SAVANNAH, Ga. — Veterans of America’s longest war are finding themselves torn as the U.S. signs a potentially historic peace accord with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

For many, the U.S. is long overdue in withdrawing its forces after more than 18 years of fighting. Others question the trustworthiness of the Taliban, whose hard-line government the U.S.-led forces overthrew in 2001. Skeptics worry the Taliban’s re-integration could cause Afghanistan to backslide on such issues as human rights.

“If they sign a peace treaty and Afghanistan goes back to the Taliban or Sharia law, then it’s all been for nothing,” said former Army Staff Sgt. Will Blackburn of Hinesville, Ga.

Afghan vets conflicted on agreement

By Russ Bynum
Associated Press

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Turning point

Deal between US, Taliban could lead to full withdrawal in 14 months

J.P. Lawrence
Stars and Stripes

DOHA, Qatar — The United States and its foreign allies will withdraw all forces within 14 months and end the war in Afghanistan if the Taliban renounces terror groups and abides by an agreement signed in Doha on Saturday.

The agreement mandates a phased drawdown of American, NATO and foreign partner troops from Afghanistan and a disavowal of al-Qaida and other terror groups by the Taliban.

It also calls for intra-Afghan talks to include the Taliban and the government in Kabul beginning March 10, as well as security cooperation by all sides in fighting the Islamic State.

Zalmay Khalilzad, America’s special envoy for Afghan reconciliation, signed the deal along with Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Taliban’s top political leader. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was the highest-ranking U.S. official to attend.

President Donald Trump said the agreement is a “powerful path forward to end the war” and to bring the troops home, should the deal’s commitments be honored.

“I thank the hundreds of thousands of American warriors who have proudly

SEE DEAL ON PAGE 4

VIRUS OUTBREAK

Officials confirm first coronavirus death in US

Page 6

MUSIC

New BTS album charts path forward as K-pop enters exciting new era

Page 12

Senior Bowl experience worthwhile for some NFL prospects

Back page
FCC proposes fines for sharing users’ phone data

Associated Press

NEW YORK — U.S. regulators have proposed fining the four major U.S. phone companies a total of $186 million combined for improperly disclosing customers’ real-time location to other organizations it sold the data to. The phone companies can object, and the amounts could change.

Critics said the FCC took too long, and the proposed fines were too low.

“Instead of meeting its obligation to come down hard on the wireless carriers that are guilty in this case, the FCC dragged its feet and issued penalties that let these companies off easy,” said Sen. Edward Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat.

Lisa Hayes of the advocacy group Center for Democracy & Technology said the FCC’s “weak enforcement response” demonstrate why the U.S. needs a comprehensive privacy law.

Location data makes it possible to identify the whereabouts of nearly any phone in the U.S. within seconds. Federal law requires telecommunications companies protect the confidentiality of some customer data, including location information.

EXCHANGE RATES

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INTEREST RATES

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| Discount rate         | 2.25 |
| Federal funds market rate | 1.55 |
| 3-month bill          | 1.42 |
| 30-year bond          | 1.75 |

WEATHER OUTLOOK

The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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Navy wants total of 390 manned vessels

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly said Friday that the service wants to increase the fleet to 390 manned ships, with an additional 45 unmanned vessels.

That would dramatically increase the number of combat ships in the Navy at a time when ship-building funds in the proposed budget for fiscal year 2021 have decreased and some appropriated money for ships has been diverted to build the wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Modly did not say how soon the Navy needed to acquire that many ships.

During a House Armed Services Committee hearing Thursday, Modly told lawmakers that the goal for the Navy is to reach 355 ships by 2030. That ship count is based on the 2016 Force Structure Assessment that has since become a requirement for the sea service. The Navy is expected to have 297 ships this year.

On Friday, Modly said he’s been calling for a fleet of “355 plus” ships since he was sworn in as undersecretary in 2017. Modly’s remarks Friday were made during a discussion on Navy modernization and competing against China and Russia at the Brookings Institute, a Washington-based think tank.

The new ship total is in the Integrated Force Structure Assessment that has been sent to Defense Secretary Mark Esper for approval.

Unmanned vessels will be part of the future mix of ships in the fleet, he said, but the question remains whether they will be counted as part of total battle force.

“So our force structure is probably, if you include unmanned in the force structure assessment that we just did, the number is like 435 with unmanned in there. And it’s like 390 without unmanned in there,” he said.

The Navy is investing in two unmanned surface vessels in the 2021 budget proposal. But the value of the ships still must be determined, Modly said.

Navy officials did not provide further details Friday on Modly’s comments about the new fleet numbers.

Congress is still waiting for the Pentagon to submit its 30-year shipbuilding plan, which is required by law.

It’s being held up because Esper wants to consider it with the new force structure assessment, Modly said.

The assessment details the Navy’s plan for its future fleet, such as how many aircraft carriers, submarines and destroyers that the service needs to compete against Russia and China.

Calif. Marine becomes first woman to lead howitzer unit

BY ANDREW DYER  
The San Diego Union-Tribune

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — A Marine stationed at Camp Pendleton became the first woman to graduate from the Corps’ Howitzer Section Chief Course this month, taking on a combat artillery leadership role once reserved for men.

As a newly minted section chief, it will be the job of Cpl. Julianna Yakovac, 21, of 1st Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, to lead a crew.

The M777 Howitzer is a cannon that can hit targets from almost 20 miles away. It requires a crew of at least six Marines to fire.

A howitzer section chief is the equivalent of an infantry squad leader, said Lt. Col. David Tumanjan, the executive officer of the 11th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division.

“These (noncommissioned officers) are expected to run a gun crew of 8-to-10 Marines and are responsible for every bit of technical knowledge associated with it — where it’s placed, firing, movement, and local security around that howitzer,” Tumanjan said in a statement.

Yakovac said she does not see herself as a trailblazer. She was quick to credit her male counterparts for where she is now.

“I joined because I wanted to be a part of a great unit,” Yakovac said Thursday. The Marine, originally from Olympia, Wash., had just returned from field exercises at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms.

“I wouldn’t say I’m a trailblazer — when I joined I didn’t have that intention,” she said. “I’m just happy to have the same opportunity everyone else has. It’s not any more of an accomplishment than my male counterparts.”

Not just for golf fans, the event brought out a range of lifestyle devotees for top-end dining options, indulgent experiences, and gracious hospitality.

While Yakovac downplays the significance of what she’s doing, it’s not the first time she’s made the news.

She was featured in a 2019 CBS This Morning story about women serving in Marine Corps combat jobs.

The Marines, under orders from then-Defense Secretary Ash Carter, opened combat jobs to women in 2016. Men make up more than 90% of the Corps, which is the largest gender disparity of all military branches.

When she entered, Yakovac said, she didn’t know there had been any restrictions or that rules had changed — she just wanted to be in the field.

“ ’I found out she’d be firing artillery, she was thrilled. ’It was extremely exciting,’ she said. ’It’s been more exciting as I’ve gone,’ Yakovac said.

“While she reported to her unit she was one of two women there, but now, two years later, there are a lot more,” she added.

Yakovac said her male counterparts have been great teammates.

“I’ve been fortunate to have great experiences,” she said. “I’ve never been talked down to; I’ve been built up.”

There was early resistance in the Marine Corps to opening some of the combat jobs to women in 2016. Men make up more than 90% of the Corps, which is the largest gender disparity of all military branches.

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“ ”
### Deal: Intra-Afghan meetings will begin to determine rights, cease-fires and integration

**WAR ON TERRORISM**

**FROM FRONT PAGE**

served in Afghanistan,” Trump said in a statement Friday.

The U.S. is expected to reduce its troop strength in Afghanistan from about 12,000 to 8,600 within 135 days, the agreement states. All U.S. troops and their allies would also come down from five unspecified bases.

Remaining troops would leave within 14 months of Saturday’s accord.

A reduction in troops to 8,600, about the number in Afghanistan when President Donald Trump took office in 2017, would not harm a counterterrorism mission that combats ISIS and other groups, U.S. military officials have said since last fall.

And about 8,500 non-U.S. NATO and foreign partner troops in Afghanistan, who along with the U.S. support an Afghan train- ing and advising mission, would also draw down proportionally by mid-July under the agreement.

The U.S. reserves the right to halt its withdrawal if the Taliban don’t meet the conditions of the agreement.

“We will closely watch the Taliban’s compliance with their commitments and calibrate the pace of our withdrawal to their actions,” Pompeo said Saturday. “This is how we will ensure that Afghanistan never again serves as a base for international terrorists.”

Up to 5,000 Taliban prisoners and 1,000 Afghan prisoners aligned with the Taliban will be released by the first day of the planned intra-Afghan talks under the terms of the agreement.

These intra-Afghan negotia- tions could take issues such as long-term cease-fire, the country’s constitution, the rights of women and minorities, and the inclusion of the U.S. in the fight against IslamicState fighters into the government and military.

Calling the agreement good for both Afghanistan and the interna- tional community, the Taliban’s

Baradar said through a translator that the agreement will help rebuild Afghanistan.

“With the withdrawal of all foreign forces in Afghanistan, the Afghan nation under the Islamic regime will take its relief and emb- bark on a new prosperous life,” Baradar said.

Peace with the Taliban comes with mixed reactions from many in Afghanistan, which has seen nearly continuous fighting ever since the Soviet Union’s inva- sion in 1979. Some fear that basic rights and freedoms may be lost, as a group that in the 1990s banned most popular entertain- ment and imposed severe restrictions on women regains influence.

The Doha agreement follows 10 rounds of negotiations, much of which occurred in 2019, a year which the U.S. carried out a re- cord-setting number of airstrikes on the Taliban and ISIS.

The talks seemed near a deal in September, only to be abruptly called off after a suicide bombing claimed the life of a U.S. soldier in Kabul.

Saturday’s signing came after 1,000 hours of partial truce that halted most offensive operations in Afghanistan, meant to test the Taliban’s commitment to stop- ping its fighters.

