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# STARS AND STRIPES®

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DENNIS ROGERS/U.S. Space Force

Space Force Spc. 3 Michelle Skeets pulls security during a routine training exercise at Schriever Space Force Base, Colo., on April 8.

## Taking war to new heights

### US officials debating rules if satellite conflict in space should arise

BY CHRISTIAN DAVENPORT  
*The Washington Post*

Ukraine's use of commercial satellites to help repel the Russian invasion has bolstered the U.S. Space Force's interest in exploiting the capabilities of the private sector to develop new technologies for fighting a war in space. But the possible reliance on private companies, and the revolution in technology that has made satellites smaller and more powerful, is forcing the Defense Department to wrestle with difficult questions about what to do if those privately owned satellites are targeted by an adversary. White House and Pentagon officials have been trying to determine what the policy



CHARLES RIVEZZO/U.S. Air Force

Air Force Lt. Col. Mike Johnson builds a satellite signal during a CRIMSON SKIES drill at Schriever Space Force Base on Oct. 31.

should be since a top Russian official said in October that Russia could target the growing fleet of commercial satellites if they are used to help Ukraine. Konstantin Vorontsov, deputy director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's department for nonproliferation and arms, called the growth of privately operated satellites "an extremely dangerous trend that goes beyond the harmless use of outer-space technologies and has become apparent during the latest developments in Ukraine." He warned that "quasi-civilian infrastructure may become a legitimate target for retaliation."

SEE WAR ON PAGE 5

## Rockets fired at compound in Syria after US airstrikes

BY DOUG G. WARE  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Rocket fire that targeted U.S. and coalition forces in Syria on Friday was the latest in a series of retaliations that included U.S. airstrikes a day earlier on Iran-linked sites and a drone attack that killed an American contractor and wounded other U.S. personnel, defense officials said. The strike on Friday included 10 rockets that were aimed at Mission Support Site Green Village, a compound in northeastern Syria that houses U.S. and allied forces. The attack was a response to two U.S. airstrikes on other facilities in Syria used by forces linked to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, according to defense officials. "The attack resulted in no injuries to U.S. or coalition personnel and no damage to equipment or facilities," Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon's top spokesman, told reporters Friday. "Our focus in Syria is on the 'defeat ISIS mission' and that will remain our focus." U.S. Central Command said one of the rockets missed its target and hit a civilian house nearby, slightly injuring two women and two children there. "This kind of indiscriminate rocket attack places not only our forces and coalition forces at risk, but also jeopardizes the local civilian population as well as the security and stability of Syria and the entire region," Army Col. Joe Buccino, a CENTCOM spokesman, said in a statement Friday. "As President [Joe] Biden has made clear, we will take all necessary measures to defend our people and will always respond at a time and place of our choosing."

SEE SYRIA ON PAGE 6

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Biden's FAA pick withdraws amid shaky support

*Associated Press*

WILMINGTON, Del. — President Joe Biden's choice to run the Federal Aviation Administration has withdrawn his nomination, a setback for the administration that comes after Denver International Airport CEO Phillip Washington appeared to lack enough support in the closely divided Senate.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg confirmed Washington's withdrawal in a tweet Saturday night, calling him "an excellent nominee" and blaming unde-

served and partisan attacks.

Republicans were united in opposition to Washington, calling him unqualified because of limited aviation experience. Democrats and allied independents still might have pushed the nomination through, but key senators on their side balked at supporting Biden's pick.

Washington's fate appeared settled when Senate Commerce Committee Chair Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., abruptly called off a scheduled vote last Wednesday — a sign

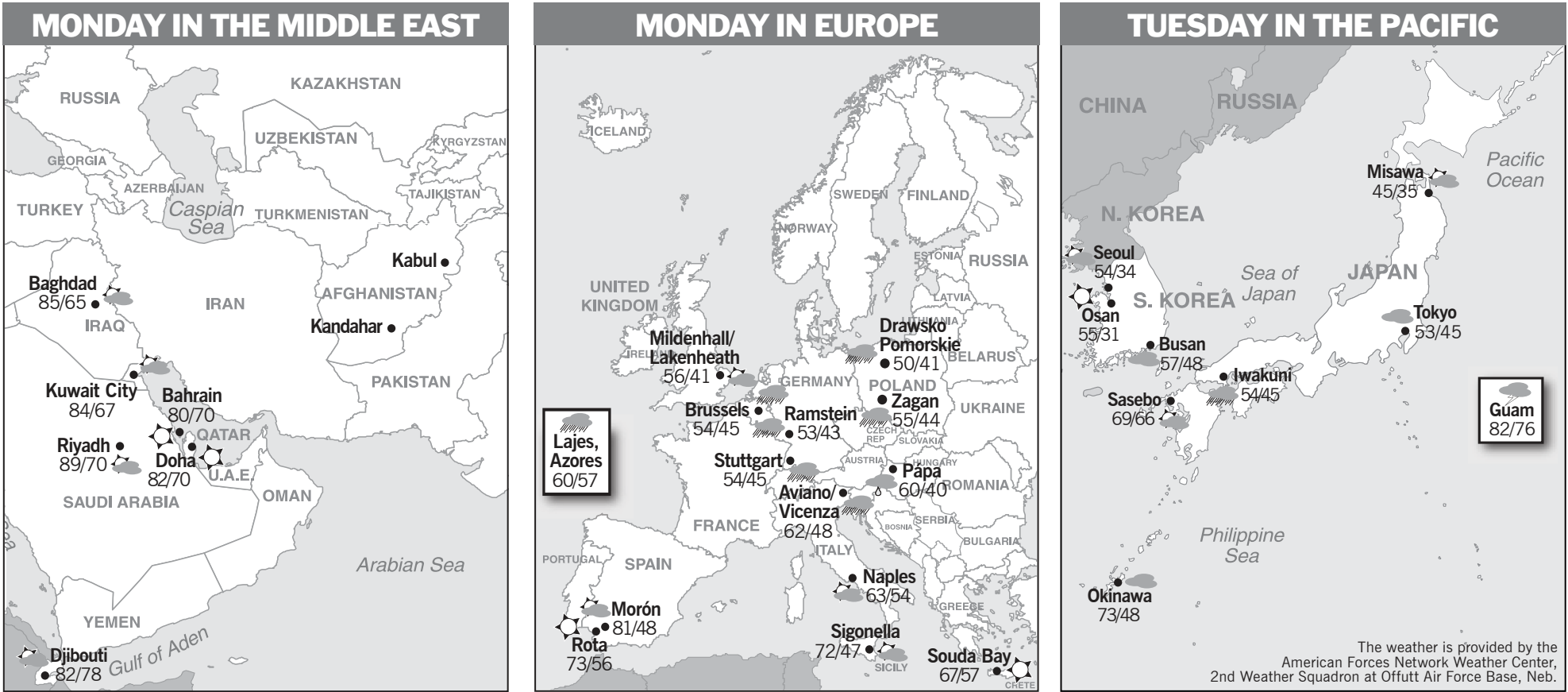
she lacked enough votes to move the nomination out of committee. She said some senators wanted more information about Washington.

Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, who was a Democrat until switching to independent in December, and moderate Democrat Jon Tester of Montana declined to say how they would have voted. A person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press that Sinema was holding up the nomination and had indicated her opposition.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		South Korea (Won)	1,296.18
Euro costs (March 27)	\$1.05	Switzerland (Franc)	.9197
Dollar buys (March 27)	0.9061	Thailand (Baht)	34.21
British pound (March 27)	\$1.19	Turkey (New Lira)	19.0645
Japanese yen (March 27)	128.00	(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)	
South Korean won (March 27)	1,258.00	INTEREST RATES	
Commercial rates		Prime rate	8.00
Bahrain (Dinar)	.3771	Interest Rates Discount rate	5.50
Britain (Pound)	1.2227	Federal funds market rate	4.58
Canada (Dollar)	1.3741	3-month bill	4.70
China (Yuan)	6.8681	30-year bond	3.64
Denmark (Krone)	6.9254		
Egypt (Pound)	30.9004		
Euro	.9293		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8497		
Hungary (Forint)	357.85		
Israel (Shekel)	3.5939		
Japan (Yen)	130.74		
Kuwait (Dinar)	.3062		
Norway (Krone)	10.4891		
Philippines (Peso)	54.27		
Poland (Zloty)	4.36		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7565		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3320		

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## MILITARY

# German soccer team hangs out, tours Ramstein

By MATT WAGNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — Manson Strowbridge got his first dose of die-hard soccer fandom in this area as a U.S. soldier in the late 1990s, when 1. FC Kaiserslautern became the first team in German history to win the federal league title a year after being promoted.

With his second stint in the area winding down, this time in a civilian capacity, the 24-year Army veteran didn't want to miss the chance to meet the team.

"It's an opportunity by chance," Strowbridge said. "I just happened to hear over AFN that they were going to be at the community club. [I was] riding down the autobahn, heading to work, thinking ... 'Oh, I got to be there.'"

Strowbridge was among hundreds of people on hand as the Red Devils signed autographs, posed for photos and talked with the military community, followed by what team officials said was the club's first ever tour of Ramstein Air Base.

Terrence Boyd, who has appeared in 14 matches for the United States at the international level, was among the most popular players.

Boyd was born to a U.S. service member and a German mother in Bremen. He lived briefly in New York as an infant before moving back to Germany with his mother.

The striker joined FCK in Janu-

ary 2022 after moving on from Halle, and he helped the team earn promotion to the Bundesliga's second division.

Boyd said he's noticed an increase in American turnout during his short time with the team.

"I think it even could improve a lot more," Boyd said. "Stints like today are a great way to improve the relationship in terms of generating more fans, getting more people hooked on the FCK atmosphere."

FCK is a founding member and four-time champion of the Bundesliga. While relegation to the third division and the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an attendance drop, fans since have returned in droves. In 12 second division home matches this season, an average of 38,778 people have packed Fritz Walter Stadium.

George Brown, president of the American 1. FC Kaiserslautern fan club, sees the relationship as a two-way street and says the club has made strides in the past few years.

FCK now has an English website, and concessions stands allow credit card and phone purchases instead of requiring a special card, Brown said.

Brown then pointed to the players on the flight line checking out C-130 and C-17 cargo planes.

"This is them reaching out to the fans, but we're reaching out to them as well," Brown said.

The FCK players also went to



PHOTOS BY MATT WAGNER/Stars and Stripes

**1. FC Kaiserslautern striker Terrence Boyd reaches to sign a ball from Brent, back, and Dex Habley on Thursday at the community center on Ramstein Air Base, Germany.**



**Airman Emma Gantner, right, looks over at 1. FC Kaiserslautern midfielder Aaron Basenach toward the end of a flexed-arm hang challenge at Northside Gym.**



**Joshua Weissert, right, poses for a photo with 1. FC Kaiserslautern defender Erik Durm at the community center.**

Northside Gym, where a couple of them competed against airmen in a fitness challenge of 1-minute pushups, a flexed-arm hang and 1-minute chinups.

The Red Devils ended the day at Ramstein High School, where they played with members of the boys and girls soccer teams. A trio, including Boyd, donned pads and switched balls with members of

the high school football team.

Boyd showed off his skill by nailing a 40-yard field goal that would have been good from at least 50 yards.

The experience left a big impression on the high school athletes on the field.

"It was really good to see them play because even if they didn't really tell us 'play smooth' or any-

thing like that, we get to see the differences," Ramstein soccer player Maxim Speed said. "I would consider myself a really good player, but seeing them play is really cool because I get to imitate that and get better by doing that."

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## Air Force doctor sentenced for sexual assault of 20-year-old

By JENNIFER H. SVAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — An Air Force doctor found guilty of sexually assaulting the daughter of a colleague and several separate crimes was sentenced Friday at a court-martial to 40 months in prison.

A jury of field grade officers also found Lt. Col. William "Marty" Hilton, a urologist with the 48th Surgical Operations Squadron at RAF Lakenheath, guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer for his actions during the assault, which occurred at his off-base home in England in August 2021.

Hilton was 53 at the time and the victim was 20. She was dog-sitting and ended up staying over after Hilton and his wife returned late from a night out drinking in Lon-

don. The assault occurred in the morning on the living room couch in the couple's home.

The jury also acquitted Hilton of two counts of assaulting a family member under the age of 16, assault of an Air Force spouse, five counts of abusive sexual contact, one instance of unlawful entry and of procuring prostitution.

At the outset of the nearly two-week trial, Hilton pleaded guilty to being drunk on duty, a separate count of unlawful entry and parts of three counts of conduct unbecoming an officer.

Col. Sterling Pendleton, the chief circuit military judge for Europe, gave Hilton credit for a little more than 15 months served in pre-trial confinement at RAF Lakenheath.

Hilton faced up to 35 years in

prison for the convictions. The government asked for seven years confinement while Hilton's defense team said 11 to 14 months was warranted.

Pendleton also gave Hilton a reprimand and dismissed him from the service.

Hilton will lose his military pension. Before commissioning into the Air Force in 2002, he joined the Army out of high school as a cavalry scout and later attended West Point.

He was the chief of urology at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, the Defense Department's largest overseas hospital, before his posting to Lakenheath.

Hilton will have to register as a sex offender and is expected to lose his medical credentialing.

The trial was held at Ramstein to broaden the pool of officers for jury selection, Lakenheath legal officials said.

Four different women, two of whom were Hilton's subordinates, testified that he touched them inappropriately in social settings. He was accused of cupping the sexual assault victim's buttocks on a prior occasion, and doing the same to the victim's mother three separate times, while giving them hugs.

One of the central questions posed during the trial was whether Hilton was an overly friendly officer with a habit of drinking too much alcohol at parties and acting improperly, or whether his behavior was criminal.

The doctor was described by some "as aggressively friendly, not really good with boundaries,"

but not dangerous, said defense attorney Sean Mangan, a retired Army lieutenant colonel.

Lawyers for the government argued that Hilton repeatedly disregarded boundaries "to satisfy his own sexual desires."

"He abused, harassed and assaulted those around him," Air Force prosecutor Maj. Matthew Maurer said. "He abused his position of trust and authority."

Hilton told the court during sentencing that he was an alcoholic and said he planned to attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

"I am sorry to everyone that I have impacted over the last three years," Hilton said. "I'm glad the victims could be heard."

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## PACIFIC

# US: China reaching out to Africa with 'shady deals'

By DOUG G. WARE  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — China drawing other countries into “shady” new partnerships and the rise of terrorist groups are two of the top U.S. security concerns emerging in the Middle East and Africa, military commanders told lawmakers on Thursday.

Army Gen. Erik Kurilla, who leads U.S. Central Command, and Marine Corps Gen. Michael Langley, who leads U.S. Africa Command, presented their concerns to members of the House Armed Services Committee during a hearing on Capitol Hill about national security.

The generals, along with Celeste Wallander, assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, said there's no doubt China is seeking to expand its influence in both regions.

“The People's Republic of China aggressively expands its informational, military and economic instruments of national power across the region, and now Beijing seeks to establish its diplomatic influence,” Kurilla said, noting China gets half its imported crude oil from the Middle East. “We are now seeing, really, for the first time [China's] diplomatic instrument of national power” in the region.

U.S.-Chinese relations have been souring for years and took another hit last month when Beijing floated a high-altitude surveillance balloon across the United States before it was shot down over the Atlantic Ocean by a U.S. fighter jet. Federal agents are still going through wreckage looking for clues to explain its purpose.

Langley told lawmakers that

China is becoming more influential in Africa and is preying on security-vulnerable countries with “illicit activities” and “shady deals.”

“There are some ill intentions,” he said. “Some of the [Chinese investments], on the face of it, may serve their purposes. But in the end, through the financing realm, it can have some ill effects on [African] society.”

“Our partners have real security needs,” Kurilla added. “And what China is doing is very quickly filling that.”

Wallander said she's concerned about the budding relationship between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin, who met for three days in Moscow this week to strengthen their cooperation. The ripple effects of their relationship will surely affect the Mideast and Africa, she said.

“That's the real challenge we have going forward,” Wallander said. “That they share an interest in undermining global security and the rules-based international order, and use one another to advance their national goals.”

“Everything China does is for its own self-interest, and they view partners in the region through a lens of ‘customer’ or ‘client,’” Kurilla added.

The group repeatedly stressed a similar level of concern for the emergence of militant and terrorist factions in places such as Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria, as well as Iran's interest in nuclear weapons and destabilizing Western-aligned nations such as Israel.

Kurilla said American forces in the Middle East have come under attack 78 times since January

2021 by Iranian drones and rockets fired by Iran proxies.

“The Iran of today is exponentially more militarily capable than it was even five years ago,” he said. “It has the largest and most diverse missile arsenal in the Middle East, and the largest and most capable [drone] force.”

Iran has resumed steps toward nuclear weapons since former President Donald Trump abandoned the 2015 agreement that thawed financial sanctions against Tehran in exchange for the country abandoning its nuclear weapons program. The pact included U.N. inspections to confirm Iran was holding up its end of the bargain.

President Joe Biden has said he'll put the U.S. back in the deal, known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, but talks to do so have largely stalled.

In recent months, the government in Tehran has drawn widespread criticism and spurred mass protests over the death of Mahsa Amini last year by Iran's “morality police” for not wearing a required hijab. But while many Iranians are pushing back against the government, Kurilla said he doesn't feel it will lead to regime change.

“The regime can deal with the domestic situation,” he said. “It is my assessment right now that even though the protests have put stress on the regime, it does not put the regime at risk.”

Some Republicans on the committee voiced concern about the return of Taliban control in Afghanistan. Kurilla said while the Taliban is running the government, he doubts its ability to mount large-scale attacks — part-



JOHN WRIGHT/U.S. Army

**Army Gen. Michael Kurilla and Marine Corps Gen. Michael Langley provide testimony March 16, at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing at the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington.**

ly because it's involved in a fight with its rival Islamic State-Khorasan, or ISIS-K. It was two coordinated ISIS-K attacks that killed 13 U.S. troops during the American evacuation of Afghanistan in August 2021.

During a Senate hearing last week, Kurilla estimated ISIS-K could be poised to launch attacks against U.S. and Western interests in the Middle East in six months. On Thursday, he told House lawmakers that the terrorist group is stronger than it was a year ago.

The defense officials also pointed to possible threats in both regions from the Wagner Group, a private Russian paramilitary force that's gained notoriety for attacking troops and civilians in Ukraine.

“Wagner has ill intentions.

They are destabilizing activity. They have a history of it [in Africa],” Langley said, adding the group has been active in Libya and participated in a recent coup in Mali. “I am concerned about that.”

“It's all about power for profit,” he added, noting the Russian group is exploiting valuable minerals, gold and diamonds in Africa to finance operations elsewhere.

“Wagner brings not security and stability for [African] countries, but in fact [it is] an entry point for economic exploitation, for instability, extraordinary and horrifying assaults on civilians,” Wallander said. “Because what Wagner offers is regime security, not national security to these countries.”

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## US tests THAAD remote control during S. Korea drill

By DAVID CHOI  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — U.S. troops in South Korea remotely fired their top-shelf missile-defense system for the first time during a large-scale military exercise, according to U.S. Forces Korea.

U.S. troops in “deployment training” employed the remote launcher for the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, anti-missile system, the command said in a news release Friday.

“In the face of [North Korea's] advanced missile threats, the training of our THAAD forces enhanced the units' combat readiness, combined defense pos-

ture within the alliance, demonstrates the ironclad commitment to support and defend [South Korea] and further strengthens the security and stability on the Korean Peninsula,” the release said.

The THAAD remote kit allows the missile interceptor more siting options and increases the area it can defend, according to a Lockheed Martin news release from 2019.

USFK did not respond to repeated requests for comment about whether THAAD interceptors were actually launched during the drill, and the dates and location of the training.

The THAAD drill happened in conjunction with the Freedom

Shield exercise by U.S. and South Korean forces, according to the release. The 11-day exercise that ended Thursday focused on simulations and included personnel from U.N. Command and the Combined Forces Command.

U.S. and South Korean troops have been conducting their largest exercises in years across the country this month.

Around 1,200 soldiers from the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division and South Korean army on Thursday wrapped up live-fire training in Pocheon, just 16 miles from the Demilitarized Zone. Meanwhile, 5,500 U.S. sailors and Marines from the Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group arrived in Bu-

san on Wednesday ahead of a separate naval exercise scheduled for later this month.

The \$800 million THAAD system produced by Lockheed Martin was deployed to a South Korean base in Seongju, about 130 miles south of Seoul, to focus “solely on North Korean nuclear and missile threats,” the Defense Department said in June 2016.

Since then, the THAAD system has undergone several upgrades for “better performance” and for “improving interoperability” between it and the Patriot missile-defense system, South Korea's Ministry of National Defense said in October.

Interoperability is a term used by the military to illustrate the

ability of one nation's military to use another's training methods and equipment.

North Korea's state-run website, Uriminzokkiri, in a blog post March 17 described the recent joint drills as a rehearsal for an “occupation of Pyongyang” that would prompt a “preliminary nuclear war.”

The communist regime has fired nine ballistic missiles so far this year, including one that flew toward the East Sea, or Sea of Japan, hours before South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol met with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Tokyo.

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MILITARY

# Austin, Milley see security risks if funding drops

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON—The military’s top leaders warned lawmakers Thursday that Republican calls to shrink defense spending to 2022 levels would force major program cutbacks that would jeopardize national security.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, outlined the potential fallout of the funding cuts to a defense subpanel of the House Appropriations Committee as the Pentagon began justifying its \$842 billion budget request for fiscal 2024 on Capitol Hill.

