SAIL, program, according to the report.

The program provides rapid assistance, ongoing risk assessment, care coordination and reintegration assistance for active-duty sailors, according to the Navy.

A total of 21% of the submitted plans did not have a list of mental health resources and contact information and 6% were not specifically tailored to their commands, according to the report.

The DOD IG required Clark to provide additional comments within 30 days, noting that its recommendation for the oversight office remained unresolved.

In addition to recommending the establishment of the central office, the DOD IG also advised the Navy to implement a plan to ensure all commands have a completed local crisis plan.

The Navy’s Culture and Force Resilience Office agreed with that recommendation.

Tunisia celebrates new US patrol boats, flagship visit

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The transfer of two American patrol boats to Tunisia and a Navy command ship’s visit embody a centuries-old U.S. commitment to maritime partnership with the North African country, a top service official said last week.

The commissioning of the boats during a ceremony Thursday in the capital city Tunis is the most recent U.S. equipment contribution to Tunisia, 6th Fleet said in a statement the same day.

The event, featuring a port visit by 6th Fleet flagship USS Mount Whitney, was an opportunity “to engage with our Tunisian counterparts and reaffirm our commitment to working together,” Vice Adm. Jeffrey Anderson, commander of U.S. 6th Fleet, said in the statement.

Tunisia, which overthrew its authoritarian dictator during the Arab Spring anti-government protests in 2011, is considered a major non-NATO U.S. partner, in part due to its location on the Mediterranean Sea, which serves as a gateway to Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

The Navy has partnered with

African countries for decades to help them gain equipment and training needed to protect their territorial waters against illegal fishing, piracy and trafficking.

That work is part of overall U.S. efforts to promote regional stability and fight terrorism in Africa.

Despite Tunisian President Kais Saied’s adoption of a new constitution in 2021 that centralized power around the presidency, the U.S. has continued its military, economic and other assistance to the country.

For example, it gave the Tunisian air force four Textron C-208EX aircraft in September to support intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities.

The U.S. also has delivered at least six C-130 military aircraft to the country, U.S. Africa Command said in August.

Since 2011, the United States has invested more than \$1 billion in security cooperation with Tunisia, including more than \$160 million in 2023, according to the U.S. Embassy in Tunisia.

The support has enabled Tunisia to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations, engage in humanitarian missions and become a security hub.



Two American patrol boats transferred from the U.S. Navy to Tunisia sit side by side during a ceremony in Tunis on Thursday.

MILITARY

GAO: Special needs students underserved

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Some special needs students attending Defense Department schools are being underserved because of staffing shortages and high turnover among special education personnel, the Government Accountability Office said in a report released Thursday.

The problem is exacerbated by rigid staffing formulas used by the Department of Defense Education Activity, or DODEA, which operates the school system. Those formulas, the report said, rely on student headcounts rather than the hours required to adequately serve students, often underestimating staffing needs.

The GAO found delays in the delivery of special education services at 44 of DODEA's 114 overseas schools during the 2022-23 school year. In six of those cases, more

than a year passed before services were restored.

Both parents and providers told investigators that delays and disruptions in services often harmed students' academic progress.

The 2024 National Defense Authorization Act directed the GAO to examine how well DODEA is meeting the special education needs of its students and to identify key obstacles. The agency analyzed data from six school years, spanning 2018 to 2024, and conducted site visits at 14 schools in Japan, Germany and North Carolina.

About 66,000 children were enrolled in 160 DODEA schools during the 2023-24 school year, with nearly three-quarters attending overseas. Roughly 15% of DODEA students receive special education services, according to the report.

DODEA offers four special education programs for students with disabilities or specific conditions from kindergarten through 12th grade. Each program has unique staffing requirements. Three are geared toward students with mild-to-moderate, moderate-to-severe, and severe-to-profound learning impairments; the fourth serves students with emotional impairments.

Special needs students include those with autism spectrum disorder, deafness, developmental delay, intellectual disability, orthopedic impairments, traumatic brain injuries and other conditions, the report said.

The staffing formulas used by DODEA are based primarily on student numbers within each program, but do not take into account the time required to fulfill each student's individualized educa-

tion program, or IEP — a legally binding plan developed by educators and parents outlining services and goals tailored to the student.

"Required service minutes can vary widely from student to student even within the same special education program or classroom," the report states.

DODEA officials told the GAO that staffing formulas "should be responsive to emerging needs and the varying intensity of support that students may require over time."

However, the formulas have not been reviewed since they were implemented in 2015, according to the report.

"DODEA school staff and administrators told us that even students within the same special education program can have significant differences in the amount of

support they need in the classroom," the report states.

At 13 of the 14 schools visited, staff said headcount-based staffing formulas did not allocate enough personnel to meet student needs outlined in IEPs.

Staff shortages and high turnover also affected the quality and consistency of services, the report said.

"Special education personnel shortages, high turnover rates, and lengthy hiring processes create obstacles affecting the consistency, timeliness, and overall quality of special education and related services that students receive," the report states.

Turnover among special education teachers was particularly high. Between 2019 and 2022, the turnover rate for those positions across the DODEA system was 68%, according to the report.

Fort Bliss confirms measles on base as cases in area rise

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — A measles outbreak in West Texas has reached Fort Bliss, with at least one confirmed case reported at the installation, military health officials said.

Officials at William Beaumont Army Medical Center said Wednesday that they will not release any further information about the measles case nor will they publicly confirm whether the base hospital is treating other cases.

"Any additional cases will not be reported to the public because it can unintentionally impact mission assurance and force protection," said Amabilia Payen, a spokeswoman for the hospital.

Officials will, however, continue to update cases with the local, state and federal agencies as they are required to do.

Measles is a highly contagious viral infection that can be life-threatening to those who are not vaccinated against it, according to the Texas Department of State Health and Human Services. It is recommended young children receive the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine to prevent contracting the virus. It comes in two doses and can offer 97% protection.

The state began to see an uptick in measles cases in late January, primarily in the western edge of the panhandle. There were 561 confirmed cases Tuesday across the state — an increase of 20 from the previous week, according to the state health department. Two school-aged children have died in Texas. Neither had received a vaccine.

Nearly 60 patients in Texas have been hospitalized, according to state health officials.

Confirmed measles cases are uncommon in the military health system, where vaccination is required for military service unless the member has a documented exemption. Vaccination rates among military family members were not available Thursday, according to the Defense Health Agency.

There have been 11 confirmed cases since 2016, including one of an active-duty service member, according to DHA.

Since January, DHA said it has had two measles cases, including the one at Fort Bliss.

"[The Defense Department] has been coordinating with the Texas state health department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on this case. Additionally, DOD public health emergency officers



Klarissa Parsons, a nurse at Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center at Fort Cavazos, Texas, administers the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine to Autumn Campbell, daughter of Spc. Tyrece Campbell, on March 14.

and staff work closely with their civilian counterparts in order to ensure an effective public health response," DHA said in a statement.

Outside of the Army base, the outbreak has grown with five new cases reported in El Paso, bringing the city's total to 13. An unvaccinated child in Doña Ana County — on the western side of Fort Bliss in New Mexico was diagnosed with measles in the last week, marking the county's first measles case.

Marines killed in accident near US-Mexico border were engineers

Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps has identified the two Marines killed in a vehicle crash last week while supporting Joint Task Force—Southern Border operations near the U.S.—Mexico border.

Lance Cpl. Albert A. Aguilera, 22, of Riverside, Calif., and Lance Cpl. Marcelino M. Gamino, 28, of Fresno, Calif., died April 15 after their vehicle crashed during a convoy movement near Santa Te-

resa, N.M., according to a statement issued Thursday by the 1st Marine Division.

Both Marines were combat engineers assigned to the 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Aguilera enlisted in March 2023 and was promoted to lance corporal the following spring, the statement said. Gamino enlisted in May 2022 and was promoted to lance corporal last summer while

he was deployed to Australia with Marine Rotational Force-Darwin.

A third Marine from the same unit remains in critical condition at University Medical Hospital in El Paso, Texas.

The Marines were on duty when the accident occurred around 8:50 a.m. along N.M. Highway 9 near the Santa Teresa Border Patrol Station, according to the division and local law enforcement. They were driving a civilian vehicle to

El Paso, about 20 miles east of the Border Patrol station.

The accident involved a silver Jeep Gladiator four-door truck, according to video from the scene taken by KFOX, a local TV station.

The accident remains under investigation.

The task force assumed control of the southern border mission on March 14 as part of President Donald Trump's emphasis on controlling the flow of people and ma-

teriel crossing the Mexican border. Roughly 6,600 active-duty service members are deployed to the mission, according to the joint task force.

However, troops have been working in support of Customs and Border Protection since Trump first deployed them in 2018. The mission continued under former President Joe Biden with National Guard troops rotating to the southern border.

MILITARY

Paving the way for homemade drones

US Army task force in Germany marks flight feat with 3D creations

By LYDIA GORDON
Stars and Stripes
HOHENFELS, Germany — Chief Warrant Officer 2 Chris Lehr and his small team of Wiesbaden-based soldiers spent about a year working on homemade 3D printed drones they weren't sure would work.

Last week, members of the 2nd Multi-Domain Task Force finally had the opportunity to find out if their creation could get off the ground with an initial round of testing at the Army's Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels.

"This thing could crash and burn," Lehr said April 11, as a five-day electronic warfare exercise dubbed Spectrum Blitz happened to be going on around them. "Luckily, we've got the airspace to test this out in."

Equipped with cautious optimism and a box of drone components team members had produced themselves, the group made three unsuccessful tries during the exercise.

But after returning to Wiesbaden to make some modifications, Lehr and his group followed up the flop with a much more successful test run Thursday, with the drone maintaining controlled flight.

The difference-maker, as it turned out, was a switch to a tilt-rotor platform rather than a fixed-wing design.

"We added two more motors and a tilt function so that it takes off (vertically)," Lehr said Thursday. "We thought the hand-launched variant would be easier, and it was not."

That has the team feeling confi-



Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Chris Lehr runs a systems check while testing homemade drones in Hohenfels.

dent about fielding the drones at Arcane Thunder, an exercise in May in Poland.

The task force's high-tech tinkering is the latest example of how small units across the Army are looking for an edge on a future battlefield where drones are expected to play a decisive role.

As the development lead at the Innovation Lab, Lehr helps develop training aides and environments for soldiers.

The 2nd Multi-Domain Task Force has been in existence since 2021, with the unit's Innovation Lab officially opening in May of last year.

Its work is an example of a concept the Army calls Transforming in Contact, an effort across the service to adapt the way soldiers fight to the new realities on the



PHOTOS BY LYDIA GORDON/Stars and Stripes

Army Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Pope hand-launches a homemade 3D printed fixed-wing drone at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, on April 11.



The first of three 3D printed drones built by soldiers with the 2nd Multi-Domain Task Force is tested in Hohenfels on April 11.

battlefield.

Task force members treated the setbacks in Hohenfels as an opportunity to learn lessons from failure.

"I feel like the Wright brothers," said Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Pope, the battalion's electromagnetic warfare master trainer, as

Lehr proceeded with systems checks on the first of three test drones scheduled for the April 11 experiment.

The first test ended with the drone nosediving seconds after the hand launch, despite near-perfect weather conditions.

Only the filament frame was

damaged, Lehr said. All internal components could be salvaged and installed into a new frame.

And by using homemade drones, the team could give it another shot much more quickly and cheaply than would have been the case with the crash of a commercially produced model.

Although the next two flights also ended in crashes, team members came away from Hohenfels with confidence in their thinking that they knew what the problem was.

On the heels of their successful modification, now the team's challenge is building enough spare parts in time for Arcane Thunder.

"I'm very confident we're going to use this drone in Poland," Lehr said. "I think moving forward we're going to look at larger platforms and stick with the vertical takeoff and landing."

Enlists: Meyer plans to refrain from politics while in uniform

FROM PAGE 1

Corps officials credited Meyer with helping save the lives of 36 U.S. and Afghan troops. The ambush claimed the lives of five Marines and nine Afghan allies.

Meyer was only the third living service member from the war in Afghanistan to receive the award, and the first living Marine to be given the honor for battlefield heroics since the Vietnam War.

"This is a guy who has put it all on the line and done the most difficult things you can imagine, testing the human resolve, and yet after all of that, he is standing before us today saying, 'I want to do more,'" Hegseth said during the

ceremony at the Pentagon.

Hegseth, who Meyer described as a longtime friend, said Meyer is an example of the Defense Department's commitment to ensure the country's "best and brightest are willing to wear the uniform."

"You are responding to something we have seen Americans across the country respond to since President [Donald] Trump was reelected, which is a renewed inspiration to want to serve this country," Hegseth said.

The process for Meyer to enlist in the Marine Corps Reserve began about two years ago. The decision to join the Reserve force, Meyer said, was something that he

has considered since he left active-duty service.

"I have always been willing to serve this great nation because I believe in the people of the United States of America," Meyer told reporters before the ceremony.

Following Meyer's active-duty service, he became a sharp critic of former President Joe Biden's administration over its withdrawal from Afghanistan. He's been outspoken about the jailing of another Marine — Lt. Col. Stuart Scheller — who criticized the Biden administration for the 2021 withdrawal. Scheller made his comments in social media posts while in uniform, which is a viola-

tion of military conduct.

But Meyer said he would refrain from politics while in uniform.

"The great part about being in the Reserve is I'm still a citizen when I'm not on orders," he said. "When I'm on orders I'll comply obviously with whatever the standard is."

Meyer participated in an early Thursday morning workout session with Hegseth, as well as the Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, and Marines at Fort Myer-Henderson Hall in Virginia, according to the Defense Department.

Gabbard, who is an Army re-

servist, attended the ceremony at the Pentagon.

Meyer said he has spent the past month in earnest training to ensure he met the Marine Corps standard. He will join a unit as a sergeant, working with the unit two weeks out of the year.

Throughout the enlistment process, he said, he has been asked multiple times why he was recommitting to serve.

"I just love my country," Meyer said. "I believe in that with everything that I have got, and at the end of the day, I have got a lot more to give."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

MIDEAST

US trims force as allies boost new government

BY ABIGAIL HAUSLOHNER
AND KAREN DEYOUNG

The Washington Post

As President Donald Trump ponders the status of U.S. troops based in Syria and has stopped some humanitarian aid programs to the war-battered country, he is increasingly at odds with allies in Europe and the Middle East that have moved to shore up the new Syrian government.

On Thursday, a U.S. official said the U.S. will withdraw about 600 troops from Syria, leaving fewer than 1,000 to work with Kurdish allies to counter Islamic State. The departure of the 600 troops will return force levels to where they had been for years before they were raised to more than 2,000 in October 2023.

The influence of Iran and Russia in what was once their most subservient regional partner has quickly dissipated since forces led by President Ahmad al-Sharaa, once an al-Qaida-allied militant, ousted longtime dictator Bashar Assad in December. Though nominally only Syria's interim leader, al-Sharaa has reached out to the West in what many U.S. allies — with the notable exception of Israel — see as an opportunity to score a win in a troubled and dangerous region.

But the Trump administration, which still maintains Assad-era sanctions on Damascus, is sitting on the fence.

"We continue to approach Syria with a lot of caution" until al-Sharaa proves he has rid his government of foreign Islamist militants and vestiges of al-Qaida, and demonstrates he can unite Syria's disparate minorities, a senior administration official said.

"We're not necessarily looking at saving Syria for the Syrian population," said the official, one of several U.S. and foreign officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity about sensitive diplomacy. "We're looking at Iran not coming back and [the Islamic State] not coming back as the crucial interest of the American people there."

Many allies, experts and U.S. lawmakers of both parties say the Trump administration's indecision may guarantee the very things it is trying to prevent.

"Too much engagement too soon could create more security dilemmas," Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman James Risch, R-Idaho, said at a hearing in February. "But no or too little engagement would give Russia and Iran the ability to wield substantial influence again."

"Time is of the essence here," Risch said. "The door is ajar, but it's going to close on us if we don't take advantage of where we are."

Two months later, the administration still has not decided whether to step through the door or shut



TRENTON PALLONE/Combined Joint Task Force — Operation Inherent Resolve

Army Pfc. Gregory Dick and Sgt. Alexander Roman, of the 10th Mountain Division, interact with Syrian children outside the Rukban Hospital during a patrol in Syria's Deconfliction Zone, in January.

it. "The Americans are clear to us that, unfortunately, they don't have a policy," said a European diplomat who has urged Washington's involvement in Syria's rehabilitation.

At an international meeting in Brussels last month, a mid-level Trump administration official handed Syria's new foreign minister a list of eight "confidence-building" steps his government would need to take to be considered for partial sanctions relief. The list, a copy of which was seen by The Washington Post, includes allowing the U.S. government to conduct anti-terrorism operations on Syrian soil against anyone Washington deems a national security threat.

It also instructs Syria's government to "issue a formal public declaration banning all Palestinian militias and political activities" on Syrian territory and to deport members of such groups to "assuage Israeli fears."

Even as the administration contemplates removing much of the U.S. presence in Syria, the list also demanded that Damascus issue a formal declaration of support for Operation Inherent Resolve, the mission of the American troops based there against ISIS.

Since taking office again, Trump has said little about Syria.

Asked shortly after his inauguration whether he would withdraw American forces — which he reportedly ordered three times during his first term before being talked out of it — he said he would "make a determination on that."

Syria, he added, "is its own mess. They've got enough messes over there. They don't need us involved in every one."

Amid widespread instability in the region, the United States is maintaining strong support for Israel's war in Gaza, conducting regular airstrikes against the Houthis in Yemen, propping up a shaky government in Lebanon and contemplating military action against Iran.

While a full drawdown of U.S. troops in Syria is not currently being contemplated, a U.S. official who focuses on the region said there was an expectation that the administration would reduce the number of troops "to a bare minimum. ... I think we're going to go down to one very small place in the northeast."