Despite scattered attacks, lev- els of violence reached their low- est in four years, Pompeo said in his speech.

“It was not perfect, but the Taliban demonstrated, even if only for a week, that when they have the will to be peaceful, they can be peaceful,” Pompeo said during the ceremony.

After the signing, Pompeo told reporters that the U.S. would not hesitate to “do what we need to protect American lives” if the Taliban diverge from the new agreement.

“Today, we’re realists,” Pom- peo said. “We are seizing the best opportunity for peace in a genera- tion, built on the hard work of our soldiers, diplomats, business- men, civil society, Taliban leaders and the Afghans themselves.”

Defense Secretary Mark Esper, who appeared Saturday with Af- gan President Ashraf Ghani and NATO head Jens Stoltenberg in Kabul, called on the milita- nts to continue the reduction in vio- lence and said the U.S. will close- ly watch their actions “to judge whether their efforts towards peace are in good faith.”

**We are seizing the best opportunity or peace.**

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**SOURCE:**

**Secretary of State Mike Pompeo**

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**FROM FRONT PAGE**

Though doubtful the Taliban will abide by the peace deal, Blackburn said he’s ready for hos- tilities to end. He first deployed to Afghanistan in 2004 with an infantry unit of the Army’s 10th Mountain Division. A decade later, his son headed overseas for the same fight.

“Anything that would get us out of that country, I will support fully,” said Blackburn, 58, who left the Army in 2010.

Other Afghanistan veterans interviewed by The Associated Press said that, while the peace deal may not be perfect, it’s time to end the war that began weeks after the 9/11 terror attacks.

The war has been heavy. More than 2,300 U.S. service members have been killed and more than 20,600 others wounded in Af- ghistan since the war began in October 2001.

Former Sgt. Michael Carra- squillo served as an infantryman in the Army’s 173rd Airborne Brigade when his unit was ambu- lanced in 2008. Shot five times while dragging a wounded comrade to safety, Car- rasquillo spent the next two years in the hospital and underwent dozens of surgeries.

“Peace in any way, shape or form is a good thing,” said Car- rasquillo, 36, of Monrovia, Md., who leads a support group for wounded veterans through the Wounded Warrior Project. “We don’t want more guys to die or to get injured.”

The peace plan calls for the Trump administration to initially draw down U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan from 13,000 to 8,600. A timetable for a complete U.S. withdrawal hasn’t been verified.

In return, the Taliban promise not to let extremists use the coun- try to stage attacks on the U.S. or its allies. The Taliban and repre- sentatives from Kabul must negoti- ate a framework for a postwar Afghanistan.

“I know the Taliban, and I never thought they could be trustworthy,” said Cmdr. Tom Porter of the U.S. Navy Reserve, who oversaw media operations in Afghanistan during the U.S.-led troop surge that began in 2010. “I knew they have a different view of time and history than we do.”

Porter said he’s concerned the Taliban could abide by the ac- cord long enough to see Ameri- can forces leave, then try to wrest control of Afghanistan under an assumption the U.S. won’t be will- ing to return for another fight.

“If you’re the Taliban, people have come and gone and invaded that place for thousands of years,” said Porter, head of govern- ment affairs in Washington for the group Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. “Ghenghis Khan has come and gone. They’ve got a long view of things.”

Former Army Capt. Emily Miller’s job focused on commu- nicating with Afghan women and children on deployments in 2011 and 2012 to assist U.S. spe- cial operations forces. She said protecting women’s rights and human rights overall needs to be a priority.

Overall, Miller said, she’s thrilled to see a chance for Af- ghistan to break from its long history of perpetual war.

“There is this new generation and I think it’s really time to un- lock that hope and optimism of Afghans that are really open to peace,” she said. “What’s the al- ternative to peace? This endless cycle of violence doesn’t really lead anywhere.”

At Fort Stewart in southeast Georgia, Army Staff Sgt. Phillip Wright thinks of himself as “one of the older guys” at age 33. He deployed to Kabul in 2010 with a field artillery unit to help train Afghanistan’s army.

Nowadays, Wright works along- side many young American sol- diers who’ve never been overseas.

He thinks it’s time for Ameri- can military to stand on its own after years of U.S. mentoring.

“We were able to train an army for another country. So I do be- lieve there has been a lot of good that’s come out of it,” he said.

There’s no hesitation from Chris Collins, a former Army Re- servist, when asked if it’s time for a U.S. exit.

“It’s not worth one more American life,” said Collins, 38.

“Enough is enough.”

Collins’ unit from Missouri de- ployed to neighboring Uzbekistan in 2004 to run a supply warehouse for U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

Returning as a civilian con- tractor five years later, he concluded little had changed.

“Let’s go home,” said Collins, now training to be a nurse. “We can’t stay there forever. They don’t want us there. It’s no differ- ent today than it was 18 years ago, essentially.”
Air Force anthem now more gender-neutral

Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — The U.S. Air Force changed lyrics in its service anthem by dropping gender references that exclude women.

The change announced Thursday by the Air Force chief of staff, Gen. David Goldfein, is designed to make the service friendlier to women, The Gazette reports.

“Our song must reflect our history, the inspiring service and accomplishments of all who’ve served, and the rich diversity that makes today’s Air Force indisputably the strongest and most capable in the world,” Goldfein wrote in a message to airmen, cadets and academy alumni.

The change originated when female Air Force Academy cadets asked Goldfein why the anthem’s third verse hailed the bravery of men, but not women.

The third verse is meaningful to cadets at the academy near Colorado Springs, where it is sung after sports victories, but students took issue with the third line: “To a friend we send a message of his brother men who fly.”

In the new version, the line is changed to read, “To a friend we send a message of the brave who serve on high.”

Other gender references in the song remain, including “at ’em boys, give ’er the gun.”

“It’s the right thing to do,” said Lt. Gen. Jay Silveria, the academy superintendent, who added that females are more than a demographic.

They are among our top performers, vital to our success as an institution and as a military,” Silveria said.

The “brother men” line was written into the song in 1938, when only men could fly Army Air Corps planes. Women joined the Air Corps in World War II, but were limited to flying planes from factories to forward bases.

The Air Force Academy, established in 1954, was open only to males until 1976.

Since 2003, the academy has had its first female commandant, dean and superintendent.

Women are seeking admittance in unprecedented numbers, making up 32% of the academy class of 2024 entering in June.

Judge rules Navy pier funds can’t be used to build wall

BY GENE JOHNSON

Associated Press

SEATTLE — President Donald Trump may not divert $89 million intended for a military construction project in Washington state to build his border wall, a U.S. judge in Seattle ruled Thursday.

The U.S. Supreme Court and some other courts have said the administration can begin diverting billions of dollars in military spending to the wall, and work has been done on some sections.

But U.S. District Judge Barbara Rothstein ruled Thursday that a case brought by Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson contains different issues which are not covered by those decisions.

Rothstein found that diverting the money is unlawful because Congress — which has the power of the purse under the Constitution — specifically barred Trump from spending additional money on the wall. The decision was also unlawful because it would take money that Congress appropriated for military construction and use it for domestic law enforcement, she said.

“Congress repeatedly and deliberately declined to appropriate the full funds the President requested for a border wall along the southern border of the United States,” Rothstein wrote.

While Trump long insisted that Mexico would pay for the wall, that hasn’t been the case. Congress in late 2018 and early 2019 refused to give Trump all of the money he wanted for a border wall, leading to a 35-day partial government shutdown. Lawmakers eventually gave him $1.3 billion.

In reaction, Trump declared a national emergency. The administration claimed that allowed him to shift almost three times that much money — $3.6 billion — from military accounts to build a combined 175 miles of fencing in California, Arizona, Texas and New Mexico.

The U.S. Supreme Court last summer lifted a court order that prevented the government from spending $2.5 billion from the Defense Department’s money for military pensions and anti-drug efforts.

The $89 million was intended for a pier at Naval Base Kitsap, the base west of Seattle where the Pacific fleet of nuclear submarines is based.

The Washington attorney general said losing that construction money would cost the state $2.6 million in tax revenue over the next two years, and that was enough to give Washington standing to challenge the plans in court.

The judge agreed.

Threat great in West Africa where Al-Qaida, ISIS cooperate

BY CARLEY PETESCH

Associated Press

THIES, Senegal — The only al-Qaida and the Islamic State group are cooperating in West Africa’s sprawling Sahel region, giving the extremists greater depth as they push into new areas, according to the commander of the U.S. military’s special forces in Africa.

“I believe that if it’s left unchecked it could very easily develop into a great threat to the West and the United States,” U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Dagvin Anderson told The Associated Press in an interview this week.

The leader of U.S. Special Operations Command in the Sahel said the cooperation allows the extremists to appeal to a wider audience in a largely rural region where government presence is sparse and frustration with unemployment is high.

“Islamic State is much more aggressive and blunt, and so in some ways they appear to be the greater threat,” he said. But al-Qaida, which continues to quietly expand, is “for us the longer strategic concern.”

The judge agreed.

He spoke on the sidelines of the U.S. military’s annual counterterrorism exercise in West Africa, currently the most active region for extremists on the continent.

The alarming new collaboration between al-Qaida and ISIS is a result of ethnic ties in the Sahel region for extremists the world over. The past year has seen a surge in deadly violence in the Sahel, with more than 2,600 people killed and more than half a million displaced in Burkina Faso alone.

The fighters are funding themselves with kidnapping for ransom as they attempt to control access to markets via taxation methods, he said. They also are likely eyeing what has been a source of income for centuries: gold.

While al-Qaida affiliates work toward establishing safe havens, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara is working to destabilize local governance, control territories and rally people to their cause, he said.

The strategy for countering the growing threat from the patchwork of extremist groups is a whole-of-government, one that goes beyond military efforts, Anderson said: “There’s no easy answer.”

African partners need to invest in governance, he emphasized, though international involvement is necessary.