“Everything that has been achieved over the last three, four, five, six, seven years — all of that would start going in the opposite direction,” Milley said. “I think it would be very significant and the risk would increase with China. It would be the wrong signal to send.”

Milley’s prediction came at the prompting of Democrats on the subpanel, who expressed alarm over a reported deal brokered by Republicans to bring government spending down to fiscal 2022 levels during a contentious vote for the House speaker.



ALEXANDER KUBITZA/Department of Defense

**Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, right, and Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testify Thursday before a House Appropriations Committee subpanel on Capitol Hill.**

kership in January. It is unclear if defense funding will be part of Republican negotiations over the total budget for fiscal 2024, which begins Oct. 1, but appropriators said they feared any possible impact on the military.

“I’m deeply concerned about efforts to reduce our defense top line to previous years’ level, especially as China increases its own military spending each year,” said Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger, D-Md. “If

we don’t prioritize investing in our national security today, I fear we risk a much costlier fight with China down the road, whenever that may be.”

If budget cuts were approved, Milley said training and work with allies would have to be curtailed in the Indo-Pacific region, where the Defense Department is investing heavily in efforts to counter China’s rising power and prevent a Chinese takeover of Taiwan. The Pentagon is

asking to spend \$9.1 billion on an initiative to build up defenses in Hawaii and Guam and strengthen partnerships in the region — a 40% increase from last year.

“You’re going to force us to reduce our up tempo, force us to do less Taiwan Strait transitions, less freedom of navigation, less patrolling of the air, less [intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance], everything will be less,” Milley said. “The probable result will be an acceleration of what could be some sort of aggressive moves in the future by China or other countries.”

The military now has about 120,000 troops deployed overseas, and the Army and Marine Corps alone conducted 24,000 live-fire exercises last year, providing a great deterrent against enemy actions, he said. The U.S. notably signed an agreement with the Philippines last month that will double the number of sites that the two militaries can work on together, Austin said.

Milley cautioned that Congress’ yearslong inability to pass budgets on time will compound the consequences of funding cuts and cause harm on their own, affecting artillery production, shipbuilding and

the F-35 fighter jet development program.

“We know if the budget is not passed on time, you can’t do multi-year contracts, you can’t lock in for industry the amount of ammunition and platforms you need,” he said.

Funding reductions in other government departments would also have a negative impact on defense, Austin said. Cutting the State Department’s budget, for example, could save money on diplomatic efforts but eventually lead to larger spending on defense, he said.

“The solution to every problem is not necessarily a military solution,” Austin said. “We need to work together to provide access to other agencies so they can reach the places they need to reach and do the things they need to do. It is typically a whole of government effort, and I think we need to remain mindful of that.”

Austin also pushed back against suggestions by some Republicans to place the burden of defense cuts on the Defense Department’s civilian employees.

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# War: General envisions propellant depots, tugs, junkyards in space

FROM PAGE 1  
liation.”

In response, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre reiterated earlier comments from her counterpart at the Pentagon that “any attack on U.S. infrastructure will be met with a response, as you’ve heard from my colleague, in a time and manner of our choosing.”

But what that response will be is unknown, as officials from a number of agencies try to lay out a policy framework on how to react if a commercial company is targeted.

In a recent interview, Gen. David Thompson, the Space Force’s vice chief of operations, said that while expanding the partnership with the commercial space industry is one of his top priorities, it has also led to a host of unanswered questions.

“The Ukraine conflict has brought it to the forefront,” he said. “First, commercial companies are thinking very clearly and carefully about, can we be involved? Should we be involved? What are the implications of being involved? ... And on our side, it’s exactly the same thing. Should we depend on commercial services? Where can we depend on commercial services?”

The Pentagon has long relied on the private sector, he said. But the proliferation of small satellites has created a more resilient system that has provided real-time imagery of the Ukraine battlefield

from space, allowing nations to track troop movements, assess damage and share intelligence. Communication systems, such as SpaceX’s Starlink constellation, has kept the internet up and running at a time when Ukraine’s infrastructure has been decimated.

The discussions come as the Pentagon is investing in more systems that were originally developed for civilian use but also have military applications. In the National Defense Strategy released late last year, the Pentagon vowed to “increase collaboration with the private sector in priority areas, especially with the commercial space industry, leveraging its technological advancements and entrepreneurial spirit to enable new capabilities.”

Several companies are developing small rockets that would launch inexpensively, and with little notice. SpaceX, meanwhile, has launched its Falcon 9 rocket at a record cadence, firing it off 61 times last year. The company is on track for even more launches this year.

“We think in a few years we’ll be in the 200, 300, 400 range,” Space Force Maj. Gen. Stephen Purdy Jr. said during a conference this month, referring to total space launches. “There’s a massive increase in commercial launch.”

He said the Space Force would like to get to the point where “we’re constantly launching, and there’s a schedule. There’s a

launch in two hours, and there’s launch in 20 hours. Your satellite is not ready? OK, get on the next one.”

For its next round of national security launch contracts, the Space Force has proposed an approach specifically designed to help small launch companies compete.

One track of contracts will be reserved for the most capable rockets — those able to hoist heavy payloads to every orbit the Pentagon wants to plant a satellite. Stalwarts such as SpaceX and the United Launch Alliance, the joint venture of Lockheed Martin and Boeing, would probably compete for those.

Blue Origin, the venture owned by Jeff Bezos, could also potentially bid its New Glenn rocket, though it has yet to fly.

But the Space Force has proposed offering a second track for smaller rockets, allowing startups to enter one of the most reputable and lucrative space marketplaces that could be worth billions of dollars over several years.

Those companies include Rocket Lab, which has recently christened its launch site on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, adding to its facility in New Zealand, and Relativity, which launched the world’s first 3D printed rocket on Wednesday (The second stage failed three minutes after liftoff, and the mission failed to reach orbit).

There are also a host of space

companies promising to build rockets that have never flown. “The challenge is not lowering the bar too low,” Peter Beck, Rocket Lab’s CEO, said in an interview. “We don’t think it’s useful to have paper rockets competing with real rockets. ... There has to be a level of due diligence. There has to be a level of sanity.”

The new approach has “balanced that tension very well between let’s make sure we have what we need for national security access to space and, as best we can, help to foster and take advantage of growth in the commercial market,” Thompson said.

The Space Force is also looking to the private sector for what’s known as on-orbit servicing, refueling spacecraft and repairing damaged ones. At some point, Purdy said, he saw a future where there are propellant depots in space, tugs that can move damaged satellites, junkyards and manufacturing in space on commercial space stations.

In other words, ensuring space has the same warfighting infrastructure and logistics that exist on the ground.

“In the other domains, we don’t build a ship or a tank or an aircraft and fuel it and then say, ‘OK, you’re going to operate this for the next 15 or 20 years, and you need to plan all your operations based on the fact that you’re never going to refuel these ever again,’” Purdy said. “That’s hard to wrap your

mind around, but that’s how we actually operate in space.”

Removing orbital debris, then, is to create freedom of movement in space, he said, the on-orbit equivalent of saying we “need a mine detection and clearing capability.”

Last year, the Space Force launched a program called Orbital Prime that would give companies seed money to develop the technology needed to clean up space. In the first round of the program, companies can win awards of \$250,000, with as much as \$1.5 million in a second round of funding. The program will culminate with a test demonstration in orbit.

“New technologies are opening up the market,” Thompson said. “And that’s driven a culture change. We’re trying to adapt to it, but it’s coming with challenges as any change would.”

One of those challenges are the new rules of the road — how best to use commercial technology in warfare, and how to respond when it is targeted. For now, there are more questions than answers.

“I will absolutely tell you with the National Space Council, with the National Security Council, with the office of Secretary of Defense and certainly inside the departments of the Air Force and Space Force, we have an intense discussion now,” Thompson said. “A lot of thinking and development and policy work has to be done.”



MILITARY

# Married colonels at Fort Hood removed after investigations

**By ROSE L. THAYER**  
*Stars and Stripes*

AUSTIN, Texas — Col. Ann Meredith has been fired as commander of the 89th Military Police Brigade at Fort Hood, as she and her husband, also a colonel fired from his command post, faced separate criminal investigations, officials at the Texas base said Thursday.

Meredith has been suspended since Jan. 5, and Lt. Gen. Sean C. Bernabe, commander of III Corps and Fort Hood, decided Tuesday to relieve her command “due to a loss of confidence in her judgment following an investigation,” said Lt. Col. Tania P. Donovan, spokeswoman for III Corps.

Meredith had been on the job since July and Lt. Col. Jeremy Prince is serving as acting brigade commander.

She will not face criminal charges or a court-martial and was disciplined through administrative action, Donovan said.

Col. Jon Meredith, her husband, was fired Oct. 3 as commander of the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood also for a loss of confidence, said Lt. Col. Jennifer J. Bocanegra, spokeswoman for the division.

“The Army [Criminal Investigation Division] investigation involving Col. Ann Meredith is distinct from the previous investigation of her husband, Col. Jon Meredith,” she said. “For the investigation involving Col. Jon

Meredith, the Army CID has exhausted all investigative leads and provided an interim report to 1st Cavalry Division. The 1st Cavalry Division does not provide comments during this stage of the process.”

Jon Meredith was the second consecutive commander to be removed from 1st Brigade. He stepped into the role in May 2021 after the previous commander, Col. Michael Schoenfeldt, was removed for bullying staff. The brigade was deployed to Poland at the time.

The married colonels have served more than 20 years in the Army with assignments at Fort Riley, Kan., and Fort Knox, Ky.

Bernabe said Fort Hood moves quickly to investigate when there are allegations of misconduct by leaders.

“Regardless of rank or position, we investigate to figure out what really happened. We go into that not making any assumptions about what the truth is and allowing the investigative process to help us understand the truth,” he said. “I fully realize that for folks on the outside trying to understand what’s going on, it’s probably not satisfying. While that investigation is underway, there’s not a lot we can say or ought to say until we understand the results of that investigation and make some decisions based on that.”

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MIKE VRABEL/U.S. National Guard

Employees make signs using the “Fort Barfoot” name to replace existing “Fort Pickett” signs on March 6 at Fort Pickett, Va.

## Ceremony starts Army’s removal of Confederate names from bases

**By ROSE L. THAYER**  
*Stars and Stripes*

AUSTIN, Texas — The Army on Friday began hosting a series of formal ceremonies to change the names of nine southern bases that honor Confederate generals from the Civil War.

Fort Pickett, a Virginia National Guard base, transitioned to Fort Barfoot in a ceremony Friday. The post first named to honor Confederate Gen. George Pickett, who is widely known for the Battle of Gettysburg, is now named for Col. Van T. Barfoot, a World War II veteran who received the Medal of Honor for his actions as a technical sergeant during the 1944 Battle of Anzio in Italy.

The Army also announced Friday that Fort Hood will soon transition from its Confederate-linked name to Fort Cavazos in honor of Gen. Richard Cavazos, a veteran of the Korean and Vietnam wars. That ceremony is scheduled for May 9, offi-

cials at the Texas post said.

Cavazos, a Texas native, was the first Hispanic man to reach the rank of four-star general. He was awarded the Silver Star and a Distinguished Service Cross for his service in the Korean War. He received a second Distinguished Service Cross during the Vietnam War.

“Gen. Cavazos’ combat proven leadership, his moral character and his loyalty to his soldiers and their families, made him the fearless yet respected and influential leader that he was during the time he served, and beyond,” said Lt. Gen. Sean Bernabe, commander of the III Armored Corps and Fort Hood.

Fort Hood is one of nine Army installations to have their names changed under a 2021 federal law seeking to strip the Defense Department of names honoring the Confederacy. The Texas base is named for John Bell Hood, who resigned his U.S. Army commission and became the Confederate general to

lead Texas forces in the Civil War.

Fort Lee, Va., has also scheduled its name-change ceremony, which will take place April 27. The base will be called Fort Gregg-Adams. Fort Benning, Ga., is scheduled to become Fort Moore on May 11, and Fort Bragg, N.C., will become Fort Liberty on June 2.

The remaining bases with pending names changes are Fort Gordon, Ga., Fort A.P. Hill, Va., Fort Polk, La., and Fort Rucker, Ala. They will become Fort Eisenhower, Fort Walker, Fort Johnson and Fort Novosel, respectively.

All changes must be complete by Jan. 1, according to federal law. The new names were chosen through a detailed process that included community input and sought to honor veterans from within the geographic region of each base or reflect the mission of the post.

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# Syria: No injuries or damage reported among US, coalition forces in rocket strike

**FROM PAGE 1**

The series of attacks began Thursday when a drone crashed into a U.S. and coalition base in Al-Hasakah, Syria. Ryder said U.S. officials are confident the drone was made by Iran and supplied to proxy forces in Syria who crashed it into the base. An American contractor was killed in the attack and five U.S. troops and another contractor were hurt. Al-Hasakah is about 95 miles northeast of Green Village.

A few hours later, the United States sent two F-15 fighter jets to blow up two facilities in east-central Syria in the Deir el-Zour area that the Pentagon said had been frequented by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. The rocket attack came afterward on Friday.

Press TV, a state-run Iranian news agency, claimed in a report Friday that the U.S. airstrikes hit a “rural development center and grain center” — not a military post aligned with the IREG.

U.S. officials have not detailed the extent of the troops’ injuries in the drone attack, but CNN reported they were all in stable condition. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights — a British-based group that monitors human rights abuses in Syria — said the U.S. airstrikes killed several “Iranian-backed militiamen.”

Ryder said Friday that the U.S. does not seek confrontation with Iran, which has had adversarial relations with the U.S. and Israel for decades. The Islamic republic often uses proxy fighters to strike targets across the Middle East and

Africa. Ryder declined to say whether U.S. officials might respond with another retaliatory strike.

“We don’t seek escalation with Iran,” he said. “But the strikes we took [Thursday] night were intended to send a very clear message, that we will take the protection of our personnel seriously and that we will respond quickly and decisively if they are threatened.”

“We will always reserve the right to respond appropriately,” he added.

CENTCOM has said there are roughly 900 American troops stationed in Syria and 2,500 in Iraq, who are there mostly to prevent a resurgence of terrorism in those countries, especially the Islamic State terrorist group, known as ISIS. The Defense Department

has about 6,500 contractors in Syria and Iraq.

Military officials are still investigating the strikes against the U.S. personnel, Ryder said.

A New York Times report said the air-defense system at the coalition base in Al-Hasakah wasn’t functioning. Ryder said that’s also being explored.

“U.S. Central Command will conduct a review to assess what happened and take a look at what, if any, other type of mitigating actions need to be taken,” he said. “But it would obviously be premature to talk about that.”

The U.S. and Iran haven’t had formal diplomatic relations since the takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and the country’s Islamic revolution in 1979. The Iranian government, however, regularly

keeps up a steady stream of criticism toward the U.S. and Israel, and has been taking steps for years to develop a nuclear weapon.

Syria has been devastated by civil war since 2011. Iran and Russia have supported the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad. The U.S. has supported groups opposed to Assad’s government, particularly the semi-autonomous region in the northeast as well as a collection of militias and rebels known as the Syrian Democratic Forces.

“This is a dangerous part of the world. The work we do is inherently dangerous,” Ryder said.

Stars and Stripes reporter J.P. Lawrence contributed to this report.  
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## EUROPE



Recruits carry their new gear at a military recruitment center in Rostov-on-Don, Russia, on Oct. 31. A campaign to replenish Russian troops in Ukraine with more soldiers appears to be underway again.

AP

## New Russian campaign tries to entice men to fight in Ukraine

By DASHA LITVINOVA  
Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia — Advertisements promise cash bonuses and enticing benefits. Recruiters are making cold calls to eligible men. Enlistment offices are working with universities and social service agencies to lure students and the unemployed.

A new campaign is underway this spring across Russia, seeking recruits to replenish its troops for the war in Ukraine.

As fighting grinds on in Ukrainian battlegrounds like Bakhmut and both sides prepare for counteroffensives that could cost even more lives, the Kremlin's war machine badly needs new recruits.

A mobilization in September of 300,000 reservists — billed as a “partial” call-up — sent panic throughout the country, since most men under 65 are formally part of the reserve. Tens of thousands fled Russia rather than report to recruiting stations.

The Kremlin denies that another call-up is planned for what it calls its “special military operation” in Ukraine, now more than a year old.

But amid widespread uncertainty of whether such a move will eventually happen, the government is enticing men to volunteer, either at makeshift recruiting centers popping up in various regions, or with phone calls from enlistment officials. That way, it can “avoid declaring a formal second mobilization wave” after the first one proved so unpopular, according to a recent report by the U.S.-based think tank Institute of the

Study of War.

One Muscovite told The Associated Press that his employer, a state-funded organization, gathered up the military registration cards of all male employees of fighting age and said it would get them deferments. But he said the move still sent a wave of fear through him.

“It makes you nervous and scared — no one wants to all of a sudden end up in a war with a rifle in their hands,” said the resident, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he feared reprisal. “The special operation is somewhat dragging on, so any surprises from the Russian authorities can be expected.”

It's been more than a week since he handed in his card, he said, and exemptions usually get resolved in a day or two, heightening his anxiety.

Russian media report that men across the country are receiving summonses from enlistment offices. In most of those cases, men were simply asked to update their records; in others, they were ordered to take part in military training.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said last week that serving summonses to update records in enlistment offices is “usual practice” and a “continued undertaking.”

Other unconfirmed media reports say authorities have told regional governments to recruit a certain number of volunteers. Some officials announced setting up recruitment centers with the goal of getting men to sign con-

tracts that enable them to be sent into combat as professional soldiers.

Ads have appeared on government websites and on the social media accounts of state institutions and organizations, including libraries and high schools.

One of them, posted by a municipal administration in the western Yaroslavl region, promised a one-time bonus of about \$3,800 to sign up, and if sent to Ukraine, a monthly salary of up to \$2,500, plus about \$100 a day for “involvement in active offensive operations,” and \$650 “for each kilometer of advancement within assault teams.”

The ad said the soldier would also get tax and loan repayment breaks, preferential university admission status for his children, generous compensation for his family if he is wounded or killed in action, and the status of a war veteran, which carries even more perks.

The current recruitment campaign is similar to one enacted last summer, before the September call-up, said Kateryna Stepanenko, a Russia analyst with the Institute of the Study of War.

Back then, authorities also used financial incentives, and various volunteer battalions were formed, but the effort clearly wasn't successful, because Putin eventually turned to partial mobilization.

Whether this one will succeed or not is unclear.

“They've already recruited a significant portion of people that were financially incentivized last summer. And they struggled to do so last year,” Stepanenko said.

# Ukraine urges UN meeting on Putin nuke plan

By KARL RITTER  
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine's government on Sunday called for an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council to “counter the Kremlin's nuclear blackmail” after Russian President Vladimir Putin revealed plans to station tactical atomic weapons in Belarus.

One Ukrainian official said that Russia “took Belarus as a nuclear hostage.”

But Moscow said it was making the move in response to the West's increasing military support for Ukraine. Putin announced the plan in a television interview that aired on Saturday, saying it was triggered by a U.K. decision this past week to provide Ukraine with armor-piercing rounds containing depleted uranium.

Putin argued that by deploying its tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, Russia was following the lead of the United States. He noted that Washington has nuclear weapons based in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey.

“We are doing what they have been doing for decades, stationing them in certain allied countries, preparing the launch platforms and training their crews,” he said.

Ukraine's Foreign Ministry condemned the move in a statement Sunday and demanded an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council.

“Ukraine expects effective action to counter the Kremlin's nuclear blackmail by the U.K., China, the U.S. and France, including as permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, which have a special responsibility to prevent threats of aggression using nuclear weapons,” the statement read. “The world must be united against someone who endangers the future of human civilization.”

Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, tweeted Sunday that Putin's announcement was “a step towards internal destabilization” of Belarus that maximized “the level of negative perception and public rejection” of Russia and Putin in Belarusian society. The Kremlin, Danilov added, “took Belarus as a nuclear hostage.”

In Russia, authorities said three people were injured when a Uk-

rainian drone caused an explosion Sunday in a town far from the two countries' border. The state-run news agency Tass reported authorities identified the drone as a Ukrainian Tu-141.

The explosion damaged residential buildings in the town of Kireyevsk in the Tula region, about 180 miles from the border with Ukraine and 110 miles south of Moscow. It left a crater about 50 feet in diameter and 16 feet deep, according to media reports.

The Russian state-run news agency Tass reported authorities identified the drone as a Ukrainian Tu-141. The Tu-141 went into service in the Soviet army in the 1970s. It reportedly was retired from service in 1989, then reintroduced in Ukraine in 2014. It has a range of about 620 miles.

Ukraine has not yet commented on the incident.

On Saturday, Putin argued that Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has long asked to have nuclear weapons in his country again to counter NATO. Belarus shares borders with three NATO members — Latvia, Lithuania and Poland — and Russia used Belarusian territory as a staging ground to send troops into neighboring Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022.

Both Lukashenko's support of the war and Putin's plans to station tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus has been denounced by the Belarusian opposition.

Tactical nuclear weapons are intended for use on the battlefield and have a short range and a low yield compared with much more powerful nuclear warheads fitted to long-range missiles. Russia plans to maintain control over the ones it sends to Belarus, and construction of storage facilities for them will be completed by July 1, Putin said.

