

WAR ON TERRORISM

Violence, attacks are 'leverage' for Taliban in peace talks

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US passes 20M COVID-19 cases, most worldwide

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STARS AND STRIPES

stripes.com

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CONTINGENCY EDITION

SUNDAY, JANUARY 3, 2021

Free to Deployed Areas

GOP-led Senate says no to veto

Congress overrides Trump, dismissing objections to \$740 billion National Defense Authorization Act

By **MATTHEW DALY**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congress on Friday overrode President Donald Trump's veto of a defense policy bill, a first by lawmakers since he took office nearly four years ago, ensuring that the measure becomes law.

In an extraordinary New Year's Day session, the Republican-controlled Senate easily turned aside the veto, dismissing Trump's objections to the \$740 billion bill and handing him a rebuke just weeks before he leaves the White House.

Trump lashed out on Twitter, saying the Senate missed an opportunity to eliminate protections for social media platforms that he said give "unlimited power to

Big Tech companies. Pathetic!!!"

Trump also slammed lawmakers for rejecting his call to increase COVID-19 relief payments to \$2,000: "Not fair, or smart!"

The 81-13 vote in the Senate on the widely popular defense bill followed an earlier 322-87 override vote in the House. The bill affirms a 3% pay raise for U.S. troops and guides defense policy, cementing decisions about troop levels, new weapons systems and military readiness, personnel policy and other military goals.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said the "sweeping and overwhelmingly bipartisan votes" in the

SEE OVERRIDE ON PAGE 5

President Donald Trump boards Air Force One in West Palm Beach, Fla., on Friday.

PATRICK SEMANSKY/AP

Remembering US troops who died in Iraq and Syria in 2020

By **CHAD GARLAND**
Stars and Stripes

Four U.S. service members were killed during hostilities and four others died in noncombat incidents in Iraq and Syria in 2020 as America wound down its role in the fight against the Islamic State group.

The eight deaths last year bring to 99 the number of American troops who have died while taking part in the U.S.-led coalition bat-

ting ISIS since it began a little over six years ago. Twenty-one were killed in combat and more than 235 have been wounded in action.

All four combat deaths happened in March, two during an operation against ISIS in northern Iraq and two in a rocket attack on Camp Taji, near Baghdad. A British soldier was also killed and 14 troops were wounded in the rocket attack, which the Pentagon has

blamed on pro-Iran Shiite militias.

The U.S. is expected to reduce troop numbers in Iraq to around 2,500 by mid-January. Hundreds of troops are expected to remain in eastern Syria.

Antonio I. Moore

Spc. Antonio I. Moore, 22, of Wilmington, N.C., died in Deir al-Zour province, Syria, on Jan. 24, when his vehicle rolled over dur-



Moore

Knightdale, N.C.

"Antonio was one of the best in our formation," Lt. Col. Ian Doiron, the battalion's commander,

ing route clearance operations, the Pentagon said. Moore was assigned to the Army's 363rd Engineer Battalion, 411th Engineer Brigade, out of

said in a statement at the time.

Moore, who was on his first deployment since enlisting in the Army as a combat engineer in May 2017, was survived by his mother, stepfather, three brothers and one sister, the Vicksburg, Miss.-based 412th Theater Engineer Command said in a statement.

His awards and decorations in-

SEE REMEMBERING ON PAGE 4

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Chewy sends paintings to stand out

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Danielle Schwartz didn't ask for an oil painting of her cat. But she loves the portrait of Stinky that hangs in her upstate New York home, a surprise gift from an unlikely place: an online pet store.

It's one of the more than 1,000 free paintings that Chewy sends to select customers each week — even during the pandemic — tapping into people's obsession with their fur children and, it hopes, winning customers for life.

In the cutthroat world of online shopping, that personal touch and a bit of kitsch is how Chewy is looking to stand out among the competition, which has only gotten stiffer as more people shop online and add pandemic pets to their families. Pet ownership is expected to grow 4% in 2020, the first increase in several years, according to the Petco Foundation.

Chewy's strategy seems to be working on Schwartz, whose blue-eyed cat likes to rub up against the painting from his cat

tree.

"I just want to buy everything from them," she says. "They're a big company. I was shocked that they did something so personal."

The portraits have become a hit on social media, where people share images of them or beg for their pets to be turned into works of art.

"Customers were going bananas," says co-founder Ryan Cohen, who helped come up with the idea in 2013 before leaving the company.

EXCHANGE RATES

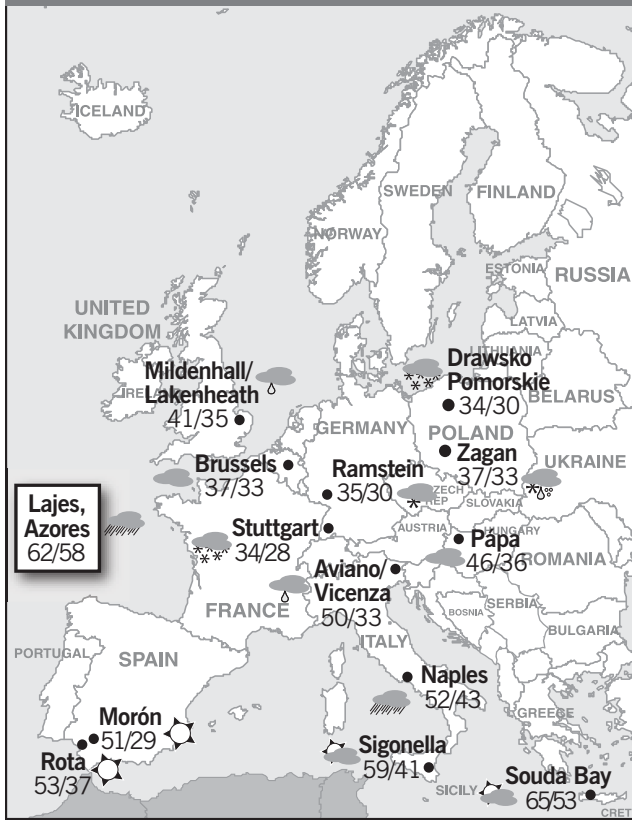
Military rates		So. Korea (Won)	
Euro costs (Jan. 4)	\$1.20		1089.92
Dollar buys (Jan. 4)	0.7924	Switzerland (Franc)	.8897
British pound (Jan. 4)	\$1.33	Thailand (Baht)	29.97
Japanese yen (Jan. 4)	101.00	Turkey (NewLira)	7.4392
South Korean won (Jan. 4)	1062.00		
Commercial rates		INTEREST RATES	
Bahrain(Dinar)	.3770	Prime rate	3.25
Britain (Pound)	.7314	Interest Rates Discount rate	0.75
Canada (Dollar)	1.2722	Federal funds market rate	0.09
China(Yuan)	6.5330	3-month bill	0.09
Denmark (Krone)	6.0929	30-year bond	1.64
Egypt (Pound)	15.7396		
Euro	.8240		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7529		
Hungary (Forint)	297.00		
Israel (Shekel)	3.2226		
Japan (Yen)	103.25		
Kuwait(Dinar)	.3041		
Norway (Krone)	8.6305		
Philippines (Peso)	48.34		
Poland (Zloty)	3.74		
Saudi Arab (Riyal)	3.7514		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3221		

WEATHER OUTLOOK

SUNDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



SUNDAY IN EUROPE



MONDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

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Mobile • Online • Print

EUROPE

KRISTI KIMMEL

CustomerService@stripes.com

+49 (0) 0631.3615.9111
DSN: 314.583.9111

MIDDLE EAST

KRISTI KIMMEL

CustomerService@stripes.com

+49 (0) 0631.3615.9111
DSN: 314.583.9111

PACIFIC

ICHIRO KATAYANAGI

PacificAdvertising@stripes.com

CML +81 (42) 552.2511 ext. 77313
DSN: 227.7313

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WAR ON TERRORISM

Taliban using attacks to 'leverage' peace talks

BY PAMELA CONSTABLE
AND SHARIF HASSAN
The Washington Post

KABUL, Afghanistan — In a video, five turbaned fighters stand in a row, wearing flak jackets and sneakers, assault rifles at the ready. One says in Pashto that God hates those who stray from religion and “cling to a worldly life,” and obliges the faithful to wage jihad, even if they must face prison or death, to establish the “law of the Koran” on earth.