The French lead the military effort in the Sahel with more than 5,000 forces and they hope to bring in more European partners. But the French have urged the U.S. to reconsider any cuts to its already small military footprint of about 1,400 personnel in West Africa. The U.S. has about 6,000 personnel on the continent.

Anderson countered that the U.S. is already doing a lot in the Sahel through the State Department, a large USAID presence and investment.

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With very small engagement, the U.S. can still help countries develop the capabilities to build coalitions and share intelligence, Anderson said.

“It’s going to take all these nations working together, but also it’s going to have to be African solutions to an African problem,” he said.
First coronavirus death in US confirmed

By Mari Yamaguchi
Associated Press

TOKYO — The coronavirus outbreak's impact on the world economy grew more alarming on Saturday.

China's manufacturing plunged in February by an even wider margin than expected after efforts to contain the virus outbreak shut down much of the world's second-largest economy, an official survey showed.

The survey, coming as global stock markets fall sharply on fears that the virus will spread abroad, adds to mounting evidence of the vast cost of the disease that emerged in central China in December and its economic impact worldwide.

The monthly purchasing managers' index released by the Chinese statistics agency and an industry group fell to 35.7 from January's 50 on a 100-point scale on which numbers below 50 indicate activity contracting.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced a 270 billion yen ($2.5 billion) emergency economic package to help fight the virus as he sought the public's support for his government's fight against the outbreak. Abe said at a news conference that Japan is at critical juncture to determine whether the country can keep the outbreak under control ahead of the Tokyo summer Olympics.

Abe, whose announcement this past week of a plan to close all schools for more than a month through the end of the Japanese academic year sparked public criticism, said the emergency package includes financial support for parents and their employers affected by the school closures.

Iran and hasn't been tested for the virus, and also barred public gatherings for two weeks.

But if COVID-19 becomes a global pandemic, economists expect the impact could be much worse, with the U.S. and other global economies falling into recession.

By Kim Gabel
Stars and Stripes

SEoul, South Korea — The wife of an American soldier who tested positive for the new coronavirus also has been infected, the military said Saturday.

As of Saturday, the total number of confirmed cases in South Korea soared past 3,000.

The soldier was the first U.S. service member to contract the pneumonia-like illness, which has spread rapidly since first appearing in China late last year.

His wife and their baby were transported from Daegu to an isolation unit at Camp Humphreys where the soldier also is being held, officials said.

The woman had been in self-quarantine since Wednesday, when her husband tested positive, according to U.S. Forces Korea. She also was confirmed to have the virus earlier Sunday.

“Her’s now been admitted to an isolation room at the U.S. hospi," the command said, adding it would not provide information about the child without the parents' consent.

“The patient has not been in contact with any other USFK or BTS. Tourist arrivals in Thailand are down 50% compared with a year ago, and in Italy — which has reported the most cases of any country outside of Asia — hotel bookings are falling and Premier Giuseppe Conte raised the specter of recession.

Economists already are bracing for a steep decline in the world economy as governments around the world keep citizens at home and businesses closed due to the coronavirus outbreak.
Trump nominates Ratcliffe to be top intelligence official, again

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Friday picked Rep. John Ratcliffe again to be the nation’s top intelligence official, just months after abruptly ending an earlier effort to install him amid bipartisan criticism that the Texas Republican was unqualified for the post.

Trump’s decision meant that once again the GOP-led Senate would have to decide whether to put the three-term lawmaker in charge of overseeing the 17 U.S. spy agencies that the president repeatedly scorns.

It also puts the leadership of the intelligence community in the spotlight early in an election year in which those agencies are already warning that Russia is trying anew to interfere in the presidential race.

Democrats have also accused Trump of installing people at those agencies most noteworthy for their fealty to him, not intelligence expertise.

“All while our elections are perilously at risk of foreign interference. Just the way the President likes it,” tweeted Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., who chairs the House Intelligence Committee and helped lead his impeachment by the House.

Trump initially named Ratcliffe for the job last summer, but abruptly withdrew his name just five days later, before the Senate even considered him. The president bowed to questions about Ratcliffe’s qualifications and bipartisan concerns that he had little experience in the field of intelligence.

At the time, news reports challenged the accuracy of Ratcliffe’s resume. His selection then drew sharp criticism from Democrats and a lukewarm response from some Republicans.

Before being elected to Congress in 2014, Ratcliffe was mayor of Heath, Texas, and a U.S. attorney in the Eastern District of Texas.

But since last summer, Ratcliffe’s visibility rose as an ardent defender of Trump during the House’s impeachment proceedings against him.

“John is an outstanding man of great talent!” Trump said in announcing his choice in a tweet.

Ratcliffe’s fate in the Senate this time remains unclear.
Democratic race reaches critical crossroads

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, S.C. — The Democratic 2020 primary season enters a critical four-day stretch that will help determine whether the party rallies behind Bernie Sanders or embraces a longer and uglier slog that could carry on until the national convention. This marks a dangerous moment for a political party desperate to replace President Donald Trump but deeply split over whether Sanders, the undisputed Democratic front-runner and a self-described democratic socialist, is too extreme to defeat the Republican president.

“Only two things are going to happen: either Bernie or borked,” said James Carville, a veteran Democratic strategist.

Carville is uncomfortable with a Sanders nomination but fears that a brokered convention — in which party bosses or delegates in floor fights and negotiations decide the nominee after no candidate amasses enough delegates in the primary — would inflict serious damage on the party, as well. “It’s just hard for me to see beyond the two options,” he said.

South Carolina’s primary on Saturday stands as the first marker on the four-day crossroads. Joe Biden and his establishment allies hope to slow Sanders’ momentum — and change the trajectory of the race — with a convincing victory demonstrating his strength among African Americans. But just three days later, Sanders believes he’s positioned to seize a major delegate advantage when 14 states and one U.S. territory vote on “Super Tuesday.”

After two consecutive victories and a tie for the lead in Iowa, the 78-year-old Vermont senator’s confidence is surging. “I’m confident we’re going to do well in South Carolina,” he said after a campaign event Friday in Springfield, Mass.

Sanders will spend the next 24 hours campaigning in the heart of progressive ally Elizabeth Warren’s political turf. Senior adviser Jeff Weaver said Sanders is aggressively hunting for delegates, noting that their campaign’s experience during the 2016 race against Hillary Clinton taught them that any candidate who finishes Super Tuesday with a significant delegate advantage will be difficult to catch.

“I’m confident we’re going to do very very well across the country,” Weaver said of the coming four days. He also sought to downplay the importance of South Carolina’s first-in-the-South primary, where “Biden is expected to win.”

Expectations can be broken,” Weaver added. “But for the vice president, he needs an extraordinary, nearly large win in South Carolina in order to convince folks he’s going to be able to go the distance.”

At a rally in North Charleston on Friday, Trump asked the crowd whether Biden or Sanders would make the best Democratic opponent for him.

“I think Bernie’s easier to beat,” Trump said.

The audience seemed to agree, cheering the mention of Sanders and booing the mention of Biden.

Yet the Democrats’ 2020 primary season is far from a two-person race.

In South Carolina, billionaire activist Tom Steyer has spent more than $59 million on television advertising — more than all the other candidates combined — in an effort to be first to finish in four contests. Not ceding anything, Pete Buttigieg is fighting to prove he can build a multi-racial coalition. And with the help of super PACs, Warren and Klobuchar have vowed to keep pushing forward no matter how they finish on Saturday.

New York billionaire Mike Bloomberg is not competing in South Carolina, yet he has shattered spending records after investing hundreds of millions of dollars in Super Tuesday advertising backed by a horde of paid staff in virtually every state in the nation.

Sanders-linked group entered into racial discrimination NDA

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A political advocacy group founded by Bernie Sanders entered into a nondisclosure agreement with an African American political consultant that bars her from discussing a lawsuit alleging racial discrimination at the organization and the Vermont senator’s 2016 presidential campaign.

The consultant, Tezlyn Figaro, confirmed the existence of the nondisclosure agreement to The Associated Press without providing additional details.

The deal is tied to a 2019 lawsuit in which Figaro said she was fired from the Sanders-created political group Our Revolution a year earlier due to her race and in “retaliation for complaining about the organization’s treatment towards her and African-Americans.” The lawsuit was settled out of court for an undisclosed amount of money. Though the lawsuit was aimed at Our Revolution, it included broad criticism of Sanders’ campaign, arguing an all-white leadership staff “was accused of racism” by black staffers and failed to engage black voters.

Nondisclosure agreements, or NDAs, have become common in presidential campaigns and political organizations in recent years as tools to guard against the release of private data, strategic conversations or other proprietary information. But such deals have become increasingly controversial as people alleging that they’re victims of sexual harassment and misconduct or, in Figaro’s case, racial discrimination have said they’re prevented from publicly sharing their stories.

Billionaire Mike Bloomberg, one of Sanders’ Democratic presidential race rivals, has faced criticism for the use of nondisclosure agreements at his company in cases related to sexual harassment. The former New York mayor has said he’s willing to release three women from nondisclosure agreements related to comments he was accused of making in the past.

Sanders has acknowledged the mistreatment of women and minorities who worked on his 2016 campaign, and his advisers say they’ve taken corrective measures for his second run. Now the front-runner for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, Sanders frequently says he is building a “multiracial, multi-generational movement” that will appeal to the broad coalition needed to win the primary and defeat President Donald Trump.

But legal experts say that argument could be undermined by a nondisclosure agreement that prevents a woman of color who has criticized Sanders’ record on race from talking about her experience.
Pneumonia still threatens ‘cold-stunned’ sea turtles

By Wayne Parry
Associated Press

WEST ORANGE, N.J. — A dozen sea turtles that nearly froze when they were too far north last fall as water temperatures abruptly plunged in New Jersey survived that ordeal but remain threatened by the pneumonia most of them developed afterward.

Sea Turtle Recovery, a nonprofit group operating out of the Turtle Back Zoo in northern New Jersey, got the turtles through their initial medical crisis, with two needing CPR.