Russia has stored its tactical nuclear weapons at dedicated depots on its territory, and moving part of the arsenal to a storage facility in Belarus would up the ante in the Ukrainian conflict by placing them closer to Russian aircraft and missiles already stationed there.

The U.S. said it would “monitor the implications” of Putin's announcement. So far, Washington hasn't seen “any indications Russia is preparing to use a nuclear weapon,” National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said.



PACIFIC

# Honduras breaks with Taiwan, establishes ties with China

Associated Press

BEIJING — Honduras established diplomatic ties with China on Sunday after breaking off relations with Taiwan, which is increasingly isolated and now recognized by only 13 sovereign states.

Foreign ministers from China and Honduras signed a joint communique in Beijing — a decision the Chinese Foreign Ministry hailed as “the right choice.”

The diplomatic victory for China comes as tensions rise between Beijing and the United States, including over China’s increasing assertiveness toward self-ruled Taiwan, and signals growing Chinese influence in Latin America. The new China-Honduras relationship was announced after the Honduran and Taiwanese governments made separate announcements that they were severing ties.

China and Taiwan have been locked in a battle for diplomatic recognition since they split amid civil war in 1949, with Beijing spending billions to win recognition for its “one China” policy.

China claims Taiwan is part of its territory, to be brought under its control by force if necessary, and refuses most contacts with countries that maintain formal ties with the island democracy. It threatens retaliation against countries merely for increasing contacts.

China’s Foreign Minister Qin Gang said the establishment of ties proved that adhering to “one China” policy is winning people’s hearts and is “the general trend.”

“We inform sternly the Taiwan authorities that engaging in separatist activities for Taiwan independence is against the will and interests of the Chinese nation and against the trend of history, and is doomed to a dead end,” he said.

The Honduran Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Twitter that its government recognizes “only one China in the world” and that Beijing “is the only legitimate government that represents all of China.”

It added that “Taiwan is an in-



GREG BAKER/AP

**Honduras Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina Garcia, left, and Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang shake hands following the establishment of diplomatic relations between the countries in Beijing on Sunday.**

alienable part of Chinese territory, and as of today, the Honduran government has informed Taiwan of the severance of diplomatic relations, pledging not to have any official relationship or contact with Taiwan.”

Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu told a news conference Sunday that Taiwan had ended its relations with Honduras to “safeguard its sovereignty and dignity.”

Wu said that Honduran President Xiomara Castro and her team always had a “fantasy” about China and had raised the issue of switching ties before the presidential election in Honduras in 2021. Relations between Taiwan and Honduras were once stable, he said, but China had not stopped luring Honduras.

Honduras had asked Taiwan for billions of dollars of aid and compared its proposals with China’s, Wu said. About two weeks ago, the Honduran government sought \$2.45 billion from Taiwan to build a hospital and a dam, and to write off debts, he added.

“The Castro government dismissed our nation’s longstanding assis-

tance and relations and carried out talks to form diplomatic ties with China. Our government feels pained and regretful,” he said.

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen said her government would not “engage in a meaningless contest of dollar diplomacy with China.”

“Over these past few years, China has persistently used various means to suppress Taiwan’s international participation, escalate military intrusion, and disrupt peace and stability in the region,” she said in a recorded video.

Her office spokesperson Olivia Lin said in a statement that relations between the sides had lasted for more than 80 years.

Analysts have warned over the implications of the newly formed ties between China and Honduras. Political analyst Graco Pérez in Honduras said Beijing’s narrative would highlight the benefits, including investment and job creation, “but that is all going to be illusory.”

Pérez noted that some other countries have established such relations, but “it didn’t turn out to be what had been offered.”

For decades China has funneled billions of dollars into investment and infrastructure projects across Latin America. That investment has translated to rising power for China and a growing number of allies.

In Honduras, it has come in the form of construction of a hydroelectric dam project in central Honduras built by the Chinese company SINOHYDRO with about \$300 million in Chinese government financing.

Honduras is the ninth diplomatic ally that Taipei has lost to Beijing since the pro-independence Tsai first took office in May 2016.

Taiwan still has ties with Belize, Paraguay and Guatemala in Latin America, and Vatican City. Most of its remaining partners are island nations in the Caribbean and South Pacific, along with Eswatini in southern Africa.



AUSTRALIA DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE

**U.S. Marines arrive at RAAF Base Darwin in Australia’s Northern Territory on March 16, to begin a seven-month training rotation.**

## Marine rotational force returns to Australia

By SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

U.S. Marines have boots on the ground in northern Australia again to begin a seven-month training rotation, according to Australia’s deputy prime minister.

The 12th contingent since 2012 of Marine Rotational Force-Darwin includes 2,500 Marines, Richard Marles, who is also Australia’s Minister of Defence, said in a statement Thursday.

“The US is our most vital security partner and the strength of our Alliance highlights our joint commitment to promoting a secure, stable, and inclusive Indo-Pacific,” he said.

The Marines will remain in Australia until October, according to Marles.

The rotation builds cooperation between the allies and with other nations in the Indo-Pacific, Australian navy Capt. Mitchell Livingstone, commander of Headquarters, Northern Command, said in the statement.

The Australians and Marines will train to provide humanitarian assistance and to conduct security operations. They’ll also conduct high-end live fire exercises, he said.

The 1st Marine Regiment provides the command element overseeing 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment and Combat Logistics Battalion 1. All are based at Camp Pendleton, Calif., Maj. Matthew

Wolf, a spokesman for the rotational force, said in an email Friday.

The force includes Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 363 from Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, he said.

The Marines will train in the Northern Territory, Queensland and South Australia and participate in the Talisman Sabre exercise in July, Wolf said.

A task force of 17,000 U.S., Australian, New Zealand, Japanese, South Korean and British troops participated in Talisman Sabre in Australia in 2021, the last time the biennial exercise was held.

The Marines arrive in Darwin against a backdrop of growing links between the U.S. and Australia. President Joe Biden, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, leaders of the AUKUS pact countries, on March 14 announced a new submarine deal, part of an effort to counter Chinese expansionism in the Indo-Pacific. Under the deal, Australia aims to launch its own nuclear-powered subs in the 2030s. A rotational force of U.S. and British subs will operate from Western Australia starting in 2027.

Days later, Australia announced it plans to buy up to 220 Tomahawk cruise missiles from the U.S. after the State Department approved the sale on March 17.

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## China threatens ‘serious consequences’ after Navy’s Paracels operation

By ALEX WILSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The U.S. Navy carried out a freedom-of-navigation operation Friday near islands in the South China Sea, a day after denying Chinese claims that its military had driven an American guided-missile destroyer from the area.

The USS Milius conducted the FONOP around the Paracels before leaving the area and “continued op-

erations in the South China Sea,” 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. j.g. Luka Bakic told Stars and Stripes in an email Friday.

“Unlawful and sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea pose a serious threat to the freedom of the seas, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight, free trade and unimpeded commerce, and freedom of economic opportunity for South China Sea littoral nations,” he wrote.

Beijing said actions by the Milius undermined “peace and stability in the South China Sea,” according to a Friday statement from China’s Ministry of National Defense.

“We solemnly request the U.S. side to immediately stop such provocative actions, otherwise it will bear the serious consequences of the accident caused by it,” ministry spokesman Tan Kefei said in the statement. “The Chinese People’s Liberation Army will take all neces-

sary measures to resolutely safeguard national sovereignty and security, and resolutely maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea.”

The operation came less than a day after the Chinese Southern Theater Command claimed it had forced the Milius away from waters around the island chain, which is claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam. Bakic, in a Thursday statement to The Associated Press, de-

nied the destroyer was forced to exit the area. The Milius was “conducting routine operations” in the region Thursday before it entered the waters near the Paracels on Friday, he told Stars and Stripes.

After the FONOP, the Milius “continued on to conduct routine maritime security operations in international waters,” he said.

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## NATION



BEN MARGOT/AP

An abortion-rights demonstrator holds a sign during a rally on May 14, 2022, in Chattanooga, Tenn.

## States' divisions on abortion widen after Roe overturned

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A group of Tennessee Republicans began this year's legislative session hoping to add narrow exceptions to one of the strictest abortion bans in the country, armed with the belief that most people — even in conservative Tennessee — reject extremes on the issue.

Tennessee law requires doctors to prove in court that they were saving a woman's life when they performed an abortion. Surely, the lawmakers thought, they could win concessions that would allow doctors to use their good faith judgment about when abortion is necessary to save a woman's life. But after a key anti-abortion group stepped in, the lawmakers had to settle for a stricter legal standard that moves the needle very little.

Like lawmakers in several GOP-led states who started the year thinking about moderating the nation's toughest abortion laws, Tennessee's lawmakers found no appetite among their colleagues for loosening the rules.

During the first legislative sessions in most states since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, lawmakers on both sides are dug in. Republicans are moving to make abortion restrictions tougher. Democrat-dominated states are moving to protect access for their residents and, now, for the residents of other states arriving for care.

"Abortion is one of the most stark examples of the political divide between red states and blue states, even when we know that people generally favor the middle

on abortion," said Gretchen Ely, a professor in the College of Social Work at the University of Tennessee.

Last year's overturning of the 1973 *Roe* decision meant state laws banning or restricting abortion if such a ruling arrived took effect. Many were met with legal challenges. Currently, bans on abortion at all stages of pregnancy are in place in 13 states and on hold in another four because of court injunctions.

Lawmakers in most states have introduced abortion-related legislation this year. Republican-backed measures include funding for counseling centers that discourage abortion, bans on medication abortions and other restrictions. Democrats' bills include expanding insurance coverage for abortion and knocking back restrictions implemented in the past.

The legislative action comes after voters in six states — conservative, moderate and liberal — voted in referendums last year and abortion access proponents prevailed in all of them. Polling has shown the public was unhappy with the overturning of *Roe* even as they also support some abortion restrictions.

But Mary Ziegler, a legal historian at the University of California, Davis School of Law, said anti-abortion groups are anticipating that abortion rights support will gradually diminish.

"There's a belief that people will be more open to more and more stringent bans the further we get away from *Roe v. Wade* being the law," she said.

Kelsey Pritchard, a member of

the state affairs staff at Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, said those ballot measure losses motivated anti-abortion groups to get their message out more strongly. "It was a wake up call for how much work we have to do," she said.

The ban currently implemented in Tennessee is among the most stringent. Instead of an exception for abortions to save the life of the woman, it includes an "affirmative defense" for doctors, placing the burden on them to prove an abortion was medically necessary.

Now, a scaled-back proposal is moving through the Legislature. It removes the affirmative defense language but still doesn't grant access to abortions in the cases of "medically futile pregnancies" and lethal fetal anomalies. Doctors warned the new exemption will do little to relieve worries about being prosecuted.

Tennessee Right to Life had already revoked its endorsement of one GOP lawmaker — seen as a key tool for winning over conservative voters — after Republican Sen. Richard Briggs called for changes while admitting that he voted in favor of the state's so-called trigger ban because he didn't believe *Roe* would actually be overturned. Now the lobbying group warned it could do the same with others who tried to weaken the ban.

"This new amended bill only allows a woman to access an abortion if she's damn near on her deathbed," said Democratic Sen. London Lamar, who experienced her own near-fatal pregnancy loss several years ago.

## Court blocks virus vaccination order for federal workers

By KEVIN MCGILL  
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — President Joe Biden's order that federal employees get vaccinated against COVID-19 has been blocked by a federal appeals court.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans, in a decision Thursday, rejected arguments that Biden, as the nation's chief executive, has the same authority as the CEO of a private corporation to require that employees be vaccinated.

The ruling from the full appeals court, 16 full-time judges at the time the case was argued, reversed an earlier ruling by a three-judge 5th Circuit panel that had upheld the vaccination requirement. Judge Andrew Oldham, nominated to the court by then-President Donald Trump, wrote the opinion for a 10-member majority.

The ruling maintains the status quo for federal employee vaccines. It upholds a preliminary injunction blocking the mandate issued by a federal judge in January 2022. At that point, the administration said nearly 98% of covered employees had been vaccinated.

With the preliminary injunction arguments done, Oldham noted, the case will return to that court for further arguments, when "both sides will have to grapple with the White House's announcement that the COVID emergency will finally end on May 11, 2023."

The White House defended the order, citing the high compliance rate among the federal workforce and saying in a statement Friday that "vaccination remains one of the most important tools to protect people from serious illness and hospitalizations" against COVID.

Opponents of the policy said it

was an encroachment on federal workers' lives that neither the Constitution nor federal statutes authorize.

Biden issued an executive order in September 2021 requiring vaccinations for all executive branch agency employees, with exceptions for medical and religious reasons. The requirement kicked in the following November. U.S. District Judge Jeffrey Brown, who was appointed to the District Court for the Southern District of Texas by Trump, issued a nationwide injunction against the requirement the following January.

The case then went to the 5th Circuit.

One panel of three 5th Circuit judges refused to immediately block the law.

But a different panel, after hearing arguments, upheld Biden's position. Judges Carl Stewart and James Dennis, both nominated to the court by President Bill Clinton, were in the majority. Judge Rhesa Barksdale, nominated by President George H.W. Bush, dissented, saying the relief the challengers sought does not fall under the Civil Service Reform Act cited by the administration.

The broader court majority agreed, saying federal law does not preclude court jurisdiction over cases involving "private, irreversible medical decisions made in consultation with private medical professionals outside the federal workplace."

A majority of the full court voted to vacate that ruling and reconsider the case. The 16 active judges heard the case on Sept. 13, joined by Barksdale, who is now a senior judge with lighter duties than the full-time members of the court.



CAROLYN KASTER/AP

President Joe Biden receives his first dose of the coronavirus vaccine from nurse partitioner Tabitha Mase at Christiana Hospital in Newark Del., on Dec. 21, 2020.



## NATION

# Fake AI images keep spreading misinformation

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Former President Donald Trump getting gang-tackled by riot-gear-clad New York City police officers. Russian President Vladimir Putin in prison grays behind the bars of a dimly lit concrete cell.

The highly detailed, sensational images have inundated Twitter and other platforms in recent days, amid news that Trump faces possible criminal charges and the International Criminal Court issuing an arrest warrant for Putin.

But neither visual is remotely real. The images — and scores of variations littering social media — were produced using increasingly sophisticated and widely accessible image generators powered by artificial intelligence.

Misinformation experts have warned the images are harbingers of a new reality: waves of fake photos and videos flooding social media after major news events and further muddying fact and fiction at crucial times for society.

“It does add noise during crisis events. It also increases the cynicism level,” said Jevin West, a professor at the University of Washington in Seattle who focuses on the spread of misinformation. “You start to lose trust in the system and the information that you are getting.”

While the ability to manipulate photos and create fake images isn’t new, AI image generator tools by Midjourney, DALL-E and others are easier to use. They can quickly generate realistic images — complete with detailed backgrounds —

on a mass scale with little more than a simple text prompt from users.

Some of the recent images have been driven by this month’s release of a new version of Midjourney’s text-to-image synthesis model, which can, among other things, now produce convincing images mimicking the style of news agency photos.

In one widely-circulating Twitter thread, Eliot Higgins, founder of Bellingcat, a Netherlands-based investigative journalism collective, used the latest version of the tool to conjure up scores of dramatic images of Trump’s fictional arrest.

The visuals, which have been shared and liked tens of thousands of times, showed a crowd of uniformed officers grabbing the Republican billionaire and violently pulling him down onto the pavement.

Higgins, who was also behind a set of images of Putin being arrested, put on trial and then imprisoned, said he posted the images with no ill intent. He even stated clearly in his Twitter thread that the images were AI-generated.

Still, the images were enough to get him locked out of the Midjourney server, according to Higgins. The San Francisco-based independent research lab didn’t respond to emails seeking comment.

“The Trump arrest image was really just casually showing both how good and bad Midjourney was at rendering real scenes,” Higgins wrote in an email. “The images started to form a sort of narrative



J. DAVID AKE/AP

**Images created by Eliot Higgins with the use of artificial intelligence show a fictitious skirmish with Donald Trump and New York City police officers posted on Higgins' Twitter account, as photographed Thursday.**

as I plugged in prompts to Midjourney, so I strung them along into a narrative, and decided to finish off the story.”

He pointed out the images are far from perfect: in some, Trump is seen, oddly, wearing a police utility belt. In others, faces and hands are clearly distorted.

But it’s not enough that users like Higgins clearly state in their posts that the images are AI-generated and solely for entertainment,

said Shirin Anlen, media technologist at Witness, a New York-based human rights organization that focuses on visual evidence.

Too often, the visuals are quickly reshared by others without that crucial context, she said. Indeed, an Instagram post sharing some of Higgins’ images of Trump as if they were genuine garnered more than 79,000 likes.

“You’re just seeing an image, and once you see something, you

cannot unsee it,” Anlen said.

With synthetic images becoming increasingly difficult to discern from the real thing, the best way to combat visual misinformation is better public awareness and education, experts have said.

“It’s just becoming so easy and it’s so cheap to make these images that we should do whatever we can to make the public aware of how good this technology has gotten,” West said.

## Gap grows between TikTok users, lawmakers on potential ban

BY HALELUYA HADERO

Associated Press

NEW YORK — On the one side are dozens of lawmakers on Capitol Hill issuing dire warnings about security breaches and possible Chinese surveillance.

On the other are some 150 million TikTok users in the United States who just want to be able to keep making and watching short, fun videos offering makeup tutorials and cooking lessons, among other things.

The disconnect illustrates the uphill battle that lawmakers from both sides of the aisle face in trying to convince the public that China could use TikTok as a weapon against the American people. But many users on the platform are more concerned about the possibility of the government taking away their favorite app.

TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew said during a nearly six-hour congressional hearing Thursday that the platform has never turned over user data to the Chinese government, and wouldn’t do so if asked.

Nevertheless, lawmakers, the FBI and officials at other agencies have continued to raise alarms that Chinese law compels Chinese companies like TikTok’s parent company ByteDance to fork over data to the government for whatever purposes it deems to involve national security. There’s also concern Beijing might try to push pro-China narratives or misinformation through the platform.

“I want to say this to all the teenagers out there, and TikTok influencers who think we’re just old and out of touch and don’t know what we’re talking about, trying to take your favorite app,” said Republican Rep. Dan Crenshaw during the hearing. “You may not care that your data is being accessed now, but you will one day.”

Many TikTok users reacted to the hearing by posting videos critical of lawmakers who grilled Chew and frequently cut him off from speaking. Some called a potential TikTok ban, as some lawmakers and the Biden administration has reportedly threatened, the

“biggest scam” of the year. Others blamed the surge of scrutiny on the platform on another tech rival, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg.

But few expressed fear of possible Chinese surveillance or security breaches that lawmakers continue to amplify as they look to rein in TikTok.

Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., whose district is in the heart of Silicon Valley, said he is mindful of the value that platforms like TikTok provide to young people as an outlet for creative expression and building community. “But there’s absolutely no reason that an American technology company can’t do that,” said Khanna, the top Democrat on the cyber subcommittee on House Armed Service. “America has the most innovative technology companies in the world.”

He added that Congress should move forward with a proposal that would force the platform’s sale to an American company for continued access for its millions of users while “ensuring that the platform

isn’t subject to Chinese propaganda or compromises people’s privacy.”

According to a survey by the Pew Research Center, two-thirds of Americans aged 13 to 17 use TikTok, and 16% of all teens say they use it almost constantly. It’s because of TikTok’s large user base that Lindsay Gorman, a former tech adviser for the Biden administration who now works as a senior fellow for emerging technologies at the German Marshall Fund, said the Biden administration will likely pursue every option short of a ban first. That would include the option for the app’s Chinese owners to divest, which the administration is reportedly demanding from TikTok if it wants to avoid a nationwide ban.

TikTok itself has been trying to leverage its popularity. On Wednesday, it sent dozens of influencers to Congress to lobby against a ban. It has also ramped up a broader public relations campaign, plastering ads all over Washington that tout its promises of securing

users’ data and privacy and creating a safe platform for its young users.

Some popular TikTokers who speak out against a ban are concerned — and angered — about how it might impact their personal lives. Many earn income from their videos and have inked brand partnerships to market products to their audiences — another stream of revenue that could be wiped away if the platform disappears. They would also lose the social capital that comes from having a large following on the trend-setting app.

Sarah Pikhit, an 18-year-old student at Penn State University, said she used to use TikTok a lot, but started cutting back when she realized how much time she spent scrolling through videos on the app. She still uses it, but mostly to post her own content, which she said she can do on other platforms. She said she wouldn’t care if TikTok gets banned — but her friends would.

“They like the excessive scrolling,” Pikhit said.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Hyundai, Kia recall vehicles due to fire risk

**MI** DETROIT — Hyundai and Kia are telling the owners of more than 571,000 SUVs and minivans in the U.S. to park them outdoors because their tow hitch harnesses can catch fire while they are parked or being driven.

The affiliated Korean automakers are recalling the vehicles and warning people to park them away from structures until repairs are made.

Affected Hyundai vehicles include the 2019 to 2023 Santa Fe, the 2021 to 2023 Santa Fe Hybrid, the 2022 and 2023 Santa Fe Plug-in hybrid and the 2022 and 2023 Santa Cruz. The only Kia affected is the Carnival minivan from 2022 and 2023. All have Hyundai or Kia tow hitch harnesses that came as original equipment or were installed by dealers.

The Korean automakers say in documents posted by U.S. safety regulators that water can get into a circuit board on the hitches and cause a short circuit even if the ignitions are off.