The video, published Monday on a Taliban spokesman's Twitter account, came amid a rash of targeted shootings and bombings in the Afghan capital that have killed several dozen journalists, civic leaders, physicians, democracy advocates and government officials. The mayhem has brought a new kind of personal terror to a city long accustomed to insurgent attacks against official buildings and military targets.

Even though U.S. troops are leaving the country, the militiaman explained, “it is permissible to kill the (American) puppet regime of Kabul” and those who aid it. English subtitles accompanied his raised voice. “We are carrying weapons to avenge our values and institutions,” he said. “We are wholeheartedly obeying the supreme command of Allah.”

The video was posted days before negotiations between Taliban and Afghan delegates are set to resume Wednesday in Qatar, after a two-week break. Afghan security officials have blamed the Taliban for several targeted killings, saying the insurgents are using new scare tactics to “leverage” their position at the negotiating table and undermine public confidence in the government of President Ashraf Ghani.

The killings have led prominent civilians to take extra security measures or avoid going outdoors. The Taliban appear to be keeping close tabs on a variety of activities; a recent fashion show at a local hotel was immediately denounced in a tweet from a Taliban leader, who charged that “Western intoxication and ideas” have entered Afghan culture and warned that “anything in conflict with Islam” will be destroyed.

“People in Kabul used to worry whether they would be caught by chance in an attack on a government building or international institution. Now they worry whether they will be next on the list,” said one security official, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to comment publicly.

But the chief Taliban spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, denied any involvement in the attacks, calling the charges “propaganda.” In a voice mail response Friday to questions from The Washington Post, he said the insurgents had



MARIAM ZUHAIB/AP

Firefighters clean up the debris after a car bomb explosion in Kabul, Afghanistan, Thursday.

“The real worry is not these individual assassinations. It is the larger wars that could lie ahead.”

Hafiz Mansour
conservative lawmaker, delegate

nothing to do with the killings and blamed them on Afghanistan's intelligence agency.

“We have not killed the doctors, civil society activists, or people who have not taken up arms against us,” he said in Dari. “They are not among our military targets, and killing them has no benefit for us.” When peace comes, he added, the country will need “educated” Afghans.

Mujahid said that the group's primary goal is to settle the issues through talks, and that a “military solution” would only be used as a last resort.

Despite such denials, Afghan experts and officials said they have little doubt that the Taliban is behind the surge of attacks. Most victims have been killed in their vehicles, either by gunmen who escaped on motorbikes or magnetic bombs placed underneath the carriages. They said the insurgents are sending a veiled message to several audiences, including Afghan officials trying to retain public confidence, delegates returning to the peace talks and American officials in the incoming administration.

The Afghan government has

doubled the number of police and other security forces patrolling the capital, and vehicles are being stopped and searched on many street corners. Officials said they have made a number of arrests, and Interior Minister Massoud Andarabi told Afghan lawmakers on Wednesday that detainees had described a special new “cell” based in nearby Logar province that plans attacks on high-profile individuals.

“Unclaimed bombings & targeted assassination of civil society activists are pillars of Taliban terror campaign linked to their negotiations strategy,” vice president Amrullah Saleh, a former national intelligence chief, tweeted this week. “They want to break the political will of the Afg people & demand impossible concessions.”

Kabul residents going about daily routines that expose them to danger, whether selling used winter clothing in outdoor markets or delivering supplies in hand carts, have also been spooked.

“If I didn't have to feed my wife and children, I wouldn't leave home at all now,” said Ali Agha, 26, who sells fruit in a crowded West Kabul neighborhood. With so

many explosions and attacks, he said, he had to change his location from another, more vulnerable market where he made more money. “I blame the president, because he can't provide security for the people.”

Many Afghans say U.S. officials gave too much away to the insurgents in the deal they signed in February, failing to commit them to specific conditions regarding violence and ties to other extremist groups, while agreeing to withdraw most U.S. troops by spring.

Since the pact was signed, the Taliban have waged a relentless campaign of attacks across the country, killing thousands of people. But in October, President Donald Trump announced that troop drawdown would be speeded up, adding to the insurgents' sense of imminent victory.

“The Taliban are feeling triumphal, and they want to be seen as tough. They are not interested in winning hearts and minds,” said Davood Moradian, director of the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies. “They are using force to delegitimize the Afghan state by showing it can't protect the public, and to remove a layer of resistance to their victory by getting rid of those who represent the values of the Afghan republic.”

With a new government soon to take over in Washington, Moradian said, the insurgents want to make sure President-elect Joe Biden doesn't change the terms of the February pact or set new conditions for pulling out the remain-

ing 5,000 troops, slated to be halved next month. By sowing terror on city streets, he added, “the Taliban are telling the new administration, ‘Don't you dare reopen the deal.’”

Among Afghan delegates returning to the Doha talks early next week, the intensifying targeted violence has created a sense of dispirited gloom. Some have lost friends to recent attacks or started wearing bulletproof vests. Others said the dismissive harshness of the Taliban's attitude makes it hard to stay optimistic about prospects for peace — or even to remain polite in meetings with adversaries bent on murdering people and creating chaos in their capital.

“The Taliban have not changed. They are eager for power, but they have no plans or policies, no ability to run a country. They are a fighting army, not a governing group. They know how to destroy but not to build,” said Hafiz Mansour, a conservative lawmaker and delegate. “We have to keep talking because there is no other option, but it is going to be difficult.”

Mansour warned that continued violence and stalemated talks could eventually lead to a government collapse, which has happened several times in recent Afghan history, including after the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989.

“The real worry is not these individual assassinations,” he said. “It is the larger wars that could lie ahead.”

MIDEAST

Iran plans 20% uranium enrichment soon

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran said Saturday it plans to enrich uranium up to 20% at its underground Fordo nuclear facility “as soon as possible,” pushing its program a technical step away from weapons-grade levels as it increases pressure on the West over the tattered atomic deal.

The move comes amid heightened tensions between Iran and the U.S. in the waning days of the administration of President Donald Trump, who unilaterally withdrew America from Tehran’s nuclear deal in 2018.

That set in motion an escalating series of incidents capped by a U.S. drone strike that killed a top Iranian general in Baghdad a year ago, an anniversary Sunday that has American officials now worried about possible retaliation by Iran.

Iran’s decision to begin enriching to 20% a decade ago nearly brought an Israeli strike targeting

its nuclear facilities, tensions that only abated with the 2015 atomic deal. A resumption of 20% enrichment could see that brinkmanship return.

Even Ali Akbar Salehi, the U.S.-educated head of the civilian Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, offered a military analogy to describe his agency’s readiness to take the next step.