But 11 of them went on to develop pneumonia, a common problem in turtles that survive so-called “cold-stunning” and one that could yet kill some of them. Bill Deerr and Brandi Biehl, who run the center, are determined not to let that happen.

“Their whole organ systems started to shut down due to the cold,” Deerr said. “It’s really their fight at that point. If they make it through that first month, it’s almost like they’ve decided they want to fight and to live.”

The turtles are being treated with medications, and their progress and conditions are checked daily at a hospital on the grounds of the turtle-themed zoo that is popular with children.

Ten of the 12 are green turtles, along with one loggerhead, and one endangered Kemp’s Ridley turtle. The loggerhead, the largest of the group, was found floundering off Ocean City, N.J.; the others were recovered from the bayside beaches of Long Beach Island in November.

Biehl and Deerr suspect climate change played a role in their illness.

“Over the past few years, they’ve documented warmer waters traveling farther north along our coast, all the way up into New England, and with those warmer waters, it means the turtles will travel further in the summertime — and then they have further to migrate to keep up with those warmer waters back in the fall,” he said.

One of the turtles in the worst shape was a 4-year-old green turtle they named Duckie. They injected him with drugs to jump-start his heart and put a breathing tube down his throat. It was touch-and-go for about 15 minutes.

“All of a sudden he opened his eyes, lifted his head and took a breath,” Deerr said.

The largest turtle is Tabitha, a 20-year-old loggerhead found flailing in the surf, covered with 15 pounds of barnacles, some of which had broken through her shell to bone underneath it.

She also could not dive because of air in her body cavity, and had pneumonia, severe anemia and an intestinal blockage. Center staff removed 2½ gallons of air from her body and began treating her many ailments. They are optimistic she will make a full recovery and eventually grow from 165 pounds to about 250. It costs $1,500 to $2,000 apiece to treat most of the turtles, but Tabitha could cost as much as $5,000 due to her size.

US considering arms pact with China, Russia

By Deb Reichmann
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration has informed Moscow that the U.S. is open to holding a summit with other permanent members of the United Nations Security Council in hopes of pushing for a three-way arms control pact with Russia and China, a senior administration official said Friday.

The New START treaty, the last major arms-control treaty remaining between the U.S. and Russia, expires in 2021. There has been talk of negotiations on an extension to the existing treaty, but the White House thinks the next generation of arms control must also include China, which is expected to at least double its stockpile during the next decade.

Russia has asked the U.S. to extend the New START treaty for up to five years, but Moscow also has embraced the idea of bringing China into an agreement. The U.S. and Russia have three bilateral meetings. The U.S. and China have discussed having a similar dialogue, but the planned meeting would be the first time that representatives of all three countries would be at the same table discussing the issue.

“Russia wants to make a deal very much on arms control and nuclear. And that’s smart. And so do we. We think it would be a good thing,” Trump said at a news conference in December in London with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. “And I’ll also certainly bring in, as you know, China. And we may bring them in later, or we may bring them in now.”

China has nuclear weapons, ballistic missile capabilities and the know-how to make chemical and biological weapons — and it is updating its nuclear arsenal. Beijing also has signed various international weapons agreements, but none limiting nuclear weapons.

The time and place of the meeting has not been determined, but a senior administration official said the U.S. will use the gathering to pursue a trilateral arms control agreement that would notably be a first time among the big three.

The meeting is expected to include leaders of the U.S., Russia, China, Britain and France — the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. The official spoke on condition of anonymity according to White House guidelines.

The United States will use this opportunity to bring both Russia and China into the international arms control framework and head-off a costly arms race, the administration official said.

Tim Morrison, former senior director for countering weapons of mass destruction at the National Security Council at the White House, said other countries might need to be pulled into arms control agreements in the future.

“I think it is essentially the direction of the future not only to bring the Chinese around to the necessity of negotiated restraint on weapons of mass destruction, and particularly nuclear weapons, but also to begin to think about the other nuclear weapons states ... particularly India and Pakistan and focus on how we ensure that we do not face a highly nuclearized security environment in the future,” Morrison said at a recent event at George Washington University.

Dems grill secretary of state over Iran, coronavirus

By Eric Tucker
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Mike Pompeo defended the Trump administration’s response to the spreading coronavirus but also faced contentious questions Friday from Democrats about the basis for an airstrike that killed Iran’s most powerful general and whether the attack had put America at risk.

Democrats on the House Foreign Affairs Committee repeated expressed frustration that the panel was afforded only two hours to question Pompeo, who until Friday had gone months without testifying publicly on Capitol Hill. He balked last fall at complying with a subpoena tied to the House impeachment inquiry into the administration’s interactions with Ukraine.

Rep. Gregory Meeks, D-N.Y., recalled Pompeo’s “thundering” while in Congress about the need for testimony from one of his Democratic predecessors, Hillary Clinton, about the 2012 attacks on the U.S. mission in Benghazi.

“But with you, sir, we had to move heaven and earth to get you here today for just two hours,” Meeks said. “To me that shows you’re not either.”

“I am confident that this administration has taken the actions that have significantly reduced risk, and will continue to do so,” Pompeo said.

Days before the airstrike, Trump administration officials were warning that Iran was arming Iraq and Afghan militia groups. The administration also said Iran was actively plotting “to do so.”

Democrats were skeptical of Pompeo’s arguments, with Rep. Andy Levin of Michigan at one point showing Pompeo a blank map and asking him to pinpoint the embassies that were under threat of imminent attack at the time of Soleimani’s death.

“I’m never willing to disclose classified information. I assume you’re not either,” Pompeo responded.

Pompeo also defended the administration’s response to the coronavirus, saying he was “incredibly proud” of the work the State Department had done in getting American civilians and diplomats out of China, where the illness first surfaced.

“I am confident that this administration has taken the actions that have significantly reduced risk, and will continue to do so,” Pompeo said.

Hillary Clinton, about the 2012

against Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran’s elite Quds force, saying he was “100% confident that the military commander had plans to kill more Americans and was actively plotting "to do so."

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**Nation**

**Ban on flavored e-cigarettes sales approved**

**By Matthew Daly**  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Moving to stem a vaping epidemic among young people, the House approved a bill Friday to ban the sale of flavored e-cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products.

The bill would place new restrictions on the marketing of e-cigarettes and ban flavors in tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes. It also would place a new excise tax on nicotine.

The House approved the bill, 213-195, sending it to the Senate, where approval is considered unlikely. The White House said in a statement that President Donald Trump’s administration opposes the bill.

Supporters, mostly Democrats, said the legislation provides a comprehensive strategy to reverse a teen vaping epidemic that officials fear is looking like a generation of young people on nicotine.

In the latest government survey, more than 1 in 4 high school students reported using e-cigarettes in the previous month. Late last year, Congress approved a law raising the minimum age to buy all tobacco and vaping products from 18 to 21 nationwide.

Opponents said the House bill went too far, noting that the new law raising the age of tobacco use has been in effect for only two months. Earlier this year, the Trump administration issued rules that prohibit fruit, candy, mint and dessert flavors from small, cartridge-based e-cigarettes like Juul, the most popular brand in the U.S.

But the policy exempts disposable e-cigarettes and larger tank-based vaping devices. Those exceptions followed months of lobbying by vaping companies. Public health advocates accused the administration of caving to industry pressure.

Some members of the Congressional Black Caucus said the proposal to ban menthol cigarettes could harm black smokers. African Americans smoke menthol cigarettes at a far higher rate than the rest of the U.S. population, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Marketing and promotion of menthol cigarettes is heavily targeted toward black smokers.

“A ban that targets menthol products but ignores other premium tobacco products unduly burdens the black community,” said Rep. Yvette Clarke, D-N.Y., whose Brooklyn district is majority African American.

Supporters said the House bill would have huge health benefits for teenagers who increasingly use e-cigarettes and vape products with flavors such as mango, bubble gum and cotton candy.

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**Los Angeles deputies shared photos of Kobe Bryant crash**

**By Stephanie Dazio**  
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Authorities are investigating whether deputies shared graphic photos of the helicopter crash scene where Kobe Bryant, his daughter and seven others were killed.

Los Angeles Times reported that it’s unclear how widely the photos might have been disseminated and who was involved. It’s additionally unclear how many of the photos deputies had taken the photos themselves or received them from someone else.

Deputy Maria Lucero told The Associated Press on Friday that “the matter is being looked into.”

The Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs, the union that represents rank-and-file deputies, declined to comment specifically on the allegations.

“As with all investigations, we will aggressively represent our members and preserve their rights,” the union said in a statement Friday.

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**Exhibit brings MLK speech to life**

**By Sophia Tareen**  
Associated Press

CHICAGO — Imagine being so close to Martin Luther King Jr. as he gives one of the world’s most famous speeches that you notice the creases in his face and then realize the late civil rights leader is looking you square in the eye.

That’s the intense personal moment organizers are striving for with a one-of-a-kind virtual reality exhibit opening Friday at Chicago’s DuSable Museum of African American History. Called “The March,” it captures the 1963 March on Washington during which King delivered his iconic “I Have a Dream” address.

“The speech is so well known and the ways people are used to seeing it is kind of archival, grainy two-dimensional film,” said Mia Tramz, an editorial director of immersive experiences at TIME, which helped create the project. “By being able to see it with your own two eyes and feel like you’re standing there, you not only get the message of the words, but the message of the energy that he put behind those words.”

The project has the rare full backing from King’s estate, which fiercely guards his likeness and speeches. The high-tech effort took years of research on King’s gestures and expressions, as well as interviews with attendees.

Creators said it was inspired by an archive image of King giving a different speech on the National Mall, shot from his perspective looking out. TIME, which features King in a March issue, worked with companies including a production studio run by actress Viola Davis and her husband, Julius Tennon. Davis narrates part of the project.

Visitors start in a dark empty room with audio of people involved in key events leading up to the march. One is Hank Thomas, who was a Freedom Rider — activists who protested segregation by sitting in bus seats reserved for whites and who experienced violence and jail.