The extent to which U.S. withdrawal plans might be derailed by events on the ground remained unclear. A resurgent ISIS is already increasing attacks in eastern Syria as it seeks to capitalize on any vacuum left by the reduction in Russia's presence and a po-

tential U.S. departure.

Among the ripest targets are prison camps in northeast Syria controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces, a Kurdish-led militia, that hold about 9,000 ISIS fighters and 40,000 of their family members. The SDF works under the supervision of — and with intelligence and weapons assistance from — U.S. troops there.

Allies and regional experts say they have broader concerns. Many have doubts about al-Sharaa's commitment and ability to build a centralized, inclusive and democratic state and advocate a gradual approach to test the new government's intentions and viability. But without at least a gradual lifting of sanctions, "[al-]Sharaa cannot deliver to his population," said Marwan Muasher, vice president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a former foreign minister of Jordan.

"There is electricity for only a few hours a day ... the economy is in shambles," Muasher said. "Without lifting sanctions, he's not able to show progress. Unless he is able to show progress, he's in trouble." Although the Biden administration removed a \$10 million bounty on al-Sharaa's head in December, Syria's U.S. designation as a state supporter of terrorism remains in place.

As sanctions continue to cripple efforts in Damascus to jump-start the economy, Russia is trying to regain its foothold with shipments of oil and other necessities. "Iran will find a way back into Syria" if Damascus isn't supported by multinational partners, said James F. Jeffrey, a retired U.S. diplomat who served as Trump's first-term special envoy for Syria.

Sebastian Gorka, the senior director for counterterrorism on the National Security Council staff, is seen as leading the charge against any concessions.

"I don't think anybody shed a tear for the fall of the Assad regime," Gorka said in an interview published recently by Breitbart. But, he said, "what you have in Damascus now isn't some kind of Jeffersonian Democrat."

Al-Sharaa, under his nom de guerre of Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, was a founding member of

Jabhat al-Nusra — an anti-Assad group that began as an al-Qaida splinter but announced in 2016 it had split from the extremist organization. "All we know is this so-called interim president has said that shariah, Islamic law, will be the law of Syria," Gorka said in the interview. "So the jury is still out on Jolani and what he wants to do in Syria."

Sectarian violence has broken out repeatedly, most prominently last month when an attack on government forces by a group of loyalists from Assad's Alawite sect near the Mediterranean coast was met with heavy reprisals from the new Sunni Muslim government forces that resulted in heavy civilian casualties.

"We are looking at what they do, not what they say," the senior administration official said. Washington remains skeptical over Syria's newly appointed Cabinet, which lacks significant representation of minority groups, while including in prominent positions radical foreign fighters who played key roles in ousting Assad. The interim government's constitutional declaration is little more than "shariah law with a pretty bow," the official said.

Chief Trump negotiator and Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff has evinced a more sanguine view toward the new government.

"The indications are that Jolani is a different person than he once was," Witkoff said in an interview last month with former Fox News host Tucker Carlson.

"People can change," Witkoff said. Normalizing relations with Syria, he offered, could be part of an "epic" peace arrangement throughout the Middle East.

In the meantime, two regional U.S. allies in the region — Israel and Turkey — have edged closer to direct conflict as they compete for Trump's backing of their differing aims for Syria's future.

Turkey has numerous incentives to want to stabilize al-Sharaa's government, including the return of millions of Syrian refugees who fled the 13-year civil war; suppression of demands of Syrian Kurds for their own state on Turkey's border or a significant role in the new Syria; a more dominant place in the region and investment opportunities for Ankara's flailing economy.

Israel, which sees al-Sharaa as a radical Islamist in sheep's clothing, would far prefer a weak and decentralized Syria on its border. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose relations with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan have long been strained, said during his recent Oval Office meeting with Trump that "we don't want to see Syria being used by anyone, including Turkey, as a base for attacking Israel."

Forces: US troops will number less than 1,000

FROM PAGE 1

The number of U.S. troops there was increased to more than 2,000 after the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks by Hamas militants in Israel as Iranian-backed fighters targeted American forces and interests in the region in response to Israel's bombardment of Gaza.

Three U.S. soldiers in Jordan were killed by a drone fired by an Iranian-backed militia in January

2024.

In December 2024, Syrian President Bashar Assad fled the country.

In the months since, Syrians displaced by more than a decade of war have returned home, but the country remains unstable. Israel has targeted Syrian weapons installations, and there are some indications that ISIS is trying to reconstitute itself, and Iranian-

backed militias in Syria remain a threat to U.S. interests.

"As this consolidation takes place, consistent with President [Donald] Trump's commitment to peace through strength, U.S. Central Command will remain poised to continue strikes against the remnants of ISIS in Syria," Parnell said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

PACIFIC

USS Nimitz in Guam as deactivation nears

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Navy’s oldest aircraft carrier, the USS Nimitz, arrived in Guam on Friday, possibly marking its final visit to the island as the ship continues what is expected to be its last Pacific deployment.

The Nimitz and its escorts — the guided-missile destroyers USS Gridley and USS Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee — pulled into Apra Harbor for the strike group’s first port call since departing San Diego on March 24, said strike group spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Tim Pietrack.

The ships will resupply and the crew will conduct maintenance and “take time to rest and recharge,” he told Stars and Stripes by email Friday.

Pietrack declined to comment on the length of the stay, citing security concerns.

While the Navy has not officially confirmed this as the Nimitz’ final deployment, the ship’s nuclear reactors are scheduled to begin deactivation next spring when the vessel relocates to Naval Station

Norfolk in Virginia. That process, expected to conclude by 2027, marks an early step toward the carrier’s decommissioning and eventual disposal.

“Until the decommissioning, Nimitz remains ready to sail where we are needed, when we are needed, in support of our nation’s tasking,” Pietrack wrote.

Commissioned in 1975, the 50-year-old Nimitz is set to be replaced by the Gerald R. Ford-class USS John F. Kennedy, which is expected to be commissioned later this year.

During this deployment, the carrier has primarily operated at sea, conducting flight sorties, live-fire exercises, a change-of-command ceremony, and multiple replenishments-at-sea, according to photos published by the Navy.

Rear Adm. Maximilian Clark, commander of Carrier Strike Group 11, highlighted Guam’s strategic importance during the visit.

“It’s always an honor to return to Guam — where our service members are welcomed like fam-



HANNAH KANTNER/U.S. Navy

F/A-18E Super Hornets rest on the flight deck as the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz pulls into Naval Base Guam on April 18.

ily, and where our presence truly matters,” he said in the release.

“The Nimitz Strike Group is proud to be in Guam — America’s criti-

cal terrain and gateway to maintaining stability in the region.”

New US ambassador to Japan touts trade deal, stronger ties

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — The new U.S. ambassador to Japan pledged Friday to support the American military’s efforts to “push back against a country like China” during remarks on his first day in the post.

George Glass, a former businessman and veteran diplomat, spoke to reporters shortly after landing at Haneda Airport in Tokyo. He was confirmed by the Senate last week in a 66-32 vote following his nomination by President Donald Trump.

Glass, an Oregon native, previously served as U.S. ambassador to Portugal from 2017 to 2021 during Trump’s first term.

He posted a photo of his swearing-in ceremony, attended by Vice President JD Vance, on X on April 12.

“We sit with Japan in a very tough neighborhood — you have Russia, you’ve got China, you’ve got North Korea,” Glass said at



AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

The new U.S. ambassador to Japan, George Glass, speaks to reporters shortly after landing at Haneda Airport in Tokyo, on Friday.

Haneda. “We had tremendous success in Europe pushing back on the Chinese and their predatory habits.”

A top priority, he added, would

be “making sure the military has all the issues taken care of and all the materials they need to be able to successfully push back against a country like China.”

Glass arrives as Japan looks to ease its burden under sweeping tariffs imposed on April 2 on U.S. trading partners. Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba was reportedly the first foreign leader to contact Trump following the announcement, launching talks on trade and tariffs.

Trump later posted on Truth Social that the meeting had made “Big progress!” but provided no details.

At Haneda, Glass said he was “extremely optimistic that a deal will get done,” citing the strength of both countries’ economies and their negotiating teams.

“When I saw that President Trump then decided he was going to get involved and has now named this his top priority, that’s why I have a lot of confidence that we’ll get something done,” Glass said.

He previewed his agenda during an April 11 speech at the Washington residence of Japanese Am-

bassador Shigeo Yamada, according to Japanese broadcaster NHK.

“Obviously we have a lot to talk about in the next few weeks. We are well prepared to and very optimistic,” Glass said, emphasizing the importance of strengthening bilateral ties.

At his March confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Glass called on Japan to increase defense spending, including additional support for U.S. forces and bases in the country.

He described the U.S.-Japan alliance as being at an “all-time high” in both economic and military cooperation.

Glass has a background in finance, investment banking and technology, according to his State Department biography. He is also a regular donor to Trump’s campaigns, the Republican National Committee, GOP congressional candidates and joint fundraising committees.

Fighter jet tilts after tire detaches while taxiing on Okinawa runway

By BRIAN McELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

An F-15E Strike Eagle deployed to Kadena Air Base on Okinawa lost a tire while taxiing on the runway Thursday, according to the 18th Wing.

The multirole fighter was conducting a taxi check when it experienced a “tire malfunction,” wing

spokeswoman Maj. Alli Stormer said Friday. She did not identify the squadron or the specific mission the aircraft was supporting.

“The situation was safely resolved with no injuries or significant damage,” she said without elaborating.

Local broadcaster Okinawa TV reported that the aircraft’s left rear tire detached and rolled into

the grass beside the runway, causing the jet to tilt to one side. The report cited unnamed witnesses and an uncredited photo.

The incident occurred around 1 p.m., a spokesman for the Okinawa Defense Bureau said by phone Friday. The bureau, part of Japan’s Ministry of Defense, is seeking more information from the Air Force and plans to update the local

community accordingly, the spokesman added.

Tire issues have occurred at Kadena before. On Oct. 18, two F-22 Raptors experienced problems — one had two tire failures while landing, and another suffered a tire malfunction before takeoff, according to the wing.

Twelve F-15Es from the 336th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron

at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C., arrived at Kadena for a rotational deployment on April 6, a bureau spokesman said.

They deployed alongside F-35A Lightning IIs from the 355th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska.

Stars and Stripes reporter Hana Kusumoto contributed to this report.

MILITARY

Relatives, Marines mark Ernie Pyle's death

By **Brian McElhiney**
Stars and Stripes

IE SHIMA, Okinawa — Retired Air Force Maj. Tom Cowan didn't hesitate when asked about his favorite column written by his famous relative, war correspondent Ernie Pyle.

It's perhaps Pyle's most well-known dispatch from the Italian front in World War II: "The Death of Capt. Waskow," dated Jan. 10, 1944. In it, Pyle described how soldiers in the Army's 36th Infantry Division paid tribute to their fallen company commander.

"That article, just the way he describes so eloquently the outpouring of the men to their captain," Cowan said Saturday while aboard the ferry to Ie Shima, where a ceremony marking the 80th anniversary of Pyle's death would soon begin. "... That's what's always most important, and I always used that as an example of how I wanted to lead my troops."

Cowan, Pyle's first cousin once removed through his mother, serves as president of the Ernie Pyle Legacy Foundation. The organization's leadership is largely composed of Pyle's indirect descendants.

He and his daughter, Angelica Shaklee, became the first of Pyle's relatives to visit the memorial on Ie Shima, where an obelisk stands near the site where Pyle was killed on April 18, 1945. They joined about 150 Marines, American Le-



Retired Air Force Maj. Tom Cowan — the cousin of famed war correspondent Ernie Pyle, with his daughter, Angelica Shaklee — salutes after laying flowers near the spot where Pyle was killed, on Ie Shima, Okinawa, on Saturday.

gionnaires and Okinawan officials for the morning ceremony.

The significance of the 80th anniversary brought more attendees than in previous years, said Lawrence Ocomy, commander of Okinawa's American Legion Post 28. The post has maintained Pyle's memorial and hosted the annual ceremony since 1952.

"Many of those World War II

veterans are no longer here to tell the stories," Ocomy, an Army veteran, said after the ceremony. "However, Pyle captured those stories, specifically for the infantrymen. That story to this day still lingers on in the many writings that he published."

Born in 1900 near Dana, Ind., Pyle became known for his down-to-earth reporting on the lives of

enlisted troops during some of the war's most significant battles.

He began covering the war for Scripps-Howard newspapers in 1940 during the German bombings of London, known as the Blitz. He later embedded with troops in the North African campaign in 1942-43 and reported from Italy and France in 1944, the year he received the Pulitzer Prize for his

war correspondence.

Pyle joined the 77th Infantry Division during the Battle of Okinawa and was killed when the jeep he was riding in came under fire from a Japanese machine gunner on a ridge above. He was buried near the site of his death; his remains were later moved to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, also known as the Punchbowl.

He "told the story of the American fighting man as American fighting men wanted it told," both III Marine Expeditionary Force deputy commander Brig. Gen. Trevor Hall and Cowan said during their remarks, quoting President Harry Truman's tribute after Pyle's death.

"Few individuals in history have done more than Ernie Pyle to educate us on the cost of conflict and the brutality of war," Hall said.

The Ernie Pyle Legacy Foundation also hosted a ceremony Friday at the Punchbowl, where Pyle was reburied in 1949.

"He simply set out to tell the truth, one soldier's story at a time," Suzanne Puanani Vares-Lum, a retired Army general and current director of the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, said. "He gave a voice to the warfighter who had no voice during World War II."

Stars and Stripes reporter Wyatt Olson contributed to this report.

Bill would ban drones shooting video footage of military sites

By **Svetlana Shkolnikova**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Shooting drone video footage of national defense sites would be treated as a crime and punishable with imprisonment under new legislation introduced by two military veterans in Congress.

The Espionage Act of 1917 already prohibits the photography of sensitive military sites, but the statute makes no mention of videography — an omission that Reps. Jen Kiggans, R-Va., and Don Davis, D-N.C., hope to correct.

Their proposed bill would amend the law to include "video"

in the list of criminal information-gathering means to address a growing use of drones by adversaries such as China.

The lawmakers said Congress needed to take swift action as adversaries increasingly attempt to obtain unauthorized access to aerial footage of defense sites.

"As a Navy veteran who represents one of the most military-heavy districts in the country, I know how critical it is to safeguard our national defense infrastructure and protect sensitive national security information," Kiggans said.

The Drone Espionage Act would hold bad actors accounta-

ble, impose serious repercussions and protect national security, she said.

Last year, Kiggans was among scores of lawmakers who raised alarm over a spate of mysterious drone sightings in Virginia's Hampton Roads area, which is home to 18 military installations and 120,000 active-duty, Reserve and civilian personnel.

Drones were also spotted along the East Coast, most prominently in New Jersey.

The White House has repeatedly denied any malicious activity, saying some of the drones were authorized for research purposes while others were a combination

of lawful commercial drones, hobbyist drones and law enforcement drones.

Lawmakers continue to remain concerned about foreign surveillance, however.

A Chinese citizen living in California was sentenced to four months in prison late last month for flying a drone for nearly an hour over Vandenberg Space Force Base in November and taking aerial photos of the installation.

The man, a lawful permanent resident of the U.S., had conducted a search for the phrase "Vandenberg Space Force Base Drone Rules" and messaged with another

person about hacking his drone to allow it to fly higher than it could otherwise, according to the Justice Department.

He was arrested prior to boarding a flight to China and pleaded guilty to one federal count of violating the national defense airspace.

His sentence also includes a year of supervised release and \$225 in fines.

Those caught taking video of a military site, particularly using a drone, with the aim of harming national defense would be subject to a fine, 10 years of imprisonment or both under the legislation proposed by Kiggans and Davis.

Bones found on Marine Corps base ID'd as missing Okinawan man

By **Brian McElhiney**
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

Human bones discovered more than a year ago at a Marine Corps base on Okinawa belong to a local man who went missing in 2018, according to Japanese police.

The man, who was in his 70s at

the time of his disappearance, was reported missing by family members that year, a Nago police department spokesman said by phone Friday.

He declined to release the man's name or exact age. Police identified him using DNA testing.

A contractor conducting an en-

vironmental survey at a construction site on Camp Schwab found the bones on March 21, 2024.

The site is part of the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma replacement project and is managed by the Okinawa Defense Bureau — not the U.S. military.

Items recovered nearby includ-

ed a long-sleeved shirt, a T-shirt, a belt, black socks and 201 yen — about \$1.40 — Okinawa Prefectural Police said in a November news release. At the time, police appealed to the public for help in identifying the remains.

The man is believed to have died around the time he was re-

ported missing, and no foul play is suspected based on the condition of the bones, the Nago police spokesman said. The investigation continues.

"The bones were found in an area where many wild animals live, and they might have been moved by these animals," he said.

MIDEAST

Strike on Yemeni oil port escalates US effort

By JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A U.S. airstrike on an important oil port held by Yemen’s Houthi rebels killed more than 70 people and wounded many others, the Iranian-backed rebel group said Friday, marking a major escalation in the military campaign President Donald Trump launched against the faction last month.

The overnight strike on the Ras Isa port sent massive fireballs billowing skyward and turned tanker trucks into burning wrecks. It was the first American attack on a Houthi-controlled oil facility in the new U.S. bombing campaign.

And on Saturday, Yemen’s Houthi rebels said the U.S. launched a series of airstrikes on the capital, Sanaa, and the Houthi-held coastal city of Hodeida.

The U.S. is targeting the Houthis because of the group’s attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, a crucial global trade route, and on Israel. The Houthis are the last militant group in Iran’s self-described “Axis of Resistance” that is capable of regularly attacking Israel.

The port is a major hub for incoming fuel shipments that power areas of Yemen held by the Houthis, and analysts say the airstrike could seriously affect daily life there.

The Houthis, who said the attack killed at least 74 people and wounded 171 others, aired graphic footage of the aftermath on their al-Masirah satellite news channel, showing corpses strewn about the port and smashed tanker trucks. They denounced the strike as a “completely unjustified aggression.”