“We are like soldiers and our fingers are on the triggers,” Salehi told Iranian state television. “The commander should command and we shoot. We are ready for this and will produce (20% enriched uranium) as soon as possible.”

Iran’s decision comes after its parliament passed a bill, later approved by a constitutional watchdog, aimed at hiking enrichment to pressure Europe into providing sanctions relief.

It also serves as pressure ahead of the inauguration of U.S. President-elect Joe Biden, who has said he is willing to re-enter the nucle-

ar deal.

The International Atomic Energy Agency acknowledged Iran had informed its inspectors of the decision by a letter after news leaked overnight Friday.

“Iran has informed the agency that in order to comply with a legal act recently passed by the country’s parliament, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran intends to produce low-enriched uranium ... up to 20 percent at the Fordo Fuel Enrichment Plant,” the IAEA said in a statement.

The IAEA added Iran did not say when it planned to boost enrichment, though the agency “has inspectors present in Iran on a 24/7 basis and they have regular access to Fordo.” The parliamentary bill also called on Iran to expel those inspectors, though it appears Tehran still hasn’t decided to take that step.

Salehi said Iran would need to switch out natural uranium in centrifuges at Fordo for material al-

ready enriched to 4% to begin the process of going to 20%.

“It should be done under IAEA supervision,” Salehi added.

Since the deal’s collapse, Iran has resumed enrichment at Fordo, near the Shiite holy city of Qom, some 55 miles southwest of Tehran.

Shielded by the mountains, Fordo is ringed by anti-aircraft guns and other fortifications. It is about the size of a football field, large enough to house 3,000 centrifuges, but small and hardened enough to lead U.S. officials to suspect it had a military purpose when they exposed the site publicly in 2009.

The 2015 deal saw Iran agree to limit its enrichment in exchange for sanctions relief. The accord also called for Fordo to be turned into a research-and-development facility.

Under Iran’s former hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Tehran began 20% enrichment. Israel, which has its own un-

declared nuclear weapons program, feared Tehran was building a bomb.

After the discovery of Fordo, the U.S. worked on so-called “bunker buster” bombs designed to strike such facilities.

As Israel threatened at one point to bomb Iranian nuclear sites like Fordo, U.S. officials reportedly showed them a video of a bunker-buster bomb destroying a mock-up of Fordo in America’s southwestern desert.

Israel, which under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has continued to criticize Iran’s nuclear program, offered no immediate comment Saturday.

As of now, Iran is enriching uranium up to 4.5%, in violation of the accord’s limit of 3.67%. Experts say Iran now has enough low-enriched uranium stockpiled for at least two nuclear weapons, if it chose to pursue them. Iran long has maintained its nuclear program is peaceful.

Remembering: Service members honored for their sacrifice

FROM PAGE 1

clude the National Defense Service medal and the Army Service Ribbon.

Diego D. Pongo

Gunnery Sgt. Diego D. Pongo, 34, of Simi Valley, Calif., was killed on March 8 alongside another special operations Marine during a joint U.S.-Iraq raid to destroy an ISIS hideout in a mountainous area of northern Iraq.



Pongo

“They were intelligent, courageous and loyal,” said Col. John Lynch, head of Marine Raider Regiment, to which both men were assigned. “They were also family men.”

Pongo, a member of 2nd Marine Raider Battalion out of Camp Lejeune, N.C., joined the service in 2004 and had served eight years with the elite Raiders. He was an advanced sniper, a foreign weapons instructor and a combat marksmanship leader.

Moises A. Navas

Capt. Moises A. Navas, 34, of Germantown, Md., was killed along with Pongo on March 8.

Like Pongo, he joined the Marines in 2004 and was with the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion. He



Navas

earned his commission through an enlisted-to-officer program in 2010 and served as an infantry officer before becoming a Raider in 2016.

“They were dedicated leaders, true professionals in their craft, and willing to go above and beyond for the mission and their team,” said Lynch, their regimental commander.

He and Pongo were killed while accompanying Iraqi forces on a mission during which they discovered a well-defended cave complex in the mountains. About two dozen ISIS fighters were reportedly killed in the firefight.

Marshal D. Roberts

Air Force Staff Sgt. Marshal D. Roberts, 28, of Owasso, Okla., died March 11 as the result of a rocket attack on Camp Taji, Iraq, that also killed Army Spc. Juan Miquel Mendez Covarrubias and 26-year-old British combat medic Lance Cpl. Brodie Gillon.

Roberts joined the service in May 2014 and was the senior personnel noncommissioned officer on the deployment with the 219th Engineering Installation Squadron of the Oklahoma Air National Guard’s 138th Fighter Wing, which is headquartered in Tulsa.

Roberts was a “dedicated Airman, mentor and leader,” said Col. Michael Meason, commander of the wing, where Roberts’



Roberts

wife also served. The couple had an 8-year-old daughter.

“We are devastated by the loss of Staff Sgt. Roberts who served selflessly and with honor,” said Maj. Gen. Michael Thompson, Oklahoma’s adjutant general.

Juan Miquel Mendez Covarrubias

Spc. Juan Miquel Mendez Covarrubias, 27, of Hanford, Calif., a member of the 1st Cavalry Division’s 1st Air Cavalry Brigade out of Fort Hood, Texas, was promoted to specialist following his death on March 11 in the rocket attack on Camp Taji.

The signal support systems specialist joined the Army in 2018 and served with the brigade’s 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment since March 2019. He deployed in support of Operation Inherent Resolve in October 2019.

“The regiment and his fellow Soldiers are grieving the loss of a true warrior,” his battalion commander Lt. Col. Adam S. Camarano said in a statement expressing condolences to his friends.

John David Hilty

Sgt. 1st Class John David Hilty, a 44-year-old soldier from Bowie, Md., died in a noncombat incident on March 30 in northern Iraq, a few months before he was expected to retire.

The petroleum supply specialist was serving with the Fort Hood, Texas-based 1st Battalion,

227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division.

“He was an exceptional leader who will be sorely missed throughout the entire formation,” said 1-227th commander Lt. Col. Adam Camarano.

The father of a son who was born around the time of his third deployment to Afghanistan in late 2008, Hilty joined the Army as a combat engineer in April 1999 and deployed to Iraq in October 2019.

Christopher Wesley Curry

Sgt. Christopher Wesley Curry, 23, of Terre Haute, Ind., died May 4 in a noncombat incident in Irbil, in northern Iraq.

He was serving with the 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, out of Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

“His honesty, light heartedness, and wit will always be remembered by his brothers in arms,” said Lt. Col. Jimmy Howell, the battalion commander.

His father, Michael Curry, served 22 years in the Army, and his two brothers are in the service.

“Being in the military, I have lost friends who I consider fam-



Hilty



Covarrubias



Curry

ily,” Michael Curry told Terre Haute’s Fox 10 television news, days after his son’s death. “I never thought it would hit home like it has. I have two other sons that are still in the military. I thought they would all come back home to me safe and sound.”

Bryan “Cooper” Mount

Sgt. Bryan “Cooper” Mount was killed when his all-terrain vehicle rolled over during a patrol in eastern Syria on July 21.

The 25-year-old cavalry scout from St. George, Utah, was serving with the 82nd Airborne Division’s 2nd Brigade Combat Team. He had previously deployed with the brigade to Iraq in 2017 during the nine-month campaign to oust ISIS from Mosul, the country’s second-largest city.

Mount joined the Army in January 2016 and had earned many awards and decorations, including an Army Commendation Medal with Combat device, Army Good Conduct Medal, Combat Action Badge and Army Parachutist Badge.