After that, attendees are outfitted with heavy virtual reality headsets that block out the outside world and replace it with three-dimensional glimpses of Aug. 28, 1963, on the National Mall. In what sometimes looks like a video game, visitors march along Constitution Avenue and then stand in the crowd of some 250,000.

Then the scenery changes again. Visitors find themselves standing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and an arm’s length from King, whose hand gestures and facial expressions are brought to life. After delivering part of the speech, he walks by and locks eyes, a moment creators say is unparalleled.
Turkish border opens to Europe

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said his country's borders with Europe were open on Saturday, making good on a long-standing threat to let refugees into the continent as thousands of migrants gathered at the frontier with Greece.

Erdogan's announcement that Turkey is allowing refugees and migrants to exit the country marked a dramatic departure from current policy and an apparent attempt to pressure Europe.

It came amid a military escalation in northwestern Syria's Idlib province, where hundreds of thousands of Syrian civilians are trapped between advancing Syrian government forces backed by Russia and rebel fighters supported by Turkey.

The mass displacement in Idlib has raised the possibility that Turkey might come under growing international pressure to open its own closed border with Syria and offer refuge to masses of desperate Syrian civilians.

"We can't handle a new wave of migration," Erdogan said in a speech Saturday, in an apparent reference to the growing humanitarian crisis in Idlib. Nearly 950,000 displaced civilians have been pushed toward the Syrian-Turkish border amid cold winter weather.

Erdogan also said Turkey would not stand in the way of refugees and migrants who hope to head from his country to Europe. "We will not close the gates to refugees," Erdogan said. "The European Union has to keep its promises. We are not obliged to look after and feed so many refugees. If you're honest, if you're sincere, then you need to share."

Under a 2016 deal, Turkey agreed to stem the tide of refugees to Europe in return for financial aid after more than a million people entered Europe in 2015. It has since protested that the EU has failed to honor the agreement. Erdogan has frequently threatened to "open the gates" and allow refugees and migrants to head to Europe unless more international support was provided.

Since seizing territory from Kurdish forces in a different part of Syria in October, Erdogan has also suggested resettling at least a million Syrian refugees from Turkey in that northeastern region. However, his efforts to secure funding for such a scheme have been rejected by European governments. Aid groups have also said it is still too dangerous to send refugees back to Syria.

Turkey currently hosts more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees, and many fleeing war and poverty in Asia, Africa and the Middle East use it as a staging post and transit point to reach Europe, usually through neighboring Greece.

Migrants played a cat-and-mouse game with Greek border patrols throughout Friday night and into Saturday, with some cutting holes in the fence only to be turned back by tear gas and stun grenades. Greek authorities also fired tear gas to repulse attempts by the crowd to push through the border.

Erdogan's speech Saturday in Istanbul marked the first time a top Turkish official openly announced migrants would be allowed to try to cross the border, after a foreign ministry spokesman floated the idea Thursday.

Shelling in Syria kills another Turkish soldier

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey's Defense Ministry said one of its soldiers was killed and two were injured by Syrian government shelling.

The latest casualty after 33 Turkish troops were killed in an airstrike in Syria earlier last week.

The announcement late Friday also said Turkish forces hit Syrian government targets and a number of Syrian troops were "neutralized."

Syrian government forces have been on a weeklong offensive into Idlib province, the country's last rebel stronghold, which borders Turkey. Thousands of Turkish soldiers are deployed inside rebel-controlled areas of Idlib province, which is dominated by al-Qaida-linked militants.

On Thursday, at least 33 Turkish soldiers were killed in airstrikes in Idlib blamed on the Syrian government.

The deaths — the highest number in a single day since Turkey first intervened in Syria in 2016 — were the most serious escalation between Turkish and Russian-backed Syrian forces. It's raised the prospect of an all-out war with Syrian or Russian jets and masses of civilian trapped in the middle.

It remained unclear whether土耳其的President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had given the Syrian government until the end of February to pull back from areas captured in Idlib, threatening large-scale military action if they didn't. But any large-scale Turkish military action risks more loss of life among Turkish soldiers, and it's not clear what Erdogan might do. He's kept unusually silent since the 33 deaths.

Since the start of February, 55 Turkish soldiers have been killed after Turkey began reinforcing its forces in Idlib. It was a bid to thwart the Syrian government offensive, which began in early December.

The Syrian advance into Idlib has pushed nearly 950,000 displaced civilians toward the Turkish border amid cold winter weather.

Meanwhile, in Turkey, refugees had camped overnight beside the border with Greece after hundreds headed to the frontier when Ankara said it would no longer prevent them crossing.

The move by Turkey to open its border is seen in Greece as a deliberate attempt to pressure European countries, and in particular Greece, a fellow NATO ally of Turkey with which frequently testy relations have become increasingly strained.

NATO envoys held emergency talks Friday at the request of Turkey, a NATO member. While urging deescalation deescalation in Idlib, NATO offered no further assistance.

Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by telephone Friday and discussed implementing agreements in Idlib, the Kremlin said. Fahrettin Altun, Erdogan's director of communications, said they had agreed to meet "as soon as possible."

Erdogan also spoke with other world leaders, including President Donald Trump and German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for an immediate cease-fire in Idlib. He warned that "without urgent action, the risk of even greater escalation grows by the hour, and as always, civilians are paying the gravenest price."
Charting the course

With 4 million presales, K-Pop powerhouse BTS leads the genre into exciting new era

BY AUGUST BROWN
Los Angeles Times

If there’s a digital age equivalent to camping outside a record store waiting for a new album to drop, it’s what BTS fans did overnight: hovering over Spotify or Apple Music, pouring some very strong coffee and waiting for 4 a.m. EST to arrive, so they could finally stream “Map of the Soul: 7” when it landed.

The new album from the biggest K-pop group in the world is a global record biz event like no other, a comprehensive 20-song collection that looks forward, backward and all around the K-pop landscape that RM, Suga, J-Hope, Jin, Jimin, Jungkook and V helped create. It booked more than 4 million presales, easily eclipsing the year-end tally of its predecessor, “Map of the Soul: Persona” (and that’s not even counting the streams to come).

The album is also a fantastic summary of BTS’ accomplishments so far, and charts a path forward in a tumultuous but exciting new era for K-pop. It’s an album about being in a band, about the relationships that form and get tested in the crucible of insane fame, all set to some of the most genre-invigorating music of their career.

Dedicated BTS Army troops will immediately notice that the front quarter of this gargantuan album is previously released material from “Persona,” the 2019 EP that pivoted the band from their smash hit “Love Yourself” trilogy into this new period. “Boy With Luv,” “Make It Right,” “Dionysus” and “Jamais Vu” will be plenty familiar at this point.

What comes next is the darkest, strangest and yet most relevant and ambitious music BTS has made yet. It’s partly a hat tip back to their roots as a hip-hop act, Bangtan Boys, but attuned to today’s misty, hard-kicking sonics and bolstered by everything they’ve learned in the intervening years as pop stars.

On a first pass, the R&B and global pop moments are some of the most affecting, even more so given the breadth of the record. Jimin’s “Filter” is a sweaty, Latin guitar-driven single that’s his high point as a vocalist so far; “Louder Than Bombs,” co-written with Troye Sivan, is a glitchy electro-pop stomper with some of the most moving vocal harmonies in the BTS catalog.

The group is beloved, however, for lyrics that peel off the insulation around K-pop fame and speak with singular candor about the cost of the spotlight, and what an experience like theirs both takes and gives to BTS’ friendships. The band appears to be trying to do one of the hardest tricks in pop: the road album.

BTS’ phenomenal ascent as artists mirrored the K-pop genre’s rise in America, and their fans’ path into adulthood with all its promise and vague sense of closing doors. “Twenty-four, feels like I became a grown-up faster than everyone else,” Jungkook sings on “My Time.” “But is it too fast? There are traces of losses / Don’t know what to do; am I living this right?”

As the album drops its landing gear, “We Are Bulletproof: The Eternal” leaves fans feeling the arc of the journey, a piano ballad that insists the BTS Army really is in this together, that the band is figuring out this life thing right along with you. It would be a logical ending point, but then they throw on an old-school big-beat club number “Outro: Ego” and a remix, with a Sia collaboration, of “ON” for good measure.
The evolution of the playlist

The new ‘High Fidelity’ and the state of the music geek in the digital age

BY DAN DELUCA
The Philadelphia Inquirer

T
here’s a scene in “High Fidelity,” the new Hulu series starring Zoe Kravitz as a record store owner, in which her character, Rob (short for Robyn), shows up unannounced at the apartment of British ex-boyfriend Mac. She wants to hear him say that he loves her more than his new partner, Lily, and thereby ruining Rob’s life. (Good luck with that.)

But Rob needs to know something else, something equally important. Has Mac listened to her playlist?

“It’s like a love letter,” Rob explains, speaking directly to the camera.

Making a playlist isn’t just about throwing together a bunch of songs you enjoy. For Rob, her mix, which starts out with David Bowie’s “Modern Love,” is about expressing something personal to someone she cares deeply about — without the risk of putting her feelings into words. The music does the talking.

In the new Hulu version, the focus is no longer on socially awkward, straight white men. Rob is a woman who dates women and men. Simon (David H. Holmes) is gay. Cherise (Da’Vine Joy Randolph) is African American, and far more likable than the Jack Black version of the character. “The movie and the book are kind of perfect iterations of the source material,” Veronica West, show co-creator Kravitz’s Rob is a soul who treasures her record collection, and doesn’t have the technical savvy to use Instagram to spy on her ex. She’s “an analog person in a digital world,” said West, reprising the Erykah Badu lyric.

But a digital world it is, like it or not. And for music fans, there’s plenty to like — principally, that streaming services make available pretty much all the music ever recorded.

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“I spent hours putting that cassette together,” Rob recounts in the novel, talking about the tape he used to woo Laura, the original Mac. “There’s a lot of erasing and rethinking and starting again. A good compilation tape, like breaking up, is hard to do.”