## Owner of pizza shop said to abuse workers

**MA** BOSTON — A Boston pizza shop owner accused by federal authorities of abusing employees who were not legally in the U.S. has been ordered held without bail by a magistrate judge who cited the defendant's "history of violence and threats."

Stavros Papantoniadis, 47, who also goes by Steve, faces one charge of forced labor but allegedly victimized at least seven employees, according to court documents.

Prosecutors allege he hired people in the U.S. illegally, made them work long hours, underpaid them, verbally and physically abused them, and threatened to inform immigration authorities or police if they complained. He hit one worker in the mouth, breaking some teeth, and on another occasion kicked that worker in the genitals so hard that the man needed surgery, prosecutors said.

## Police: Driver veered into work zone, killing 6

**MD** BALTIMORE — A crash along the Baltimore beltway left six construction workers dead after a driver lost control of her car and it careened into a work zone, according to Maryland State Police.

Lisa Adrienna Lea, 54, was alone in an Acura sedan driving north on Interstate 695 when she went to change lanes and struck the front passenger side of a Volkswagen, state police said.

The impact caused her to lose control, and her car entered the work zone through an opening in temporary concrete barriers separating the construction area from



BEN GARVER, THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE/AP

## Fine for fishing

Oliver Hunt casts a line in the Cheshire Reservoir for a day of fishing in the sunshine in Cheshire, Mass.

interstate traffic. The crew was working on the highway's left shoulder.

After the crash, Lea was taken to the University of Maryland Medical Center's Shock Trauma Center for injuries she received.

## Social media law means kids need parents' OK

**UT** SALT LAKE CITY — Children and teens in Utah would lose access to social media apps such as TikTok if they don't have parental consent and face other restrictions under a first-in-the-nation law designed to shield young people from the addictive platforms.

Two laws signed by Republican Gov. Spencer Cox prohibit kids under 18 from using social media between the hours of 10:30 p.m. and 6:30 a.m., require age verification for anyone who wants to use social media in the state and open the door to lawsuits on behalf of children claiming social media harmed them. Collectively, they seek to prevent children from being lured to apps by addictive features and from having ads promoted to them.

The companies are expected to sue before the laws take effect in March 2024.

## Endangered hooded vulture escapes from zoo

**CA** OAKLAND — An endangered hooded vul-

ture escaped from a zoo aviary in the San Francisco Bay Area that was destroyed after a massive tree fell on it during a storm. But the bird has remained on zoo grounds, and officials were working to entice it back.



African hooded vulture

The male hooded vulture and five other exotic birds, including two pied crows and three superb starlings, flew out from the aviary at the Oakland Zoo amid a wind-packed storm that pummeled the Bay Area, zoo spokeswoman Erin Dogan said.

But the birds stayed on zoo grounds, and a team of at least 12 zoo workers armed with binoculars, nets and crates has already recovered the three starlings, Dogan said.

## School to stay closed after contamination scare

**MO** FLORISTANT — A Missouri grade school that was shut down last year amid concerns of possible radioactive contamination will not reopen, the school district said.

Jana Elementary School, in the St. Louis County town of Florissant, closed in October after a private study indicated the presence of contamination in classrooms,

the playground and elsewhere. The study was funded by lawyers whose clients were suing over radioactive waste in Coldwater Creek, which runs near the school.

Though a follow-up study by the Army Corps of Engineers and a third study by SCI Engineering found no signs of contamination, the school never reopened.

A statement from the Hazelwood School District said the board and administration recognize the school's closure and relocation of children and staff to other schools hasn't been easy.

## Hospital to stop delivering babies

**ID** SANDPOINT — A rural hospital in northern Idaho will stop delivering babies or providing other obstetrical care, citing a shifting legal climate in which recently enacted state laws could subject physicians to prosecution for providing abortions, among other reasons.

Bonner General Health in Sandpoint will discontinue obstetrical services in mid-May. It also cited a decreasing number of deliveries and a loss of doctors among other factors in its decision.

Those pregnant in the city of about 9,000 — with an average annual snowfall of about 60 inches — will most likely have to travel about 45 miles to Coeur d'Alene for care, or to hospitals farther away in Idaho, Washington and

Montana.

The decision to discontinue providing obstetrical services was emotional and difficult, hospital officials said in a news release.

The numbers of deliveries had been declining for years with 265 births recorded at the hospital in 2022, the statement said. Births also have been decreasing nationally and older people have been moving into the Sandpoint area, officials said.

## 8 dolphins dead after stranding, officials say

**NJ** SEA ISLE CITY — Eight dolphins have died after they became stranded on a beach in New Jersey, marine animal welfare officials said.

The Marine Mammal Stranding Center said on Facebook that a pod of eight dolphins known as "common dolphins" had become stranded in Sea Isle City and that staff and a veterinarian had responded with help from local officials. Officials said at the time that two of the dolphins had died.

Later, officials said the remaining six dolphins were assessed by the veterinarian and the decision was made to euthanize them to prevent further suffering.

Their conditions were rapidly deteriorating and returning them to the ocean would have prolonged their inevitable death, officials said.



# NATION

## Aid on way to tornado-wrecked Mississippi

BY LEAH WILLINGHAM  
Associated Press

President Joe Biden issued an emergency declaration for Mississippi early Sunday, making federal funding available to the areas hardest hit Friday night by a deadly tornado that ripped through the Mississippi Delta, one of the poorest regions of the U.S.

At least 25 people were killed and dozens of others were injured in Mississippi as the massive storm ripped through several towns on its hour-long path. One man was killed after his trailer home flipped several times in Alabama.

Search and recovery crews on Sunday resumed the daunting task of digging through the debris of flattened and battered homes, commercial buildings and municipal offices after hundreds of people were displaced, even as the National Weather Service warned of a risk of more severe weather Sunday — including high winds, large hail and possible tornadoes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia.

A tornado reportedly touched down early Sunday in Troup County, Ga., near the Alabama border, according to the Georgia Mutual Aid Group. Affected areas included the county seat of LaGrange, about 67 miles southwest of Atlanta.



JIM LYTLE/AP

**Providence Baptist Church, on Highland Drive in Amory, Miss., is seen missing its steeple and front entryway after it was hit by a tornado on Saturday.**

“Many buildings damaged, people trapped,” GMAG said on Facebook. In nearby West Point, roads, including Interstate Highway 85, were blocked by debris.

The Troup County Sheriff’s Office said it was responding to reports of downed trees and power lines and damaged homes. A tiger was reported missing at the Wild Animal Safari in Pine Mountain. Calls there were not answered early Sunday.

“If you do not have to get on the roads this morning please do not travel,” the agency said on Facebook.

Some outages in cell service were

reported after a suspected tornado struck the area around dawn Sunday, the Troup County Sheriff’s Office said.

Following Biden’s declaration, federal funding can be used for recovery efforts in Mississippi’s Carroll, Humphreys, Monroe and Sharkey counties, including temporary housing, home repairs, loans covering uninsured property losses and other individual and business programs, the White House said.

The twister flattened entire blocks, obliterated houses, ripped a steeple off a church and toppled a municipal water tower.

Based on early data, the tornado received a preliminary EF-4 rating, the National Weather Service office in Jackson said late Saturday in a tweet. An EF-4 tornado has top wind gusts between 166 mph and 200 mph, according to the service. The Jackson office cautioned it was still gathering information on the tornado.

The tornado devastated a swath of the 2,000-person town of Rolling Fork, reducing homes to piles of rubble and flipping cars on their sides. Other parts of the Deep South were digging out from damage caused by other suspected twisters. One man died in Morgan County, Ala., the sheriff’s department there said in a tweet.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency said in a briefing that 25 people were confirmed killed, 55 people were injured and 2,000 homes were damaged or destroyed. High winds, hail and strong storms were expected for parts of Alabama and Georgia on Sunday, the National Weather Service said.

“How anybody survived is unknown by me,” said Rodney Porter, who lives 20 miles south of Rolling Fork. When the storm hit Friday night, he immediately drove there to assist in any way he could. Porter arrived to find “total devastation” and

said he smelled natural gas and heard people screaming for help in the dark.

“Houses are gone, houses stacked on top of houses with vehicles on top of that,” he said.

Annette Body drove to the hard-hit town of Silver City from nearby Belozzi to survey the damage. She said she was feeling “blessed” because her own home was not destroyed, but other people she knows lost everything.

“Cried last night, cried this morning,” she said, looking around at flattened homes. “They said you need to take cover, but it happened so fast a lot of people didn’t even get a chance to take cover.”

Storm survivors walked around Saturday, many dazed and in shock, as they broke through thickly clustered debris and fallen trees with chain saws, searching for survivors. Power lines were pinned under decades-old oaks, their roots torn from the ground.

Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves issued a state of emergency and vowed to help rebuild as he viewed the damage in a region speckled with wide expanses of cotton, corn and soybean fields and catfish farming ponds. He spoke with Biden, who also held a call with the state’s congressional delegation.

## Search on in Pa. for missing in deadly chocolate factory blast

BY MICHAEL RUBINKAM  
AND RON TODT  
Associated Press

WEST READING, Pa. — An explosion at a chocolate factory in Pennsylvania on Friday killed three people and left four people missing, authorities said. One person was pulled alive from the rubble overnight.

Rescue crews using dogs and imaging equipment continued to search through the rubble Saturday — hours after the blast that erupted just before 5 p.m. Friday at the R.M. Palmer Co. plant in the borough of West Reading, about 60 miles northwest of Philadelphia.

West Reading Borough Chief of Police Wayne Holben said the death toll rose on Saturday with the discovery of a third body at the site. The Berks County Medical Examiner and Coroner on Saturday night also confirmed three fatalities.

Borough Fire Chief Chad Moyer said four people remained missing as emergency personnel continue searching for victims and state and local fire investigators examine the scene to determine a cause.

“Due to the violence of the explosion and the amount of time that has passed, the chance of finding survivors is decreasing rapidly,” Moyer said. “However, please be assured that our primary goal is accounting for all missing individuals and reuniting them with their loved ones.”

Holben earlier said the rescue of one person from the rubble “provides hope that others still may be found.” Rescue workers were continuing a thorough search using specialized equipment and techniques. Officials said dogs and imaging equipment were being used to look for signs of life during the careful removal of debris.

The blast destroyed one building

and damaged a neighboring building. Roads near the site will be closed until Monday at 8 a.m., Holben said.

“It’s pretty leveled,” Mayor Samantha Kaag said of the explosion site. “The building in the front, with the church and the apartments, the explosion was so big that it moved that building four feet forward.”

Reading Hospital said Saturday afternoon it had received 10 patients, of which one was transferred to Lehigh Valley Hospital and another to Penn State Health St. Joseph Medical Center. Two were admitted to Reading Hospital in good and fair condition, respectively, and the others had been discharged, officials said.

A UGI Utilities spokesperson said crews were brought in after damage from the blast led to the release of gas that was helping to feed the fire.

R.M. Palmer said in a statement



BEN HASTY, READING (Pa.) EAGLE/AP

**Emergency personnel work at the site of a deadly explosion at the R.M. Palmer Co. chocolate factory in West Reading, Pa., on Saturday.**

late Saturday that everyone at the company was “devastated by the tragic events” and “focused on supporting our employees and their families.”

R.M. Palmer’s website says it has been making chocolate novelties since 1948 and now has 850 employees at its West Reading headquarters.

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# WORLD

## Daylight saving dispute leaves Lebanon with two time zones

By ABBY SEWELL  
Associated Press

BEIRUT — The Lebanese government's last-minute decision to delay the start of daylight saving time by a month until the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan resulted in mass confusion Sunday.

With some institutions implementing the change while others refused, many Lebanese have found themselves in the position of juggling work and school schedules in different time zones — in a country that is just 55 miles at its widest point.

In some cases, the debate took on a sectarian nature, with many Christian politicians and institutions, including the small nation's largest church, the Maronite Church, rejecting the move.

The small Mediterranean country normally sets its clocks forward an hour on the last Sunday in March, which aligns with most European countries. However, on Thursday

Lebanon's government announced a decision by caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati to push the start of daylight saving to April 21.

No reason was given for the decision, but a video of a meeting between Mikati and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri leaked to local media showed Berri asking Mikati to postpone the implementation of daylight saving time to allow Muslims to break their Ramadan fast an hour earlier. Mikati responds that he had made a similar proposal but goes on to say that implementing the change would be difficult as it would cause problems in airline flight schedules, to which Berri interjects, "What flights?"

After the postponement of daylight saving was announced, Lebanon's state airline, Middle East Airlines, said departure times of flights scheduled to leave from Beirut's airport between Sunday and April 21 would be advanced by an hour.

The country's two cellular tele-

phone networks sent messages to people asking them to change the settings of their clocks to manual in order for the time not to change at midnight, although in many cases the time advanced anyway. While public institutions, in theory, are bound by the government's decision, many private institutions, including TV stations, schools and businesses, announced that they would move to daylight saving on Sunday as previously scheduled.

Soha Yazbek, a professor at the American University of Beirut, is among many parents who have found themselves and their children now bound to different schedules.

"So now I drop my kids to school at 8 am but arrive to my work 42 km away at 7:30 am and then I leave work at 5 pm but I arrive home an hour later at 7 pm!!" Yazbek wrote on Twitter, adding for the benefit of her non-Lebanese friends, "I have not gone mad, I just live in Wonderland."

## Israeli group asks high court to punish PM over legal plan

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — An Israeli good governance group on Sunday asked the country's Supreme Court to punish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for allegedly violating a conflict of interest agreement meant to prevent him from dealing with the country's judiciary while he is on trial for corruption.

The request by the Movement for Quality Government in Israel intensifies a brewing showdown between Netanyahu's government and the judiciary, which it is trying to overhaul in a contentious plan that has sparked widespread opposition.

The Movement for Quality Government in Israel, a fierce opponent of the overhaul, asked the court to force Netanyahu to obey the law and sanction him either with a fine or prison time for not doing so, saying he was not above the law.

"A prime minister who doesn't obey the court and the provisions of the law is privileged and an anarchist," said Eliad Shraga, the head of the group, echoing language used by Netanyahu and his allies against protesting opponents of the over-

haul. "The prime minister will be forced to bow his head before the law and comply with the provisions of the law."

Netanyahu is barred by the country's attorney general from dealing with his government's plan to overhaul the judiciary, based on a conflict of interest agreement he is bound to, and which the Supreme Court acknowledged in a ruling over Netanyahu's fitness to serve while on trial for corruption. But Thursday, after parliament passed a law making it harder to remove a sitting prime minister, Netanyahu said he was unshackled by the attorney general's decision and vowed to wade into the crisis and "mend the rift" in the nation. That declaration prompted the attorney general, Gali Baharav-Miara, to warn that Netanyahu was breaking his conflict of interest agreement.

Netanyahu is on trial for charges of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three separate affairs. He denies wrongdoing and dismisses critics who say he will try to seek an escape route from the charges through the legal overhaul.

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## FACES

## Q&amp;A

# Telling the hip-hop story from the start

Chuck D talks rap's rise through 'Fight the Power' doc

By JONATHAN LANDRUM JR.  
Associated Press

**H**ip-hop became a cultural phenomenon against the backdrop of U.S. history, and now Public Enemy's Chuck D has committed himself to explore the artform's origins.

Chuck D rounded up several rap greats — including Ice-T, Run-D.M.C and MC Lyte — who offered their firsthand accounts ahead of this year's 50th anniversary of hip-hop. Their reflections are explored in the four-part docuseries "Fight the Power: How Hip Hop Changed the World," that aired on PBS and is available to stream on its platforms and YouTube with a premium subscription.

The series delves into the history of hip-hop including the genre's radical rise from the New York City streets, creating a platform for political expression and being a leading voice for social justice.

"Fight the Power" touches on how hip-hop has played an impactful role in speaking up against injustice in the aftermath of America's racial and political reckoning in 2020 after George Floyd's killing by Minneapolis police. The series, executive produced by Chuck D, features archival footage and insightful interviews from of rap's most integral figures including Fat Joe, Lupe Fiasco, Grandmaster Caz, B-Real of Cypress Hill, Melle Mel, will.i.am, John Forte, Roxanne Shanté and Abiodun Oye-wole of The Last Poets.

In a recent interview, Chuck D talked about hip-hop's cultural growth in 50 years, the genre being the backbone for Black men's voices and how rap could last for another half century.

Remarks have been edited for clarity and bravery.

**AP: You mentioned in your docuseries that hip-hop was a catalyst for the Black Lives Matter movement. How so?**

**Chuck D:** It's a collective where people felt the same way. It spoke politically to the injustice regarding George Floyd and was a spark that connected around the world.

Hip-hop has done the same thing. Hip-hop ties human beings for their similarities and knocks the differences to the side. It's a movement, when you talk about collective people feeling similar, enact upon something and still even stay within the constraints of the law. Younger people say, "OK, listen, we're going to speak truth to power right now. We're going to protest march. We're going to show you numbers that you ain't seen in a long time about something you probably didn't care about." That's hip-hop, right?

**During the birth of hip-hop, how did it help encourage Black voices?**

Black men didn't have a voice. You might've sung records for people who were fortunate to become recording artists. Our music has always been code. Hip-hop is the term for our creativity, maybe for the last 50 years. But before that, we always was creative and musicianship, vocalization, arts and craft, and also the movement of dance. Just that the elements had gotten refined in another period in the '70s out of another Big Bang Theory of sociopolitical environments. That's where that voice came out and it came out culturally. It still speaks loudly, culturally.

**How does your documentary amplify that notion?**

Some people like to deal with hip-hop where they first started. I think what this documentary series says is "Nah, this is where it started." You might have picked up on it after you were born in the 1990s and picked up maybe 2000, but it started before you.

**What do you want people to take away from your documentary?**

I don't want people to do what they don't want to do. If you say you love hip-hop, then you should be able to know about what you love. You don't have to love hip-hop. I used to ask people straight out, "Do you love hip-hop?" They would respond "Oh yeah. I love it." Then I was ask, "Do you love Black people?" They would say "What's that got to do with it?" I'm here to tell you that the culture



JORDAN STRAUSS, INVISION/AP

**Chuck D, of Public Enemy, rounded up several rap greats who offered their firsthand accounts about the history of hip-hop in a four-part series streaming on PBS platforms.**

and the music comes out of the people. Sometimes your love of it got to infuse and give something back to the people. That's the cycle.

**How do you feel about hip-hop being misinterpreted at times?**

I'm 12 years older than hip-hop, so I'm not in awe of it. I've seen the trajectory and my involvement in it was to see if I can make it go head-to-head, stand shoulders and shoulders next to everything else that gets bragged and talked about. I'm a big sports fan. You know, a lot of people in New York broke up because the Giants lost. That's how they tied into their loyalty for something that they say that they love. Well, people love music, too. They seem to know less about it than they know about sports, because sports make sure you're not stupid. Stephen A. Smith now is a superstar journalist who makes sure that if you come in the room, you're not stupid about sports. You can't go off the top of your head and freestyle what you think when it's fact. This four-part series at least deals with facts, especially in this misinformation age. Facts are important. Facts is not opinion, bro.

**How have you seen hip-hop transcend?**

Africa is the future of hip-hop. It's 54 African nations. Not only are they spitting like crazy, but they're also braiding languages.

Hip-hop is going to like 3.0 when you talk about Africa. Hip-hop is there. So that's the sustaining power if you want to pay attention to it.

**Do you feel like rappers can still be commercially successful while being socially conscious?**

Depends on where they are and who they're talking to. If you're in France, it might work for you. Each level that you get into it, you got to go deeper because you build a fan base that's three times harder than you. If you're an activist, you're going to bring on activists that's really doing this. You as an artist could engage on it and group them together.

Now, as far as what's going to make that artist keep a light on or go out and get the Lamborghini, that's a personal thing. Money is relative. There's pressure put on the arts. That's an illusion. It's a little unfair to any art — which is not supposed to bring you an industry. It's supposed to be able to bring a canvas to the world.

**What's it going to take for hip-hop to live for another 50 years?**

Commitment collective, people recognizing that this is a part of us and recognizing more parts of us that have been part of our cultural history around the world. We got to recognize the world, too.

## Kiss biopic, 'Shout It Out Loud,' coming to Netflix in 2024

From wire reports

Kiss, the rock band behind hits such as "Rock and Roll All Nite" and "Detroit Rock City," are the latest musicians to get the biopic treatment.

A film documenting the early days of the band is expected to premiere on Netflix in 2024.

The band's longtime manager, Doc McGhee, offered an update about the project, which has been in the works since 2021.

Titled "Shout It Out Loud," the film is named after a track from the group's 1976 gold-selling opus, "Destroyer."

"It's a biopic about the first four years of

Kiss. We're just starting it now," he said during an interview on The Rock Experience With Mike Brunn podcast. "We've already sold it, [the deal is] already done, we have a director. That's moving along and that'll come in '24."

While Joachim Ronning, whose credits include "Maleficent: Mistress of Evil" and "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales," was initially attached to helm the film, McGhee named McG as the director.

The veteran music video auteur, whose real name is Joseph McGinty Nichol, has films such as "Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle" and Netflix's forthcoming "Family

Leave" to his credit.

Casting has yet to be announced, but the main roles will focus on Gene Simmons, Paul Stanley, Peter Dinklage and Ace Frehley, and the formation of the group in 1972.

One of the bestselling bands of all time, Kiss was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2014.

**Prince Harry memoir 'Spare' getting the parody treatment**

First came the Twitter critics, then the late-night comedians and now the satirists: Prince Harry's bestselling memoir "Spare" is getting the parody treatment.