Lt. Col. Val Moro, his commander in 1st Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, said his “care-free and easygoing personality” made him approachable and well-loved among his fellow soldiers.



Mount

MILITARY

DOD keeps F-35's full-rate production on hold

By TONY CAPACCIO
Bloomberg

The Pentagon has put a decision on approving full-rate production of Lockheed Martin Corp.'s F-35 on indefinite hold, as officials remain unable to say when the fighter jet will be ready for combat testing that's been delayed repeatedly since 2017.

The most recent of many milestones for a full production decision on the \$398 billion program — “no later than March” of next year — has been scrapped by Ellen Lord, the Defense Department's undersecretary for acquisition and sustainment.

“Technical challenges and the impact of covid-19” have delayed preparation of the simulation facility where the sophisticated testing of the costliest U.S. weapons system will be conducted, Jessica Maxwell, Lord's spokeswoman, said in a statement when asked about a previously undisclosed Dec. 18 memo by Lord. She said a new date would “based on an independent technical review.”

That means it will be months into President-elect Joe Biden's administration before his new team at the Pentagon has all the information it will need to make a decision on the F-35's full-rate production, the most lucrative phase for Bethesda, Md.-based Lockheed.

The simulated combat testing was to have occurred this month, the latest date of an exercise once scheduled for 2017.

Whenever the testing occurs, it will take an additional two to three months to transfer and analyze the data and then draft a final report for delivery to Pentagon leaders and Congress. The report is mandated by law before a deci-



SEONGJOON CHO/Bloomberg

A South Korean airman inspects a F-35A stealth fighter jet manufactured by Lockheed Martin on display during a press day of the Seoul International Aerospace & Defense Exhibition at Seoul Air Base in Seongnam in 2019.

sion.

A decision to allow full-rate production will be a seal of approval from the Defense Department to American taxpayers and foreign customers that the warplane has been fully tested, deemed effective against the highest-level threats, can meet its maintenance goals and can be produced efficiently.

More than 600 of the F-35 program's potential 3,200 aircraft already have been delivered, and the fighter is in use by the military in nine nations, including the U.S.

Air Force and Marine Corps. But it still hasn't demonstrated its effectiveness against the most challenging Russian and Chinese air defense systems and aircraft. That will be measured in a sophisticated on-ground simulator at Patuxent River Naval Air Station in Maryland.

Biden and his aides have complained that Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller and the Trump loyalists around him have failed to provide his transition team with adequate briefings, criticism that Miller has rebuffed.

Maxwell, the spokeswoman for acquisition chief Lord, said it's possible Biden's team will be briefed on the F-35 memo during an “acquisition-specific” meeting scheduled to take place next week. Previously “we provided information on the F-35 as part of the initial transition books, and have since provided additional F-35 program information as part of broader Requests for Information on acquisition,” she said.

The Defense Department's F-35 program office is analyzing test preparations and expects to

have revised dates for the simulation and for a potential full production decision by Feb. 28, according to Laura Seal, a program spokeswoman.

Robert Behler, the Defense Department's operational testing director, says in his latest annual report, set for release in January, that the roughly one month of combat testing is now expected to occur in mid- to late-2021.

Maxwell said in spite of the delayed decision the program “will continue low-rate initial production at the planned rate.”

Overrides: Bipartisan NDAA agreement shows limits of Trump influence

FROM PAGE 1

House and Senate “delivered a resounding rebuke to President Trump's reckless assault on America's military and national security.”

Trump's veto of the National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, “would have hurt the health, financial security and safety of our service members, their families, our veterans and our allies and partners worldwide,” Pelosi said. “Instead of keeping Americans safe, the president continues to use his final moments in office to sow chaos and undermine our security.”

The defense bill, which now has the force of law, “looks after our brave men and women who volunteer to wear the uniform,” said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. “But it's also a tremendous opportunity: to direct our national security priorities to

reflect the resolve of the American people and the evolving threats to their safety, at home and abroad. It's our chance to ensure we keep pace with competitors like Russia and China.”

The Senate override was delayed after Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., objected to moving ahead until McConnell allowed a vote on the Trump-backed plan to boost COVID relief payments to \$2,000. McConnell did not allow that vote; instead he used his parliamentary power to set a vote limiting debate on the defense measure, overcoming a filibuster threat by Sanders and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York.

Without a bipartisan agreement, a vote on the bill could have been delayed until Saturday night. Lawmakers, however, agreed to an immediate roll call Friday once the filibuster threat was stopped.

Trump vetoed the defense measure last week, saying it failed to

limit Twitter and other social media companies he claimed were biased against him during his failed reelection campaign. Trump also opposed language that allows for the renaming of military bases that honor Confederate leaders.

Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and a close Trump ally, hailed the override vote.

“Today, the Senate sent a strong message of support to our troops,” Inhofe said. “Not only does this bill give our service members and their families the resources they need, but it also makes our nation more secure — pushing back against China and Russia (and) strengthening our cyber defenses.”

Trump has succeeded throughout his four-year term in enforcing party discipline in Congress, with few Republicans willing to publicly oppose him. The biparti-

san overrides on the defense bill showed the limits of Trump's influence in the final weeks of his term.

Earlier this week, 130 House Republicans voted against the Trump-backed COVID relief checks, with many arguing they were unnecessary and would increase the federal budget deficit. The Democratic-controlled House approved the larger payments, but the plan fizzled in the Senate amid opposition from McConnell and other Republicans, another sign of Trump's fading hold over Congress.

Only seven GOP senators voted with Trump to oppose the defense bill override. Forty Republicans — including the entire GOP leadership — voted for the override, along with 41 Democrats. Sanders and five other liberals who opposed the defense bill also voted against the override.

Besides his concerns about so-

cial media and military base names, Trump also complained that the bill restricted his ability to withdraw thousands of troops from Afghanistan and Germany. The measure requires the Pentagon to submit reports certifying that the proposed withdrawals would not jeopardize U.S. national security.

Trump has vetoed eight other bills, but those were all sustained because supporters did not gain the two-thirds vote needed in each chamber for the bills to become law without Trump's signature.

Rhode Island Sen. Jack Reed, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, called Trump's Dec. 23 veto a “parting gift” to Russian President Vladimir Putin “and a lump of coal for our troops. Donald Trump is showing more devotion to Confederate base names than to the men and women who defend our nation.”

VIRUS OUTBREAK

US tops 20M cases, most of any country

By NANCY DILLON
New York Daily News

The total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the United States topped 20 million on Friday, the most of any country according to Johns Hopkins University.

That's 24% of the planet's official cases, a sobering figure considering the U.S. is home to less than 5% of the world's population.

India has the second-largest number of confirmed cases with 10.3 million, Johns Hopkins said.

Brazil has reported 7.7 million, Russia has reported 3.2 million

and France has logged 2.7 million, the university's tracking dashboard said.

COVID-19 deaths also are up in the U.S., totaling 346,687 as of Friday, or 19% of the world's cumulative coronavirus death toll.

The new data comes as health officials around the globe race to get newly approved vaccines into the arms of front-line medical personnel, nursing home residents, vulnerable patients, first responders and other essential workers.

In the U.S., the federal government missed its goal of vaccinating 20 million people by year's end

as the distribution over the last three weeks hit logistical challenges.

Much of the responsibility has fallen on the shoulders of already overstretched state health departments, overcrowded hospitals and understaffed nursing homes, experts have said.