“It targets a vital civilian facility that has served the Yemeni people for decades,” the group said in a statement.

U.S. Central Command declined to answer any questions about possible civilian casualties but referred to a statement in which it said “this strike was not intended to



Yemenis watch a crater of a explosion at Magel Al-Dammah cemetery a day after it was hit by U.S. airstrikes in Sanaa, Yemen, on Sunday. Assessing the toll of the month-old U.S. airstrike campaign has been difficult because the military hasn’t released information about the attacks.

harm the people of Yemen.”

“U.S. forces took action to eliminate this source of fuel for the Iran-backed Houthi terrorists and deprive them of illegal revenue that has funded Houthi efforts to terrorize the entire region for over 10 years,” it said in its statement.

A U.S. official said the attack sent a message to those supplying fuel to the Houthis despite sanctions. The official spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity to provide details not yet made public.

Hours after the U.S. strike, the Houthis launched a missile toward Israel that was intercepted, the Israeli military said. Sirens sounded in Tel Aviv and elsewhere. Meanwhile, the Houthis said they shot down another American MQ-9 Predator drone, which the U.S. official acknowledged.

The Ras Isa port is a collection of oil tanks and equipment that sits in Yemen’s Hodeida governorate along the Red Sea. It is just off Kamaran Island, which has been targeted by intense U.S. airstrikes in recent days.

Before the Houthis took control of Yemen’s capital, Sanaa, in 2014 and sent the government into exile, oil from the country’s energy-rich Marib governorate moved through Ras Isa for export. But since the Houthis don’t control that region, the port now serves as an import hub for gasoline, diesel and liquefied petroleum gas that help power those parts of Yemen the Houthis control.

The new U.S. operation against the Houthis under Trump appears more extensive than attacks on the group were under President Joe Biden, an AP review found.

From November 2023 until this January, the Houthis targeted more than 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones, sinking two of them and killing four sailors. That has greatly reduced the flow of trade through the Red Sea corridor, which typically sees \$1 trillion of goods move through it. The Houthis also launched attacks targeting American warships without success.

Assessing the toll of the month-old U.S. airstrike campaign has been difficult because the military hasn’t released information about the attacks, including what was targeted and how many people were killed. The Houthis, meanwhile, strictly control access to attacked areas and don’t publish complete information on the strikes.

Further complicating the situation is the U.S. strikes hitting mili-

tary targets, said Mohammed al-Basha, a Yemen expert at the Basha Report risk advisory firm. He pointed to an American attack that Trump highlighted online with black-and-white strike footage, which might have killed about 70 fighters.

“Although the Houthis claimed it was a tribal gathering, they neither released any footage nor named a single casualty, strongly suggesting the victims were not civilians but affiliated fighters,” al-Basha said. “However, the overnight strike on the Ras Isa Fuel Port marks the first mass-casualty incident the Houthis have openly acknowledged and publicized.”

The AP analyzed satellite images of the port provided by Planet Labs PBC that showed destroyed oil tanks and vehicles, and what appeared to be oil leaking into the Red Sea.

A U.S. State Department spokesperson, Tammy Bruce, accused a Chinese commercial satellite image provider, Chang Guang Satellite Technology Co. Ltd., of “directly supporting Iran-backed Houthi terrorist attacks on U.S. interests.”

During a briefing with reporters, Bruce did not elaborate in detail. But she acknowledged a report by The Financial Times that quoted anonymous American officials saying the company linked to the People’s Liberation Army has provided images allowing the rebels to target U.S. warships and commercial vessels traveling through the Red Sea corridor.

Bruce said “Beijing’s support” of the satellite company ... “contradicts their claims of being peace supporters.”

Responding to a question about the allegation, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said Friday: “I am not familiar with the situation you mentioned.” However, he insisted China is seen as urging countries “to make more efforts conducive to regional peace and stability.”

US, Iran say nuke talks make progress, make plans for more

By MATTHEW LEE AND JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

ROME — Iran and the United States plan to meet over Tehran’s rapidly advancing nuclear program again this week, after both sides said they made progress in their talks Saturday in Rome.

A U.S. official confirmed that at a point during the negotiations in Rome, President Donald Trump’s special envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi spoke face to face.

Before they meet again in Oman on April 26, Araghchi said technical-level talks would be held in the coming days. That experts would be dis-

cussing details of a possible deal suggests movement in the talks and comes as Trump has pushed for a rapid agreement while threatening military action against Iran.

The sides “made very good progress in our direct and indirect discussions,” according to a senior Trump administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a private diplomatic meeting.

In a post on X, Araghchi similarly said they made “progress on principles and objectives of a possible deal.” He added, however, that “optimism may be warranted but only with a great deal of caution.” He told Iranian state television earlier that

“I hope that we will be in a better position after the technical talks.”

While the U.S. said both direct and indirect discussions were held, Iranian officials described them as indirect, like those last weekend in Muscat, Oman, with Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi shuttling between them in different rooms.

“These talks are gaining momentum and now even the unlikely is possible,” al-Busaidi said on X.

In a separate post, Oman’s Foreign Ministry said the sides agreed to keep talking to seek a deal that ensures Iran is “completely free of nuclear weapons and sanctions, and maintaining its ability to develop peaceful nuclear energy.”

That talks are even happening represents a historic moment, given the decades of enmity between the two countries. Trump, in his first term, unilaterally withdrew from Iran’s nuclear deal with world powers in 2018, setting off years of attacks and negotiations that failed to restore the accord that drastically limited Tehran’s enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

At risk is a possible American or Israeli military strike on Iran’s nuclear sites, or the Iranians following through on their threats to pursue an atomic weapon. Meanwhile, tensions in the Middle East have spiked over the Israel-Hamas war in the

Gaza and after U.S. airstrikes targeting Yemen’s Iranian-backed Houthi rebels.

“I’m for stopping Iran, very simply, from having a nuclear weapon,” Trump said Friday. “I want Iran to be great and prosperous and terrific.”

Before the Iran talks started, Witkoff met in Rome with Rafael Mariano Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, according to a person familiar with the meeting who spoke on condition of anonymity to share details that were not made public. The U.N. nuclear watchdog agency would likely be key in verifying compliance by Iran should a deal be reached.

NATION

High court blocks new deportations under wartime law

By **NICHOLAS RICCARDI**
AND **MARK SHERMAN**
Associated Press

The Supreme Court on Saturday blocked, for now, the deportations of any Venezuelans held in northern Texas under an 18th-century wartime law.

In a brief order, the court directed the Trump administration not to remove Venezuelans held in the Bluebonnet Detention Center “until further order of this court.”

Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito dissented.

The high court acted in an emergency appeal from the American Civil Liberties Union contending that immigration authorities appeared to be moving to restart removals under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798. The Supreme Court had said earlier in April that deportations could proceed only if those about to be removed had a chance to argue their case in court and were given “a reasonable time” to contest their pending removals.

“We are deeply relieved that the Court has temporarily blocked the removals. These individuals were in imminent danger of spending the rest of their lives in a brutal Salvadoran prison without ever having had any due process,” ACLU lawyer Lee Gelernt said in an email.

The Trump administration later Saturday filed paperwork urging the high court to reconsider its hold. Press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Saturday in a post on X: “We are confident we will ultimately prevail against the onslaught of meritless litigation brought by radical activists.”

On Friday, two federal judges refused to step in as lawyers for the men launched a desperate legal campaign to prevent their deportation, even as one judge said the case raised legitimate concerns. Early Saturday, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals also refused to issue an order protecting

the detainees from being deported.

The ACLU had already sued to block deportations of two Venezuelans held in the Bluebonnet facility and sought an order barring removals of any immigrants in the region under the Alien Enemies Act.

In an emergency filing early Friday, the ACLU warned that immigration authorities were accusing other Venezuelan men held there of being members of the Tren de Aragua gang, which would make them subject to President Donald Trump’s use of the act.

The act has only been invoked three previous times in U.S. history, most recently during World War II to hold Japanese-American civilians in internment camps. The Trump administration contended it gave them power to swiftly remove immigrants they identified as members of the gang, regardless of their immigration status.

Following the unanimous high court order on April 9, federal judges in Colorado, New York and southern Texas promptly issued orders barring removal of detainees under the AEA until the administration provides a process for them to make claims in court.

But there had been no such order issued in the area of Texas that covers Bluebonnet, which is 24 miles north of Abilene in the far northern end of the state.

U.S. District Judge James Wesley Hendrix, a Trump appointee, this week declined to bar the administration from removing the two men identified in the ACLU lawsuit because Immigration and Customs Enforcement filed sworn declarations that they would not be immediately deported. He also balked at issuing a broader order prohibiting removal of all Venezuelans in the area under the act because he said removals hadn’t started yet.



LOREN HOLMES, ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS/AP

People gather in Town Square Park to protest against President Trump and his policies on Saturday in Anchorage, Alaska.

Anti-Trump protesters hold rallies across the country

By **PHILIP MARCELO**
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Opponents of President Donald Trump’s administration took to the streets of communities large and small across the U.S. on Saturday, decrying what they see as threats to the nation’s democratic ideals.

The disparate events ranged from a march through midtown Manhattan and a rally in front of the White House to a demonstration at a Massachusetts commemoration of “the shot heard ’round the world” on April 19, 1775, marking the start of the Revolutionary War 250 years ago.

Thomas Bassford was among the demonstrators at the reenactment of the Battles of Lexington and Concord outside Boston. The 80-year-old retired mason from Maine said he believes Americans are under attack from their own government and need to stand up against it.

“This is a very perilous time in America for liberty,” said Bassford, who was with his partner, daughter and two grandsons. “I wanted the boys to learn about the origins of this country and that sometimes we

have to fight for freedom.”

In Denver, hundreds of protesters gathered at the Colorado State Capitol with banners expressing solidarity with immigrants and telling the Trump administration: “Hands Off!” People waved U.S. flags, some of them held upside down to signal distress.

Thousands of people also marched through downtown Portland, Ore., while in San Francisco, hundreds spelled out the words “Impeach & Remove” on a sandy beach along the Pacific Ocean, also with an inverted U.S. flag. People walked through downtown Anchorage, Alaska, with handmade signs listing reasons why they were demonstrating, including one that one that read: “No sign is BIG enough to list ALL of the reasons I’m here!”

Elsewhere protests were planned outside Tesla car dealerships against billionaire Trump adviser Elon Musk and his role in downsizing the federal government. Others organized more community service-oriented events such as food drives, teach-ins and volunteering at local shelters.

The protests come just two weeks after similar nationwide demonstrations.

Organizers say they oppose what they call Trump’s civil rights violations and constitutional violations, including efforts to deport scores of immigrants and to scale back the federal government by firing thousands of government workers and effectively shuttering entire agencies.

Some of the events drew on the spirit of the Revolutionary War, calling for “no kings” and resistance to tyranny.

In Anchorage, a colonial reenactor in colonial garb held up a “No Kings” sign while the person next to him hoisted cardboard that read in part: “The Feudal Age is OVER.”

Boston resident George Bryant, who was among those at the Concord protest, said he is concerned that the president is creating a “police state.” He held a sign saying, “Trump fascist regime must go now!”

“He’s defying the courts. He’s kidnapping students. He’s eviscerating the checks and balances,” Bryant said. “This is fascism.”

Florida State classes resume Monday after fatal shooting on campus

Associated Press
TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Classes will resume at Florida State University on Monday, four days after a deadly shooting on campus left two people dead and six others injured, school officials said.

Students and instructors will have the option of holding classes remotely or in person, depending

on the class. The school has waived all mandatory attendance policies that could affect grades, so students won’t be punished if they choose not to go to class in person, FSU President Richard McCullough said in a letter to students and faculty.

Students also can request an incomplete grade for their class if

they feel they are unable to complete a course, McCullough said.

“We want everyone to receive the support and help they need. For some students that may mean not going back into the classroom,” McCullough said. “For others, the idea of community and gathering, as well as the opportunity to focus on academics, may be

beneficial.”

The gunman, identified as the stepson of a sheriff’s deputy, arrived on campus an hour before the shooting and stayed near a parking garage before he walked in and out of buildings and green spaces while firing a handgun just before lunchtime, police said.

In roughly four minutes, offi-

cers confronted 20-year-old Phoenix Ikner, a Florida State student, and shot and wounded him, Tallahassee police said.

The two victims who died were Robert Morales, a university dining coordinator, and Tiru Chabba, an executive for food service vendor Aramark, according to family members and attorneys.

NATION

Jan. 6 rioters embraced at rallies, run for office

By ALI SWENSON
Associated Press

JACKSON, Mich. — Ryan Kelley thought he had a good shot at becoming Michigan's governor in 2022. That is, until he was charged with misdemeanors for participating in the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol. His campaign sputtered and he finished fourth out of five candidates in the Republican primary.

Three years later, Kelley says, people ask him all the time to run for governor again. In today's America, where President Donald Trump returned to the White House and within hours pardoned some 1,500 Jan. 6 rioters, Kelley's two-month prison sentence for his actions that winter day in 2021 isn't the obstacle to public life that it might once have been.

It may even be a ticket to political prominence.

Far from being sidelined, those who rioted, assaulted police officers or broke into congressional offices during the violent attack are now being spotlighted as honored guest speakers at local Republican events around the country.

They are getting a platform to tell their version of events and being hailed as heroes and martyrs. Some are considering runs for office, recognizing that at least among a certain segment of the pro-Trump base, they are seen not as criminals but as patriots.

Kelley, a 43-year-old commercial real estate developer, is among those fielding new opportunities in the political arena.

At a recent county Republican committee event in Jackson, Michigan, Kelley was met with hugs and handshakes. Dozens of attendees hollered and clapped when he introduced himself as "your favorite J6er." They gasped and shook their heads as Kelley recalled how his young son thought he was dead while he was



PAUL SANCYA/AP

Ryan Kelley speaks at the Jackson County Republican headquarters Thursday, April 10 in Jackson, Mich.

in prison. They urged him to run for governor again in 2026. It is something he said he is debating.

After Kelley finished speaking, attendees said they were touched by his story.

"I've done much worse and did no jail time," said 58-year-old Todd Gillman, a woodworker and Republican chairman for the local congressional district. "Thank God people like Ryan Kelley are not intimidated by the lawfare that was used against them."

It makes sense that Republicans are seizing the chance to showcase Jan. 6 rioters, said Matt Dallek, a historian at George Washington University who studies the conservative movement.

Trump has likened those rioters to "political prisoners" and "warriors" for defending him and his false claims that the 2020 election won by Democrat Joe Biden was stolen.

There is no credible evidence the 2020 election was tainted or that Trump was the winner — facts backed up by federal and state election officials and Trump's own attorney general. Trump's allegations of fraud were also roundly rejected by courts, including by judges appointed by Trump.

"Those who are pardoned can testify, like no one else can, to the horrific power of the federal government to destroy their lives,"

Dallek said. "It's a potent rallying cry, and also probably a potent fundraising tool."

But there also is a danger to elevating them, he said. Many of those pardoned by the Republican president used violence to stop the peaceful transfer of power, and juries determined their actions to be criminal.

"It is, I think, a mainstreaming, a growing acceptance on the right of political violence, as long as it's done in the service of Trump and his ongoing election lie," Dallek said.

Kelley, who did not commit violence or enter the Capitol, pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor trespassing charge. He said he saw some

things at the Capitol — people breaking windows, for example — that he did not like. But he also flatly denied an audience member's use of the term "insurrection."

By The Associated Press' count, at least two dozen local Republican groups nationwide in recent months have invited Jan. 6 rioters to speak at regular meetings or special fundraisers, some with titles such as "Insurrection Hoax" and "Patriots Vindicated."

They include people who only trespassed at the Capitol but also rioters who were convicted and pardoned for more serious crimes such as carrying a firearm on Capitol grounds or violently attacking law enforcement.

The Western Wake Republican Club in North Carolina in March featured remarks from James Grant, a pardoned rioter who was among the first to assault police officers and breach a security perimeter during the attack on the Capitol.

A Republican women's club in Lawrence County, Tenn., earlier this month hosted an event for Ronald Colton McAbee. He was employed as a sheriff's deputy in Tennessee when he went to Capitol, dragging an officer away from a police line and punching another officer who tried to stop him.

Some of the local GOP groups welcoming Jan. 6 rioters have faced pushback from their communities, prompting them to relocate or even cancel scheduled events.

In California, the Association of Monterey Bay Conservatives' event featuring six pardoned rioters faced so much public backlash that three potential venues canceled, according to TV station KSBW. When the event was ultimately held at the fourth venue in Salinas, protesters gathered outside the building.

Google's digital ad network declared an illegal monopoly

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Google has been branded an abusive monopolist by a federal judge for the second time in less than a year, this time for illegally exploiting some of its online marketing technology to boost the profits fueling an internet empire currently worth \$1.8 trillion.

The ruling issued Thursday by U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema in Virginia comes on the heels of a separate decision in August that concluded Google's namesake search engine has been illegally leveraging its dominance to stifle competition and innovation.

After the U.S. Justice Department targeted Google's ubiqui-

tous search engine during President Donald Trump's first term, the same agency went after the company's lucrative digital advertising network in 2023 during President Joe Biden's ensuing administration in an attempt to undercut the power that Google has amassed since its inception in a Silicon Valley garage in 1998.

Although antitrust regulators prevailed both times, the battle is likely to continue for several more years as Google tries to overturn the two monopoly decisions in appeals while forging ahead in the new and highly lucrative technological frontier of artificial intelligence.

The next step in the latest case

is a penalty phase that will likely begin late this year or early next year.

The same so-called remedy hearings in the previous search monopoly case are scheduled to begin Monday in Washington D.C., where Justice Department lawyers will try to convince U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta to impose a sweeping punishment that includes a proposed requirement for Google to sell off its Chrome web browser.

Brinkema's 115-page decision centers on the marketing machine that Google has spent the past 17 years building around its search engine and other widely used products and services, including its Chrome browser,

YouTube video site and digital maps.