"Spare Us! A Harrody" will be available to buy in the U.K. on April 5, according to a report in the L.A. Times. It's still unclear if the book will be sold in the U.S.

The satire mocks the famed 38-year-old prince's merciless tell-all, published this year, that skewered the British royal family. The original Penguin Random House book contained unwelcome revelations about the spare heir — who is sixth in the British royal line of succession — including barbs about his sister-in-law Kate Middleton and anecdotes in which he smeared Elizabeth Arden cream on his frostbitten "todger" and lost his virginity in a field.





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OPINION

Waiting for Trump indictment is an arresting comedy

By KATHLEEN PARKER

The Washington Post

With apologies to Samuel Beckett, waiting for Donald Trump to be arrested is a bit like waiting for Godot to show up. Only in today's comedy, Trump never shows up for an event that never happens.

Which allows ample time to consider whether this is good, or bad, for Trump.

Keep in mind it was Trump and not Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg who announced that he'd be arrested Tuesday. Then Wednesday came and then Thursday, and the would-be defendant was still on the campaign trail.

The specificity of his doomsday prophesy should have been a hint that he was fundraising rather than girding for a confrontation with a new archenemy. Within short order of posting about his dreamed-for arrest, Trump's campaign raised \$1.5 million. Not a bad take for an election-denying, rabble-rousing loser. Not to put too fine a point on the matter.

No one expects Trump to be handcuffed or perp-walked, though he would prefer such a show. He would be fingerprinted, however, photographed for a mug shot and swabbed for New York's state DNA database.

And to think it all began with an adult-film star and hush money.

To refresh your memory, Stormy Daniels allegedly had a fling with The Don long before he was The Prez. Concerned that she might spoil everything if Americans found out, especially in the wake of his infamous boasts about assaulting women, Trump allegedly directed his sidekick attorney Michael Cohen to pay her off. More shocking than the deed itself was the cheap thrill he took Daniels for. Only

\$130,000 in exchange for the presidency? She should sue for something, though I can't think what.

According to Cohen, who testified before the grand jury, he paid Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, with his own money, and Trump reimbursed him for legal fees. (Trump denies everything, including the alleged tryst.) Because the payment was aimed at helping Trump win the 2016 election, Bragg might contend, as prosecutors in the Cohen case did, that the money should have been declared a campaign contribution. Trump did not report the payment, needless to say.

For his part, Bragg may be out of his league. Given Trump's record of deceptions and antagonisms, not the least of which was his role in inspiring the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, one would think it not much of a challenge. But Trump's record also includes countless lawsuits, which he files with the gleeful frequency of a parking-ticket scribbler in the District of Columbia. He loves lawsuits and must be pretty good at the racket — or at least at hiring lawyers who are.

When Trump essentially bragged that he'd be arrested Tuesday, it seems he was merely staging a puppet show. He wouldn't be arrested unless he wanted to be. Once an indictment is issued, all he has to do is quietly turn himself in. But where's the fun in that? The puppets were the however-many who crowdfunded his next foray on the hustings.

And the arrest? We wait.

Bragg's case centers on the idea that the Daniels payoff was far above the \$2,700 allowed for individual campaign contributions. By not disclosing it, Trump may have violated federal tax rules that apply to political campaigns.

Of course, some might think, *So the man*

*had a night out and wanted the broad to keep her trap shut* (Speaking gangster here.) *No-body's knees got busted. What's the big deal?*

Well, the United States of America got a little bruised. Never mind the utter seediness of Trump — election laws exist to protect us from thugs and criminals, some of whom wear nice suits and, apparently, own tanning booths. But it seems questionable whether Bragg has a solid indictment — and more's the pity. It's worth noting that Cohen, who pleaded guilty in Manhattan federal court to eight counts, including criminal tax evasion and campaign finance violations, received a three-year prison sentence.

Democrats and other anti-Trumpers have long hoped a criminal conviction would preclude the former president from ever holding public office again. Would that it were so. No law says someone can't run if indicted. Trump could even serve as president, assuming he's not in prison.

In 2016, Trump famously told the audience at a Christian college: "I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn't lose any voters." Whether this remains true isn't clear. As of Wednesday, his "favorable" rating was at 41%, unfavorable at 54.8%. These numbers have been relatively constant the past two years.

I suppose it's possible Trump could enjoy some time in penitential seclusion, depending on sentencing if convicted, but I wouldn't bet the family goat on it. More likely, if he's indicted at all, Trump will glory in the injustice of Bragg's folly, raising millions more for his second run at the presidency and emboldening his base to save America from traitors.

His arrest could happen any day now.... Or, like Beckett's Didi and Gogo, we could wait forever for Trump to have his day in court.

Americans need to rediscover the lost art of tolerance

By GARY ABERNATHY

Special to The Washington Post

As the United States grows more racially, culturally and politically fractionalized, let's acknowledge the obvious: Our diversity does not automatically make us stronger, as politicians and activists sometimes proclaim, but is a major contributor to our polarization. Our best hope for civil coexistence is rediscovering the lost art of tolerance.

Cataloguing all the examples of America's sweeping multiculturalism is an impossible endeavor. We have enormous diversity of identity: White. Black. Hispanic. Asian. Native American. Straight. Gay. Trans. Nonbinary. More significant is our diversity of beliefs. Pro-choice. Pro-life. Conservatives. Liberals. MAGA Republicans. Democratic socialists. Never-Trumpers. Moderates. Libertarians. Gun enthusiasts. Gun-control advocates. Climate activists. Fossil fuel defenders. Christians. Jews. Muslims. Atheists. And more.

Many Americans occupy multiple groups, and other individuals don't easily fit into any specific group. Significant numbers within certain groups will never accept the beliefs — or even the right to have a voice — of other groups. Too often, all they have in common is an unshakable moral certitude of the righteousness of their respective causes. Clearly, our diversity is a big reason for our national disharmony.

It's not popular to say that, but most Americans know it. Just examine the opi-

nions about our growing racial and ethnic diversity. In 2020, the Pew Research Center surveyed attitudes about the U.S. Census Bureau's forecast that in a couple of decades, Black, Latino and Asian Americans will — combined — displace whites as the majority population. Most respondents said the development was neither good nor bad. Eleven percent called it bad. Only 24% declared such a prospect a good thing — up from 14% in 2016, but far from an endorsement of diversity as, as then-candidate Joe Biden once tweeted, "our greatest strength."

White people are, unsurprisingly, the least enthusiastic about the shifting population shares, Pew found. But interestingly, fewer than half of Black, Hispanic or Asian respondents called a more diverse population a good development, despite their projected growth. People of all races and backgrounds know diversity can be hard. The answer is not to "get the hell away" from each other, a cartoonist's rant aside. The better path is to recalibrate our notion of what a functional multicultural society looks like.

Straight white religious conservatives — the group to which I can most relate — face the biggest adjustment, having long been in power. But the expanding societal presence and influence of people of color and LGBTQ+ Americans should not be stubbornly resisted, but graciously accepted. There will be cultural changes with which many of us disagree, but that will provide us the opportunity to demonstrate the toler-

ance toward others that we increasingly plead for ourselves.

To untangle the destructive conflation of church and state, evangelicals — the most partisan religious incarnation of white conservatives — must rethink their approach and their objectives. They have every right as citizens to participate in government. But as disheartening as our increasingly godless society can be to many of us, neither Christian doctrine — despite its cultural dominance — nor any other religious creed was intended to be government policy. Besides, the Bible repeatedly reminds believers not to be so concerned with the things of this world.

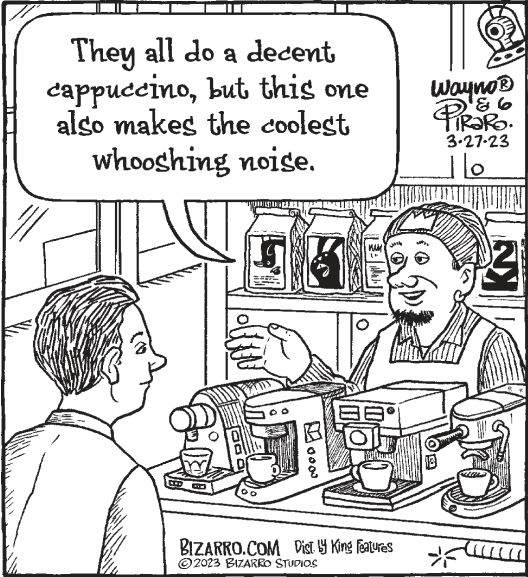
But progressive Americans must adjust, too, by exhibiting tolerance for conservative social and religious beliefs rather than disparaging such views as bigoted or hateful. They must show more consideration for people who are asked again and again to reject beliefs and practices that their communities have sincerely held for generations.

The prospect of our escalating disparity need not be bleak. If we try, we might discover that tolerance can lead to a respectful, peaceful and even fruitful community of multifaceted people and ideas over time. Let us pray for that — or, for the nonreligious, hope for it — politely tolerating each other's right as Americans to choose either option.

Gary Abernathy, a Washington Post contributing columnist, is a freelance writer based in the Cincinnati region.



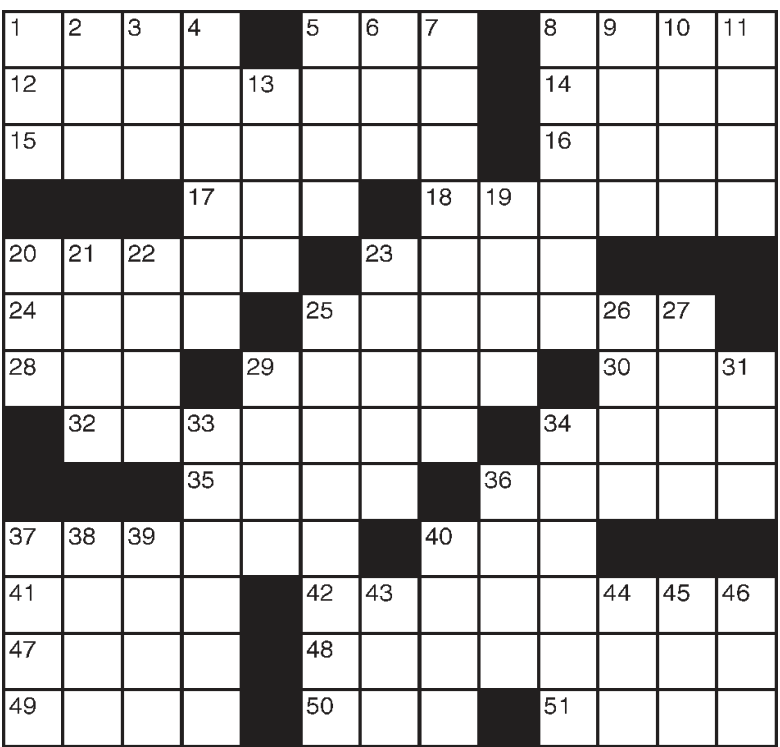
Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

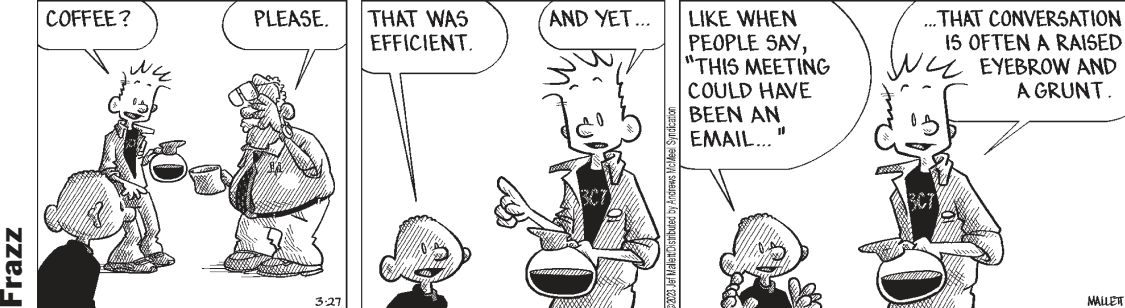


- ACROSS
- DOWN
- 25 Ina Garten  
bestseller
- 26 Lion's greeting
- 27 Loretta of  
"M\*A\*S\*H"
- 29 Glitzy rock  
genre
- 31 Golfer Ernie
- 33 "What a shame"
- 34 Hoyden
- 36 Huff and puff
- 37 From the start
- 38 Fishing rod
- 39 Pork cut
- 40 Noggin
- 43 Opposite of  
"post-"
- 44 Tram load
- 45 Corn product
- 46 Keystone  
lawman
- 1 D.C. baseball  
team
- 2 "Caught ya!"
- 3 X, at times
- 4 Cowboy's seat
- 5 New Mexico  
resort
- 6 "I love," in Latin
- 7 Comical  
compilation
- 8 Prior to
- 9 Work on proofs
- 10 Queue
- 11 Cask sediment
- 13 Wall St. deals
- 19 Beer ingredient
- 20 Shoe width
- 21 Designer Gucci
- 22 Alphabetic  
sequence
- 23 Fusses
- 1 Ultimate
- 2 "Caught ya!"
- 3 X, at times
- 4 Cowboy's seat
- 5 New Mexico  
resort
- 6 "I love," in Latin
- 7 Comical  
compilation
- 8 Prior to
- 9 Work on proofs
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- 19 Beer ingredient
- 20 Shoe width
- 21 Designer Gucci
- 22 Alphabetic  
sequence
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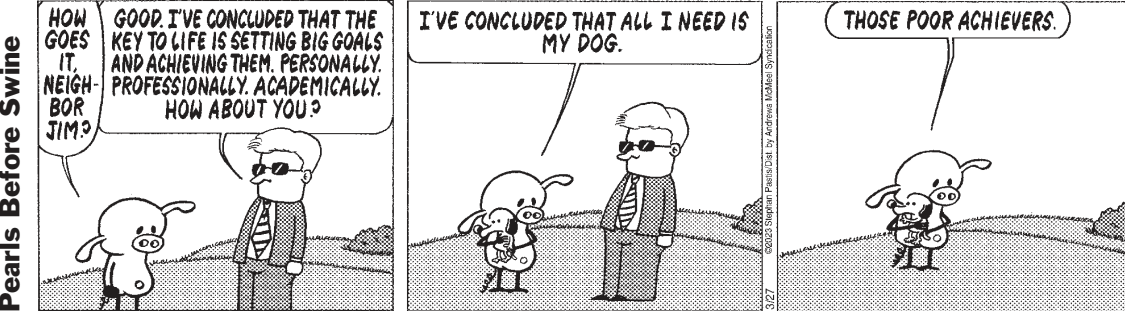
Answer to Previous Puzzle



Frazz



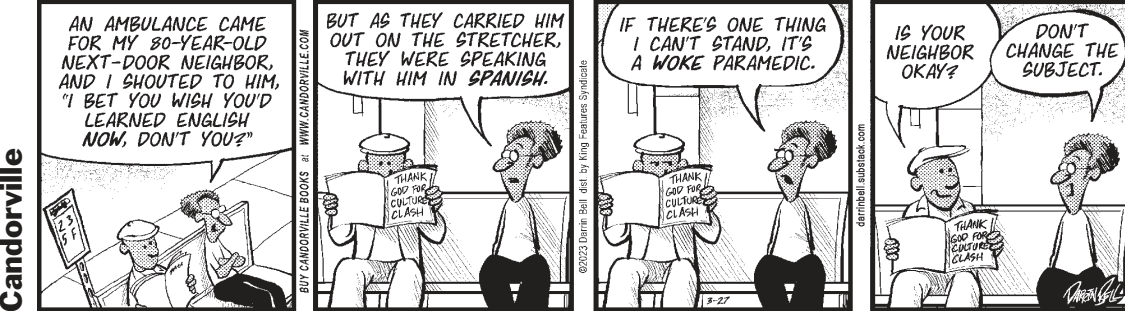
Pearls Before Swine



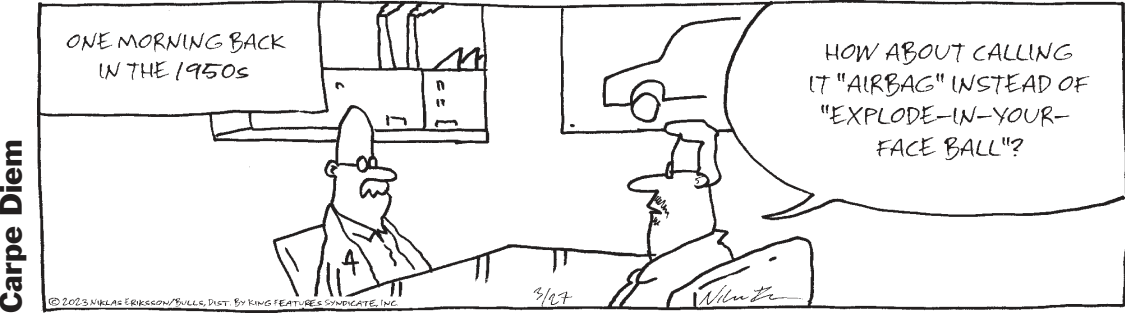
Non Sequitur



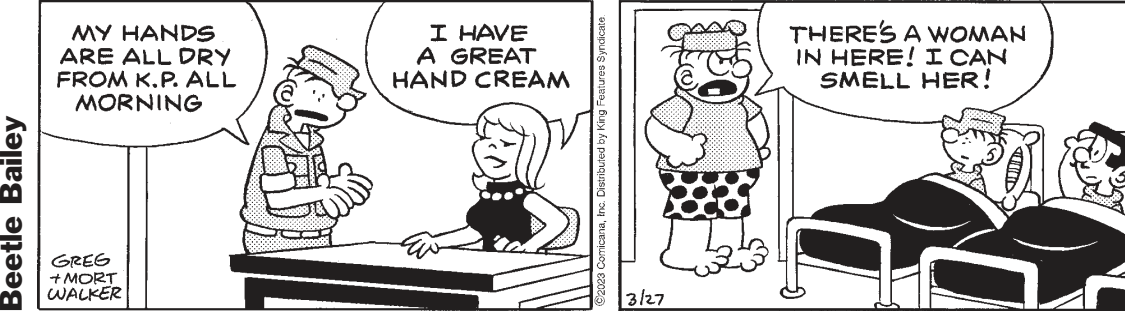
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



3-27

CRYPTOQUIP

PAGIJ QYVLS Q DRMGF  
X IQURQGXF SOQS'D OG  
XOAM LFAGJZAM SV YZ  
DLIIZDDPLA:

"UGDDGVF: GURAQLDGYAZ."  
Saturday's Cryptoquip: FILM ABOUT A BAKER  
MAKING TRUCKLOADS OF LOAVES FOR A BIG  
NEVADA CITY: "LEAVENING LAS VEGAS."  
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: X equals G



# SCOREBOARD

## COLLEGE BASKETBALL

<b>Men's NIT</b>	
<b>Semifinals</b>	
<b>Tuesday, March 28</b>	
<b>At Las Vegas</b>	
UAB vs. Utah Valley St.	
North Texas vs. Wisconsin	
<b>Championship</b>	
<b>Thursday, March 30</b>	
Semifinal winners	
<b>Women's NIT</b>	
<b>Quarterfinals</b>	
<b>Sunday, March 26</b>	
Oregon at Washington	
Arkansas at Kansas	
Harvard at Columbia	
<b>Monday, March 27</b>	
Florida at Bowling Green	
<b>Semifinals</b>	
<b>Tuesday, March 28</b>	
Oregon-Washington winner vs. Kansas-Arkansas winner	
Harvard-Columbia winner vs. Bowling Green-Florida winner	
<b>Championship</b>	
<b>Saturday, April 1</b>	
Semifinal winners	

## PRO SOCCER

<b>MLS</b>							
<b>EASTERN CONFERENCE</b>							
	<b>W</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Pts</b>	<b>GF</b>	<b>GA</b>	
New England	4	1	0	12	7	5	
Cincinnati	3	0	2	11	7	4	
Atlanta	3	1	1	10	12	9	
Orlando City	2	1	2	8	5	4	
Columbus	2	2	1	7	11	8	
Nashville	2	2	1	7	4	2	
NYCFC	2	2	1	7	5	6	
Philadelphia	2	3	0	6	8	8	
Inter Miami CF	2	3	0	6	6	6	
Toronto FC	1	1	3	6	6	5	
New York	1	1	3	6	4	4	
Chicago	1	1	2	5	7	7	
D.C. United	1	3	1	4	7	10	
Charlotte FC	1	3	1	4	4	9	
CF Montréal	1	3	0	3	3	7	
<b>WESTERN CONFERENCE</b>							
	<b>W</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Pts</b>	<b>GF</b>	<b>GA</b>	
Saint Louis SC	5	0	0	15	15	4	
Seattle	3	1	1	10	10	2	
LAFC	3	0	1	10	9	3	
Minnesota	2	0	2	8	5	3	
FC Dallas	2	2	1	7	7	6	
Austin FC	2	2	1	7	6	7	
San Jose	2	2	1	7	4	6	
Houston	2	2	0	6	4	5	
Portland	1	3	1	4	5	10	
Real Salt Lake	1	3	0	3	3	9	
Vancouver	0	2	3	3	5	7	
LA Galaxy	0	1	3	3	2	4	
Sporting KC	0	3	2	2	2	7	
Colorado	0	3	2	2	2	8	