President-elect Joe Biden criticized the Trump administration Tuesday for the vaccine rollout and vowed to accelerate the current speed once he's sworn in this month.

"The Trump administration's plan to distribute vaccines is fall-

ing behind, far behind," Biden said during his remarks from Wilmington, Del.

"As I long feared and warned, the effort to distribute and administer the vaccine is not progressing as it should," he said.

"If (the pace) continues to move as it is now, it's going to take years, not months, to vaccinate the American people," he said, saying his administration will push to administer 100 million shots in its first 100 days.

He said Congress would have to fund the plan to ramp up the current pace, but he also plans to use

his power under the Defense Production Act to order private industry to accelerate production of the materials needed for the vaccines.

"This is going to be the greatest operational challenge we've ever faced as a nation," he said.

"We need to be honest — the next few weeks and months are going to be very tough, very tough for our nation. Maybe the toughest during this entire pandemic," Biden warned.

He said it's likely "things are going to get worse before they get better."

Once a model, Calif. struggles to get hold of latest virus surge

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Ambulances waited hours for openings to offload coronavirus patients. Overflow patients were moved to hospital hallways and gift shops, even a cafeteria. Refrigerated trucks were on standby, ready to store the dead.

For months, California did many of the right things to avoid a catastrophic surge from the pandemic. But by the time Gov. Gavin Newsom said on Dec. 15 that 5,000 body bags were being distributed, it was clear that the nation's most populous state had entered a new phase of the COVID-19 crisis.

Now infections have been racing out of control for weeks, and California remains at or near the top of the list of states with the most new cases per capita. It has routinely set new marks for infections and deaths, and began the new year reporting a record 585 deaths in a single day.

Experts say a variety of factors combined to wipe out the past efforts, which for much of the year held the virus to manageable levels. Cramped housing, travel and Thanksgiving gatherings contributed to the spread, along with the public's fatigue amid regulations that closed many schools and businesses and encouraged — or required — an isolated lifestyle.

Another factor could be a more contagious variant of the virus detected in Southern California, although it's not clear yet how widespread that may be.

California's woes have helped fuel the year-end U.S. infection spike and added urgency to the attempts to beat back the scourge that has killed more than 340,000 Americans. Even with vaccines becoming available, cases are al-

most certain to continue growing, and yet another surge is expected in the weeks after Christmas and New Year's.

On Friday, the number of confirmed U.S. coronavirus cases surpassed 20 million, nearly twice as many as the No. 2 country, India, and nearly one-quarter of the more than 83 million cases globally, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

In California, the southern half of the state has seen the worst effects, from the agricultural San Joaquin Valley to the Mexico border. Hospitals are swamped with patients, and intensive care units have no more beds for COVID-19 patients. Makeshift wards are being set up in tents, arenas, classrooms and conference rooms. Some hospitals are having difficulty keeping up with the demand for oxygen.

Hospitalizations statewide have gone up more than eightfold in two months and nearly tenfold in Los Angeles County. On Thursday, the total number of California deaths surpassed 25,000, joining only New York and Texas at that milestone.

"Most heartbreaking is that if we had done a better job of reducing transmission of the virus, many of these deaths would not have happened," said Barbara Ferrer, the county's public health director, who has pleaded with people not to get together and worsen the spread.

Crowded houses and apartments are often cited as a source of spread, particularly in Los Angeles, which has some of the densest neighborhoods in the U.S. Households in and around LA often have several generations — or multiple families — living under one roof. Those tend to be lower-



JAE C. HONG / AP

Ventilator tubes are attached a COVID-19 patient at Providence Holy Cross Medical Center in the Mission Hills section of Los Angeles, on Nov. 19.

"This pandemic is an ultra-marathon. In our culture, we are used to sprints."

Corinne McDaniels-Davidson

director of the Institute for Public Health at San Diego State University

income areas where residents work essential jobs that can expose them to the virus at work or while commuting.

The socioeconomic situation in LA County is "like the kindling," said Paula Cannon, a professor of microbiology and immunology at the University of Southern California. "And now we got to the stage where there was enough COVID out in the community that it lit the fire."

Home to a quarter of the state's 40 million residents, LA County has had 40% of the state's deaths and a third of its 2.3 million cases. The virus has hit Latino and Black communities harder.

Cannon said there's a moral imperative for people who can follow stay-home orders to help prevent spread that is harder to con-

tain in other areas.

In March, during the early days of the pandemic, Newsom was hailed for issuing the nation's first state stay-home order.

The Democrat eased business restrictions in May, and when a broader restart led to another surge, imposed more rules.

In early December, with cases out of control, he issued a looser stay-home order. He also closed businesses such as barbershops and salons, halted restaurant dining and limited capacity in retail stores.

The latest restrictions apply everywhere except in rural Northern California.

But Dr. Lee Riley, an infectious diseases professor at the University of California at Berkeley, said that while the state managed to

flatten the curve of rising cases, it never effectively bent the curve downward to the point infections would die out.

When cases rose in June and July, California was never able to do enough contact tracing to isolate infected people and those they may have exposed before they spread the disease — often unwittingly — to others, he said. And public health directives were never adequately enforced.

Across California, local officials have reminded people that the fate of the virus lies in their behavior and asked for one more round of shared sacrifice. They reminded people that activities that were safe earlier this year are now risky as the virus becomes more widespread.

"You can practice safety and low-risk behavior from March to October. But all that is erased. Nothing matters except what you are doing to fight the virus right now," said Corinne McDaniels-Davidson, director of the Institute for Public Health at San Diego State University. "This pandemic is an ultra-marathon. In our culture, we are used to sprints."

VIRUS OUTBREAK ROUNDUP

Kansas City area sees worst month for virus deaths

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY — December was the deadliest month of the coronavirus pandemic in the Kansas City area, where an average of 11 people died each day from COVID-19.

The Kansas City metropolitan area recorded 342 COVID-19 deaths through Dec. 30, the Kansas City Star reported. All told, 1,353 area residents have died from the virus since the onset of the pandemic. The metro area includes Kansas City and Jackson, Clay and Platte counties in Missouri and Johnson and Wyandotte counties in Kansas.

In Missouri, the virus has claimed 5,519 lives, including 28 new deaths reported Thursday by the state Department of Health and Senior Services. The state also cited 3,714 new confirmed cases, bringing the total to 392,570 since the pandemic began.

Hospitalization numbers have improved over the past couple of weeks, but experts worry another surge could follow holiday gatherings. The health department said in-patient bed capacity statewide was at 29%, and intensive care unit bed capacity was at 25%.

The situation was even more concerning in the St. Louis area. Dr. Alex Garza, head of the St. Louis Metropolitan Pandemic Task Force, said hospitals were at 84% capacity and ICUs were at 90% capacity.

“As we enter this new year our ICUs are still operating at near-full capacity and there is little room left if we were to have a surge in patients,” Garza said at a news conference Wednesday.

Garza said the recent decline in recorded COVID-19 cases in the region may have simply reflected that fewer people were taking the time to get tested around the holidays.

Utah

SALT LAKE CITY — Less than a quarter of the 127,375 doses of the COVID-19 vaccines reportedly received in Utah have been used to vaccinate health care providers and long-term care facility residents and staff as of the end of the year, Deseret News reported.

“The initial rollout of the vaccine has been slow, slower than anticipated, slower than we wanted,” said Rich Lakin, immunization program director with the Utah Department of Health. “We hope to be at a much faster pace in the next 15 days.”

Utah is already starting to speed

up the process, health department spokesperson Tom Hudachko said Thursday.