In the reboot, Rob approaches her task with similar seriousness. She won’t settle for a playlist programmed by an algorithm. Nor will she click on Spotify’s 92-track “Break Up Songs” playlist promising “the best cure for a broken heart!”

She wants to make something human that speaks to Mac’s soul. In some ways, streaming technology makes her task easier. She’s not limited to 45 minutes per side on a cassette, or 80 minutes on a recordable CD. And she doesn’t have to buy the songs.

But in other ways, the job is harder. The modern music consumer must overcome the paralysis that results from too many options. If I can play absolutely anything, where do I start?

There’s a problem with Rob’s obsession with the sequence of the songs: the shuffle button. Mixtape making has always allowed fans to put the songs they love in the order of their choice. Back when they were made on CD-Rs and cassettes, they stayed that way.

When Rob asks Mac if he’s played her a mix, she says he has. “I thought I knew what I wanted to do,” she says. “But it’s like you have these expectations of how you want to feel and then you listen to someone else’s music and it’s like a new kind of music that you never knew you wanted.”

“In the digital era, the listener decides.”

with Sarah Kucserka, told the Hollywood Reporter. “To make it modern and tell a different story, it seems like doing that from a female point of view was absolutely necessary.”

Making it modern also means reflecting the ways in which a music geek has been changed by technology in a generation.

Counterintuitively, Championship Vinyl is probably less anachronistic in the Hulu series than it was in Hornby’s novel, which was set in 1995, the height of the CD era, when people were selling off LPs, a dated medium, clearly doomed.

In 2020, vinyl is booming. There’s a demand for physical product in an ephemeral marketplace where streaming music services like Spotify and Apple Music have reshaped listening habits.

The excellence of the soundtrack — ace tastemaker Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson of The Roots is executive music producer — can be heard on a nine-hour Spotify playlist of 142 songs.

That ease of use typifies the streaming era. Things were more labor intensive in the original “High Fidelity,” when making a mix meant dropping a needle on songs in your personal collection.

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NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

NUMBER THEORY
BY SAM EZEKYS / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

ACROSS
1. “Consent in!”
5. Kind of case in grammar
11. Staid some pounds
17. Edited, in a way
19. Sister channel of HBO
20. What the answer at 26-Across is written in
21. Lowlevel, as a class
22. Question that might be asked when hurrying into a meeting
23. Duty for a property owner
24. Relative of marmalade
26. PEPFAR
28. Oval Office V.I.P.
29. Transition point
30. Period preceding a school break
34. What the answer at 45-Across is written in
36. “Yes, captain”
40. Gapin opening
41. William of “John Wick”
42. Toward the stern
43. Howe’ser
44. Chicago mayor
45. ELEVEN
46. Whom Harry Potter feasts from serving
49. Spicy, crunchy snack
50. “An Amazont” writer
51. Area the Chinese call Xizang
52. “Make sense?”
53. Hell
54. Square up with
55. & 60. Take control after a coup
56. SIXTEEN
57. “Just __ thing. What is it?”
58. Specks
59. Sleep. Prefix
61. Not quite right
62. P.S.
63. “Hallujah, praise the Lord!”
71. Because
72. T.W.O.
76. Copy spots to stop
77. Miss in the future, maybe
78. Buzz source
79. Fictional creature made from slime
81. Restaurant handouts for court counters
82. What the answer at 61-Across is written in
86. Final authority
88. Rainbows, e.g.
89. Flour filter
90. & 92. Alternative title for this puzzle
93. On-the-go sit
103. See 106-Across
104. What the answer at 75-Across is written in
105. Life lessons
106. With 103-Across, character in Episodes I through IX of “Star Wars”
107. Millennium, informally
108. Things passed between the legs
109. “Butt out!”

DOWN
1. Title host of radio’s first major quiz show
2. Contact-lens care brand
3. Broadway opening
4. Declare for the draft, say
5. Home that, for instance, contain nickel
6. “I am an understudy”
7. “Closed, long around an orbit, and a rear view.”
8. “I am an understudy”
9. Where Wagner was born and died
10. Scatterbrained
11. Ma’s name that sounds like two consecutive letters of the alphabet
12. At any time
13. “Ugh, stop talking already!”
14. 1974 Jonism winner that went on to international stardom
15. “Wah!”
16. Immature stage of a salamander
17. Letters of credit
19. Drop on the ground?
20. “Not on ______’s!”
21. Where Wagner was born and died
22. Scatterbrained
23. Ma’s name that sounds like two consecutive letters of the alphabet
24. “I am an understudy”
25. “Ugh, stop talking already!”
26. Circular motion of the gods
27. Excellent conductors
28. 1994 neighborhood near NoLita
29. “Claw”
30. Put in jeopardy
31. Torch, a condition of the 60s
32. Lyrical, as poetry
33. Babbling response to a verbal jab
34. High hairdo
35. Clue
36. “Ugh, stop talking already!”
37. Excellent conductors
38. 1994 neighborhood near NoLita
39. Where most of America’s gold is mined
40. Like the presidency of John Adams
41. Joint
42. Longtime Eagles Qb
43. Suspense
44. Bible study: Abbr.
45. With a wink
46. Kisses, to Cambridge
47. Brown
48. Bring (out) for display
49. Candy wrapped in a tube
50. “I’ll come to you ______’s!”
51. Benny-weeny
52. New-pedometer reading
53. Beginner, in modern times
54. Mammoth
55. Western tine
56. Salvador
57. Will happily sell at $1?'

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE

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15 YEARS IN AFGHANISTAN
MD

SEVERN — A nanny in Maryland was accused of drugging a toddler who has a congenital heart condition.

Shannon Michelle Emery, 38, was arrested and charged with second-degree child abuse, neglect and reckless endangerment, Anne Arundel County police told news outlets.

The toddler’s mother said she suspected the nanny was giving her 2-year-old daughter unauthorized pills. The mother watched home surveillance videos and said Emery was seen feeding white pills to the toddler. The child was then seen sleeping for several hours.

A lab test of the child’s sippy cup revealed it contained diphenhydramine, commonly known by the brand name Benadryl, the Capital Gazette reported.

Police: Man arrested for semen-filled syringe hit

MD

CHURCHTON — Police arrested a man accused of stabbing a woman with a syringe filled with semen at a Maryland grocery store in an attack caught on surveillance video.

Thomas Bryon Stemen was arrested after Anne Arundel County police said they received a tip about the suspect.

Video from the store in Churchton shows a man follow the woman into the cart area and bump into her. The woman is then seen looking down at her leg as she backs out of the store.

Police are looking for additional victims.

Man who sent white powder to FBI sentenced

MA

SPRINGFIELD — A Massachusetts man who sent threatening packages containing white powder to federal officials, including one that had a death threat against President Donald Trump, has avoided additional time behind bars.

Kevin Johnson, 48, of South Carolina, was sentenced in Los Angeles federal court to three years of probation and ordered to pay a $2,000 fine.

Prosecutors said Nguyen was part of an Orange County-based smuggling ring. She received packages of South African rhinoceros horns at a nail salon she used to operate in Highland, then sent them to her former boyfriend.

The horns were then shipped to Vietnam and China, where they are believed to have medicinal powers and carry an immense black market price tag.

Troopers tackle suspect in middle of highway

NC

RALEIGH — North Carolina troopers tackled a man to the ground in the middle of a highway after he walked into morning rush hour traffic and threatened to pull out a gun, according to authorities and video from the scene.

State troopers were patrolling Interstate 40 just outside Raleigh when a man walking on the shoulder of the road threw a large bag into their path, the agency said.

The suspect, John Averly Rodriguez, 34, told troopers he was armed and then ran into the roadway, the news outlet said. Troopers stopped traffic in both directions, surrounded Rodriguez with weapons drawn and fired pepper spray at him before bringing him to the ground.

World’s first in vitro cheetah cubs born

OH

POWELL — Two cheetah cubs were born through in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer to a surrogate mother for the first time, Ohio zoo officials announced.

The male and female cubs were born to 3-year-old Izzy at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, the zoo said in a statement. A team observed the births through a remote camera and are continuing to monitor Izzy and the cubs.

The biological mother of the cubs is 6-year-old Kibibi who has never reproduced and is too old to become pregnant naturally.

Reward offered in golden eagle poisoning case

WY

CHEYENNE — Federal investigators want help from the public as they try to find out who poisoned a golden eagle and ravens in southwest Wyoming four years ago.

They’re offering a reward of up to $2,000 for information leading to a conviction.

The golden eagle and four ravens were found dead southwest of Wamsutter in 2016. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said investigators also found poisoned baits in the remote area of interspersed private and U.S. Bureau of Land Management lands.

Golden eagles are federally protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.
OPINION

Iran can’t be trusted to deal with coronavirus

BY BOBBY GHOSH
Bloomberg Opinion

I t’s the leadership of the World Health Organization can spare a moment from their gawking to Beijing, they should direct their attention to another authoritarian state struggling to contain the coronavirus: Iran. The Islamic Republic’s mismanagement of the contagion represents an imminent threat not only to its own citizens but to all of the Middle East and Central Asia — and possibly, given the menacing nature of the microbe, the world.

Iran already accounts for more deaths from the virus than any country outside China, which is considering as the official narrative after being reported from most of Iran’s provinces. The official death toll, which stands at 19, is a number the regime understated. An Iranian lawmaker has put the count at 50 in the holy city of Qom alone. Officials in Tehran dismiss this as an exaggeration, but they have even less credibility than Iran’s currency.

Iranians know not to trust their government, and their patience is wearing thin. In recent days, a teal envelope had been sent to all of Iran’s provinces. The official death toll, which stands at 19, is a number the regime understated. An Iranian lawmaker has put the count at 50 in the holy city of Qom alone. Officials in Tehran dismissed this as an exaggeration, but they have even less credibility than Iran’s currency.

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Players ejected from games for targeting will be allowed to remain in the bench area and replay reviews will be limited to two minutes if proposed by the NCAA football rules committee are passed.