**Note:** Three points for victory, one point for tie.

<b>Saturday's games</b>							
LA Galaxy 0, Portland 0, tie							
New York 1, Charlotte FC 1, tie							
Columbus 6, Atlanta 1							
New England 2, D.C. United 1							
Chicago 3, Miami 2							
Orlando City 2, Philadelphia 1							
Colorado 1, Austin FC 1, tie							
Houston 1, New York City FC 0							
Seattle 4, Sporting Kansas City 1							
Vancouver 1, Minnesota 1, tie							
Cincinnati 1, Nashville 0							
Saint Louis City SC 4, Real Salt Lake 0							
Los Angeles FC 2, FC Dallas 1							
Toronto FC 0, San Jose 0, tie							

<b>NWSL</b>							
	<b>W</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Pts</b>	<b>GF</b>	<b>GA</b>	
San Diego	1	0	0	3	3	2	
North Carolina	1	0	0	3	1	0	
Angel City	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Gotham FC	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Houston	0	0	0	0	0	0	
OL Reign	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Orlando	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Portland	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Louisville	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Washington	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Chicago	0	1	0	0	2	3	
Kansas City	0	1	0	0	0	1	

**Note:** Three points for victory, one point for tie.

<b>Saturday's games</b>							
North Carolina 1, Kansas City 0							
San Diego 3, Chicago 2							
<b>Sunday's games</b>							
OL Reign at Washington							
Orlando at Portland							
Louisville at Houston							
Gotham FC at Angel City							
<b>Saturday, April 1</b>							
Portland at Kansas City							
Houston at Chicago							
Washington at Louisville							
OL Reign at Gotham FC							
North Carolina at San Diego							
<b>Sunday, April 2</b>							
Angel City at Orlando							

## AUTO RACING

<b>Pit Boss 250</b>	
<b>NASCAR Xfinity Series</b>	
<b>Saturday</b>	
<b>At Circuits of the Americas</b>	
<b>Austin, Texas</b>	
<b>Lap length: 3.41 miles</b>	
<b>(Start position in parentheses)</b>	
1. (1) AJ Allmendinger, Chevrolet, 46 laps, 0 points.	
2. (9) William Byron, Chevrolet, 46, 0.	
3. (3) Ty Gibbs, Toyota, 46, 0.	
4. (2) Sammy Smith, Toyota, 46, 37.	
5. (8) Justin Allgaier, Chevrolet, 46, 36.	
6. (11) Daniel Hemric, Chevrolet, 46, 31.	
7. (14) Sam Mayer, Chevrolet, 46, 31.	
8. (15) Josh Berry, Chevrolet, 46, 35.	
9. (4) Sheldon Creed, Chevrolet, 46, 47.	
10. (7) Riley Herbst, Ford, 46, 32.	
11. (26) Brandon Jones, Chevrolet, 46, 29.	
12. (27) Chandler Smith, Chevrolet, 46, 25.	
13. (18) Miguel Paludo, Chevrolet, 46, 24.	
14. (25) Jeremy Clements, Chevrolet, 46, 23.	
15. (23) Alex Labbe, Chevrolet, 46, 22.	
16. (29) Anthony Alfredo, Chevrolet, 46, 21.	
17. (34) Parker Retzlaff, Chevrolet, 46, 20.	
18. (20) Kaz Grala, Toyota, 46, 19.	
19. (22) Connor Mosack, Toyota, 46, 18.	
20. (32) Ryan Ellis, Chevrolet, 46, 17.	
21. (21) Jeb Burton, Chevrolet, 46, 17.	
22. (33) Kyle Weatherman, Chevrolet, 46, 15.	
23. (31) Ryan Sieg, Ford, 46, 23.	
24. (13) Aric Almirola, Ford, 46, 0.	
25. (36) Jeffrey Earnhardt, Chevrolet, 46, 12.	
26. (38) Kyle Sieg, Ford, 46, 11.	
27. (6) John H. Nemechek, Toyota, 46, 18.	
28. (24) Josh Billicki, Chevrolet, 46, 9.	
29. (30) Brad Perez, Chevrolet, 46, 8.	
30. (35) Joe Graf Jr, Ford, 46, 7.	
31. (5) Parker Kligerman, Chevrolet, 46, 14.	
32. (10) Cole Custer, Ford, 45, 5.	
33. (37) Brennan Poole, Chevrolet, garage, 29, 4.	
34. (28) Brett Moffitt, Ford, engine, 27, 3.	
35. (16) Sage Karam, Chevrolet, engine, 23, 2.	
36. (19) Preston Pardus, Chevrolet, suspension, 16, 1.	
37. (12) Austin Hill, Chevrolet, engine, 13, 1.	
38. (17) Carson Hocevar, Chevrolet, transmission, 7, 0.	
<b>Race statistics</b>	
<b>Average speed of race winner:</b> 75.256 mph.	
<b>Time of race:</b> 2 hours, 5 minutes, 3 seconds.	
<b>Margin of victory:</b> 0.853 seconds.	
<b>Cautions flags:</b> 5 for 7 laps.	
<b>Lead changes:</b> 6 among 4 drivers.	
<b>Lap leaders:</b> A.Allmendinger 0-14; S.Creed 15-26; W.Byron 27; S.Creed 28; P.Kligerman 29; S.Creed 30-32; A.Allmendinger 33-46	
<b>Leaders summary (driver, times led, laps led):</b> A.Allmendinger, 2 times for 28 laps; S.Creed, 3 times for 16 laps; W.Byron, 1 time for 1 lap; P.Kligerman, 1 time for 1 lap.	
<b>Wins:</b> A.Hill, 3; J.Nemechek, 1; S.Smith, 1.	
<b>Top 16 in points:</b> 1. A.Hill, 249; 2. R.Herbst, 234; 3. J.Nemechek, 220; 4. J.Allgaier, 200; 5. C.Smith, 196; 6. S.Mayer, 187; 7. S.Smith, 185; 8. S.Creed, 184; 9. J.Berry, 183; 10. D.Hemric, 176; 11. P.Kligerman, 156; 12.	

## DEALS

<b>Saturday's transactions</b>	
<b>BASEBALL</b>	
<b>Major League Baseball</b>	
<b>American League</b>	
<b>CLEVELAND GUARDIANS</b> — Optioned SS Richie Palacios to Columbus (IL).	
<b>KANSAS CITY ROYALS</b> — Optioned RHP Josh Staumont and LHPs Josh Taylor and Richard Lovelady to Omaha (IL).	
<b>MINNESOTA TWINS</b> — Reassigned RHPs Jose De Leon and Jeff Hoffman to minor league camp.	
<b>NEW YORK YANKEES</b> — Reassigned INF Wilmer Difo and C Rodolfo Duran to minor league camp.	
<b>SEATTLE MARINERS</b> — Reassigned RHP Riley O'Brien and LHP Tommy Milone to minor league camp.	
<b>TAMPA BAY RAYS</b> — Optioned RHP Luis Patino to Durham (IL).	
<b>TEXAS RANGERS</b> — Optioned RHP Joe Barlow to Round Rock (PCL).	
<b>TORONTO BLUE JAYS</b> — Reassigned RHPs Luke Bard, Junior Fernandez, Bowden Francis and Matt Peacock and Cs Stevie Brancan and Rob Brantly to minor league camp. Optioned RHPs Thomas Hatch, Nate Pearson, Zach Thompson and Trent Thornton to Buffalo (IL). Released RHP Jay Jackson.	
<b>National League</b>	
<b>CHICAGO CUBS</b> — Optioned RHP Adrian Sampson to Iowa (IL). Assigned RHP Vinny Nitello to minor league camp.	
<b>COLORADO ROCKIES</b> — Selected the contracts of LHP Ty Blach, INF/OF Harold Castro and INF Mike Moustakas. Placed OF Sean Bouchard, INF Brendan Rodgers and LHP Ryan Rolison on the 60-day IL. Optioned RHPs Jake Bird and Peter Lambert to Albuquerque (PCL). Reassigned LHP Fernando Abad, RHP Matt Kocak, INF Coco Montes and C Jonathan Morales to minor league camp.	
<b>NEW YORK METS</b> — Agreed to terms with RHP Dylan Bundy on a minor league contract.	
<b>ST. LOUIS CARDINALS</b> — Optioned 1B Juan Yeppez and LHPs JoJo Romero and Genesis Cabrera to Memphis (IL). Selected the contract of 2B Taylor Motter from Memphis.	
<b>SAN DIEGO PADRES</b> — Optioned SS Matthew Batten to El Paso (PCL).	
<b>SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS</b> — Optioned RHP Cole Waites to Sacramento (PCL). Reassigned RHPs Melvin Adon, Mauricio Llovera, Kade McClure and Miguel Yajure,	

C.Custer, 152; 13. R.Sieg, 143; 14. A.Alfredo, 129; 15. B.Jones, 128; 16. B.Moffitt, 126.

XPEL 225

NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series

Saturday

At Circuits of the Americas

Austin, Texas

Lap length: 3.41 miles

(Start position in parentheses)

1. (7) Zane Smith, Ford, 42 laps, 52 points.

2. (2) Kyle Busch, Chevrolet, 42, 0.

3. (3) Ty Majeski, Ford, 42, 43.

4. (12) Tyler Ankrum, Toyota, 42, 37.

5. (1) Ross Chastain, Chevrolet, 42, 0.

6. (11) Corey Heim, Toyota, 42, 39.

7. (4) Nicholas Sanchez, Chevrolet, 42, 31.

8. (9) Tanner Gray, Toyota, 42, 29.

9. (10) Kaz Grala, Toyota, 42, 0.

10. (13) Ben Rhodes, Ford, 42, 31.

11. (19) Taylor Gray, Toyota, 42, 26.

12. (8) Grant Enfinger, Chevrolet, 42, 25.

13. (20) Rajah Caruth, Chevrolet, 42, 24.

14. (15) Stewart Friesen, Toyota, 42, 30.

15. (24) Kaden Honeycutt, Ford, 42, 25.

16. (16) Hailie Deegan, Ford, 42, 26.

17. (18) Lawless Alan, Chevrolet, 42, 28.

18. (36) Daniel Dye, Chevrolet, 42, 19.

19. (32) Jake Garcia, Chevrolet, 42, 18.

20. (25) Colin Garrett, Toyota, 42, 17.

21. (35) Kris Wright, Chevrolet, 42, 16.

22. (14) Logan Bearden, Ford, 42, 15.

23. (31) Bret Holmes, Chevrolet, 42, 14.

24. (27) Colby Howard, Chevrolet, 42, 13.

25. (29) Timmy Hill, Toyota, 42, 12.

26. (30) Mason Filippi, Ford, 42, 11.

27. (21) Chase Purdy, Chevrolet, 42, 10.

28. (33) Dale Quarterley, Toyota, 42, 9.

29. (28) Matt DiBenedetto, Chevrolet, 41, 9.

30. (5) Christian Eckes, Chevrolet, suspension, 31, 17.

31. (17) Parker Kligerman, Toyota, electrical, 26, 12.

32. (26) Spencer Boyd, Chevrolet, electrical, 12, 5.

33. (34) Matt Crafton, Ford, accident, 11, 4.

34. (6) Carson Hocevar, Chevrolet, axle, 8, 3.

35. (22) Dean Thompson, Toyota, accident, 4, 2.

36. (23) Ed Jones, Chevrolet, suspension, 0, 1.

Race statistics

Average speed of race winner: 77.004 mph.

Time of race: 1 hour, 51 minutes, 36 seconds.

Margin of victory: 5.451 seconds.

Caution flags: 3 for 5 laps.

Lead changes: 9 among 5 drivers.

Lap leaders: R.Chastain 0-2; K.Busch 3; R.Chastain 4-8; Z.Smith 9; C.Eckes 10-12; T.Majeski 13; K.Busch 14-19; R.Chastain 20-22; K.Busch 23-27; Z.Smith 28-42

Leaders summary (driver, times led, laps led): Z.Smith, 2 times for 16 laps; K.Busch, 3 times for 12 laps; R.Chastain, 3 times for 10 laps; C.Eckes, 1 time for 3 laps; T.Majeski, 1 time for 1 lap.

Wins: Z.Smith, 2; C.Eckes, 1.

Top 16 in points: 1. Z.Smith, 168; 2. T.Majeski, 166; 3. B.Rhodes, 150; 4. C.Eckes, 148; 5. G.Enfinger, 131; 6. M.Crafton, 130; 7. T.Ankrum, 114; 8. M.DiBenedetto, 112; 9. C.Heim, 110; 10. T.Gray, 107; 11. C.Purdy, 107; 12. N.Sanchez, 98; 13. S.Friesen, 83; 14. C.Hocevar, 82; 15. T.Hill, 77; 16. C.Howard, 75.



ROUNDUP

# Jokic, Nuggets top Bucks in clash of conference leaders

Associated Press

DENVER — Nikola Jokic had 31 points and 11 assists, Jamal Murray finished with 26 points and nine assists, and the Denver Nuggets beat the Milwaukee Bucks 129-106 on Saturday night in a late-season showdown of the NBA's conference leaders.

Michael Porter Jr. scored 19 points for West-leading Denver (50-24), which outscored East-leading Milwaukee 68-40 in the second half.

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 31 points — just seven in the second half — and grabbed nine rebounds for the Bucks (53-20).

“It’s better to win games, but our goal is to do something in a playoffs,” Jokic said.

The battle of the top teams in each conference — and two strong MVP candidates — was more competitive than the teams’ first meeting, won by the Bucks 107-99. Then, the Nuggets held out four starters — Jokic, Murray, Porter and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope — in the game in Milwaukee on Jan. 25. Denver had played the night before in New Orleans and opted to rest its stars.

The circumstances were reversed, with the Bucks having played in Utah on Friday night.

“We still play, still got to be better, there’s no excuses about that,” Khris Middleton said. “But I’m sure for a lot of fans, a lot of people out there, they’d love to see healthy teams, or not coming off back to backs.”

Antetokounmpo scored 24 points on 11-for-14 shooting in the first half, with all but one of those field goals coming at the rim. Murray (20 points) and Jokic (17

points) kept Denver within three at the break, and then the Nuggets outscored Milwaukee 34-19 in the third quarter to take a 97-85 lead.

Jeff Green dunked on Antetokounmpo to open the fourth as the Nuggets’ lead swelled to 15 points. Grayson Allen hit a three-pointer to cut it to 103-91 with 9:54 left, but Milwaukee went scoreless for 4:10 while Denver built a 111-91 lead.

“It was an amazing dunk,” Jokic said of Green’s dunk. “I didn’t think he was going to do it. He almost fell down, so it was a really nice dunk.”

Antetokounmpo went to the bench with 5:54 left and didn’t return.

**Suns 125, 76ers 105:** Devin Booker scored 29 points, Bismack Biyombo added 17 points, 13 rebounds and five blocks, and host Phoenix snapped a three-game losing streak.

Phoenix got good minutes from most of their bench players, particularly Terrence Ross and T.J. Warren. Warren finished with 16 points, while Ross had 15. Booker shot 9-for-18 from the field and hit all nine of his free throws.

The Suns won despite a huge game from Sixers guard Tyrese Maxey, who finished with 37 points on 14-for-19 shooting, including 7-for-11 from three-point range. Joel Embiid added 28 points and 10 rebounds.

**Kings 121, Jazz 113:** Kevin Huerter scored 27 points, had seven rebounds and four assists and host Sacramento beat Utah.

Domantas Sabonis finished with 16 points, 15 rebounds and seven assists for his NBA-leading 60th double-double of the season.



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

**Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo, right, looks to drive against Nuggets center Nikola Jokic during the first half on Saturday in Denver. The Nuggets won 129-106.**

Harrison Barnes added 18 points. Keegan Murray scored 14 of his 22 total points in the first quarter and knocked down six three-pointers for the Kings.

Jazz rookie Walker Kessler scored a career-high 31 points. He added 11 rebounds and finished 14-for-16 from the floor.

**Nets 129, Heat 100:** Mikal Bridges scored 27 points, and visiting Brooklyn opened the third quarter on a 31-6 run on the way to leapfrogging Miami into the No. 6 spot in the Eastern Conference.

Cam Johnson added 23 points and Spencer Dinwiddie scored 15 for the Nets (40-34), who snapped a five-game slide. They’re only a half-game up on Miami (40-35) in the race for the sixth and final guaranteed playoff berth, but swept the Heat 3-0 this season.

Max Strus scored 23 for the Heat, all of them in the first half.

**Hawks 143, Pacers 130:** John Collins led seven teammates in double figures with 21 points and host Atlanta overcame Jordan Nwora’s season-high 33 points and protected its shaky hold on

the No. 8 spot in the Eastern Conference playoff standings

Trae Young was ejected in the third quarter after firing an unusually hard pass to referee Scott Wall during a timeout. Wall caught the ball. Young was immediately called for a technical foul and ejected. Young had 14 points and five assists.

Tyrese Haliburton scored 19 points and Buddy Hield had 16 for Indiana.

**Pelicans 131, Clippers 110:** Trey Murphy III scored 32 points, Brandon Ingram had 32 points and 13 assists, and visiting New Orleans never trailed against Los Angeles.

C.J. McCollum had 21 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for the Pelicans, who have won four in a row.

Bones Hyland scored 18 points for the Clippers, who have lost three of four.

At risk of falling out of the play-in tournament with a loss, the energized Pelicans started out hot, scoring the first eight points, and never let up.

## Scoreboard

Eastern Conference				
	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Milwaukee	53	21	.716	—
x-Boston	51	23	.689	2
x-Philadelphia	49	25	.662	4
Cleveland	47	28	.627	6½
New York	42	33	.560	11½
Brooklyn	40	34	.541	13
Miami	40	35	.533	13½
Atlanta	37	37	.500	16
Toronto	36	38	.486	17
Chicago	35	38	.479	17½
Washington	33	41	.446	20
Indiana	33	42	.440	20½
Orlando	31	43	.419	22
Charlotte	24	51	.320	29½
Detroit	16	58	.216	37
Western Conference				
	W	L	Pct	GB
y-Denver	50	24	.676	—
y-Memphis	46	27	.630	3½
Sacramento	45	29	.608	5
Phoenix	39	35	.527	11
L.A. Clippers	39	36	.520	11½
Golden State	39	36	.520	11½
Minnesota	37	37	.500	13
L.A. Lakers	37	37	.500	13
New Orleans	37	37	.500	13
Oklahoma City	36	38	.486	14
Dallas	36	38	.486	14
Utah	35	39	.473	15
Portland	32	41	.438	17½
San Antonio	19	55	.257	31
Houston	18	56	.243	32

x-clinched playoff spot  
y-clinched division

### Friday's games

Washington 136, San Antonio 124  
Boston 120, Indiana 95  
Toronto 118, Detroit 97  
Memphis 151, Houston 114  
Charlotte 117, Dallas 109  
Milwaukee 144, Utah 116  
Chicago 124, Portland 96  
Sacramento 135, Phoenix 127  
Golden State 120, Philadelphia 112  
L.A. Lakers 116, Oklahoma City 111

### Saturday's games

Atlanta 143, Indiana 130  
Brooklyn 129, Miami 100  
Denver 129, Milwaukee 106  
Sacramento 121, Utah 113  
Phoenix 125, Philadelphia 105  
New Orleans 131, L.A. Clippers 110

### Sunday's games

Dallas at Charlotte  
Chicago at L.A. Lakers  
Brooklyn at Orlando  
Houston at Cleveland  
Memphis at Atlanta  
San Antonio at Boston  
Washington at Toronto  
Oklahoma City at Portland  
Minnesota at Golden State

### Monday's games

Dallas at Indiana  
Milwaukee at Detroit  
Houston at New York  
Phoenix at Utah  
Philadelphia at Denver  
Minnesota at Sacramento  
New Orleans at Portland  
Chicago at L.A. Clippers

### Tuesday's games

Boston at Washington  
Cleveland at Atlanta  
Miami at Toronto  
Charlotte at Oklahoma City  
Orlando at Memphis  
New Orleans at Golden State

# Nets aren't expecting Simmons to return this season

By TIM REYNOLDS

Associated Press

MIAMI — The Brooklyn Nets are not expecting guard Ben Simmons to play again this season, though no final decision will be made until the three-time All-Star meets with a back specialist, coach Jacque Vaughn said Saturday.

Simmons is currently sidelined with what the Nets say is a nerve impingement — the condition where tissue or bone compresses nerve fibers — in his back.

Saturday’s game at Miami marked the 16th in a row that Simmons has missed, and his 32nd absence in 74 Nets games this season.



Simmons

and then in all honesty, the realism that he’s probably not going to join us for the rest of the year ... certainty will come once he continues to be looked at by specialists.”

The Nets announced Friday that Simmons will continue being sidelined “while we determine the best long-term course of

“For me as a coach, there’s some things that I can control, some things that I can’t control,” Vaughn said. “What I can’t control is the impingement. What I can control is getting this group ready to play. And

treatment.” What that means still isn’t fully clear, and the Nets won’t know until Simmons is further examined.

“We’re going to lean into the specialist and the consultation and I think those answers will come from the specialists,” Vaughn said.

Simmons is a three-time All-Star who didn’t play at all last season, first citing mental health issues and then a back injury. He started last season with Philadelphia, then was sent to Brooklyn in the trade that brought James Harden to the 76ers.

He has missed games this season for a variety of reasons, including left knee soreness, a left calf strain and the back problem.

Simmons’ numbers this season are, by far, the worst of his career. He’s averaging only 6.9 points — he’s never been below 14.3 points per game in any of the other four seasons in which he played — and is shooting 44% from the foul line.