More than 6,000 doses were reportedly administered in Utah on Thursday, double the daily increases earlier in the week. What’s making the difference, Hudachko said, is that local health departments, including tribal clinics, and long-term care facilities are able to give doses much faster than hospitals.

New York

NEW YORK — The New York City Sheriff’s Department shut down a series of illegal New Year’s Eve parties for violating coronavirus restrictions, operating without a liquor license and other infractions, authorities announced Friday.

More than 300 people gathered Thursday night for karaoke and dancing at an illegal bottle club on 58th Street in Queens, the department said on Twitter.

Five people were charged with offenses including violating emergency orders that ban indoor gatherings, providing alcohol without a liquor license and obstructed egress.

Deputies also raided an illegal gathering on Prince Street in Soho, where more than 145 people were partying in a space with no liquor license, the department said. Four people were charged with multiple offenses. The patrons were not wearing masks in the venue’s overcrowded sixth floor.

Deputy sheriffs also found nearly 80 people dancing and smoking hookah at Stars Hall in the Sunset Park section of Brooklyn. The organizer of the event was ticketed for violating an executive order.

Illinois

CHICAGO — The one-day death toll from the coronavirus pandemic climbed by 157 in Illinois and another 7,201 confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases have been reported, the state’s health department announced Friday.

In a news release the Illinois Department of Public Health said the latest one day totals bring the number of deaths since the pandemic began in 2020 to 16,647 and the number of cases climbing to 970,590.

With the last totals of 2020 counted, Illinois had for the year more COVID-19-related deaths than all but five states in the nation. According to the Chicago Tribune, only Texas, New York, California,



STEPHEN M. DOWELL, ORLANDO SENTINEL/AP

Health care professionals administer the COVID-19 vaccine at Lake-Sumter State College in Leesburg, Fla., on Friday. Long lines of cars were at the site as the Lake County vaccines are currently being given to people who are 65 years and older and front-line workers.

Florida and New Jersey had more deaths. And, the paper reported that the state’s total mean there has been one coronavirus-related death for every 711 Illinois residents.

Louisiana

BATON ROUGE — With the announcement that Louisiana soon will allow people aged 70 and older to get the coronavirus vaccine, residents clamoring for the immunizations have hurried to pharmacies trying to receive a shot, even though those vaccinations don’t begin until Monday and will require a scheduled appointment.

The Louisiana Department of Health said Friday it has received multiple reports of people who meet the new, expanded criteria showing up at pharmacies, overwhelming pharmacies’ phone lines and even calling some hospitals trying to get vaccinated days before doses are available.

Health department spokeswoman Aly Neel stressed that only a limited supply of 10,000 Moderna vaccine doses will be available next week for those newly eligible, only certain pharmacies will be administering those doses and appointments are required to receive the shot or the person will be turned away.

Iowa

DES MOINES — A federal judge has rejected an argument by Tyson Foods that it is not liable in the death of a worker in Iowa because it was following federal guidance when it kept meatpacking plants open during the coronavirus pandemic.

Tyson was sued in August by the family of Isidro Fernandez, who worked at the company’s plant in Waterloo, after he died April 26 from complications of COVID-19.

More than 1,000 Tyson workers tested positive for the virus in May and at least six died. The families of Fernandez and at least three other employees who died claim in lawsuits that the company was negligent in how it reacted to the pandemic.

Tyson fired seven managers in December after an investigation found that supervisors held a betting pool on how many employees would test positive for COVID-19.

Vermont

STAMFORD — The Vermont town of Stamford has voted to overturn in its community Gov. Phil Scott’s emergency orders issued with the intention of protecting the state during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The select board of the town of about 800 people along the Massachusetts border voted 3-2 Tuesday to “terminate” the governor’s restrictions.

The three board members in favor of the idea cite a section of Vermont law that they believe allows them to reject the governor’s order.

Select board member Daniel Potvin said during the meeting that quarantine requirements, restrictions on large family or public gatherings, and face mask requirements “violate the constitution” in part because they were imposed without normal due process of law.

He asserted it was important to stand up against such measures because it could lead to more loss of personal freedoms later on. Scott hasn’t enforced the orders heavily handedly, he said, “but that could change.”

Arizona

PHOENIX — Arizona health care leaders say hospitals may

soon have to make tough decisions about the treatment of COVID-19 patients amid surging cases that are crowding intensive care units.

The state’s largest hospital chain, Phoenix-based Banner Health, suspended elective surgeries starting Friday to free up room for treating COVID-19 patients as new records for infections and hospitalizations are being set regularly.

Some of its hospitals are among those sending away ambulance transports or halting transfers from other hospitals, while still accepting walk-in patients needing emergency care.

Now, hospitals may have to prioritize care among patients, deciding who first gets access to limited resources.

Florida

KEY WEST — A local curfew muted the New Year’s celebration in Key West, forcing the festivities to end well before midnight.

The New Year’s Eve Shoe Drop took place a little early in the back courtyard at Bourbon Street Pub. At 9 p.m. sharp, partygoers watched the 23rd annual “drop” of a female impersonator in a large replica of a woman’s red high heel shoe as organizers decreed it was midnight somewhere in the world.

“Sushi,” portrayed by Key West resident Gary Marion, was in the shoe, wearing a lavish gown designed and sewn by the drag queen.

The complex sold tickets to the private event to limit revelers, who were seated to maintain social distancing, the organizers said.

New Year’s Eve typically features multiple “drops” across Key West, including the drop of a conch shell and a pirate wench. But this year’s celebrations were canceled to avoid drawing large crowds.

NATION

Judge dismisses suit to overturn election

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal judge on Friday dismissed a last-gasp lawsuit led by a House Republican that aimed to give Vice President Mike Pence the power to overturn the results of the presidential election won by Joe Biden when Congress formally counts the Electoral College votes next week.

Pence, as president of the Senate, will oversee the session Wednesday and declare the winner of the White House race.

The Electoral College this month cemented Biden's 306-232 victory, and multiple legal efforts

by President Donald Trump's campaign to challenge the results have failed.

The suit named Pence, who has a largely ceremonial role in next week's proceedings, as the defendant and asked the court to throw out the 1887 law that spells out how Congress handles the vote counting.

It asserted that the vice president "may exercise the exclusive authority and sole discretion in determining which electoral votes to count for a given State."

In dismissing the lawsuit filed by Rep. Louie Gohmert, R-Texas, and a group of Republican elec-

tors from Arizona, Texas U.S. District Judge Jeremy Kernodle, a Trump appointee, wrote that the plaintiffs "allege an injury that is not fairly traceable" to Pence, "and is unlikely to be redressed by the requested relief."

The Justice Department represented Pence in a case that aimed to find a way to keep his boss, President Donald Trump, in power.

In a court filing in Texas on Thursday, the department said the plaintiffs "have sued the wrong defendant" — if, in fact, any of those suing actually have "a judicially cognizable claim."

The department said, in effect, that the suit objects to long-standing procedures laid out in law, "not any actions that Vice President Pence has taken," so he should not be the target of the suit.

"A suit to establish that the Vice President has discretion over the count, filed against the Vice President, is a walking legal contradiction," the department argued.

Trump, the first president to lose a reelection bid in almost 30 years, has attributed his defeat to widespread voter fraud.

But a range of nonpartisan

election officials and Republicans has confirmed there was no fraud in the November contest that would change the results of the election.

That includes former Attorney General William Barr, who said he saw no reason to appoint a special counsel to look into the president's claims about the 2020 election. He resigned from his post last week.