The committee wrapped up several days of meetings in Indianapolis on Friday by issuing its recommendations.

In an effort to track down on pregame dust-ups between teams, the committee also recommended officials be on the field 90 minutes before a game begins — instead of the current 60 minutes.

NCAA coordinator of officials Steve Shaw said there was a “no bust” discussion about what he called the growing trend of defensive players flopping or seemingly faking injuries as a way to slow down offenses trying to run plays quickly. For now, rulemakers will appeal to coaches to clean up an issue that is difficult to legislate away.

Proposals must be approved by the NCAA playing rules oversight panel, which is scheduled to discuss changes April 16. New rules would go into effect for the upcoming season.

Skier Ortlieb earns first World Cup victory

LA THUILE, Italy — Nina Ortlieb edged Federica Brignone of Italy by one hundredth of a second to win a women’s World Cup super-G on Saturday for the Austrian’s first career victory.

The win for Ortlieb, the daughter of 1992 Olympic downhill champion Patrick Ortlieb, came one week after she edged fellow first podium result, finishing third in a tournament of 1992 Olympic downhill champion.

Germany takes pair of overall luge titles

KOENIGSSEE, Germany — Toni Eggert and Sascha Benecken won the World Cup doubles overall title on Saturday, and Germany’s Julia Taubitz claimed the 2019-20 women’s championship. Both crowns were decided in the final race of the season for each discipline.

Eggert and Benecken won the World Cup season title for the fourth season in a row and fifth time overall. That title came down to the final heat of the season doubles standings. Benecken and Benecken needed to beat fellow German veterans Tobias Wendl and Tobias Arlt.

They did just that, finishing in 1 minute, 39.777 seconds — about a quarter-second ahead of Wendl and Arlt.

Latvia’s Andris Sics and Juris Sics were third and third overall in the season doubles standings. The American doubles sled of Chris Mazdzer and Jayson Terdiman was a season-best seventh in the finale and ended the year ranked 20th overall.

Fourth-ranked Flyers win Atlantic 10 championship

DAYTON, Ohio — No reason to cut down the nets after Dayton clinched a conference title. These fourth-ranked Flyers have more big moments in mind as March approaches.

Obi Toppin demonstrated his assortment of dunks while scoring 23 points with near-perfect shooting, and the Flyers wrapped up the Atlantic 10 regular-season crown Friday night by beating Davidson 82-67.

The Flyers got their 18th victory in a row with their best shooting performance in 34 years. Dayton (27-2, 16-0) shot 72.3% from the field, its best mark since 1986, and made all but one of its shots from inside the arc.

“We went 27 of 28 on two-point field goals, which is unheard of,” coach Anthony Grant said. “A great job tonight of taking quality shots and sharing the ball.”

Toppin led the way, providing a pair of fast-break dunks in the second half that were exhilaration points on Dayton’s sensational season. He went 10-for-11 from the field — his only miss was from beyond the arc — and had 12 rebounds.

“We definitely want to finish this off and make a statement so when we get to March we’ve got a statement on our back,” Toppin said.

Five Flyers finished in double figures as Dayton had its best shooting night since it made 77.5% from the field against Southern on March 1, 1986.

Junior guard Ibi Watson came off the bench and Toppin hit another three for a 40-21 lead, his 20 points in the second half, when the Wildcats never got closer than 12.

The lead of both standings before the race, Aleksander Aamodt Kilde, led by the field by 0.29 seconds at the first split but the Norwegian crashed as he grip while passing a gate in a right turn.

Kilde’s mishap helped Mauro Caviezel of Switzerland take a three-point lead over Kriechmayr in the super-G rankings, while the Norwegian dropped to third, trailing by 29 points.

Kilde remained on top of the overall standings but had his lead over fellow Norwegian Henrik Kristoffersen reduced to 65 points.

Steele takes 1-shot lead in Honda Classic

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. — Brendan Steele made a couple of big mistakes down the stretch, and still was more than good enough to grab the outright lead at the midpoint of The Honda Classic.

Steele shot a 3-under 67 on Friday, getting to 5 under for the week and putting himself a shot clear of J.T. Poston (69), Lee Westwood (69) and Luke Donald (66) after the second round at PGA National.

This is Steele’s ninth time playing the Honda and the first time he’s anywhere around at PGA National with the lead. He missed the cut last year by 10 shots, but most of what he’s doing so far this year has worked.

Germany takes pair of overall luge titles

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With Eggert and Benecken needing to beat fellow German veterans Tobias Wendl and Tobias Arlt.

They did just that, finishing in 1 minute, 39.777 seconds — about a quarter-second ahead of Wendl and Arlt.

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No. 10 Creighton has first Big East title in its sights

BY ERIC OLSON
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — A season that started with low expectations could finish at unprecedented heights for Creighton.

The 10th-ranked Bluejays are one of the hottest teams in the nation heading into their final three regular-season games. They’ve knocked off four Top 25 opponents while winning nine of their last 10. They sit one game behind first-place Seton Hall in the Big East.

“The Bluejays (22-6, 11-4) came into the season ranked No. 20, but coach Greg McDermott said, “I don’t know who it is.”

Next up is Sunday’s game at St. John’s. Win there, and the Bluejays would return home for their final two games against Georgetown and Seton Hall with a chance to win the Big East regular-season title for the first time since they entered the league seven years ago.

Ballock said it makes no sense to dwell on the ultimate goal when there are others to achieve first. “You’ve got to start from where we haven’t been,” he said. “We haven’t been to the Sweet 16. Right now we’re trying to win a Big East title.”

As luge season winds down, USA’s Sweeney looks ahead

BY TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

Luge’s World Cup campaign ends this weekend in Germany, where most of the best 100 sliders in the sport will be looking to close their international seasons on a high note.

Emily Sweeney won’t be among them.

Her season ended a couple of weeks ago, on her terms. The USA Luge veteran is off the luge circuit and her longtime boyfriend — is a serious contender to win the men’s World Cup overall title.

“The United States’ Emily Sweeney speeds down the track during a women’s race at the Luge World Cup event in Sigulda, Latvia, on Jan. 25. She’s said she’s shutting down her season to allow her body to rest.

Two years ago, she broke her back in a crash at the PyeongChang Olympics. Two years ago, she broke her back in a crash at the PyeongChang Olympics.

So she’s working on her body and her mind. Sweeney is one of the most upbeat sliders on the luge circuit; always smiling, always happy, and most of the time her good mood is genuine. After the crash, however, the good mood wasn’t always there and it took Sweeney some time to realize that there was more wrong than just the fractures in her neck and back.

“I went into a depression,” Sweeney said. “It’s weird saying that. But it feels foreign to me to say I broke my neck and my back two years ago. And it feels dramatic to say, which I guess I need to just get more comfortable with that. But I think that just the way I was raised was like, ‘All right, brush it off and move on.’ And that’s why I think I appear a lot of times like it’s just sunshine and rainbows, but this one forced me to stop. But you have to. And the alternative is to stay at that low and that just becomes miserable.”

From therapy came a plan: Do one thing a day to feel better toward the ultimate goal of medal in 2022.

Most days, she succeeds. When Sweeney is right, especially in sprint events, few women in the world have a chance of catching her. Her sliding career is peaking.

“Being an Olympian was my dream since I was 7 years old,” Sweeney said. “And then I became an Olympian, and I said, ‘Well, that’s not enough. I want a medal.’”

DID YOU KNOW?

Emily Sweeney won a bronze medal at the 2019 World Championships in Winterberg, Germany, just a year after breaking her back in a crash at the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea.
**Knights extend streak to eight**

**Vegas opens six-point lead in Pacific Division**

*By W.G. Ramirez*

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Reilly Smith scored twice, Robin Lehner stopped 32 shots and the Vegas Golden Knights beat the Buffalo Sabres 4-2 on Friday night.

William Karlsson and Nicolas Roy also scored to help Vegas get its franchise-record eighth straight win and open a six-point lead ahead of Vancouver and Ed- monton in the Pacific Division — the largest lead in the division by any team this season.

The Golden Knights improved to 12-3-2 under coach Pete De- Boer, and 21-10-4 at home.

Karlsson got the Golden Knights' offense charged in the third period when Max Pacio- retty gathered the puck after his own miss and dashed to the slot from behind the net. Karlsson was streaking in alone and one- timed the puck past Hutton, mak- ing it 2-1 at 3:06.

He appeared to give the announced crowd of 18,404 plenty to cheer about in his Vegas debut after being acquired from Chicago at the trade deadline on Monday. Of- fering an opposite style to athletic and acrobatic starting goal- tender Marc-Andre Fleury, Lehner used his big body and methodical skills.

"Obviously our team plays well structurally," Lehner said. "Going from team to team, you play a little different. I've got to get back to the same habits I had two years ago with Long Island, so I've just got to get some time on the ice, but I felt good." Lehner improved to 17-10 this season and 4-2-2 lifetime against the Sabres, whom he played for from 2015-18.

Golden Knights goaltender Robin Lehner — in his Las Vegas debut after being acquired from Chicago at the trade deadline on Monday — makes a save against the Buffalo Sabres on Friday.

**Roundup**

**Giroux scores twice as Flyers beat Rangers**

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Claude Giroux scored twice and Carter Hart stopped 26 shots in the Philadelphia Flyers to their fifth straight win, 5-2 over the New York Rangers on Friday night.

The Flyers have been sensa- tional of late as they surge up the Eastern Conference standings. They are an impressive 23-5-4 at home, 12-5-1 in the first period. He appeared to get back to the same habits I had two years ago with Long Island, so I've just got to get some time on the ice, but I felt good.

Lehner improved to 17-10 this season and 4-2-2 lifetime against the Sabres, whom he played for from 2015-18.

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Rozier helps lift Hornets over Raptors

Bucks give Thunder ‘old-fashioned butt whooping’

Heat 126, Mavericks 118: Jimmy Butler scored 26 points, Duncan Robinson added 24 and Miami scored the first 13 points of the fourth quarter against visiting Dallas to win for just the third time in 10 games and spoil Luka Doncic’s 21st birthday.