He last played Feb. 15, around the time he told reporters that he was uncertain about his role with the team and prompting Vaughn to say in response that the team also wasn’t sure how it would be able to use Simmons with new lineups following the trades of Kyrie Irving and Kevin Durant.

Simmons is making \$35.4 million this season, and is due \$78.2 million more over the next two seasons.



Scoreboard

Eastern Conference								
Atlantic Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
y-Boston	72	56	11	5	117	271	154	
Toronto	72	43	20	9	95	248	201	
Tampa Bay	74	42	26	6	90	253	230	
Florida	73	36	30	7	79	255	251	
Buffalo	72	35	31	6	76	258	267	
Ottawa	73	35	33	5	75	231	238	
Detroit	72	31	32	9	71	209	238	
Montreal	73	29	38	6	64	211	270	
Metropolitan Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
x-Carolina	71	47	16	8	102	238	184	
x-New Jersey	73	46	19	8	100	256	201	
N.Y. Rangers	73	43	20	10	96	247	198	
N.Y. Islanders	74	37	28	9	83	219	205	
Pittsburgh	73	36	27	10	82	235	236	
Washington	74	34	32	8	76	236	231	
Philadelphia	72	28	32	12	68	195	236	
Columbus	72	23	42	7	53	196	285	
Western Conference								
Central Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Minnesota	73	42	22	9	93	219	198	
Dallas	73	39	20	14	92	251	204	
Colorado	71	42	23	6	90	236	197	
Winnipeg	74	41	30	3	85	222	209	
Nashville	71	36	27	8	80	202	213	
St. Louis	72	33	33	6	72	230	261	
Arizona	73	27	34	12	66	204	253	
Chicago	72	24	42	6	54	177	258	
Pacific Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Vegas	73	46	21	6	98	242	205	
Los Angeles	72	42	20	10	94	251	230	
Edmonton	73	41	23	9	91	286	247	
Seattle	72	40	24	8	88	253	231	
Calgary	74	33	26	15	81	238	232	
Vancouver	72	33	34	5	71	247	268	
Anaheim	73	23	40	10	56	189	297	
San Jose	73	19	39	15	53	209	286	
<b>Note:</b> Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.								
x-clinched playoff spot								
y-clinched division								
<b>Saturday's games</b>								
Philadelphia 3, Detroit 0								
Boston 2, Tampa Bay 1								
Seattle 7, Nashville 2								
Los Angeles 4, Winnipeg 1								
Calgary 5, San Jose 3								
Buffalo 2, N.Y. Islanders 0								
Minnesota 3, Chicago 1								
N.Y. Rangers 4, Florida 3								
Montreal 8, Columbus 2								
Carolina 5, Toronto 3								
Vancouver 3, Dallas 1								
New Jersey 5, Ottawa 3								
Pittsburgh 4, Washington 3								
Vegas 4, Edmonton 3, OT								
St. Louis 6, Anaheim 3								
<b>Sunday's games</b>								
Colorado at Arizona								
Boston at Carolina								
Toronto at Nashville								
Vancouver at Chicago								
St. Louis at Los Angeles								
<b>Monday's games</b>								
Florida at Ottawa								
Montreal at Buffalo								
New Jersey at N.Y. Islanders								
Seattle at Minnesota								
Colorado at Anaheim								
Edmonton at Arizona								
<b>Tuesday's games</b>								
Columbus at N.Y. Rangers								
Montreal at Philadelphia								
Nashville at Boston								
Pittsburgh at Detroit								
Tampa Bay at Carolina								
Vancouver at St. Louis								
Dallas at Chicago								
Los Angeles at Calgary								
Edmonton at Vegas								
Winnipeg at San Jose								
<b>Wednesday's games</b>								
Florida at Toronto								
N.Y. Islanders at Washington								
Minnesota at Colorado								
<b>Scoring leaders</b>								
<b>Through Sunday</b>								
	GP	G	A	PTS				
Connor McDavid, EDM	73	60	79	139				
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	71	45	67	112				
Nikita Kucherov, TB	74	28	74	102				
Matthew Tkachuk, FLA	70	35	62	97				
David Pastrnak, BOS	72	49	46	95				
Mitch Marner, TOR	72	28	65	93				
Nathan MacKinnon, COL	60	31	62	93				
Elias Pettersson, VAN	70	33	58	91				
Jason Robertson, DAL	73	41	50	91				

ROUNDUP

Bruins clinch Atlantic Division title

Associated Press

BOSTON — The Boston Bruins are winning so much that clinching their division didn’t merit any celebration. Captain Patrice Bergeron didn’t even realize it had happened.

Garnet Hathaway scored the tiebreaking goal late in the second period and the NHL-best Boston Bruins wrapped up first place in the Atlantic Division with their sixth straight victory, 2-1 over the Tampa Bay Lightning, on Saturday.

The win was the Bruins’ 56th and moves them one behind the club record set in 1970-71. It also keeps them on pace to set the NHL record for victories in a regular season with 10 games left. The Detroit Red Wings won 62 in 1995-96 and Tampa Bay matched it in its final regular-season game (at TD Garden in Boston) in 2018-19.

“I forgot because things were happening so quickly,” Bruins first-year coach Jim Montgomery said when asked what he told his team about winning the division. “We didn’t actually talk about the Atlantic Division, but its a tremendous feat with 10 games left.”

Bergeron added a power-play goal for the Bruins and Linus Ullmark made 26 saves, raising his record to 36-5-1.

“Last game, you mean?” Bergeron said when asked about winning the division. Informed it had happened Saturday, he said: “Oh really.”

Victor Hedman had a shorthanded score for the Lightning and Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 32 shots. Tampa Bay has lost four straight.

“I thought we played physical. I thought we played the way we want to play,” Hedman said. “That’s kind of the mindset we went in with and talked (about) before the game. I’m proud of the guys the way we battled today.”

**Kings 4, Jets 1:** Viktor Arvidsson had two goals and host Los Angeles matched its longest point streak in franchise history.

Drew Doughty had a goal and an assist and Alex Iafallo netted a power-play goal for Los Angeles, which has earned points in 11 straight games for the fourth time. The last was 2013-14, when the Kings won their second Stanley Cup. Joonas Korpisalo stopped 25 shots for Los Angeles.

Arvidsson — who has 22 goals on the season — has four in the last four games, while Doughty has found the net four times in the last five games.

Pierre-Luc Dubois scored for Winnipeg and Connor Hellebuyck made 25 saves.

**Devils 5, Senators 3:** Jack Hughes had a goal and an assist,



MICHAEL DWYER/AP

The Bruins’ Garnet Hathaway (21) celebrates his goal with teammates during the second period against the Tampa Bay Lightning on Saturday in Boston. The Bruins won 2-1 to clinch the Atlantic Division.

Mackenzie Blackwood had 25 saves and host New Jersey defeated Ottawa to clinch a playoff berth.

New Jersey could have clinched its first postseason berth since 2018 with a win, but it happened before the first intermission when Florida lost to the New York Rangers in regulation.

Jesper Bratt, Dawson Mercer and Dougie Hamilton scored for the Devils, and Tomas Tatar added an empty-netter with 42.3 seconds left to put things away.

Brady Tkachuk, Thomas Chabot and Mark Kastelic scored for the Senators. Dylan Ferguson had 30 saves.

**Penguins 4, Capitals 3:** Evgeni Malkin beat Darcy Kuemper on a breakaway with 1:20 left in regulation to lift host Pittsburgh over Washington.

Alex Ovechkin scored his 42nd goal of the season and 822nd of his career during a furious third-period rally by the Capitals that saw them erase a three-goal deficit. Washington drew even when Dylan Strome flipped the puck into an open net with 2:44 to go in regulation.

Ryan Poehling and Chad Ruhwedel scored a little over two minutes apart in the second period for Pittsburgh. Jake Guentzel added his team-high 32nd goal early in the third before Washington scrambled back. Casey DeSmith made 31 saves.

**Rangers 4, Panthers 3:** Patrick Kane scored the tiebreaking goal early in the third period as visiting New York rallied from two goals down to beat Florida.

Kaapo Kakko, Alexis Lafre-

niere and Filip Chytil each had a goal and an assist to help New York win for the eighth time in 10 games. Jaroslav Halak stopped 31 shots to snap a four-game skid (0-2-2) and get his first win since Feb. 11 at Carolina.

**Kraken 7, Predators 2:** Eeli Tolvanen scored twice and Philipp Grubauer made 14 saves in visiting Seattle’s win over Nashville.

Jared McCann had a goal and two assists. Daniel Sprong, Adam Larsson, Matty Beniers and Oliver Bjorkstrand also scored for Seattle, which entered Saturday holding the top spot in the Western Conference’s wild-card race. Vince Dunn had two assists.

**Flyers 3, Red Wings 0:** Carter Hart made 29 saves, Scott Laughton scored and host Philadelphia won its third straight with a shutout of Detroit.

Kieffer Bellows also scored and Tyson Foerster had an empty-netter for Philadelphia in a matchup of two of the Eastern Conference’s worst teams.

**Sabres 2, Islanders 0:** Kyle Okposo scored with 6½ minutes remaining, Eric Comrie stopped 27 shots for his second career shutout and visiting Buffalo beat New York.

Jeff Skinner added an empty-net goal to help Buffalo win its second straight after losing the previous four.

**Flames 5, Sharks 3:** Tyler Tofoli scored two goals and host Calgary kept its playoff hopes alive by beating San Jose.

MacKenzie Weegar, Walker Duehr and Nazem Kadri added the others for Calgary, which won

for just the second time in its last nine games at the Saddledome (2-5-2). Jacob Markstrom made 28 saves. With the victory, the Flames climbed back to within four points of the Winnipeg Jets, who occupy the second wild-card spot in the Western Conference.

**Wild 3, Blackhawks 1:** Ryan Hartman scored with 1:11 remaining in the third period and host Minnesota topped Chicago.

Ryan Reaves and Frederick Gaudreau also scored for Minnesota, and Filip Gustavsson made 22 saves in goal.

**Canadiens 8, Blue Jackets 2:** Rafael Harvey-Pinard scored three goals for his first career hat trick and host Montreal beat Columbus.

**Hurricanes 5, Maple Leafs 3:** Sebastian Aho scored his team-leading 32nd goal of the season with 2:26 remaining to lift host Carolina past Toronto.

**Canucks 3, Stars 1:** Brock Boeser scored the go-ahead goal in the second period and visiting Vancouver held Dallas scoreless on four power plays, including one late in the third period.

**Golden Knights 4, Oilers 3 (OT):** Nicolas Roy scored the winning goal 2:26 in overtime, Jack Eichel had a goal and two assists and visiting Vegas topped Edmonton for its fourth straight victory.

Roy was left alone in front of Edmonton’s net and shot in his own rebound past Stuart Skinner for the win.

**Blues 6, Ducks 3:** Brayden Schenn and Kasperii Kapanen had two goals and an assist apiece in visiting St. Louis’ win over Anaheim.



## MLB

## SPRING TRAINING ROUNDUP

# Nola vs. deGrom highlights openers

By WILL GRAVES

Associated Press

**T**he Texas Rangers aren't wasting any time in seeing what they have in Jacob deGrom.

The ace right-hander, who signed a five-year, \$185 million contract with the Rangers in the offseason, will face Philadelphia's Aaron Nola when the 2023 Major League Baseball season opens on Thursday.

All 30 clubs will be in action that day for the first time since 1968.

This will be deGrom's fourth career opening day start. The two-time Cy Young winner got the nod from 2019-21 while pitching for the New York Mets. Texas has been cautious with deGrom during spring training after the 34-year-old reported tightness in his left side right before team workouts began in February.

His work over the past month has been solid enough that the Rangers did not hesitate in making deGrom the seventh different pitcher to get the ball on opening day for the team in the past seven years.

"Early, we had to hold him back a little bit, but we think he's good to go," new Texas manager Bruce Bochy said. "We have the day off after opening day, so we can cover him. We're not looking for him to take us real deep in the game or anything. So this just makes all of the sense in the world to us."

Nola, by contrast, has been a fixture for the Phillies. The 29-year-old will make his sixth opening day start for Philadelphia. Only Hall of Famers Robin Roberts (12) and Steve Carlton (10) have started more season openers in Phillies history.

Eight Cy Young winners in all will take the mound on March 30, including Corey Kluber, who will make his first start for Boston when the Red Sox face Baltimore. Kluber is the first newcomer to start Boston's first game since David Price in 2016.

Miami's Sandy Alcantara will be the first Marlins pitcher to start four straight openers when he takes on three-time Cy Young winner Max Scherzer and the New York Mets. Alcantara, a unanimous choice for the NL Cy Young in 2022, will break a tie with Josh Beckett (2003-05) and Josh Johnson (2010-12) for most opening-day starts in club history. Scherzer is one of five pitchers since 1900 to record 10 or more strikeouts on opening day at least three times in their career.

This is the second time in as many years that Cy Young winners will face each other on opening day. Cleveland's Shane Bieber and Kansas City's Zack Greinke met



ABBIE PARR/AP

**Rangers pitcher Jacob deGrom will start on Opening Day against Philadelphia and Aaron Nola. Texas made the announcement Friday and then deGrom struck out six in 3⅓ shutout innings on Saturday.**

last spring.

Angels star Shohei Ohtani, fresh off leading Japan to the World Baseball Classic title, will make his second straight opening day start for Los Angeles. Ohtani set career-highs last year in wins (15), ERA (2.33), strikeouts (216) and innings pitched (166). Ohtani and the Angels begin the season against Oakland left-hander Kyle Muller, who will be making his first opening-day start.

New York Yankees ace Gerrit Cole will join C.C. Sabathia, Jack Chesbro and Mel Stottlemyre as the only pitchers in team history to start four straight opening days

when the Yankees host the San Francisco Giants.

Framber Valdez will start for World Series champion Houston when the Astros host the Chicago White Sox.

The youngest opening-day starter will be Cincinnati's Hunter Greene. The hard-throwing 23-year-old will match up with Mitch Keller and the Pittsburgh Pirates. Greene struck out 164 hitters in 125⅓ innings as a rookie last season. Greene also pitched 7⅓ no-hit innings against the Pirates last April, only to take the loss.

Washington's Patrick Corbin is hopeful that getting the start on

opening day will lead to a better season than the ones he endured in 2021 and 2022. Corbin led the majors in losses each of the past two seasons, going 9-16 with a 5.82 ERA in 2021, then 6-19 with a 6.31 ERA last year. But with Stephen Strasburg still sidelined by injury and top prospect Cade Cavalli out for the year following Tommy John surgery, the Nationals are turning to one of the few pieces remaining from the team that won the 2019 World Series.

## Second opinion

Philadelphia Phillies first baseman Rhys Hoskins will get a second opinion on his injured left knee, but the team believes Hoskins will miss all of the 2023 season.

General manager Dave Dombrowski said while Hoskins will be re-evaluated, he would be "shocked" if the 30-year-old Hoskins did not require surgery to repair a torn ACL.

Hoskins hit 30 homers with 79 RBIs last season for the reigning National League champions.

He was backing up to play a chopper on Thursday when the ball popped out of his glove. Soon after, he fell to the ground and began clutching his left knee. Teammates gathered around him before he was taken off of the field.

The Phillies will turn to Darick Hall to replace Hoskins. Hall, 27, hit .250 with nine home runs and 16 RBIs in 41 games as a rookie in 2022.

"I do feel comfortable to say that we do like Darick Hall a lot," Dombrowski said. "We think he's ready

to step up and be a big-league player."

The injury was another blow for the Phillies, who will be without top pitching prospect Andrew Painter for another few weeks because of a sprained ligament in his right elbow. And slugger Bryce Harper isn't expected back until around the All-Star break after undergoing Tommy John surgery in November.

## Going the extra Mile(s)

No more contract uncertainty for St. Louis Cardinals starter Miles Mikolas. The veteran right-hander signed a three-year, \$55.75 million contract with the Cardinals that will carry through the 2025 season.

The new deal replaces his current contract, a four-year deal signed in February, 2019 that covered the 2020-23 seasons and was set to expire this fall. Mikolas will receive a \$5 million signing bonus payable July 1 and will make \$18.75 million in 2023 and \$16 million in each of the following two seasons. There are several award bonuses available to Mikolas, including \$250,000 for winning a Cy Young.

Mikolas is scheduled to make the second opening-day start of his career Thursday when the Cardinals host Toronto. Mikolas went 12-13 with a 3.29 ERA last season while helping St. Louis to the NL Central title.

"Miles stands among the top pitchers in the game today, and has continued to provide a steady presence for us both in the rotation and inside the clubhouse," St. Louis general manager John Mozeliak said in a statement.

## All in the family

Gerrit Cole's head was down as he walked toward the New York Yankees dugout at the end of his final spring training start on Friday when something — or make that someone — caught his eye: Cole's 2-year-old son Caden.

The younger Cole made his way to the railing next to the dugout, forcing Cole to switch gears immediately from his typically hyper-intense demeanor on the mound to well, simply being Dad. He patted Caden on the head and later got down on one knee to chat with Caden's younger brother Everett — born in January — and wife Amy close by.

"Honestly that's one of the top moments of my career," Cole told the YES Network after allowing one run in 5⅓ innings with no walks and three strikeouts. "That was really special. I look forward to more of those moments."



CHRIS O'MEARA/AP

**Phillies first baseman Rhys Hoskins lies on the ground after getting injured during a spring training game on Thursday.**



# WOMEN’S NCAA TOURNAMENT



Virginia Tech guard Georgia Amooore drives to the basket past Tennessee guard Tess Darby, right, during the first half of a Sweet 16 game of the NCAA Tournament on Saturday.

## ROUNDUP

# Virginia Tech keeps rolling, tops Tennessee in Sweet 16

*Associated Press*

Throughout this historic season for Virginia Tech, coach Kenny Brooks has repeated the belief that Elizabeth Kitley is the best player for the Hokies, but Georgia Amooore is the most important.

It was proven again Saturday with Amooore carrying Virginia Tech to a level it’s never reached in program history.

Amooore scored a career-high 29 points and the top-seeded Hokies advanced to the Elite Eight for the first time in school history with a 73-64 win over No. 4 seed Tennessee.

“I just want to win. All we have to do is keep winning to get people to talk about us, so we’ll keep trying to win,” Amooore said.

The Hokies (30-4) won their 14th straight game overall and advanced to a matchup with No. 3 seed Ohio State in the Seattle 3 Regional final on Monday night.

Amooore and the Hokies used a dominant stretch spanning the end of the second quarter and beginning of the third that built enough of a cushion to hold off Tennessee’s valiant rally over the final 12 minutes.

Amooore attempted 19 three-pointers in the Hokies’ second-round win, but shot only 14 this time around.

“She’s only doing now what we see all the time. When the kids have to go out and guard her, they really tighten up their shoestrings because they know that there’s something that can happen,” Brooks said. “But she’s phenomenal. She’s as good as anybody in the country, in my opinion. She’s

## Scoreboard

<b>SEATTLE 4</b> <b>Regional Semifinals</b> <b>Friday, March 24</b>	
Louisville 72, Mississippi 62	Iowa 87, Colorado 77
<b>Regional Championship</b> <b>Sunday, March 26</b>	
Iowa vs. Louisville	
<b>GREENVILLE 2</b> <b>Regional Semifinals</b> <b>Friday, March 24</b>	
Miami 70, Villanova 65	LSU 66, Utah 63
<b>Regional Championship</b> <b>Sunday, March 26</b>	
LSU vs. Miami	
<b>GREENVILLE 1</b> <b>Regional Semifinals</b> <b>Saturday, March 25</b>	
South Carolina 59, UCLA 43	Maryland 76, Notre Dame 59
<b>Regional Championship</b> <b>Monday, March 27</b>	
South Carolina vs. Maryland	
<b>SEATTLE 3</b> <b>Regional Semifinals</b> <b>Saturday, March 25</b>	
Virginia Tech 73, Tennessee 64	Ohio St. 73, UConn 61
<b>Regional Championship</b> <b>Monday, March 27</b>	
Virginia Tech vs. Ohio St.	

playing with the utmost confidence and she’s been playing like this ever since we really started this stretch.”

Kayana Traylor added 14 points and Kitley scored 12 points despite sitting a big chunk of the first half with foul trouble.

“I’m just so happy that I landed at such an amazing spot where we did exactly what we wanted to,” Kitley said. “And it hasn’t been easy and it’s taken coach Brooks a few years, but what he’s done with the program and the amount of time is incredible.”

Jordan Horston led Tennessee (25-12) with 17 points. Rickea

Jackson scored 15 and Jordan Walker added 12.

## Greenville 1 Region

**South Carolina 59, UCLA 43:** The reigning national champion Gamecocks turned in their latest overwhelming defense-and-rebounding-first performance to beat the Bruins.

Aaliyah Boston had eight points, 14 rebounds and two blocks, and Kamilla Cardoso had 10 points for the Gamecocks (35-0), the top overall tournament seed. It was South Carolina’s 41st consecutive victory and secured the program’s sixth trip to the Elite Eight under Dawn Staley.

The Gamecocks will play for their fifth trip to the Final Four in Monday’s Greenville 1 Region final against No. 2 seed Maryland.

Charisma Osborne scored 14 points to lead the Bruins (27-10), who were in the Sweet 16 for the first time since 2019.

**Maryland 76, Notre Dame 59:** Diamond Miller scored 14 of her 18 points in the final two quarters to lead the second-seeded Terrapins over the depleted Irish and into the Elite Eight for the first time in eight years.