The system was largely built around a series of acquisitions that started with Google's \$3.2 billion purchase of online ad specialist DoubleClick in 2008.

U.S. regulators approved the deals at the time they were made before realizing that they had given the Mountain View, Calif., company a platform to manipulate the prices in an ecosystem that a wide range of websites depend on for revenue and that provides a vital marketing connection to consumers.

The Justice Department lawyers argued that Google built and maintained dominant market positions in a technology trifecta

used by website publishers to sell ad space on their webpages, as well as the technology that advertisers use to get their ads in front of consumers and the ad exchanges that conduct automated auctions in fractions of a second to match buyer and seller.

After evaluating the evidence presented during a lengthy trial that concluded just before Thanksgiving last year, Brinkema reached a decision that rejected the Justice Department's assertions that Google has been mistreating advertisers while concluding the company has been abusing its power to stifle competition to the detriment of online publishers forced to rely on its network for revenue.

WAR IN UKRAINE

Zelenskyy blasts Russia's ceasefire claim

BY HANNA ARHIROVA
AND ELISE MORTON
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia on Sunday of creating a false appearance of honoring an Easter ceasefire, saying Moscow continued to launch attacks after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a unilateral temporary truce.

“As of Easter morning, we can say that the Russian army is trying to create a general impression of a ceasefire, but in some places, it does not abandon individual attempts to advance and inflict losses on Ukraine,” Zelenskyy said in a post on X.

Despite Putin's declaration of an Easter ceasefire on Saturday, Zelenskyy said Sunday morning that Ukrainian forces had recorded 59 instances of Russian shelling and five assaults by units along the front line, as well as dozens of drone strikes.

In a later update, Zelenskyy said that despite Ukraine declaring a symmetrical approach to Russian actions, there had been an increase in Russian shelling and drone attacks since 10 a.m. He said, however, that it was “a good thing, at least, that there were no air raid sirens.”

“In practice, either Putin does not have full control over his army, or the situation proves that in



EVGENIY MALOLETKA/AP

An elderly woman prepares her Easter baskets to be blessed during celebration of the Orthodox Easter in Krasne village, Ukraine, on Sunday.

Russia, they have no intention of making a genuine move toward ending the war, and are only interested in favorable PR coverage,” he wrote.

Zelenskyy said that Russia must fully adhere to the ceasefire conditions and reiterated Ukraine's offer to extend the truce

for 30 days, starting midnight Sunday. He said the proposal “remains on the table” and added: “We will act in accordance with the actual situation on the ground.”

Zelenskyy said Saturday night that some areas were quieter since the ceasefire was an-

nounced, which he claimed showed Putin to be the “true cause” of the war. “As soon as Putin gave an order to scale back the attacks, the intensity of strikes and killings dropped. The only source of this war and its prolongation is in Russia,” he wrote on X.

Russia's Defense Ministry said

Sunday that Ukrainian forces launched overnight attacks in the Donetsk region despite the ceasefire, and had sent 48 drones into Russian territory.

According to the ministry, there were “dead and wounded among the civilian population,” without giving details. It claimed Russian troops had strictly observed the ceasefire.

Russia-installed officials in the partially occupied Ukrainian region of Kherson also said that Ukrainian forces continued their attacks.

Just hours after announcing the ceasefire, Putin attended an Easter service late Saturday at Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour led by Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church and a vocal supporter of Putin and the war in Ukraine.

According to the Kremlin, the ceasefire was to last from 6 p.m. Moscow time on Saturday to midnight following Easter Sunday.

Putin offered no details on how the ceasefire would be monitored or whether it would cover airstrikes or ongoing ground battles that rage around the clock.

His announcement came after President Donald Trump said Friday that negotiations between Ukraine and Russia are “coming to a head” and insisted that neither side is “playing” him in his push to end the grinding three-year war.

Trump says Ukraine-Russia talks are ‘coming to a head’

BY ANGELA CHARLTON
AND HANNA ARHIROVA
Associated Press

PARIS — President Donald Trump on Friday said negotiations between Ukraine and Russia are “coming to a head” and insisted that neither side is “playing” him in his push to end the grinding war.

Trump spoke shortly after Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned that the U.S. may “move on” from trying to secure a Russia-Ukraine peace deal if there is no progress in the coming days, after months of efforts have failed to bring an end to the fighting.

“Now, if for some reason, one of the two parties makes it very difficult, we're just going to say you're foolish. You are fools, you horrible people,” Trump said. “And we're going to just take a pass. But hopefully, we won't have to do that.”

Rubio's dour assessment came after landmark talks in Paris among U.S., Ukrainian and European officials produced outlines for steps toward peace and appeared to make some long-awaited

progress. Another meeting is expected this week in London, and Rubio suggested it could be decisive in determining whether the Trump administration continues its involvement.

“We are now reaching a point where we need to decide whether this is even possible or not,” Rubio told reporters in Paris. “Because if it's not, then I think we're just going to move on. It's not our war. We have other priorities to focus on.”

He said the U.S. administration wants to decide “in a matter of days.”

The State Department said Rubio issued the same warning in a phone call Friday with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, telling him that “if a clear path to peace does not emerge soon, the United States will step back from efforts to broker peace.”

Trump said “Marco is right” that the dynamic of the negotiations must change, but stopped short of saying he's ready to walk away.

“Well, I don't want to say that,”

Trump said. “But we want to see it end.”

Rubio's comments stepped up pressure on both sides to reach a peace deal, even as the U.S. and Ukraine made progress on a minerals agreement that Trump has sought to recoup billions of dollars in military assistance that Washington has sent Kyiv since Russia's full scale invasion in February 2022.

They also indicated the road to a complete truce will be long and mired with contention, despite Trump repeatedly claiming on the campaign trail that he could end the war within a day. Trump said last month that he was “being a little bit sarcastic.”

Coming out of the Paris talks, the Americans are ready to use both carrot and stick strategies with Russia and understand the need for a relationship of force that allows them to get commitments from both sides,” said a French diplomatic official who took part in the talks but was not authorized to comment publicly.

The Americans and Europeans



JULIEN DE ROSA, POOL/AP

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, center, and Germany's Political Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Gunter Sautter, right, attend a meeting on Ukraine and its security in Paris on Thursday.

discussed sanctions but not the question of easing sanctions” on Russia. The official said the European Union needs to use all instruments at our disposition,” notably to have levers of influence over the Russians to ensure they commit to eventual promises.

U.S. Vice President JD Vance struck a more hopeful tone in Rome on Friday, ahead of talks with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

“We think we have some interesting things to report on, of course in private,” he said. On the negotiations, “I won't prejudge

them, but we do feel optimistic that we can hopefully bring this war, this very brutal war, to a close.”

He didn't give more details.

The U.S. and Ukraine are nearing a long-delayed deal granting the U.S. access to Ukraine's vast mineral resources, which has been intertwined with Trump's peace push. Trump said Thursday: “We have a minerals deal.” Ukraine's economy minister said Friday that the two countries signed a memorandum of intent ahead of a possible fuller agreement later.

WORLD

Vance, pope meet on Easter Sunday amid ongoing dispute over migration

Associated Press

VATICAN CITY — Vice President JD Vance met briefly with Pope Francis on Sunday to exchange Easter greetings, after they got into a long-distance tangle over the Trump administration’s migrant deportation plans.

Francis, who is recovering from a near-fatal bout of pneumonia, received Vance in one of the reception rooms of the Vatican hotel where he lives. The 88-year-old pope offered the Catholic vice president three big chocolate Easter eggs for Vance’s three young children, who did not attend, as well as a Vatican tie and rosaries.

“I know you have not been feeling great but it’s good to see you in better health,” Vance told the pope. “Thank you for seeing me.”

Vance’s motorcade entered Vatican City through a side gate while Easter Mass was being celebrated in St. Peter’s Square. Francis had delegated the celebration of the Mass to another cardinal.

The Vatican said they met for a few minutes at the Domus Santa Marta “to exchange Easter greetings.” Vance’s office said that they met, but provided no further details. In all, Vance’s motorcade was on Vatican territory for 17 minutes.

He later joined his family for Easter Mass at St. Paul Outside the Walls, one of the four pontifical basilicas in Rome. The Vances visited the tomb of the apostle St. Paul that is said to be located there.

Vance, who converted to Catholicism in 2019, and the pope have tangled sharply over migration and the Trump administration’s plans to deport migrants en masse. Francis has made caring for migrants a hall-



Pope Francis receives Vice President JD Vance before bestowing the Urbi et Orbi blessing during Easter mass presided over by Cardinal Angelo Comastri in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on Sunday. At center is Bishop Leonardo Sapienza, head of the papal household.

mark of his papacy.

Just days before he was hospitalized in February, Francis blasted the deportation plans, warning that they would deprive migrants of their inherent dignity. In a letter to U.S. bishops, Francis also appeared to respond to Vance directly for having claimed that Catholic doctrine justified such policies.

Vance has acknowledged Francis’ criticism but has said he will continue to defend his views. During a Feb. 28 appearance at the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast in Washington, Vance didn’t address the issue specifically but called himself a “baby Catholic” and acknowledged there are “things about the faith that I don’t know.”

Vance met Saturday with the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, and foreign minister, Archbishop Paul Gallagher.

Vance’s office said he and Parolin “discussed their shared religious faith, Catholicism in the United States, the plight of persecuted Christian communities around the world, and President Trump’s commitment to restoring world peace.”

The Vatican, for its part, said there was an “exchange of opinions” including over migrants and refugees and current conflicts.

The Holy See has responded cautiously to the Trump administration while seeking to continue productive relations in keeping with its tradition of diplomatic neutrality. It has expressed alarm over the administration’s crackdown on migrants and cuts in international aid while insisting on peaceful resolutions to the wars in Ukraine and Gaza.

Netanyahu: Hamas rejected Israel plan to halt war in Gaza

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said again Saturday that Israel has “no choice” but to continue fighting in Gaza and will not end the war before destroying Hamas, freeing the hostages and ensuring that the territory won’t present a threat to Israel.

The prime minister also repeated his vow to make sure Iran never gets a nuclear weapon.

Netanyahu is under growing pressure not only from families of hostages and their supporters but also from reservist and retired Israeli soldiers who question the continuation of the war after Israel shattered a ceasefire last month.

In his statement, he said Hamas has rejected Israel’s latest proposal to free half the hostages in return for another temporary truce. Hamas has said it will only free the remaining hostages in return for an Israeli withdrawal and a lasting ceasefire, as called for in the agreement that Israel ended.

Israeli strikes meanwhile killed more than 90 people in 48 hours, Gaza’s Health Ministry said Saturday. Israeli troops have been increasing their attacks to pressure Hamas to release the hostages and disarm.

Children and women were among the 15 people killed overnight, according to hospital staff. At least 11 dead were in the southern

city of Khan Younis, several of them in a tent in the Muwasi area where hundreds of thousands of displaced people stay, hospital workers said. Israel has designated it as a humanitarian zone.

Israel’s military in a statement said it killed more than 40 militants over the weekend.

Separately, the military said a soldier was killed Saturday in northern Gaza and confirmed it was the first soldier death since Israel resumed the war on March 18. Hamas’ armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, said it ambushed Israeli forces operating east of Gaza City’s al-Tuffah neighborhood.

Israel has vowed to intensify attacks across Gaza and occupy indefinitely large “security zones” inside the small coastal strip of over 2 million people.

Israel also has blockaded Gaza for the past six weeks, again barring the entry of food and other goods. Last week, aid groups raised the alarm, saying most people are barely eating one meal a day as stocks dwindle, according to the United Nations.

The head of the World Health Organization’s eastern Mediterranean office, Dr. Hanan Balkhy, on Friday urged the new U.S. ambassador in Israel, Mike Huckabee, to push the country to lift Gaza’s blockade so medicines and other aid can enter.

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Flaming sex toys sparked blaze damaging 3 homes

NY NEW YORK — A man busted for starting a fire that damaged three Staten Island homes and threatened the life of an elderly woman told authorities the blaze started when he tried to burn sex toys in his backyard, documents reveal.

“I started the fire. I was in the backyard at my house and I lit two sex toys on fire,” Harry Torres, 37, told investigators, according to a criminal complaint against him.

The fire, which authorities initially called “suspicious,” quickly spread to two neighboring buildings, which were then extensively damaged, according to FDNY officials.

A woman in her 80s who lived in one of the houses that caught fire was forced to flee after the blaze reached her home, her adult children told the SI Advance. She had lived in the home since 1987, her children said.

There were no injuries reported in the fire, which also damaged two vehicles, according to the complaint against Torres.

It was not immediately clear how or why Torres set fire to the sex toys, a police source said.

Torres is charged with arson and reckless endangerment, according to the FDNY.

Dog rescues 2-year-old who wandered 7 miles

AZ SELIGMAN — A 2-year-old boy is back with his family after a rancher’s dog found him in the desert 7 miles from his home in Arizona, authorities said.

The family of Boden Allen reported him missing last Monday after he wandered away in Seligman, the Yavapai County Sheriff’s Office said in a statement. Deputies and more than 40 search-and-rescue personnel from the Arizona Department of Public Safety, the neighboring Coconino County Sheriff’s Office and other agencies sprang into action.

“After 16 hours of searching, a rancher approximately 7 miles away reported that a young child had walked onto his property,” the sheriff’s office said.

Buford, an Anatolian Pyrenees, had come to the rescue, finding the child on his nightly patrol for coyotes and other wildlife, rancher Scotty Dunton told the sheriff’s office. He was heading out to town the next morning when he saw Buford sitting at the end of his driveway with the boy.

Court: Transitioning teen cannot change name

MS JACKSON — The Mississippi Supreme Court on Thursday upheld a ruling denying a transgender teen’s name-change petition.

The ruling comes nearly two years after a then 16-year-old un-



BURRILL STRONG/The Washington Post

Book brigade

Residents of all ages in Chelsea, Mich., helped a local bookshop move each of its 9,100 books — one by one — to a new storefront about a block away. A “book brigade” of around 300 people stood in two lines on the sidewalk in downtown Chelsea last week, passing each title from Serendipity Books’ former location directly to the correct shelves and alphabetized in the new building.

dergoing a gender transition filed a petition to change his name to better fit his gender identity. Both of the teen’s parents consented to the name change. But Hinds County Chancery Judge Tametrice Hodges in November 2023 denied the petition, citing the teen’s lack of maturity.

The Mississippi Supreme Court voted 8-1 to uphold the ruling.

Man killed wife after posing as ex-boyfriend

CO BROOMFIELD — A Colorado man was convicted Thursday of killing his wife after stalking her while posing as her ex-boyfriend.

Jurors reached the verdict against Daniel Krug, 44, a day after beginning deliberations. They found him guilty of all four charges he faced — first-degree murder as well as two counts of stalking and one count of criminal impersonation.

With his marriage to Kristil Krug falling apart, prosecutors said Krug decided to play “puppet master” by scaring his wife and then trying to win her back by protecting her from the fake stalking, uniting them against a common threat.

Kristil Krug, a biochemical engineer, kept a log tracking the increasingly threatening texts and emails that suggested she was being watched. As police investigat-

ed the messages, prosecutors said Daniel Krug began to realize that he could face criminal charges and started plotting how to kill his wife to silence her and because she didn’t want to be with him anymore.

Prosecutors said he waited for her to return to their suburban Denver home on Dec. 14, 2023, after taking two of their children to school and then knocked her unconscious and stabbed her in the heart.

Judge rules in favor of church in abortion case

ND BISMARCK — More than 9,000 Catholic employers do not need to abide by federal regulations requiring accommodations for workers who seek abortions and fertility treatments, according to ruling issued last week by a federal judge in North Dakota.

The Catholic Benefits Association and the Bismarck Diocese filed a lawsuit last year challenging the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s regulations on implementing the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, which requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for pregnancy and childbirth needs. The EEOC interpreted the statute to include abortion and fertility treatments among those needs, which the Catholic groups argued

violated their religious rights.

U.S. District Judge Daniel Traynor later granted a preliminary injunction to temporarily block the EEOC from enforcing both its final rule for the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act and the harassment guidelines against the Catholic employers. On Tuesday, Traynor made the injunction permanent, saying the facts and evidence had not changed.

Millions of honey bees killed in poisoning

VA STAFFORD — Millions of dead honey bees were found by a Virginia beekeeper in what he said was a calculated attack on his farm.

Sixty colonies of honey bees were fatally poisoned and “steel chains and locks” were found on the gates of the farm, Jerry Mattiaccio, owner of Rock Hill Honey Bee Farms in Stafford, said in a statement on Facebook.

Between 20,000 and 100,000 honey bees make up a colony, according to Clemson University’s College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences. Photos Mattiaccio shared on social media showed heaps of dead bees lying at the base of apiaries on his farm.

“None of these actions could be accidental,” Mattiaccio said in the post. “This was clearly intentional, hoping to injure my operation.”

The suspected poisoning will

cost him about \$20,000 in business losses, Mattiaccio told WRC-TV.

Afghan teenager pleads guilty to Election Day plot

OK OKLAHOMA CITY — An Afghan teenager accused of taking part in an Oklahoma plot to carry out an Election Day attack has pleaded guilty, federal prosecutors said Thursday.

Abdullah Haji Zada, 18, a citizen of Afghanistan who was living in Moore, pleaded guilty to knowingly receiving and conspiring to receive a firearm and ammunition to be used in a terrorist attack, court records show.

Zada, who was 17 at the time of his arrest, is awaiting sentencing and faces up to 15 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Zada also agreed to be removed from the United States after he is released from prison, court records show.

Zada’s co-defendant, Nasir Ahmad Tawhedi, 27, who previously worked as a security guard for a U.S. military installation in Afghanistan, is currently awaiting trial.

Prosecutors allege Zada and Tawhedi took steps to obtain AK-47 rifles and ammunition and planned to carry out an attack targeting large crowds on Election Day last year.

FACES



ELI ADE, WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP

Writer-director Ryan Coogler, left, and cinematographer Autumn Durald Arkapaw on the set of “Sinners.”