Trump and his allies have filed about 50 lawsuits challenging election results, and nearly all have been dismissed or dropped.

He also lost twice at the Supreme Court.



BEN GRAY / AP

U.S. Sen. Kelly Loeffler, R-Ga., talks to supporters during a campaign event Thursday, at McCray's Tavern in Marietta, Ga.

Loeffler and Perdue run hard-line GOP pitch in swing state Georgia

Associated Press

ATLANTA — The merchandise featured in Sen. Kelly Loeffler's online campaign store includes T-shirts and bumper stickers bearing Donald Trump's name and the message: "Still my president."

The Georgia Republican is running television ads ahead of Tuesday's Senate runoff elections that lambastes her opponent, the Rev. Raphael Warnock, as "dangerous" and "radical."

Loeffler's colleague, Sen. David Perdue, meanwhile, is warning Georgians that Democrats will enact a "socialist agenda" if his challenger, Jon Ossoff, wins on Tuesday.

In the final days of campaigns that will decide control of the U.S. Senate, the Republican incumbents are appealing to the most conservative part of the electorate. Their steady embrace of the hard-right, Trump wing of the GOP — even repeatedly refusing to acknowledge Trump's defeat — and their caricatures of the Demo-

cratic challengers may seem like a risky approach in a state that narrowly voted for Democrat Joe Biden for president in November after years of steady Democratic gains.

Yet the strategy reflects prevailing GOP wisdom in the Trump era: Republicans' clearest path to victory, even in swing states, is to drive up support among a GOP base motivated by allegiance to the president and fear of Democrats. Still, the approach comes at the expense of a once-broader Republican coalition that included more urban and suburban moderates and GOP-leaning independents who have rejected the Republican brand under Trump.

"The president resonates with a lot of people, and so do the buzzwords, so you hear 'Trump' and 'socialism' a lot," said Michael McNeely, a former vice-chair of the Georgia Republican Party. "I wish we lived in a society where people talked about ideas, but that's just not where we are."

Trump may have complicated Perdue's and Loeffler's gamble even more with how he's handled his defeat to Biden.

The president has spread unfounded assertions of voter fraud and blasted Georgia Republican officials, including Gov. Brian Kemp, who have defended the elections process. When Trump allies, including Perdue and Loeffler, backed up the claims, some Republicans expressed concern it could discourage some Trump loyalists from voting in the runoff. Now, other Republicans are worried that GOP candidates have instead turned off the more moderate voters repelled by Trump.

Trump will visit Georgia for a final rally with Loeffler on Monday evening, hours before polls open.

Early voting ended Thursday with just more than 3 million Georgians casting absentee or in-person ballots. That trails the final early vote count of 3.65 million ahead of the general election.

Biden's Treasury pick made over \$7 million speaking to companies

Associated Press

REHOBOTH BEACH, Del. — President-elect Joe Biden's choice to be treasury secretary, Janet Yellen, collected more than \$7 million in speaking fees over the past two years from major financial firms and tech giants including Citigroup, Goldman Sachs and Google, according to disclosure forms filed as part of her nomination.

Yellen's was among three financial disclosures turned in by Biden transition officials that were made public on Thursday by the Office of Government Ethics. In a separate filing, Yellen listed firms and banks where she had received speaking fees and said she intended to "seek written authorization" from ethics officials to "participate personally and substantially" in matters involving them.

Yellen was the Federal Reserve chair from 2014 to 2018. Her term was not renewed by President Donald Trump. She took in the speaking fees in 2019 and 2020.

Her selection by Biden to lead the Treasury Department has been cheered by progressive Democrats, who support Yellen's work as a labor economist who has long prioritized combating economic inequality. Since her nomination was announced, Yellen has pledged to work to fight systemic racism and climate change.

But receiving steep payments from Wall Street bankers and other powerful corporations could become an issue as her nomination works its way through a closely divided Senate. Hillary Clinton faced criticism from the left-wing of the Democratic Party while running for president in 2016 for having received lucrative speaking fees at Wall Street firms.

A Biden transition spokesperson said Friday that, since leaving the Fed, Yellen has "spoken at economic conferences, universities and to business groups and financial institutions about her experiences and her views on what we can do as a country to build a stronger economy and increase our competitiveness." He added that "this is not someone who pulls punches when it comes to bad actors or bad behavior."

Oregon Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden, ranking member of the chamber's Finance Committee, said he expects Yellen's nomination to "move forward quickly, with her hearing held before Inauguration Day" on Jan. 20.

"In the last few years, she has shared her views in a range of forums — congressional testimony, media interviews, speaking engagements, and opinion pieces," Wyden said in a statement. "She's been fully transparent."

Also released Thursday were disclosure forms from Biden's choice to be secretary of state, Antony Blinken, who detailed his work at a consulting firm he co-founded, WestExec Advisors, LLC. They show that Blinken was paid more than \$1.1 million and has entered into an agreement, negotiated in October, to sell his equity interest in the firm, where he advised clients including Bank of America and Facebook.

Biden's transition team says it expects to announce more Cabinet picks next week. Among those positions yet to be filled are the president-elect's selection for labor secretary and attorney general — a choice that could be complicated by federal prosecutors investigating the finances of Biden's son Hunter.

NATION



RON TODD / AP

Participants take to the streets of south Philadelphia for a New Year's celebration of Mummers tradition despite official cancellation of the annual event and a ban on large gatherings Friday.

Some Mummers still strut despite Philadelphia parade cancellation

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Scores of costumed performers took to the streets of their south Philadelphia stomping grounds for a New Year's celebration of Mummers tradition, far from the customary parade route and despite official cancellation of the annual event and a ban on large gatherings due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Participants in brightly colored costumes, some with faces painted, paraded Friday down 2nd Street in South Philadelphia following trucks that blared string band or popular music. Some wore masks but many did not, and others marched with them wearing "South Philly Still Struts"

sweatshirts. WPVI-TV reported that other groups of Mummers marched through other sections of south Philadelphia.

Mayor Jim Kenney announced in July that the city would not grant permits to planned outdoor events with more than 50 people, effectively canceling the large annual parade and other events as officials struggled to keep a lid on the spread of the virus. Some Mummers leaders and organizations also asked members to stay home.

City spokeswoman Lauren Cox said there were no major issues Friday but said seeing pictures of many participants without masks

was "very concerning given the seriousness of this current wave of the pandemic."

"Anyone who has been in or near large crowds today should get tested five to seven days after the activity, stay away from others for 10 days, and continue monitoring for symptoms for 14 days," she said.

The Philadelphia Inquirer reported recently that two previous attempts in the 119-year history of the parade to call it off — in 1919 due to World War I and in 1934 due to the Great Depression — hadn't gone well. In both cases, Mummers still took to the streets to celebrate.

Fed employees get 1% raise in Trump order

The Washington Post

Almost all federal employees will receive a 1% raise under an order President Donald Trump issued late Thursday that ends months of back-and-forth over pay for the 2.1 million executive branch workers.

The executive order finalizes Trump's original proposal early in 2020 for a 1% boost for employees under the General Schedule pay system, which applies to most white-collar federal employees.

The increase, to take effect Sunday with the start of the first bi-weekly federal pay period of the year, will be paid across the board to General Schedule employees, in contrast with the previous raises paid under the Trump administration, which varied somewhat by locality.

While a separate pay system, also locality-based, applies to blue-collar employees, for many years their increases have been capped at the local General Schedule amount. The budget bill that Trump signed into law Sunday continued that policy for 2021.