Shyanne Sellers also had 18 points for Maryland (28-6), which used a third-quarter burst to put away Notre Dame (27-6). Maryland will play South Carolina on Monday for a Final Four berth.

Sonia Citron led the Fighting Irish with 14 points, their only double-figure scorer. Notre Dame was again without leading scorer Olivia Miles, who injured a knee in the ACC Tournament.

# Ohio State halts UConn’s streak

## Huskies had been to 14 straight Final Fours

**By DOUG FEINBERG**  
*Associated Press*

SEATTLE — UConn’s record Final Four run is over, thanks to a monumental performance by Ohio State.

The Buckeyes ended UConn’s unprecedented streak of reaching 14 consecutive Final Fours, beating the Huskies 73-61 on Saturday in the Sweet 16 of the women’s NCAA Tournament.

“The problem with streaks is the longer they go, you’re closer to it ending than you are to the beginning of it,” UConn coach Geno Auriemma said. “It’s just a matter of time. I mean, it’s not if it’s going to happen. It’s just a matter of time when it’s going to happen. And it was going to happen sooner rather than later.”

Cotie McMahon scored 23 points for the Buckeyes, who snapped their three-decade Elite Eight drought. The Buckeyes hadn’t made a regional final since 1993, when they eventually lost in the title game to Texas Tech.

“When I had the opportunity to come to Ohio State, this was certainly the goal and the vision to go farther than they have been going,” said coach Kevin McGuff, who had never beaten UConn. “It’s not easy to get here, obviously. But I’m really proud of our team and our program of how we’ve evolved to be able to get to this point.

“Like I said, I mean, I have so much respect for Geno and his staff and all that they have accomplished. So for us to be able to win this game in the Sweet 16 is obviously extremely significant. They’re just hard to beat. They’re so well-coached. So this is a great win for us.”

The third-seeded Buckeyes (28-7) forced No. 2 seed UConn (31-6) into 25 turnovers, ending the Huskies’ season before the nation-

al semifinals for the first time in 14 seasons. UConn hadn’t been eliminated this early since 2006.

“It’s an impossibility to do what we have done already,” Auriemma said. “What’s the next highest streak? ... And you take that in stride and you say, yeah, it was great while it lasted and it’s a credit to all the players that we had and all the times that you have to perform really, really well at this level.”

Ohio State will play Virginia Tech on Monday night in the Seattle 3 Region final with a trip to Dallas at stake. The Hokies beat Tennessee 73-64.

Ohio State, which had to rally from a double-digit deficit in the first round against James Madison, used full-court pressure to disrupt the Huskies’ offense.

“Our press is what we rely on, and sticking together and talking through it,” said Ohio State’s Jacy Sheldon, who had 17 points and went 10-for-10 from the foul line. “We knew UConn was going to be ready for us, so we knew we were going to have to stay consistent throughout the game.”

This has been the most trying year of Auriemma’s Hall of Fame career. UConn was beset by injuries and illnesses to both players and coaches, including a torn ACL that sidelined star Paige Bueckers all season. It got so bad the Huskies had to postpone a game when they didn’t have enough scholarship players.

“We picked the worst day to actually be doing the things that we’ve been struggling with all year long,” Auriemma said in a sideline interview during the game.

Lou Lopez Senechal scored 25 points for the Huskies, Azzi Fudd had 14, and Ohio State transfer Dorka Juhasz finished with 13 points and 10 rebounds.



UConn forward Aaliyah Edwards attempts to drive past Ohio State forward Eboni Walker, left, and guard Rikki Harris on Saturday.



# MEN'S NCAA TOURNAMENT

## Larrañaga asks for transparency on deals

### Miami coach says NIL agreements should be publicized by all schools

By ERIC OLSON  
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Miami coach Jim Larrañaga wants to know how much money athletes at other schools are making through name, image and likeness deals.

It's only fair, he said, since no school has had the values of its athletes' deals publicized more than Miami.



Pack

"I think everybody should be transparent," he said at a news conference Saturday ahead of his team's NCAA Tournament Midwest Region final against Texas. "Why is it hidden behind the curtain? Why? You can go on a website and check out anybody's salary in the NBA."

"There are a lot of schools that do the same thing we do. We just don't know about it because it's not public knowledge. Why not? Why are we afraid of sharing that information?"

Larrañaga said full disclosure is important for competitive reasons and also so the NCAA or Congress can have more information at their disposal when, and if, they bring clarity and uniformity to NIL rules.

Nijel Pack's two-year, \$800,000 contract with Miami booster John Ruiz is the most publicized NIL deal since the NCAA began allowing college athletes to make mon-

ey off their popularity. ACC player of the year Isaiah Wong's \$100,000 deal with Ruiz also became public knowledge.

Though the terms of twins Haley and Hanna Cavinder's deals have not been publicized, the two reportedly have made millions of dollars during their time playing women's basketball at Fresno State and now Miami.

Larrañaga said television networks, shoe companies, universities, athletic directors and coaches make lots of money off college sports and that the athletes deserve a cut.

"I hope they get as many great deals as they can because I think eventually they have to learn how to handle money," he said. "So at their young age, if they learn it, maybe they'll find out. I don't know how many of these guys are spending every cent they get, but I know a lot of NBA guys did that and ended up bankrupt. I think that's a learning experience. That's why you're in college anyway."

There have been concerns raised that publicizing the amount of money athletes make could cause jealousy and splinter locker rooms.

Larrañaga said NIL hasn't changed the dynamic, as far as he's concerned.

"These guys have to get along on the court and off the court," he said. "If you can't handle that as a coach, you probably couldn't han-



HANS PENNING/AP

**Miami head coach Jim Larrañaga wants schools to publish the name, image and likeness deals their athletes are making, for competitive reasons and so the NCAA or Congress can have more information at their disposal if they ever bring clarity and uniformity to NIL deals.**

dle it when a guy was complaining about playing time or 'I didn't get enough shots.'"

Wong disputed a report last year that, upon learning of Pack's deal, he threatened through his agent to transfer if his NIL deal wasn't beefed up.

Larrañaga said he's seen no problems between the two.

"They hit it off day one," he said. "Why? Because they love playing

basketball."

Jordan Miller vouched for his coach, especially when it comes to Pack's deal.

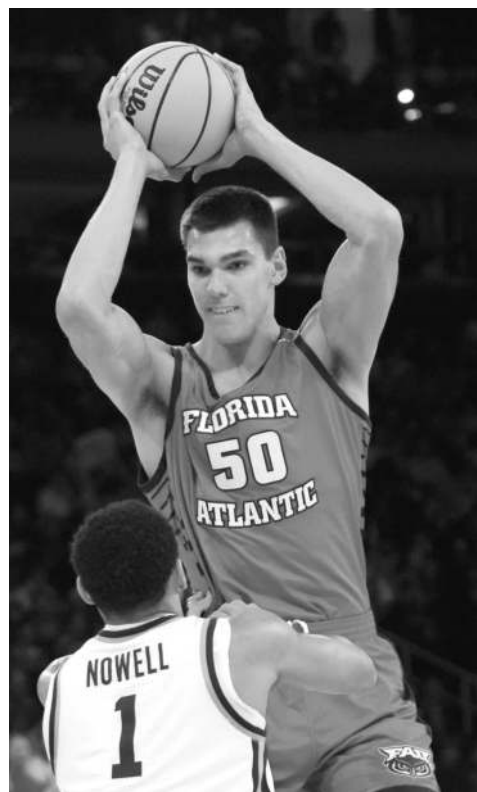
"At the end of the day, he's our teammate, and everybody's happy for him," Miller said.

Larrañaga said he couldn't speculate on whether athletes would be paid as employees of universities some day.

For now, the most important

thing is to set firm guidelines for NIL and to make sure athletes are educated about how to manage their money.

"Guys like Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson and LeBron (James), they make life-changing money, life-altering money," Larrañaga said. "These young kids, they might not get that chance beyond this. So they need an education about it."



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

**Florida Atlantic's Vladislav Goldin grabs a rebound over Kansas State's Markquis Nowell during Saturday's East Region final of the NCAA Tournament in New York.**

## First: K-State's Nowell didn't get much help

FROM PAGE 24

Wichita State in 2013. The Owls are the third No. 9 to get that far since seeding began in 1979.

"Honestly, all the things people say just fuels us to go out there and play even harder," said Bryan Greenlee, who scored 16 points before fouling out. "They can say whatever they want, say we're a Cinderella team, say we don't belong, but we've constantly proven people wrong all season."

Nowell, the 5-foot-8 native New Yorker — @MrNewYorkCity on Twitter — was incredible again at Madison Square Garden, with 30 points, 12 assists and five steals. In the Sweet 16, Nowell set the NCAA Tournament record with 19 assists in an overtime win against Michigan State. He didn't get enough help this time.

Nae'Qwan Tomlin was the only other player in double figures for Kansas State (26-10) with 14 points. Keyontae Johnson, the Wildcats' leading scorer, fouled out with nine points.

"Keyontae played 18 minutes, and that's why he was neutralized," said first-year Kansas State coach Jerome Tang, who took over a team that went 14-17 last season.

Martin scored 17 points, including a huge three-pointer down the stretch, the 7-foot-1 Vladislav Goldin had 14 points and 13 rebounds, and Michael Forrest made four clutch free throws in the final 20 seconds for the Owls, who held steady as the Wildcats made one last push.

Cam Carter made a three from the wing with 22.8 seconds left to cut FAU's lead to 75-74 and Kansas State sent Forrest to the line with 17.9 seconds left. The senior made both to make it a three-point game.

Nowell found Tomlin inside for a layup with 8.6 seconds left to cut the lead to one again, and again K-State sent Forrest to the line. With 6.9 remaining, he made them both.

With no timeouts left, Nowell rushed down the court, gave up the ball to Ismael Massoud outside the three-point line — and never got it back. FAU's Johnell Davis swiped it away and time ran out.

"I was trying to get Ish a shot," Nowell said. "Coach wanted Ish to set the screen, and I waved it off because I felt like on the right side of the court, that's where Ish hits most of his shots. And they closed out hard to him, and he didn't get his shot off."

Nowell was named the most outstanding player of the region after his final collegiate game, but FAU turned out to be the best team.

"I gave my heart and soul to this university, to this team," Nowell said. "I maximized everything I had inside of me to see these guys happy."

As the Owls built their lead in the final minutes, Kansas State fans who had packed the building became anxiously quiet and the "F-A-U!" chants started to rise.

The Owls rushed the floor to celebrate a historic moment for the school. FAU didn't even have a basketball program until the late 1980s and has only been in Division I for the last 30 years.

"I'm living the dream right now," Forrest said.

FAU held up to Tennessee's bully ball in the Sweet 16 and dropped a 40-point second half on the best defense in the nation to eliminate the Southeastern Conference team.

Against one of the Big 12's best, FAU dominated the boards, 44-22, and became the first team from C-USA to reach the Final Four since Memphis in 2008.



MEN'S NCAA TOURNAMENT



DAVID BECKER/AP

UConn guard Jordan Hawkins celebrates during the second half of Saturday's West Region final of the NCAA Tournament against Gonzaga in Las Vegas. Hawkins finished with 20 points.

UConn wallops Gonzaga to earn Final Four berth

By JOHN MARSHALL  
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The critique of UConn under coach Dan Hurley had been the program's inability to win in March.

Consecutive first-round NCAA Tournament exits meant the Huskies were good, not great — certainly not anywhere in league with the UConn women's program.

In perhaps the maddest March of all, the Huskies proved they are elite again, putting in another dominating performance a few hours after the UConn women had a rare misstep.

Jordan Hawkins scored 20 points and UConn overwhelmed its fourth straight NCAA Tournament opponent, earning its first trip to the Final Four in nine years with an 82-54 blowout of Gonzaga on Saturday night.

"I think it becomes a little bit of a mental hurdle, especially like early rounds of the NCAA Tournament where you feel like maybe the burden of the history and tradition and first-round games, maybe even second-round games," Hurley said. "The climb to get to this point has been real and it's been more challenging than I thought."

The Huskies (29-8) have felt right at home in their first extended March Madness run since winning the 2014 national championship, playing their best basketball of what had been an up-and-down season.

UConn controlled the usually efficient Bulldogs at both ends in

Scoreboard

<b>EAST REGIONAL Semifinals</b> <b>At New York</b> <b>Thursday, March 23</b>	
FAU 62, Tennessee 55	
Kansas St. 98, Michigan St. 93, OT	
<b>Regional Championship</b> <b>Saturday, March 25</b>	
FAU 79, Kansas St. 76	
<b>SOUTH REGIONAL Semifinals</b> <b>At Louisville, Ky.</b> <b>Friday, March 24</b>	
San Diego St. 71, Alabama 64	
Creighton 86, Princeton 75	
<b>Regional Championship</b> <b>Sunday, March 26</b>	
San Diego St. vs. Creighton	
<b>MIDWEST REGIONAL Semifinals</b> <b>At Kansas City, Mo.</b> <b>Friday, March 24</b>	
Miami 89, Houston 75	
Texas 83, Xavier 71	
<b>Regional Championship</b> <b>Sunday, March 26</b>	
Texas vs. Miami	
<b>WEST REGIONAL Semifinals</b> <b>At Paradise, Nev.</b> <b>Thursday, March 23</b>	
UConn 88, Arkansas 65	
Gonzaga 79, UCLA 76	
<b>Regional Championship</b> <b>Saturday, March 25</b>	
UConn 82, Gonzaga 54	
<b>FINAL FOUR</b> <b>At Houston</b> <b>National Semifinals</b> <b>Saturday, April 1</b>	
San Diego St.-Creighton winner vs. FAU	
Texas-Miami winner vs. UConn	
<b>National Championship</b> <b>Monday, April 3</b>	
Semifinal winners	

the West Region final, building a 23-point lead early in the second half to waltz right into the final section of the bracket.

Those first-round exits are now well in the rearview mirror. So is that midseason funk.

These elite Huskies did what the UConn women couldn't for once and are headed to Houston, where they will play either Texas

or Miami.

UConn has a pretty good track record once it gets this far, too: The Huskies are 8-1 all-time in Final Four games.

"We've got a lot to prove," said Andre Jackson Jr., who had eight points, 10 assists and nine rebounds. "We still have a chip on our shoulder."

The Bulldogs (31-6) didn't have the same second-half magic they had in a last-second win over UCLA in the Elite Eight.

Gonzaga allowed UConn to go on a late run to lead by seven at halftime and fell completely apart after All-American Drew Timme went to the bench with his fourth foul early in the second half.

The Zags shot 33% from the field — 7-for-29 in the second half — and went 2-for-20 from three-point range to stumble in their bid for a third Final Four since 2017.

"UConn was just terrific tonight and we didn't have any answers, especially when kind of everything really didn't bounce our way," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said. "And we can't absorb a game like that when our offense is as bad as it was tonight."

Alex Karaban scored 12 points and Adama Sanogo had 10 points and 10 rebounds for UConn.

Timme had 12 points and 10 rebounds, receiving a warm ovation after being taken out of his final collegiate game with 1:50 left.

The Zags started off like they had a Vegas hangover, firing off two air-balled three-pointers and a wild runner by Timme.

Bulldogs' Timme ends storied career

By MARK ANDERSON  
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Gonzaga was down 10 points early in the second half Saturday night in the West Region final against UConn, but Julian Strawther had just secured a defensive rebound, and perhaps the Bulldogs had a run in them.

But then came a whistle. Zags forward Drew Timme had picked up his fourth foul. Shortly thereafter, it became clear that Gonzaga's NCAA Tournament run would end.

Without him, the third-seeded Bulldogs weren't a match for No. 4 seed UConn, which pulled away to win 82-54 and end Timme's college career.

Timme, who gained fame for his masterful inside moves and world-class mustache, put together perhaps the finest college career in recent memory. He was a throwback for his crafty low-post game and for spending four years at the same school.

"I'm just so thankful that the program and the place took me for who I was," Timme said. "They didn't ask me to be anybody but myself. I'm forever in debt for Gonzaga, just the love I have for just everyone that helped me and made this journey so special and so fun. I just don't think I could ever repay that."

"I'd do anything for Gonzaga. I always will. This isn't a goodbye; it's a see-you-later."

The emotions were clear on Timme's red face, which he covered with a towel a handful of times. He sniffled as the postgame news conference was about to begin.

But Timme held it together when the questions came, including about the fourth foul less than three minutes into the second half. That came after he was whistled for a charge just 26 seconds into the half.

"The bottom line is they were the better team tonight," Timme said of UConn. "They made more shots. They got the 50-50 balls. Regardless of whether we want to say what-ifs, the refs didn't control that game."

Timme, who had 12 points and 10 rebounds against the Huskies, departs knowing he left a mark not only at Gonzaga but on college hoops.

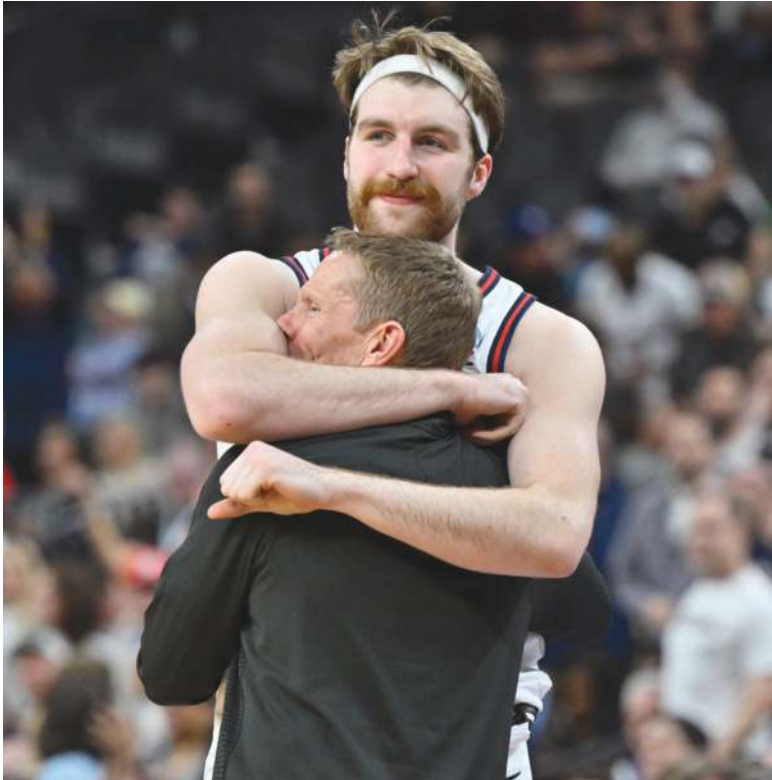
He owns the Gonzaga record with 2,307 points and led the Zags to the Sweet 16 in each of the past three seasons and the national title game in 2021.

"I think he's one of the greatest college players in this modern era," coach Mark Few said. "He's won at the highest level. We leaned on him as hard as we've ever leaned on a player, and he delivered time and time and time again."

"But that's just a small piece of it. He's a bigger-than-life character. It was a blast to coach him."

Gonzaga will have a new man in the middle next season, and the Bulldogs got a taste of what that experience will be like when Timme sat for about three minutes and UConn rolled to a 58-37 lead.

By the time Timme re-entered the game, the Huskies were well on their way to their fourth double-digit victory in as many games.



DAVID BECKER/AP

Gonzaga forward Drew Timme hugs head coach Mark Few after being taken out of the game during the final minutes of Saturday's 82-54 loss to Connecticut in the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament.



# SPORTS

**End of an impressive streak**  
Ohio State denies UConn 15th straight  
Final Four » **Women's NCAA Tournament, Page 21**



**MEN'S NCAA TOURNAMENT**

Florida Atlantic's Alijah Martin dunks over Kansas State's David N'Guessan during the first half of Saturday's Elite Eight game of the NCAA Tournament in New York.  
PHOTOS BY ADAM HUNGER/AP

## FAU reaches first Final Four



Florida Atlantic head coach Dusty May cuts a piece of the the net after the Owls won 79-76 to earn a spot in the Final Four.

No. 9 seed Owls withstand Nowell, K-State

BY RALPH D. RUSSO  
*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — Alijah Martin sent a message early for upstart Florida Atlantic, soaring to the basket for a one-handed jam and chirping with the Kansas State players about his poster moment at Madison Square Garden.

“They’re going to label us whatever, but we’re some pit bulls and Rottweilers,” Martin said.

Now they can call the ninth-seeded Owls a Final Four team.

Martin and FAU withstood another huge game by Kansas State’s Markquis Nowell and brushed off a deficit in the final eight minutes to beat the Wildcats 79-76 on Saturday night.

FAU (35-3), making its second appearance in the NCAA Tournament and first since 2002, won the East Region and will play the winner of Sunday’s South Region final between Creighton and San Diego State.

### INSIDE

Connecticut routs Gonzaga to win West Region final  
**Page 23**

“I expect the prognosticators to pick us fifth in the Final Four,” fifth-year FAU coach Dusty May said.

In one of the most unpredictable NCAA Tournaments ever — all four No. 1 seeds were out by the Elite Eight — the Owls from Conference USA typify the madness.

The winningest team in Division I this season had never won an NCAA Tournament game before ripping off four straight, all by single digits, to become the first No. 9 seed to reach the Final Four since

**SEE FIRST ON PAGE 22**

## Red-hot Bruins clinch Atlantic Division title » NHL, Page 19