An on-set breakthrough

‘Sinners,’ shot on IMAX, is a historic first for female cinematographers

By LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

Cinematographer Autumn Durald Arkapaw didn’t realize she was going to make history on “Sinners.” The Ryan Coogler film, now in theaters, marks the first time a female director of photography has shot a movie on large-format IMAX film.

It was Kodak executive Vanessa Bendetti who texted her the news.

“I smiled at the thought,” Arkapaw said in a recent interview. “I felt very proud that Ryan gave me the opportunity.”

The format, a favorite of filmmakers like Christopher Nolan, has gained popularity in recent years — not just with directors but with moviegoers seeking it out as well. Coogler hadn’t originally considered it for “Sinners” — he had planned on using 16 mm — until Warner Bros. executive Jesse Ehrman asked him if he’d considered large format, which gives moviegoers more resolution and a shallower depth of field.

“Just from an exhibition sense in this day and age with folks having so much access to streaming and watching so many things on their phones, it’s nice to have a format like IMAX that can be an experience you can only experience in the theaters,” Coogler said.

Coogler and Arkapaw then began a testing process, looking at 70 mm IMAX prints of films like “2001: A Space Odyssey,” “The Hateful Eight” and “Tenet” and consulting with Nolan and his regular cinematographer Hoyte van Hoytema. Coogler quickly fell in love with the format and felt it was fitting for the larger-than-life, genre-bending film about vampires, the blues and life in the Jim Crow south in 1932.

“I wasn’t surprised that we were exploring large format,” Arkapaw said. “We shot ‘Wakanda Forever’ on IMAX, but that was digital. We always talked about true IMAX being ... something that you see and you fall in love with.”

Her conversation with Hoytema made her even more excited. The Oscar-winning “Oppenheimer” cinematographer told her not to worry about the size or weight of the equipment and to shoot the movie as she would with any other kind of camera.

“Hearing that straight off was inspiring and encouraging and we took that advice and just told our story,” Arkapaw said. “It was very freeing.”

In the end, they decided to employ a combination of IMAX film and Ultra Panavision 70, an even rarer format that Quentin Tarantino resurrected for “The Hateful Eight.” This means different scenes have different aspect ratios, which Coogler himself broke down in a video explainer for Kodak.

“We’re using these two formats for the very first time,” Coogler said. “It really complements the story, it really complements the setting and it really complements the filmmaking.”

One of Arkapaw’s favorite scenes was one they weren’t even initially going to do on IMAX film because it was dialogue heavy and the cameras are notoriously noisy. But if her work on “Wakanda” taught her anything about Coogler, it’s that he’s always looking to push boundaries.

The scene is the introduction to Jack O’Connell’s Irish vampire Remmick and the Choctaw trying to hunt him down, which they shot like a Western as the sun sets in the distance.

“We had a lot of beautiful crane work in that and some intimate stuff. Ryan loves a hallway, so there’s a Steadicam shot inside. It’s very eerie,” she said. “I can’t see that scene in any other format now.”

With “Sinners” in theaters, the hope is that audiences will seek out the special formats where they can, whether it’s IMAX film or digital.

“We want to bring people back to the cinema, get back to theaters,” “Sinners” star Michael B. Jordan said. “I think this is a movie that’s meant to give for the moviegoing experience ... it takes you on a ride.”

The profession has come a long way since Arkapaw started exploring cinematography as a career path. It wasn’t too long ago that she said she struggled to find many women cinematographers besides Ellen Kuras (“Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind”). And while there are more than there were 20 years ago, there are still barriers to be broken, including an Oscar win. Only three have been nominated: Rachel Morrison (who worked with Coogler on “Fruitvale Station” and “Black Panther”) was the first for “Mudbound,” in 2018, followed by Ari Wegner for “The Power of the Dog” and Mandy Walker for “Elvis.”

Katy Perry gears up for sci-fi-inspired tour

By KRYSTA FAURIA
Associated Press

In less than a year, Katy Perry has released an album, campaigned for Vice President Kamala Harris and, just last week, flown to space. As she heads to Mexico City to kick off a world tour on Wednesday, the pop superstar shows no intention of slowing down.

“I’m always open and I say, ‘Why not?’ and ‘Let’s just try,’” she told The Associated Press recently. “The power of your thoughts are so incredible because everything starts with a thought. I had this thought, ‘I want to go on tour.’ And here we are.”

With that openness to try comes accepting that not every endeavor will be a victory. Her September album, “143,” was critically panned, and she was simultaneously criticized for reuniting with embattled producer Dr. Luke. Celebrities like Olivia Munn and Emily Ratajkowski critiqued the spaceflight’s use of resources as superfluous and indulgent. And Harris ultimately lost the November election to President Donald Trump.

But Perry’s longevity and the scale of her fame since her 2008 breakout hit, “I Kissed a Girl,” are attributable at least in part to her willingness to get back up in the wake of a setback, as she belts in her 2013 empowerment anthem, “Roar.”

“I can control what I can control,” she said.

That mantra has been refined over the past 15 years through her practice of Transcendental Meditation. The meditation technique has been embraced by a handful of celebrities, including — per-

haps most zealously — the late David Lynch, whom Perry credits with spreading the practice and its message.

“That changed my life. And I’ve gone on a long inner space journey

to untangle some wires, to answer some questions, to become more grounded, to find the power within myself,” she said.

Perry also credits having

her daughter, Daisy, with propelling her along a journey of self-discovery and enhancing her “feminine divine.”

“Being a mother just makes you level up with that type of power,” she said. “I think I’ve just grown into the strong woman that I’ve always dreamed of and idolized.”

That journey has informed her approach to music and performing, down to the narrative of her sci-fi-themed “Lifetimes Tour.” Citing films like “Blade Runner” and “The Fifth Element” as visual and thematic inspirations, Perry will play a video game character who faces off against evil forces.

“It’s really about believing in yourself and leading with love. Those are always my messages, no matter how I wrap it or whatever tour I bring. It’s love and empowerment,” she said. “When I can lead by example, it just ripples.”

Perry’s tour of more than 80 performances will primarily be a career-spanning showcase of past hits, but with a dance-infused flair to some of the traditional pop songs. “I tell everybody they have to wear some sensible shoes,” she said.



Pryor box set revives comedian’s best albums

Stand-up legend Richard Pryor will always be considered a 1-of-1 talent in the world of comedy. As brilliant as he was blunt, his immortal jokes live on in an archive of comedy albums.

On April 17, a handful of classics from the height of his fame were repackaged by Rhino Records into a massive box set befitting one of the most influential comics to ever hold a microphone.

“I Hope I’m Funny: The Warner Albums (1974-1983),” showcases Pryor’s unparalleled genius on his classic records, including “That N—s Crazy,” “...Is It Something I Said?,” “Bicentennial N—,” “Wanted/Richard Pryor Live in Concert” (a double LP), “Live on the Sunset Strip” and “Here and Now.”

Pryor, who won five Grammys and an Emmy during his lifetime as a comedian and actor, had a body of work that was a master

class of stand-up and acting and pushed the boundaries of discussion on race, class, drug addiction and sociopolitical commentary.

Pryor died of a heart attack in 2005 at age 65.

Joanna Gaines launches new renovation series

Joanna Gaines is launching a new renovation series, “Mini Reni,” which will air on Max and Magnolia Network on Wednesdays beginning May 14.

The nine-episode series finds the interior designer riding solo and operating on a smaller scale than in “Fixer Upper,” the home makeover show that made her and husband, Chip, famous.

“These aren’t whole-house renovations, so the heart behind the show is to inspire people to design their home gradually,” Gaines said in a statement.

From wire reports



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OPINION

Justices can rebuke schools’ bullying wokeism

By GEORGE F. WILL
The Washington Post

In this centennial year of two memorable events in the fraught history of public K-12 education, Montgomery County, a progressive Washington suburb, has kindled another controversy about government power and parental rights. On Tuesday, the Supreme Court will hear oral argument concerning whether children can be exempted from instruction that their parents consider contrary to their religious beliefs. The parents say this compulsory instruction violates their First Amendment right to the free exercise of religion.

In November 2022, the county’s board of education mandated for elementary school pupils “LGBTQ-inclusive” storybooks featuring gender transitions, same-sex play-ground romance, and questioning “cisnormativity” and “power hierarchies.” The picture book “Pride Puppy!” asks students to search a Pride Parade for “underwear,” “leather,” and a “lip ring.” Another picture book invited kindergarten through fifth-grade readers to ponder what it means to be “nonbinary” and asks “what pronouns fit you?”

Parents were promised school adherence to Maryland’s policy of parental notification and the right to opt their children out when the storybooks were read. But the day after the board reaffirmed this policy in March 2023, it reversed, saying there would be no parental notice or opt-outs concerning the storybooks.

Montgomery is reportedly the nation’s most religiously diverse county, and parents of many faiths, represented by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, are challenging the board’s policy. The policy has survived scrutiny by a district court and the U.S. Court

of Appeals for the 4th Circuit.
The plaintiffs, who are arguing only for notification and opt-out rights, say parents should not be sidelined to facilitate government telling children how they are supposed to think about gender and sexuality. The parents ask: Are there no limits on government schools’ power to impose whatever curriculum it pleases? If so, parents who cannot afford private schools surrender their right to direct their children’s religious upbringing.
Forty-seven states protect parental opt-out or opt-in rights. Three are silent on this. No state bars such accommodations. Montgomery County does in this case by declaring the controversial material part of a curriculum where opt-outs are not permitted.

When parents protested, board members denounced them as “hate”-promoting “white supremacists” and “xenophobes.”
A divided 4th Circuit upheld Montgomery County’s practices, offering the strained argument that they do not “compel” the children of the aggrieved parents to “change” their religious beliefs or conduct. This, even though the Supreme Court has hitherto applauded the traditional reluctance of government to directly force instruction of children “in opposition to the will of the parent.”

It is insufferable that Montgomery County can coerce parents, as a price of access to public education they are paying for, to accept government efforts to control their children’s thinking about sensitive matters. To live their faith, the parents must forgo a public benefit.

The 4th Circuit’s deference to Montgomery County’s policy is a dereliction of the judicial duty to police government excesses. Speaking of which:
In 1925, in Dayton, Tenn., John Scopes, a high school teacher, tested the state’s law

DOGE ban on working from home will reduce efficiency

By CLAUDIA SAHM
Bloomberg Opinion

E lon Musk recently cut his forecast for savings from the Department of Government Efficiency, which he once predicted would reach \$2 trillion, to only \$150 billion this year. This amounts to 2% of federal outlays — and even that is overstated, because it ignores the productivity the government will lose from its ban on working from home.

The ban is an abrupt shift. Almost 60% of federal employees are eligible to work from home, and according to the federal Office of Personnel Management, two-fifths of them did some form of remote work (situational, routine or infrequent) in the year that ended in September 2023. That was down slightly from prior years, but was twice the rate before the pandemic.

The federal government was not an outlier. Overall, its rate of working from home as measured by the Bureau of Labor Statistics is about 10 percentage points higher than the private sector, though some industries (information technology, finance, and professional management) had higher rates.

Banning telework was not about ending unusual practices — and it will likely come at a cost. Economists at the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that during the pandemic, total factor productivity growth was higher for industries where the percentage of primarily remote workers grew more. And this increase in productivity was not accompanied by increas-

es in employee compensation.
The bottom line: If DOGE were really about making the federal government more efficient, as its name suggests, then it would promote the option of working from home.
That said, research on productivity at the worker level suggests that the details of the telework arrangement matter. Studies in which workers were randomly assigned to full-time remote work versus full-time in-the-office work generally found reduced productivity from working from home. A study of hybrid work (with two days remote and three days in the office) found no reduction in performance, but it improved retention by one-third and increased work satisfaction.

Those findings are consistent with the OPM’s survey, in which more than half of agencies said telework improved retention, and one-third cited greater employee engagement. Retaining workers, especially those who are highly motivated, can help reduce the costs of hiring and create a more experienced workforce. Hiring and retaining high-quality workers will become even more important with a smaller federal workforce that is expected to deliver the same level of services. That Musk viewed a return-to-office mandate as a way to cause attrition shows how valuable a benefit it is.

The option of remote work also expands the pool of potential hires. For example, research shows that a one percentage point increase in working from home increases full-time employment by 1.1% for people with a physical

against teaching “any theory that denies the story of the divine creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.” Scopes stressed academic freedom; the prosecution stressed the community’s right to control the curriculum of schools it funded. His guilty conviction (later overturned) involved a \$100 fine. But today, Montgomery County is defending not instruction in science but indoctrination about political questions.

Also in 1925, a unanimous Supreme Court overturned an Oregon law requiring parents to send children to public schools. This was, the court said, an unreasonable interference with the “liberty” of parents to “direct the upbringing and education of children.” The Ninth Amendment (“The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people”) was not mentioned, but the court affirmed an unenumerated right.

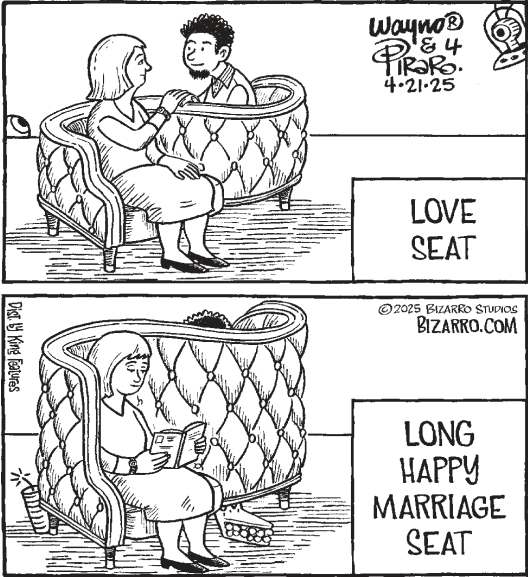
Politics is a uniquely human activity because only humans are opinionated — and egotistical: They think their opinions are superior to others’. A primary purpose of politics is to keep the peace among such turbulent creatures. Government, especially in its schools, should, as much as possible, practice a neighborly neutrality, eschewing the promotion of orthodoxies concerning matters that divide the community.

In 2022, the high tide of bullying wokeism, Montgomery County disdained parents it smeared for objecting to its aggressive agenda, which was to require children to listen to authority figures reading material obviously designed to shame children into thinking a certain way. The Supreme Court should awaken Montgomery County to policies that are more constitutional — and kinder.

disability. In effect, telework increases the labor supply available to the government, limiting upward pressure on wages and allowing it greater choice in skills.
The cost savings from remote work go beyond hiring and retention. A reduction in transit and commuting costs — a standard employee benefit — and rental of office space were two other cost savings identified by 46% and 23% of agencies, respectively. Maintaining telework could have supported another DOGE priority, which is to reduce facility costs.
Resilience and continuity of services are also crucial in the government. Some 70% of federal agencies said remote work was a crucial strategy in helping them prepare for emergencies such as natural disasters or extreme weather. Dismantling these capabilities could lead to a disruption in services in the next emergency.
The federal government has been experimenting with telework policies for more than a decade, accumulating both expertise and data: It has been tracking the costs and benefits of remote work in a common framework since 2011. That’s information DOGE could have used to improve the practice and make government more efficient, benefiting workers and their managers, and also taxpayers.

Claudia Sahn is the chief economist at New Century Advisors and a former Federal Reserve economist. She created the Sahn rule, a recession indicator. This column reflects the personal views of the author and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

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			

- ACROSS
- 1 Nevada casino city

5 CEO's degree, often

8 1920s art style

12 Supervisor

14 Hibernia

15 Adolescent

16 Trellis climber

17 Football's Parseghian

18 Battery-powered two-wheelers

20 Part of Hispaniola

23 Jrs.' exam

24 Shoppe description

25 Bits of body art

28 Up to

29 "Seinfeld" character Elaine

30 Steal from

32 Use up

34 — podrida

35 Oodles

36 Aerosmith hit of 1993

37 Comedian Marin

40 Org. with a style manual

41 Atmosphere

42 New member

47 Pool table surface

48 Book maker?
- 49 Spuds' buds

50 Phone trio

51 Apiece
- DOWN
- 1 Decay

2 Night before the big day

3 Born as

4 Highly decorated

5 Ginormous

6 Spell-off

7 Collared person

8 Danny of "Taxi"

9 Actor Estrada

10 Movie

11 Singles

13 New Delhi dress

19 Cave creatures

20 Sizzling

21 "Put — on it!"