Clippers 132, Nuggets 103: Paul George hit six three-pointers while scoring 24 points, Kawhi Leonard added 19 points and host Los Angeles routed Denver in a meeting of Western Conference powers.

Pistons 113, Suns 111: Derrick Rose scored 31 points, Christian Wood and Brandon Knight added 19 apiece and visiting DeSaiX snapped a seven-game losing streak by beating Phoenix.

Kings 104, Grizzlies 101: De’Aaron Fox scored 25 points, Harry Giles added 16 and visiting Sacramento gained a step on the final Western Conference playoff spot with a win over Memphis.

Hawks 141, Nets 118: John Collins had 33 points and 13 rebounds, rookie Cam Reddish scored 17 of his career-high 26 points in the third quarter, and Atlanta handed visiting Brooklyn its fourth consecutive loss.

Magic 136, Timberwolves 125: Terrence Ross scored 19 of his season-high 33 points in the fourth quarter and Aaron Gordon finished with 17 points, 11 rebounds and a career-high 12 assists for his first career triple-double in host Orlando’s win over Minnesota.

Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo dunks over Oklahoma City Thunder center Steven Adams on Friday in Milwaukee.

Pelicans 116, Cavaliers 104: Brandon Ingram scored 29 points, Zion Williamson added 24, and host New Orleans beat Cleveland.

Jrue Holiday scored 22 points and Derrick Favors grabbed 15 rebounds for the Pelicans, who earned their third victory in four games.

Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo dunked over Utah’s Rudy Gobert in the third quarter Friday night to help the Bucks to a 133-86 victory.

Raptors forward Pascal Siakam, left, is defended by Hornets guard Terry Rozier on Friday in Toronto.

Terry Rozier hit a tiebreaking free throw with 2.1 seconds remaining, helping Charlotte to a 99-96 victory.

By IAN HARRISON

Associated Press

TORONTO — For the first time in more than two months, the Toronto Raptors are on a losing streak.

Terry Rozier hit a tiebreaking free throw with 2.1 seconds remaining and the Charlotte Hornets beat Toronto 99-96 Friday night to snap the second quarter as the Raptors won their second consecutive loss and just their third in 20 games.

Bismack Biyombo had 13 points and 11 rebounds against his former team, and Devonte Graham scored nine of his 18 in the fourth quarter as the Hornets won their second straight and beat short-handed Toronto for the third time in 10 meetings.

“Probably one of our best wins of the season,” Hornets coach James Borrego said of beating the defending champs on their home court. “They’re a fantastic team, a well-coached team, they know what they’re doing. It was a big-time win for us.”

Rozier scored 18 points, Miles Bridges had 17 and P.J. Washington 15 as all five Hornets starters finished in double figures.

“They’ve got a great group,” Rozier said about the Raptors. “We just dug deep and we stayed with it and we pulled it out.”

Charlotte has won five of seven after losing 13 of the previous 14.

“We’re heading in the right direction. Our young guys are growing,” Biyombo said.

Pascal Siakam had 24 points, Norman Powell returned from injury to score 22 and Kyle Lowry had 21 for the Raptors.

Toronto, which lost 108-97 to NBA-leading Milwaukee on Tuesday, dropped back-to-back games for the first time since losing at Indiana on Dec. 23 and at home to Boston on Christmas Day.

“It hurts,” Lowry said. “You don’t want to ever lose but you’ve got to grow from it, you’ve got to learn from it.”

It’s just the fourth time this season the defending champions have dropped consecutive games.

Toronto lost three in a row between Dec. 3 and 8, losing at home to Miami and Houston before a defeat in Philadelphia.

Raptors guard Fred VanVleet sat out because of a sore left shoulder, while forward Serge Ibaka was out with a sore left knee.

Roundup

Bucks give Thunder ‘old-fashioned butt whooping’

Heat forward Jimmy Butler (23) drives to the basket against Thunder forward Danilo Gallinari (8) Friday in Oklahoma City.

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Oklahoma quarterback Jalen Hurts reportedly struggled on the first tryout at new positions. "Or as Harrison describes it — it’s football and technique. Here, more than 300 draft prospects are poked and prodded by medical staffs, run and jump in shorts, lift weights and anxiously wait to compare results. Many of the top prospects do only limited work or none instead for their pro days — perhaps their only chance to work out for scouts.

Players like Harrison welcome a second chance to perform on center stage, eager to show scouts what they learned in Mobile and how they have used those lessons to develop. “It’s a tremendous opportunity when you come from a Group of Five school,” Wyoming linebacker Logan Wilson said. “It helped give me a head start on it, knowing what was coming here at the combine. When you’ve been through it once, it makes it easier the second time.”

And good results in Mobile can create more buzz around guys like Harrison or Jordan Love, the Utah State quarterback, and potentially into the top 10 on Thursday. The lessons don’t stop on the football field, either. While just about everyone trains to excel in the drills, even the new ones this year, others like Utah linebacker Francis Bernard used the past month to contemplate other ways to improve their stock.

“Going back and looking at how I answered some of the questions at the Senior Bowl made me think a little more about how I would answer them here,” he said. “I’ve definitely refined those answers and some teams have noticed and asked what changed. I just explained that I’d thought about them a little more and they said I did a better job here.”

Certainly an extra week of football comes with risk.

South Carolina defensive tackle Javon Kinlaw shut it down in Mobile after developing tendinitis in his left knee, and Oklahoma quarterback Jalen Hurts reportedly struggled on the first day of the Senior Bowl.

But most of these guys figure more time on the football field can’t hurt, and some insist it’s helped them remain poised under the bright lights of the combine. "Michael Jordan said you have to expect things of yourself before you do them," said offensive lineman Ben Bartch of St. John’s (Minnesota), a Division III school. “I expected that I was going to perform well (at the Senior Bowl), whether or not other people thought I was some small-school scrub who was going to get destroyed. So I think going down there, you get that first rep out of your system and you just relax a little bit. Like, look we’re just playing football. We’re having fun. It think it was a great experience and really big for me.”

But Harrison retains a head start on it all, knowing what was coming here at the combine. When you’ve been through it once, it makes it easier the second time.”

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The virtues of Pecora’s perseverance

Winningest coach in NCAA history never imagined he would stick around so long

By Will Graves
Associated Press

JOHNSTOWN, Pa. — In the fall of 1976, Pat Pecora packed what he could into a $150 car bought from a family friend and made the hour-long drive east from the Pittsburgh surburbs into the western Pennsylvania highlands.

He had no idea what he was doing. The 22-year-old needed a job, and the University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown offered one that sounded an awful lot like three. Wrestling coach. Men’s soccer coach. Gym teacher. Pecora needed to find a way to juggle them all at once. For $9,000 a year.

Never mind that he hadn’t so much as kicked a soccer ball or that the wrestling program he inherited consisted of a handful of guys practicing on a stage in the student union, where one roll too many sent them tumbling to the floor below. His earliest recruiting trips were walks to the cafeteria, where he’d scout for young men in high school wrestling shirts.

Join me, Pecora told them. We’re going to be a family. A family that’s grown by the hundreds over the last 44 years, one bound by the tenets the winningest college wrestling coach in history began preaching long ago.


They’re all baked into the foundation Pecora laid during that first fall, one that set the groundwork for 618 career wins (and counting), a pair of NCAA Division II national titles, 10 spots available during a given season for all NCAA divisions plus NAIA and junior colleges — the most important element of society.

Pecora sparred with his wrestlers well into his 40s. Current players insist the trim 66-year-old has the best core strength on the team — Pat Pecora spars with his wrestlers well into his 40s. Pecora — a nonsmoker, he overcame lung cancer in his 50s and became so antsy after surgery to remove a portion of his left lung that he attempted to tear the tubes out of his chest so he could get to practice.

Pecora, the winningest wrestling coach in NCAA history, tears in a match against Cannon last Saturday.

The virtues of Pecora’s perseverance

Did you know?

Renowned for his toughness — current players insist the trim 66-year-old has the best core strength on the team — Pat Pecora spars with his wrestlers well into his 40s. Pecora — a nonsmoker, he overcame lung cancer in his 50s and became so antsy after surgery to remove a portion of his left lung that he attempted to tear the tubes out of his chest so he could get to practice.

Source: Associated Press

**Photos by Keith Srakocic/AP**

Above: University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown coach Pat Pecora started coaching the Johnstown team as a 22-year-old in 1972. Left: Pecora, the winningest wrestling coach in NCAA history, tears in a match against Cannon last Saturday.

Winningest coach in NCAA history never imagined he would stick around so long

The urge to teach the essential skills remains as strong now as it was when he pulled into campus nearly a half-century ago. So why stop?

“It’s not like you have to do it forever,” Pecora said, using one of his pet phrases. “You just have to do it the rest of your life.”
Ohio State linebacker Malik Harrison believes spending a week last month at the Senior Bowl set him up for an even better performance at this week's scouting combine.

Pennsylvania State University linebacker Malik Harrison is fully prepared. He expected the early mornings, the late nights and the wall-to-wall interview schedules. He answered endless questions and took the psychological tests. And over the past month, the former Penn State star even mapped out a plan for what could be the most important week of his life.

Acing it could set up Harrison for a big payday on draft weekend. Struggle, and his stock could start sliding.

For Harrison and the other Senior Bowl veterans in Indianapolis this week, this is not a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity; it's an opportunity to take advantage of their previous experiences.

"The Senior Bowl is just like this: late nights and early mornings. Long days. So, it prepared me mentally and physically," Harrison said. "It helped a lot."

No, the two events are not exactly the same.

In Mobile, Ala., a few dozen players practice in pads and get one-on-one instruction from NFL coaching staffs. Some might even be asked to

SEE COMBINE ON PAGE 22

Fully prepared
Senior Bowl helped some draft prospects get ready for combine

By Michael Marot
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS
linebacker Malik Harrison came to the NFL's annual scouting combine fully prepared.

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