22 Not busy

23 Trousers

25 Kind of ring for babies

26 Paris airport

27 Pieces for one

29 United nations

31 Prohibit

33 Accordion features

34 Delphi figure

36 Crossword hint

37 Parisian eatery

38 Donald Duck's nephew

39 Mystery writer Gardner

40 1506, in letters

43 Drama with masks

44 Spanish aunt

45 Computer key

46 Ordinal suffix

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

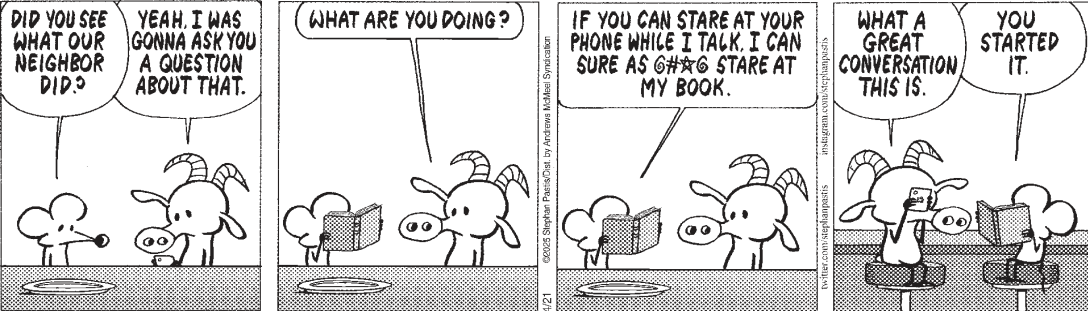
4-21 CRYPTOQUIP

QDQIDE XN FWD QHNVH GWX
VP GVRJ HIXLF PZHUSP PLUW HP
XEDXP HZJ PZVUSDEJXXJRDP:
UXXSVD QXIPFDE.
Saturday's Cryptoquip: IF METEOROLOGISTS HAVE MUCH DATA ON RAINFALL STATISTICS, THEY OUGHT TO SAVE IT TO THE CLOUD.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: X equals O

Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



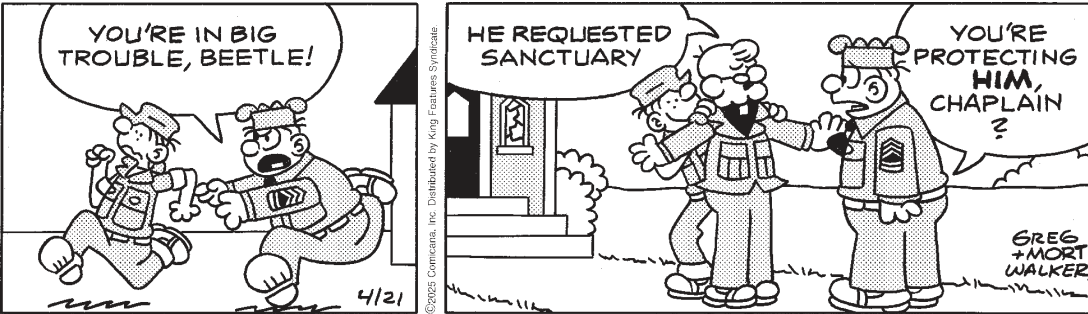
Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



SCOREBOARD/COLLEGE BASKETBALL

DEALS

Saturday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Recalled RHP Brandon Young from Aberdeen (SAL). Designated RHP Scott Blewett for assignment.

BOSTON RED SOX — Reinstated RHP Liam Hendricks from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Hunter Dobbins to Worcester (IL).

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Agreed to terms with RHP Juan Carela on a minor league contract. Recalled LHP Jared Shuster from Charlotte (IL). Placed LHP Martin Perez on the 15-day IL. Sent RHP Justin Anderson to Charlotte.

DETROIT TIGERS — Recalled LHP Bailey Horn from Toledo (IL). Placed RHP John Brebbia on the 15-day IL.

HOUSTON ASTROS — Reinstated RHP Forrest Whitley from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Nick Hernandez to Sugar Land (PCL).

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Reinstated 1B Mark Canha from the 10-day IL. Optioned LF MJ Melendez to Omaha (IL).

MINNESOTA TWINS — Reinstated RHP Brock Stewart from the 15-day IL. Optioned LHP Kody Funderburk to St. Paul (IL). Sent RHP Pablo Lopez to St. Paul on a rehab assignment.

TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Sent CF Daulton Warsho to Dunedin (FSL) on a rehab assignment.

National League

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Selected the contract of RHPs J.P. Feyereisen and Juan Morillo from Reno (PCL). Recalled RHP Drey Jameson from Reno. Optioned LHP Joe Mantiply and RHP Bryce Jarvis to Reno. Placed LHP A.J. Puk on the 15-day IL retroactive to April 18. Designated INF Grae Kessinger for assignment.

COLORADO ROCKIES — Selected the contract of INF Aaron Schunk from Albuquerque (PCL). Placed INF Ezequiel Tovar on the 10-day IL retroactive to April 16. Placed OF Brenton Doyle on the bereavement list. Recalled OF Jordan Beck from Albuquerque. Transferred LHP Austin Gomber to the 60-day IL.

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Placed RHP Blake Treinen on the 15-day IL. Reinstated RHP Evan Phillips from the 15-day IL.

MIAMI MARLINS — Selected the contract of LHP Patrick Monteverde from Jacksonville (IL). Optioned RHP George Soriano to Jacksonville.

NEW YORK METS — Sent RHP Paul Blackburn to Brooklyn (SAL) on a rehab assignment. Sent 2B Jeff McNeil to Binghamton (EL) on a rehab assignment.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Placed LHP Tim Mayza on the 15-day IL. Recalled RHP David Bednar from Indianapolis (IL). Sent RHP Colin Holderman to Indianapolis on a rehab assignment.

SAN DIEGO PADRES — Placed LF Jason Heyward on the 10-day IL retroactive to April 17. Recalled OF Tirso Ornelas from El Paso (PCL).

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Transferred RF Jerar Encarnacion from the 10-day IL to the 60-day IL. Placed 1B Casey Schmitt on the 10-day IL retroactive to April 18. Selected the contract of 2B David Villar from Sacramento (PCL).

WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Sent RHP Cade Cavalli to Fredericksburg on a rehab assignment.

BASKETBALL
Women's National Basketball Association

MINNESOTA LYNX — Signed Fs Anastasiia Olairi Kosu and Dalayah Daniels to rookie scale contracts.

WASHINGTON MYSTICS — Signed Fs Ashten Prechtel, Khadijah Cave and G Morgan Jones to training camp contracts. Signed F JoJo Lacey to a rookie scale contract.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

ANAHEIM DUCKS — Fired coach Greg Cronin. Reassigned G Ville Husso to San Diego (AHL).

CALGARY FLAMES — Reassigned LW Dryden Hunt to Calgary (AHL).

CAROLINA HURRICANES — Called up G Ruslan Khazheyev from Chicago (AHL).

COLORADO AVALANCHE — Recalled C Matthew Stienburg from Colorado (AHL).

DETROIT RED WINGS — Reassigned LW Elmer Soderblom to Grand Rapids (AHL).

EDMONTON OILERS — Signed D Ty Emberson to a two-year contract.

NEW JERSEY DEVILS — Reassigned G Tyler Brennan to Utica (AHL) from Adirondack (ECHL).

NEW YORK RANGERS — Fired coach Peter Laviolette.

OTTAWA SENATORS — Recalled G Leevi Merilainen from Belleville (AHL).

SOCCER
Major League Soccer

ORLANDO CITY — Signed D Zakaria Taifi and M Ryon Tori to short-term agreements.

AP SPORTLIGHT

April 21

1904 — Ty Cobb makes his pro debut for Augusta (South Atlantic League)

1980 — Bill Rodgers wins his third straight Boston Marathon. Rosie Ruiz is disqualified eight days later as women's champion when it's discovered she did not run the entire distance.

1996 — The Chicago Bulls wrap up the most successful regular season in NBA history with their 72nd victory, getting 26 points from Michael Jordan, who sets an NBA record by winning his eighth scoring title, breaking Wilt Chamberlain's record.

PRO SOCCER							
MLS							
Eastern Conference							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
Charlotte FC	6	2	1	19	16	7	
Cincinnati	6	2	1	19	13	11	
Inter Miami CF	5	0	3	18	13	6	
Columbus	5	1	3	18	12	7	
Philadelphia	5	3	1	16	16	9	
Nashville	4	4	1	13	12	11	
Orlando City	3	2	4	13	15	12	
Chicago	3	3	3	12	16	15	
New York	3	3	3	12	10	9	
NYC FC	3	4	2	11	11	13	
New England	3	4	1	10	6	7	
Atlanta	2	4	3	9	11	16	
D.C. United	2	4	3	9	11	19	
Toronto FC	1	4	4	7	8	13	
CF Montréal	0	6	3	3	4	13	
Western Conference							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
Vancouver	6	1	2	20	17	6	
Austin FC	5	3	1	16	7	8	
Minn. United	4	1	4	16	11	7	
Portland	4	2	3	15	16	13	
Colorado	4	2	3	15	13	13	
San Diego FC	4	3	2	14	15	12	
LAFC	4	4	1	13	13	14	
Seattle	3	3	3	12	12	11	
FC Dallas	3	3	3	12	10	11	
San Jose	3	5	1	10	19	17	
Real Salt Lake	3	6	0	9	8	14	
St Louis City	2	4	3	9	5	6	
Sporting KC	2	6	1	7	15	19	
Houston	1	4	4	7	8	14	
LA Galaxy	0	6	3	3	6	16	
Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.							
Saturday's games							
Austin FC 1, LA Galaxy 0							
Miami 1, Columbus 0							
Charlotte FC 3, San Diego FC 0							
Orlando City 0, CF Montréal 0, tie							
New England 2, New York City FC 0							
D.C. United 2, New York 1							
Philadelphia 3, Atlanta 0							
Seattle 3, Nashville 0							
Cincinnati 3, Chicago 2							
Colorado 2, Houston 2, tie							
FC Dallas 0, Minnesota 0, tie							
Vancouver 0, St Louis City 0, tie							
Toronto FC 1, Real Salt Lake 0							
Los Angeles FC 3, Portland 3, tie							
Sporting Kansas City 5, San Jose 3							
Saturday, April 26							
Sporting Kansas City at Cincinnati							
New York City FC at Toronto FC							
CF Montréal at New York							
D.C. United at Philadelphia							
Atlanta at Orlando City							
New England at Charlotte FC							
San Jose at Columbus							
FC Dallas at Miami							
Real Salt Lake at San Diego FC							
Austin FC at Houston							
Vancouver at Minnesota							
Chicago at Nashville							
Seattle at Colorado							
Sunday, April 27							
St Louis City at Los Angeles FC							
Portland at LA Galaxy							
NWSL							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
Kansas City	5	0	0	15	12	1	
Orlando	4	1	0	12	11	2	
Washington	4	1	0	12	7	3	
Gotham FC	2	1	2	8	8	4	
Angel City	2	1	2	8	7	8	
San Diego	2	2	1	7	9	8	
Bay FC	2	2	1	7	5	5	
Seattle	2	2	1	7	5	5	
Portland	1	2	2	5	3	5	
Houston	1	3	1	4	4	8	
Utah Royals FC	1	3	1	4	4	8	
Louisville	1	3	1	4	3	9	
Chicago	1	4	0	3	3	11	
North Carolina	0	3	2	2	3	7	
Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.							
Friday's games							
Utah Royals FC 1, Chicago 0							
Seattle 1, Portland 0							
Gotham FC 4, Angel City 0							
Saturday's games							
San Diego 4, Louisville 1							
Washington 1, Orlando 0							
Bay FC 1, North Carolina 0							
Kansas City 2, Houston 0							
Tuesday's game							
Gotham FC at Portland							
Friday, April 25							
Utah Royals FC at Houston							
Angel City at Orlando							
Saturday, April 26							
Gotham FC at Washington							
Kansas City at North Carolina							
San Diego at Chicago							
Seattle at Bay FC							
Sunday, April 27							
Louisville at Portland							

GOLF

RBC Heritage

Saturday
At Harbour Town Golf Links
Hilton Head, S.C.
Purse: \$20 million
Yardage: 7,213; Par: 71
Third Round

Si Woo Kim	68-64-66—198-15
Andrew Novak	68-65-66—199-14
Justin Thomas	61-69-69—199-14
Maverick McNealy	70-65-65—200-13
Tommy Fleetwood	67-66-68—201-12
Brian Harman	66-69-66—201-12
Russell Henley	64-68-70—202-11
Scottie Scheffler	64-70-68—202-11
Keegan Bradley	67-69-67—203-10
Patrick Cantlay	67-69-67—203-10
Cameron Davis	70-66-67—203-10
Mackenzie Hughes	68-66-69—203-10
Brian Campbell	66-70-68—204 -9
Wyndham Clark	65-70-69—204 -9
Matt Fitzpatrick	66-70-68—204 -9
Byeong Hun An	74-68-63—205 -8
Daniel Berger	70-67-68—205 -8
Viktor Hovland	69-68-68—205 -8
Shane Lowry	68-70-67—205 -8
Max Greyserman	67-70-69—206 -7
Ryo Hisatsune	71-67-68—206 -7
Tom Hoge	70-70-66—206 -7
Billy Horschel	71-66-69—206 -7
Sungjae Im	69-69-68—206 -7
Stephan Jaeger	67-70-69—206 -7
J.T. Poston	68-67-71—206 -7
Jordan Spieth	67-70-69—206

MLB

Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	13	8	.619	—
Toronto	12	9	.571	1
Boston	12	10	.545	1½
Baltimore	9	11	.450	3½
Tampa Bay	9	12	.429	4
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	13	8	.619	—
Cleveland	11	9	.550	1½
Kansas City	8	14	.364	5½
Minnesota	7	14	.333	6
Chicago	4	16	.200	8½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Texas	13	8	.619	—
Seattle	11	10	.524	2
Houston	10	10	.500	2½
Los Angeles	10	10	.500	2½
Athletics	10	11	.476	3
National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	14	7	.667	—
Philadelphia	13	8	.619	1
Miami	8	12	.400	5½
Washington	8	12	.400	5½
Atlanta	7	13	.350	6½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	14	9	.609	—
Milwaukee	11	10	.524	2
Cincinnati	10	11	.476	3
St. Louis	9	12	.429	4
Pittsburgh	8	14	.364	5½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
San Diego	15	6	.714	—
Los Angeles	15	7	.682	½
San Francisco	14	7	.667	1
Arizona	12	9	.571	3
Colorado	3	16	.158	11
Saturday's games				
Detroit 3, Kansas City 1				
Texas 4, L.A. Dodgers 3				
Cleveland 3, Pittsburgh 0				
Seattle 8, Toronto 4, 12 innings				
Boston 4, Chicago White Sox 3, 10 in-				
nings				
Baltimore 9, Cincinnati 5				
Tampa Bay 10, N.Y. Yankees 8, 10 innings				
Athletics 3, Milwaukee 1				
Houston 3, San Diego 2				
Atlanta 4, Minnesota 3				
San Francisco 3, L.A. Angels 2				
Philadelphia 11, Miami 10				
Chicago Cubs 6, Arizona 2				
N.Y. Mets 3, St. Louis 0				
Washington 12, Colorado 11				
Sunday's games				
Chicago White Sox at Boston				
Cincinnati at Baltimore				
Cleveland at Pittsburgh				
Minnesota at Atlanta				
Seattle at Toronto				
Kansas City at Detroit				
N.Y. Yankees at Tampa Bay				
Athletics at Milwaukee				
L.A. Dodgers at Texas				
San Francisco at L.A. Angels				
San Diego at Houston				
Miami at Philadelphia				
St. Louis at N.Y. Mets				
Arizona at Chicago Cubs				
Washington at Colorado, 2				
Monday's games				
Chicago White Sox (Cannon 0-2) at Bos-				
ton (Buehler 2-1)				
N.Y. Yankees (Schmidt 0-0) at Cleveland				
(Williams 1-1)				
San Diego (Vásquez 1-1) at Detroit (Fla-				
herty 1-1)				
Toronto (Gausman 2-1) at Houston				
(Brown 2-1)				
Cincinnati (Lodolo 2-1) at Miami (Meyer				
1-2)				
Philadelphia (Nola 0-4) at N.Y. Mets (Me-				
gill 2-2)				
St. Louis (Fedde 1-2) at Atlanta (Schwel-				
lenbach 1-1)				
Milwaukee (Priester 1-0) at San Francis-				
co (Ray 3-0)				
Tuesday's games				
N.Y. Yankees at Cleveland				
San Diego at Detroit				
Baltimore at Washington				
Seattle at Boston				
Chicago White Sox at Minnesota				
Colorado at Kansas City				
Toronto at Houston				
Pittsburgh at L.A. Angels				
Tampa Bay at Arizona				
Texas at Athletics				
Cincinnati at Miami				
Philadelphia at N.Y. Mets				
St. Louis at Atlanta				
L.A. Dodgers at Chicago Cubs				
Milwaukee at San Francisco				

ROUNDUP

García's walk-off HR lifts Rangers

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Adolis García hit a two-run homer off former Texas closer Kirby Yates in the ninth inning, lifting the Rangers to a 4-3 victory over the Los Angeles Dodgers on Saturday.

The fourth home run of the season from García kept Japanese rookie Roki Sasaki from getting his first major league victory. The 23-year-old right-hander pitched six solid innings in the longest of his five big league outings.

Josh Smith almost tied it against Yates (1-1) leading off the Texas ninth, missing a homer by a couple of feet foul down the line in right field. Smith slapped a double the other way before García's 394-foot drive into the seats in left.

The Dodgers were without two-way star Shohei Ohtani, who announced the birth of his first child — a girl — during the game, as did manager Dave Roberts during an in-game interview on national television.

The defending champions were well on their way to a 2-0 start in the three-game series matching the past two World Series winners before García's blast.

Sasaki surrendered a two-run homer to Kyle Higashioka in the third but allowed just two hits. The right-hander walked three and struck out four.

Freddie Freeman hit a tying two-run homer in the fourth, and Max Muncy put the Dodgers ahead with a two-out, ground-rule double later in the inning.

Jacob Webb (2-0) pitched two scoreless inning for Texas.

Guardians 3, Pirates 0: Kyle Manzardo spoiled Paul Skenes' bobblehead day, taking the young Pittsburgh ace deep in visiting Cleveland's victory.

Manzardo led off the seventh by taking the first pitch he saw from Skenes (2-2) and sending it over the right-field stands. The fifth home run of the season by Cleveland's designated hitter landed 411 feet from home plate before bouncing into the Allegheny River.

Red Sox 4, White Sox 3 (10): Triston Casas hit a bases-loaded single off the Green Monster to drive in the winning run in the 10th inning, lifting Boston over visiting Chicago.

Luis Robert Jr. hit a two-run shot for the White Sox, who lost their sixth in a row and fell to 4-16 and 0-8 on the road, the worst road start in team history.

Rays 10, Yankees 8 (10): Brandon Lowe tied the score with a two-run single in a four-run ninth inning off Devin Williams, Jonathan Aranda hit a two-run homer in the 10th and host Tampa Bay stopped New York's five-game winning streak.

Williams, an All-Star closer acquired from Milwaukee during the offseason, has a 9.00 ERA and has allowed runs in four of nine appearances. He has walked seven in eight innings.

Tigers 3, Royals 1: Spencer Torkelson hit a tiebreaking, three-run homer in the fifth inning off Seth Lugo, and host Detroit extended Kansas City's losing streak to six.

Detroit won the first three games of the four-game series and is 8-1 at Comerica Park, its best home start since nine straight wins to begin 1993.

Braves 4, Twins 3: Alex Verdugo, making his second start as Atlanta's left fielder and leadoff hitter, had four hits that included a go-ahead single in the sixth inning, and the Braves beat visiting Minnesota for their first back-to-



JEFFREY McWHORTER/AP

Rangers right fielder Adolis García watches the flight of his walk-off two-run homer off of Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Kirby Yates in the ninth inning Saturday in Arlington, Texas.

back wins of the season.

Verdugo was recalled on Thursday to help boost a slumping offense after signing a \$1.5 million, one-year contract on March 20. He had two doubles and scored two runs.

Phillies 11, Marlins 10: Trea Turner had four hits, Bryson Stott and Johan Rojas each had three and Philadelphia survived visiting Miami's six-run ninth inning.

Dane Myers hit a three-run homer and Liam Hicks added a two-run shot, both off Jordan Romano in the ninth for the Marlins. Romano, in the midst of a rough first season in Philly, was heavily booed as he trudged off the mound.

Cubs 6, Diamondbacks 2: Seiya Suzuki and Michael Busch hit consecutive home runs in a four-run second-inning as Chicago beat visiting Arizona.

Mets 3, Cardinals 0: Kodai Senga extended his scoreless streak to 19 innings, Pete Alonso homered and host New York beat St. Louis for the third straight day.

Mariners 8, Blue Jays 4 (12): Randy Aroza-rena hit a tiebreaking single in the 12th inning, Rowdy Tellez added his fifth career grand

slam and visiting Seattle stopped Toronto's three-game winning streak.

Orioles 9, Reds 5: Ramón Laureano came off the bench and hit two home runs, and Baltimore went deep five times in its victory over visiting Cincinnati.

Nationals 12, Rockies 11: Jordan Beck took a called third strike from Kyle Finnegan to end the game with a runner on third, and Washington held on to win at Colorado after nearly wasting a 10-run lead.

Athletics 3, Brewers 1: Luis Severino allowed three hits and one run in eight innings for his first win with the Athletics since signing a \$67 million, three-year contract with the team, while Brent Rooker and Shea Langeliers homered in a victory at Milwaukee.

Astros 3, Padres 2: Isaac Paredes hit a tie-breaking RBI single in the seventh inning after Christian Walker's two-run homer in the sixth tied it, leading Houston to a win at San Diego.

Giants 3, Angels 2: Landen Roupp struck out a career-high nine in seven innings, Matt Chapman hit a two-run home run, and San Francisco held on for a victory at Los Angeles.

NHL PLAYOFFS

Wild ride with Gustavsson after bounce-back

Minnesota goaltender has quietly flourished this season with most of the attention on retiring Fleury

By Dave Campbell
Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — The spotlight has been on Marc-Andre Fleury all season, with the soon-retiring goalie who has the second-most victories in NHL history winding down his farewell tour with the Minnesota Wild.

That’s more than fine with Filip Gustavsson.

While the Wild struggled to score and stay on track for the NHL playoffs during extended injury absences for star left wing Kirill Kaprizov and first-line center Joel Eriksson Ek, Gustavsson helped keep them afloat. He quietly produced a critical bounce-back season for both him and the team, starting a career-high 58 games and shaving a half-goal off his goals against average from the previous season.

“I love that he’s always cool, calm and collected,” Fleury said. “Maybe sometimes he isn’t, but he doesn’t show it, and I think it’s very comforting for the guys when you have a guy like that back there.”

Gustavsson started 21 of the past 25 games for the Wild, who grabbed the first-wild card spot in the Western Conference with a dramatic overtime victory Tuesday night in their final regular-season game. They’ll face the Vegas Golden Knights in the first round. Game 1 is Sunday.

“It’s really fun, and I wish I could play every game, almost. You kind of just have to



MATT KROHN/AP

Filip Gustavsson has started 21 of the past 25 games in net for the Wild.

leave the games way quicker after you’re done with them, because you know it’s a new one coming up, and you have to be ready for that one,” said Gustavsson, who was acquired in a summer trade with the Ottawa Senators in 2022. “If you’re losing a game or something, and the dwelling and all of that, it’s tough. Because if you’re dwell-

ing, you have a tough time sleeping. If you’re not sleeping, you’re not good the next day.”

After signing a three-year, \$11.25 million contract after his strong debut season with the Wild, Gustavsson took a step backward in 2023-24.

“I think I was trying way too hard and felt

more pressure on my shoulders that I had to make a bigger difference instead of just trusting the team,” Gustavsson said this week.

With prospect Jasper Wallstedt in the mix, too, the Wild started training camp with three goalies. Salary cap constraints and Gustavsson’s performance ensured Wallstedt spent nearly the entire season in the AHL.

“With the reset that he had in the summer and to come back with the mindset that he’s had, the consistency level that he’s been able to play with, it’s been great,” Wild coach John Hynes said, adding: “I think he understands that pucks are going to go in the net sometimes and it’s not all on him.”

Gustavsson and his wife have two kids under 2 years old at home, including newborn Lage who joined brother Vollrad in the family last month.

“I remember when I started playing pro, I always came home and I was very grumpy. I guess I wasn’t fun being around when I came home after games,” Gustavsson said. “We’ve got two kids now and we’ve got dogs and everyone is happy to see you, and you just kind of have to let it go.”

Having the perpetually smiling Fleury around as a mentor and a backup sure has helped, too.

“His compete level and his enjoyment for the game is so high,” Gustavsson said, “that it just spreads throughout the room.”

Panthers: Florida teams facing off for 4th time in 5 seasons

FROM PAGE 24

team in the NHL. When you get down to the top eight in the conference, you need a certain threshold of health. So, that has to be priority one.”

They’ll find out soon if the approach paid off.

Florida opens the playoffs at Tampa Bay on Tuesday night — the fourth time in five seasons that the Sunshine State’s two teams have faced off in the playoffs. The Panthers are bidding for their third consecutive trip to the Stanley Cup Final; the Lightning were there in each of the three seasons before that run started.

“You want to take advantage of the rest days you get and do some rehab and stuff to recover your body,” Panthers defenseman Gustav Forsling said. “And I think everyone’s really good at it on this team. We really take care of our bodies and we’re really focused on that when we can. So, for playoffs, that’s all you want. You want to be fresh for the games.”

Since the start of the 2022-23 season, including playoffs, Forsling has logged 6,615 minutes on the ice — about 400 more than anyone else in the NHL over that span. He’s appeared in 286 games over those three years; the only player who has been in more is Panthers teammate Sam Rein-

hart, who has played in 288.

Reinhart missed three of Florida’s final six games. Those were the first games he missed in three years.

“There’s trust in the staff that they know how we’re going to play when it comes to it,” Reinhart said. “So, we’ve been trying to use that to our advantage and get some added rest and be the best we possibly can for next week.”

The Panthers didn’t rush Brad Marchand onto the ice when he was acquired in a trade from Boston, giving him time to recover from an upper-body injury. And now they’re waiting to see if Matthew Tkachuk — who hasn’t played since the 4 Nations event in February — will be ready for Game 1. Tkachuk has been sidelined by a lower-body injury.

Game 1 could have been Saturday, in theory. It isn’t until Tuesday, so even that brings a few more rest days that the Panthers weren’t necessarily expecting. It also gives a couple more days for Tkachuk to determine if he can play in the playoff opener.

“We’ll get an extra day’s skate. It lets us accomplish both things: getting a right amount of rest and also be on the ice enough so we can stay sharp,” Maurice said. “We have to balance both of those two things.”

Tkachuk skates with team, could be ready for Panthers’ playoff opener vs. Lightning

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Matthew Tkachuk skated with the Florida Panthers in practice on Saturday, a sign that he may be ready to rejoin the lineup for Game 1 of the playoffs.

The Panthers, who won the Stanley Cup last season, open the first round at Tampa Bay on Tuesday. The team doesn’t expect to make a determination about Tkachuk’s status for the opener until at least Monday.

“Matthew looked like Matthew. He looked fine,” Panthers coach Paul Maurice said. “But it wasn’t a heavy enough day or from a duration point of view long enough to make a game assessment.”

The Panthers aren’t practicing on Sunday — how Tkachuk is feeling is one of the things the team’s medical staff will monitor on the off day — and the plan from there, Maurice said, is to have the whole team back on the ice on Monday before making the quick flight to Tampa.

Saturday, he noted, marked the first time this season that everyone on Florida’s roster was on the practice ice together.

“Better late than never,” Maurice said.

Tkachuk has not played for Florida since Feb. 8, the team’s last game before the start of the 4 Nations Face-Off event in which he participated for the U.S. He sustained a lower-body injury in the second game of that tournament, then tried to play in the final against Canada but didn’t take any



CONNOR HAMILTON/AP

Matthew Tkachuk has not played for the Florida Panthers since before the start of the 4 Nations Face-Off in early February.

Boston at the trade deadline.

“He’s a competitor and he’s there to win,” Marchand said. “You hear the way he talks and obviously his reputation precedes him. He’s a very competitive guy, obviously very talented and one of the most gifted players in the league around the net. He’s a presence out there.”

shifts for the third period or overtime of that contest.

The Panthers placed Tkachuk on long-term injured reserve. He missed the team’s final 25 games of the regular season, yet still finished with 22 goals, 35 assists and 57 points — third-most on the team in all three categories. He was also second on the Panthers this season with 11 power-play goals.

When Tkachuk plays, it will mark his first time being teammates with Florida forward Brad Marchand — someone the Panthers acquired from rival

NHL PLAYOFFS

Scoreboard

First Round

Best-of-seven; x-if necessary
EASTERN CONFERENCE
Tampa Bay vs. Florida

Tuesday: at Tampa Bay, **AFN-Sports2**,
Mid Tuesday CET, 8 a.m. Wednesday JKT
Thursday: at Tampa Bay
Saturday, April 26: at Florida
Monday, April 28: at Florida
x-Wednesday, April 30: at Tampa Bay
x-Friday, May 2: at Florida
x-Sunday, May 4: at Tampa Bay

Washington vs. Montreal

Monday: at Washington, **AFN-Sports2**, 1
a.m. Tuesday CET, 9 a.m. Tuesday JKT
Wednesday: at Washington
Friday, April 25: at Montreal
Sunday, April 27: at Montreal
x-Wednesday, April 30: at Washington
x-Friday, May 2: at Montreal
x-Sunday, May 4: at Washington

Carolina vs. New Jersey

Sunday: at Carolina
Tuesday: at Carolina, **AFN-Sports2**, 2:30
a.m. Wednesday CET, 10:30 a.m. Wednes-
day JKT
Friday, April 25: at New Jersey
Sunday, April 27: at New Jersey
x-Tuesday, April 29: at Carolina
x-Friday, May 2: at New Jersey
x-Sunday, May 4: at Carolina

Toronto vs. Ottawa

Sunday: at Toronto
Tuesday: at Toronto
Thursday: at Ottawa
Saturday, April 26: at Ottawa
x-Tuesday, April 29: at Toronto
x-Thursday, May 1: at Ottawa
x-Saturday, May 3: at Toronto

WESTERN CONFERENCE
Colorado 1, Dallas 0

Saturday: Colorado 5, Dallas 1
Monday: at Dallas, **AFN-Sports2**, 3:30
a.m. Tuesday CET, 11:30 a.m. Tuesday JKT
Wednesday: at Colorado
Saturday, April 26: at Colorado
x-Monday, April 28: at Dallas
x-Thursday, May 1: at Colorado
x-Saturday, May 3: at Dallas

Los Angeles vs. Edmonton

Monday: at Los Angeles
Wednesday: at Los Angeles
Friday, April 25: at Edmonton
Sunday, April 27: at Edmonton
x-Tuesday, April 29: at Los Angeles
x-Thursday, May 1: at Edmonton
x-Saturday, May 3: at Los Angeles

Vegas vs. Minnesota

Sunday: at Vegas
Tuesday: at Vegas, **AFN-Sports2**, 5 a.m.
Wednesday CET, 1 p.m. Wednesday JKT
Thursday: at Minnesota
Saturday, April 26: at Minnesota
x-Tuesday, April 29: at Vegas
x-Thursday, May 1: at Minnesota
x-Saturday, May 3: at Vegas

Winnipeg 1, St. Louis 0

Saturday: Winnipeg 5, St. Louis 3
Monday: Sat Winnipeg
Thursday: at St. Louis
Sunday, April 27: at St. Louis
x-Wednesday, April 30: at Winnipeg
x-Friday, May 2: at St. Louis
x-Sunday, May 4: at Winnipeg

MacKinnon leads Avs over Stars

By STEPHEN HAWKINS
Associated Press

DALLAS — Nathan MacKinnon took a stick to the face, had a part in both of Colorado’s strange goals in the second period and capped his night with an empty-netter for his 50th career playoff goal.

And Mackenzie Blackwood backed up the Avalanche in a big way in the goaltender’s first playoff game after 252 regular-season games for three teams over eight seasons.

The two goals in the second period put the Avalanche ahead to stay, and Blackwood had 23 saves in a 5-1 victory over the Dallas Stars in the opener of their first-round Western Conference playoff series Saturday night.

“I thought it was solid, really solid,” MacKinnon said of the opener of the Avs’ eighth consecutive postseason. “We had a lot of good looks, a lot of attempts. Maybe hit the net a little bit more, but I thought we played a pretty solid two-way game.”

MacKinnon scored on a shot that deflected off Stars defenseman Ilya Lyubushkin, and knuckled past goalie Jake Oettinger late in the second period. That came during an extended power play, a double minor against the Stars after he took a high stick to the face.

“Obviously they’re going to key on him like we do on some of their players,” coach Jared Bednar said of last season’s NHL MVP. “But really strong defensive game from him, and obviously get-up and go on the offensive side, he was making plays all night.”

Blackwood stopped four shots in a span of 11 seconds midway through the second period just before MacKinnon assisted on Artturi Lehkonen’s goal.

Lehkonen was following his initial shot and falling down after a collision in front of the net when the puck ricocheted off his lower left leg into the top corner of the net. The play was reviewed and officials ruled that there was no kicking motion by Lehkonen while tumbling to the ice with Mavrik Bourque.

There wasn’t much Oettinger could do on either of those goals as the Stars lost Game 1 in their eighth consecutive series in the NHL



GARETH PATTERSON/AP

Colorado Avalanche center Nathan MacKinnon celebrates after scoring a power-play goal during a first-round playoff game against the Stars in Dallas on Saturday night.

playoffs since 2022. They are 0-7 in series openers under coach Pete DeBoer, six of those coming at home.

“I guess the good news is we’ve come back and won more than our share of those series where we have (lost Game 1),” said DeBoer, whose teams made it to the West final each of the past two seasons. “So I think we got to concentrate on that.”

Game 2 is Monday night in Dallas, before the series shifts to Denver.

Devon Toews gave Colorado a 3-1 lead with 7:04 left. MacKinnon had an empty-net tally with 3:08 left, 11 seconds before Charlie Coyle scored.

This series-opening loss for the Stars came after they finished the regular season on an 0-5-2 stretch that included four losses at home after being 28-5-3 before that.

Blackwood is one of 11 players who have

seen action since being acquired through Colorado’s eight in-season trades. He came from San Jose in December and played in 37 games for the Avs.

Those deals included the Avalanche trading Mikko Rantanen on Jan. 24 to Carolina in the East. He played only 13 games before a deadline deal March 7 sent him back to the Central Division with the Stars and included a \$96 million, eight-year contract extension.

Rantanen, who had 101 points (34 goals, 67 assists) in 81 playoff games for the Avalanche had three shots and one block over 18 minutes in his postseason debut with the Stars.

Oettinger had 19 saves, three when Colorado had a two-man advantage in the first period when Cale Makar drew two tripping penalties only 36 seconds apart from each other.

Bednar got his 50th playoff win with the Avs — in his 82nd postseason game.

Connor’s late goal sends Jets over Blues in series opener

Associated Press

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Kyle Connor’s one-timer with 1:36 remaining in the third period snapped a 3-3 tie and lifted the Winnipeg Jets to a 5-3 victory in Saturday’s opening game of the Stanley Cup playoffs against the St. Louis Blues.

Connor also contributed two assists and captain Adam Lowry capped the victory with an empty-netter with 53 seconds left.

Game 2 in the best-of-seven series is Monday at Canada Life Centre, which featured a loud “whiteout” full house of 15,225 fans.

Mark Scheifele had a goal and two assists and Jaret Anderson-Dolan also scored for the Jets.

Scheifele became the Jets’ franchise leader in playoff points with 41.

“To do it in front of the fans tonight was pretty special,” he said. “That was a fun game to be a part of, just had a fun time.”



JOHN WOODS, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Winnipeg’s Mark Scheifele, left, Kyle Connor, center, Neal Pionk, right, and Josh Morrissey celebrate Connor’s game-winning goal against St. Louis during third period on Saturday.

Scheifele passed former captain Blake Wheeler’s franchise mark of 39 playoff points.

“Every year, (Scheifele) seems to work on some new skills, come

back an even better player than he was before,” Lowry said. “It’s difficult to kind of understand that someone in their 30s is continuing to get better, they’re not kind of

plateauing. But he puts in the work, he’s rewarded for it.”

Connor Hellebuyck made 14 saves for the Jets, who won the Presidents’ Trophy for the best regular-season record (56-22-4).

Jordan Kyrou gave the Blues a 3-2 lead with a power-play goal early in the second period, but Winnipeg’s top-line winger Alex Iafallo tied it at 9:18 of the third.

“That’s playoff hockey,” Hellebuyck said. “You have to play right to the last minute and right to the last second. It was fun. ... The guys were buzzing out there.”

Robert Thomas also scored on the power play for St. Louis. Oskar Sundqvist added one at even strength and Justin Faulk had two assists.

The Jets outshot the Blues 9-2 in the third.

“You have to control your emotions,” Blues captain Brayden Schenn said. “It’s the playoffs and special teams are huge. ... We’ll be fine for (the) next game. Obvious-

ly, Game 1 a lot of emotion with the buildup.”

Jordan Binnington stopped 21 shots for St. Louis, which grabbed the Western Conference’s final wild-card spot with a final-game victory.

The Jets won their regular-season series against the Blues 3-1.

A four-goal first period ended in a 2-2 tie.

St. Louis outshot the Jets 9-7 in the opening period, and dished out 32 hits to Winnipeg’s 14.

The Blues came out of the first intermission and used the power play for Kyrou’s goal at 1:13 and a 3-2 lead. It extended his season-ending point streak to four goals and two assists in four games.

Winnipeg couldn’t capitalize on its early third-period man advantage, but came close when Binnington denied Connor on a one-timer.

After Lowry’s goal, players paired up for some fighting with 19 seconds left.

NBA PLAYOFFS

Knicks rally with 21-0 run in 4th to beat Pistons

BY BRIAN MAHONEY
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jalen Brunson was hobbling and Madison Square Garden had gone quiet as the New York Knicks fell deeper into a hole late in the third quarter.

Brunson then left the court for what appeared to be a change of sneakers, although maybe that wasn't all.

"I think he grabbed his cape," coach Tom Thibodeau said.

Brunson and his teammates were sure super from there.

Brunson scored 34 points, Cam Payne had 11 of his 14 in the fourth quarter and the Knicks stunned the Detroit Pistons with a 21-0 run to rally for a 123-112 victory Saturday night in Game 1 of the first-round playoff series.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 23 points and 11 rebounds in his first playoff game with the Knicks and OG Anunoby also scored 23 points for the No. 3 seeds, who will host Game 2 on Monday night.

The Pistons held up well for more than three quarters of their first playoff game since 2019 and had a 98-90 lead, a little more than nine minutes from ending their NBA-record, 14-game postseason losing streak.

By the time they scored again, the Knicks were ahead by 13 points, the delirious fans in the arena roaring louder with every Pistons miscue after they played

with such poise for much of the game.

"I just thought the turnovers led to easy baskets for them," forward Tobias Harris said.

Payne converted a three-point play to start the run, Brunson scored and Payne made a 3-pointer to tie it at 98, and the onslaught would last for nearly five minutes. Payne and Brunson combined for the first 17 points before Josh Hart had the final two baskets to make it 111-98 with 4:50 remaining.

All told, the Pistons had eight turnovers in the quarter that led to 11 points. Detroit shot 7-for-22 (31.8%) and was outscored 40-21 in the fourth.

"I been kind of waiting on that all year," Payne said. "I've been waiting on this game, how I played today, all year."

Harris scored 25 points for Detroit, but just three in the second half. Cade Cunningham had 21 points and 12 assists, but the Knicks limited the star to 8-for-21 shooting in his playoff debut.

The star guard, the No. 1 pick in the 2021 draft, is the primary reason the Pistons made the playoffs as the No. 6 seed after going 44-38, a 30-win improvement that was one of the largest in NBA history from one season to the next.

"Yeah, it was definitely learning experience. Something that I've never done before, I've never been a part of," Cunningham said.



JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON/AP

Knicks guard Cam Payne reacts during the second half of Game 1 of the first-round playoff series against the Detroit Pistons on Saturday in New York. The Knicks rallied in the fourth quarter to win.

"But also, I didn't treat like a different game. I tried to approach it like a regular game, read what the defense gives me, and exploit that. At the end of the day, it's basketball. It's something I've been doing since I was a kid. So, I don't switch for the environment or anything.

"But, you know, this game got away from us."

Brunson, who missed 15 games late in the season with a sprained right ankle, was just 4 for 15 in the first half and appeared to tweak the ankle again. But he changed out of his green sneakers and found another gear in the fourth

along with the Knicks.

"Obviously, we didn't end the third quarter the way we wanted to, but there was never a doubt that we're going to just lay down and not fight," Brunson said. "We had to find a way to figure things out and keep battling and I mean, it turned around quickly."

The Pistons remained winless in the postseason since Game 4 of the 2008 Eastern Conference finals.

"Obviously, for this group, guys having first-time playoff experience, just understanding yeah, it stinks to lose, but it's all about how you come back," Harris said.

Scoreboard

First Round

**Best-of-seven; x-if necessary
Eastern Conference
New York 1, Detroit 0**

Saturday: New York 123, Detroit 112
Monday: at New York, **AFN-Sports, 1:30 a.m. Tuesday CET, 9:30 a.m. Tuesday JKT**
Thursday: at Detroit
Sunday, April 27: at Detroit
x-Tuesday, April 29: at New York
x-Thursday, May 1: at Detroit
x-Saturday, May 3: at New York

Cleveland vs. Miami

Sunday: at Cleveland
Wednesday: at Cleveland
Saturday, April 26: at Miami
Monday, April 28: at Miami
x-Wednesday, April 30: at Cleveland
x-Friday, May 2: at Miami
x-Sunday, May 4: at Cleveland

Indiana 1, Milwaukee 0

Saturday: Indiana 117, Milwaukee 98
Tuesday: at Indiana
Friday, April 25: at Milwaukee
Sunday, April 27: at Milwaukee
x-Tuesday, April 29: at Indiana
x-Friday, May 2: at Milwaukee
x-Sunday, May 4: at Indiana

Boston vs. Orlando

Sunday: at Boston
Wednesday: at Boston, **AFN-Sports, 1 a.m. Thursday CET, 9 a.m. Thursday JKT**
Friday, April 25: at Orlando
Sunday, April 27: at Orlando
x-Tuesday, April 29: at Boston
x-Thursday, May 1: at Orlando
x-Saturday, May 3: at Boston

Western Conference Houston vs. Golden State

Sunday: at Houston
Wednesday: at Houston, **AFN-Sports, 3:30 a.m. Thursday CET, 11:30 a.m. Thursday JKT**

Saturday, April 26: at Golden State
Monday, April 28: at Golden State
x-Wednesday, April 30: at Houston
x-Friday, May 2: at Golden State
x-Sunday, May 4: at Houston

Denver 1, L.A. Clippers 0

Saturday: Denver 112, L.A. Clippers 110, OT
Monday: at Denver, **AFN-Sports, 4 a.m. Tuesday CET, Noon Tuesday JKT**
Thursday: at L.A. Clippers
Saturday, April 26: at L.A. Clippers
x-Tuesday, April 29: at Denver
x-Thursday, May 1: at L.A. Clippers
x-Saturday, May 3: at Denver

Oklahoma City vs. Memphis

Sunday: at Oklahoma City
Tuesday: at Oklahoma City, **AFN-Sports, 1:30 a.m. Wednesday CET, 9:30 a.m. Wednesday JKT**
Thursday: at Memphis
Saturday, April 26: at Memphis
x-Monday, April 28: at Oklahoma City
x-Thursday, May 1: at Memphis
x-Saturday, May 3: at Oklahoma City

Minnesota 1, L.A. Lakers 0

Saturday: Minnesota 117, L.A. Lakers 95
Tuesday: at L.A. Lakers, **AFN-Sports, 4 a.m. Wednesday CET, Noon Wednesday JKT**
Friday, April 25: at Minnesota
Sunday, April 27: at Minnesota
x-Wednesday, April 30: at L.A. Lakers
x-Friday, May 2: at Minnesota
x-Sunday, May 4: at L.A. Lakers

Siakam, Haliburton help Pacers race past Bucks

BY MICHAEL MAROT
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Pascal Siakam kept it simple Saturday. He got to his spots, hit his shots and made the plays.

The three-time All-Star finished with 25 points and seven rebounds while Tyrese Haliburton added 10 points and 12 assists to lead the Indiana Pacers past the Milwaukee Bucks 117-98 for a 1-0 lead in the Eastern Conference best-of-seven first-round series.

"It's just playing the game the way it's supposed to be played — not a lot of thinking, just play the game," Siakam said after going 10 of 15 from the field. "I think as long as we play the right way and we get the shots we're supposed to get and we want to get, that's what's important."

Siakam took full advantage of the festive atmosphere as Indiana hosted its first series opener since 2014.

Team officials handed out gold T-shirts that lit up Gainbridge Fieldhouse. Fans repeatedly counted the seconds it took for

two-time league MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo to shoot free throws and heckled Bucks forward Bobby Portis. And they roared with delight when WNBA star Caitlin Clark and others appeared on the video board.

But what they wanted — and needed most — was a fast start.

"The series is one-seventh over, and Game 2 will be monumentally more difficult than this one," Pacers coach Rick Carlisle said, referring to Tuesday's game. "Everybody on our team has got to be armed and dangerous. Striking the right balance is everything for our team."

The Pacers certainly were balanced. Myles Turner capped a 19-point, four-block performance with a late 3-pointer to seal the win after Milwaukee had cut a 28-point deficit to 107-95. Six Indiana players finished in double figures and Milwaukee made just one basket over the final 5:24.

It was eerily reminiscent of last year's first-round series, which Indiana won 4-2.

Antetokounmpo led the Bucks with 36

points and 12 rebounds after missing all six games last year because of a calf injury. This time, the Bucks played without their other All-Star, Damian Lillard, who continues to work his way into game shape after battling deep vein thrombosis in his right calf. He might return in Game 2.

The difference was defense.

Indiana negated Antetokounmpo's impact over the final three quarters with traps, double teams and against defenders of all sizes. The result: Antetokounmpo had only one assist and nobody else scored more than 15 points. Plus, the Bucks, who shot a league-best 38.7% on 3-pointers, were limited to just 2-for-16 in the first half and finished 9-for-37.

But Antetokounmpo also took issue with Milwaukee's defense.

"I think we were late, like we got into scrambling mode and they would create for the next guy and that's what they want you to do," he said. "We didn't have enough urgency. Going into Game 2, hopefully we can change that."



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

The Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo, right, tries to get to the basket as the Pacers' Pascal Siakam defends on Saturday.

NBA PLAYOFFS

Westbrook makes key plays, Nuggets rally to edge Clips

BY ARNIE STAPLETON
Associated Press
DENVER — Russell Westbrook, whose late-game follies hung over the Denver Nuggets as they navigated the stunning dismissals of coach Michael Malone and GM Calvin Booth on the eve of the playoffs, came up clutch against his former team in crunch time Saturday.

“That’s who he is,” Nikola Jokic said after watching Westbrook hit an uncontested corner 3-pointer to give Denver a two-point lead late in regulation and then knocking the inbound pass away from — and off of — James Harden with 9.6 seconds left in overtime to help seal Denver’s 112-110 win over the Los Angeles Clippers.

“I just know that (inbounds) play,” from being there the previous two seasons, Westbrook said.

Westbrook had plenty to do with L.A.’s whopping 20 turnovers, including an uncharacteristic seven from Kawhi Leonard.

“Russ is Russ,” interim coach David Adelman said after improving to 4-0. “Defensively, he’s absolutely incredible. He was playing free safety out there. I thought a lot of the reasons why the turnovers happened, even if it wasn’t him forcing it, (was) just the way he was roaming around and impacting the game.

“And then offensively ... he attacked,” Adelman said. “We maybe could have pulled it out and executed. But that’s what Russ does. I don’t think he’s going to change after 17 years. If he sees somebody in front of him 1-on-1, he’s going to attack. And then he made an enormous 3.”



Nuggets guard Russell Westbrook reacts after hitting a 3-pointer in OT in Game 1 of the playoff series Saturday against the Clippers.

Jokic scored 29 points and finished one rebound shy of a triple-double. Aaron Gordon added 25 points and Jamal Murray 21 as the Nuggets overcame a 15-point first-half deficit to power past the hottest team entering the playoffs.

The No. 5 seed Clippers’ loss was their first since March 30 at Cleveland. They rolled into the playoffs having won 18 of 21, including their past eight.

“If you turn over 20 times against the team that is No. 1 in offensive transition, then you’re gonna lose the game,” lamented Clippers coach Tyronn Lue.

Harden led the Clippers with 32 points. Leonard added 22 and Ivica Zubac had 21.

Leonard shrugged off the loss, saying the team’s mood was “still good. Just Game 1. You know, Denver’s a good team, especially at home. Still got Game 2.”

That’s Monday night.

Adelman said the key to the late comeback was actually when Denver closed the second quarter on a 13-2 run to pull to 53-49 at halftime.

“It felt like one of those games where you’re just slowly crawling uphill,” Adelman said.

And Westbrook was leading the way, coming up big despite missing 12 of 17 shots overall.

“A lot of people put a lot of emphasis on missing so many shots,” Westbrook said. “But in the playoffs, all you need to do is just win the game. I don’t give a damn about how many shots you miss, make. Just make winning basketball plays defensively, offensively.”

And he did just that.



Lakers guard Luka Doncic shoots as Timberwolves guard Nickeil Alexander-Walker, right, and guard Donte DiVincenzo defend during the second half in Game 1 of a first-round playoff series on Saturday.

Timberwolves rout Lakers, despite Doncic scoring 37

BY GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Anthony Edwards was not at all surprised when the Minnesota Timberwolves showed enough talent and togetherness to turn Luka Doncic’s playoff debut with the Lakers into a rout for the visitors.

Jaden McDaniels scored 25 points, Naz Reid added 23 with six 3-pointers, and the Timberwolves overcame Doncic’s 37-point effort for a 117-95 victory Saturday night.

Edwards had 22 points, nine assists and eight rebounds in the first-round series opener for the sixth-seeded Wolves, who have won 18 of their last 22 games.

“I got a great group of guys,” Edwards said. “But it wasn’t tonight. I learned that in training camp. It just takes a minute for us to gel as a new team. It just took a minute for us to figure each other out, and I feel like now we just go.”

The Timberwolves weathered Doncic’s 16-point first quarter in front of a roaring LA crowd before taking control with a 38-20 second quarter.

They poured it on after halftime, too. Julius Randle and Edwards hit four 3-pointers apiece as the Timberwolves made a franchise playoff-record 21 3-pointers on 42 attempts — with many of those shots taken without a defender in sight.

“It means Game 1,” Minnesota coach Chris Finch said. “We know it’s going to be a long series. We’re not under any assumption that it’s going to be this type of game in Game 2. It’ll be a completely different game. We got a lot left. A lot of meat on the bone out there. A lot of things. I know we can do better.”

LeBron James had 19 points to begin his 18th NBA postseason, but the third-seeded Lakers were overwhelmed by the Wolves’ shot-making and playoff poise.

“This Minnesota team, they’re going to be physical,” James said. “That’s what they bring to the table. It took us one game ... (to) understand that. They took homecourt advantage from us tonight, but we have to

control the controllables, and if we do that, we’ll have a much better chance to win than we did tonight.”

While Los Angeles is still searching for chemistry after acquiring Doncic two months ago, Minnesota is eager to improve on last season’s run to the Western Conference finals.

Game 2 in the best-of-seven series is Tuesday night in Los Angeles.

“They’re a great opponent,” JJ Redick said after losing his playoff coaching debut. “They’re one of the best teams in basketball. It’s not to say our guys weren’t ready to withstand playoff-level basketball. We were mentally ready, and I thought our spirit was right. ... I’m not sure physically we were ready, if that makes sense. When they start playing with a lot of thrust and physicality, we really just couldn’t respond to that.”

Minnesota’s superior physicality was obvious for long stretches, even with Rudy Gobert playing only 24 minutes. But the Wolves took control and kept it largely because they hit 21 3-pointers on only 42 attempts.

The Lakers lack a dominant big man after trading Anthony Davis, and Jaden McDaniels took advantage of that while scoring 25 points. But that doesn’t explain the Lakers’ poor effort on the perimeter, where they have enough athletes to guard most teams competently when they make the effort.

“I think it was physical, (and) they were hitting a lot of 3s,” Doncic said. “We have to limit their 3s, especially their lasers. We weren’t physical. They were running. They were getting anything they want, and we have to be better.”

One day after the Dallas Mavericks’ season ended in the Play-In Tournament, Doncic produced the 11th-highest scoring playoff game of his career — and it wasn’t nearly enough, thanks to the Timberwolves’ prolific team effort.

“I think the first quarter, we played the way we play,” Doncic said. “I think we played physical. Everyone was locked in, and then we just kind of let go of the rope. So we’ve got to be way more physical.”

SPORTS



Minnesota spoils Doncic's debut
Guard scores 37 in first playoff game with Lakers, but T-wolves win in rout » **Page 23**



Florida Panthers center Brad Marchand tries to move the puck around Tampa Bay Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy (88) and defenseman Ryan McDonagh on April 15 in Tampa, Fla. Florida acquired Marchand from the Boston Bruins in March but gave him time to recover from an upper-body injury rather than rushing him into the lineup.

Panthers playing long game

Florida seeks Stanley Cup repeat after prioritizing rest in final weeks of regular season

BY TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press
FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. Florida coach Paul Maurice didn't care about which team the Panthers drew for Round 1 of the Stanley Cup playoffs. Didn't care about whether that series would start on home ice or not. Didn't care about finishing first, second or third in the Atlantic Division, either.
The Panthers have bigger priorities.



Maurice

That's why, for the better part of the past two months, the defending Stanley Cup champions have been patient and prudent. Injured players weren't rushed back into the lineup. Banged-up players were offered time to heal. A premium was put on rest. It wasn't about tanking — they still had a realistic chance at the division entering the final few

days of the regular season. It was about being as sharp as possible for Game 1, when things just matter more. "Who you play does not matter and I don't say that out of an arrogant, 'We don't care who we play, that's how good we are,'" Maurice said toward the end of the regular season, laying out the strategy. "If you aren't healthy, you can win a game but you're not winning. And this is true of every

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INSIDE
MacKinnon has 2 goals, assist as Avalanche win opener against Stars
Connor goal pushes Jets past Blues in Game 1
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García walk-off lifts Rangers over Dodgers » MLB, Page 19