That measure took no position regarding a raise, in effect backing the 1% amount in Trump's budget proposal in February. Under the complex federal pay law, if no number is enacted into law by the end of a year, the White House's proposed raise takes effect automatically.

However, the outcome was uncertain because the administration in the meantime had advocated for a freeze, citing "budgetary constraints and the recent, pandemic-related impacts on non-Federal labor markets."

The raise will be the smallest of the four paid under the Trump administration, following boosts averaging 1.9, 1.9 and 3.1%.

The order will increase to \$172,500 a salary cap that applies to employees in the uppermost levels of the General Schedule in some areas, including the Washington-Baltimore area. For most career executives and others at senior career levels, a cap of \$199,300 will apply; most of them are paid within a range and receive raises based on performance ratings.

The raise will not apply to senior political appointees nor to U.S. Postal Service employees, whose pay is determined in bargaining.

A separate cost-of-living adjustment of 1.3% will be paid to most federal retirees effective this month, the same increase going to Social Security beneficiaries and military retirees. That increase was determined in October based on an inflation measure.

The executive order also finalizes a 3% raise for active-duty military personnel contained in the recently enacted budget bill, effective Jan. 1.

Order delaying woman's execution nixed by court

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal appeals court has cleared the way for the only woman on federal death row to be executed before President-elect Joe Biden takes office.

The ruling, handed down Friday by a three-judge panel on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, concluded that a lower court judge erred when he vacated Lisa Montgomery's execution date in an order last week.

U.S. District Court Judge Randolph Moss had ruled the Justice Department unlawfully rescheduled Montgomery's execution and he vacated an order from the director of the Bureau of Prisons scheduling her death for Jan. 12.

Montgomery had been scheduled to be put to death at the Federal Correctional Complex in Terre Haute, Ind., in December, but Moss delayed the execution after her attorneys contracted coronavirus visiting their client and asked him to extend the time to file a clemency petition.

Moss concluded that under his order the Bureau of Prisons could not even reschedule Montgomery's execution until at least Jan. 1. But the appeals panel disagreed.

Meaghan VerGow, an attorney for Montgomery, said her legal team would ask for the full appeals court to review the case and said Montgomery should not be executed on Jan. 12.

Montgomery was convicted of



Montgomery

killing 23-year-old Bobbie Jo Stinnett in the northwest Missouri town of Skidmore in December 2004. She used a rope to strangle Stinnett, who was eight months pregnant, and then cut the baby girl from the womb with a kitchen knife, authorities said. Montgomery took the child with her and attempted to pass the girl off as her own, prosecutors said.

Montgomery's lawyers have argued that their client suffers from serious mental illnesses.

Vandals damage federal buildings in Philadelphia

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — A group of people dressed in black vandalized at least two federal buildings in downtown Philadelphia on New Year's Eve, and police said they recovered Molotov cocktails and other suspicious devices as they arrested seven of them, authorities said Friday.

Officers spotted about 50 people, all in black, around 8:30 p.m. Thursday at the historic U.S. Customs House, police said.

And a 25-year-old man was seen throwing a brick through the windows of a federal building and courthouse shortly before 9 p.m., police said. He fled with a 24-year-old man and two 23-year-old women, all of whom were arrested.

Damage to the building was es-

timated at about \$3,000. Anti-police and anti-prison graffiti were scrawled on walls, a sheriff's van was defaced and several windows were broken.

Three other people were also arrested in the area, a 25-year-old man and two women ages 22 and 26. Police said the man was carrying a glass jar with a fuse that had "a strong flammable odor," as well as a plastic container with white powder labeled "Fire Starter."

The younger woman had bottles with liquids that had "a chemical smell," they said.

Chief Inspector Mike Cram earlier told reporters that officers recovered what he called "numerous Molotov cocktails and some other devices which haven't been identified."

NATION

Chicago ends the year with 769 homicides

Associated Press

CHICAGO — The number of homicides and shootings in Chicago spiked dramatically in 2020, ending with more bloodshed than in all but one year in more than two decades, statistics released by police on Friday revealed.

After three years of falling homicide totals, 2020 ended with 769 homicides — 274 more than the previous year and the most since the 784 homicides in 2016.

The latest shooting victim figures told the same story, with the year ending with 4,033 shooting victims compared with 2,598 the year before. And it never let up, as is illustrated by the fact that in December, there were 50 homicides — 19 more than occurred in De-

ember 2019.

None of these numbers come as a surprise, as the year unfolded with news reports about violence that often included the word “deadliest,” such as after Memorial Day weekend, the deadliest in five years. Then a few days later, May 31, ended with more homicides — 18 — than in any single day in memory.

Chicago was not alone. During that weekend in particular, which came after the death of George Floyd after being forcibly detained by Minneapolis police, cities across the United States witnessed spasms of violence.

The year ended in Detroit, Washington, D.C., New York, Milwaukee and other cities with more



ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ, CHICAGO TRIBUNE/AP

A woman kneels Sept. 7 outside the University of Chicago Medicine's Comer Children's Hospital where a girl, 8, was taken after being killed in a shooting that wounded three others in Chicago.

killings than the year before. The same held true in smaller cities, including Grand Rapids, Mich., and Rockford, Ill..

Chicago, the nation's third-largest city, saw hundreds more homicides than either New York or Los Angeles.

Law enforcement officials and experts around the U.S. have pointed to social and economic upheaval caused by the COVID-19 virus, public sentiment toward police following Floyd's death and a historic shortage of jobs and resources in poorer communities as

contributing factors.

According to the Chicago Police Department, 79 officers were shot at in 2020, compared with 22 who were fired upon the year before. The number of officers who were struck by bullets doubled from five in 2019 to 10 in 2020.

Killings in D.C. hit 16-year high

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Homicides in the District of Columbia rose for the third consecutive year in 2020, reaching nearly 200 for the first time since the previous decade and further stressing a city rattled by the pandemic and social and political unrest.

The number of killings stood at 198 Thursday evening, making the past year the deadliest in the city since 2004. More than 920 people were shot in the District in 2020, a 64% increase from three years ago.

The victims of deadly violence include a beloved school bus driver, a construction worker killed while renovating a home and a grandmother who survived COVID-19. A little boy was fatally shot at a “stop the violence” cookout, and a toddler died of gunfire as he was strapped in a car seat.

“It breaks my heart when I think of the promises not fulfilled as a result of violence,” said the District's newly named police chief, Robert Contee III, who was expected to start Saturday. He must also be confirmed by the District Council.

He takes over from Peter Newsham, who left to take over a police department in Virginia amid calls for quicker and broader changes to policing during this period of social reckoning.

The nation's capital, like many other cities across the country, has experienced a spike in shootings and killings over the past year. The disruption of the pandemic may be

partly to blame, experts say, but Contee and others also note that slayings in the District have been rising in recent years.

Troy Donte Prestwood, who chairs an Advisory Neighborhood Commission in one of the District's more troubled neighborhoods in Anacostia, said that back in the high-crime era of the '90s, people were “leaving the city because they were scared for their safety.”

Now, he said, “I'm beginning to hear that conversation come up again in communities like mine.”

Prestwood said the new police chief “will be a great opportunity for us to reset, to think differently about public safety, and how public safety should look in communities of color.”

He said he supports police and violence interrupters, who come into communities to help defuse conflicts, “but it's not enough.”

Police and experts who study crime patterns cite myriad possible reasons for the spike in killings and shootings in the District and some other cities.

They point to the coronavirus crisis, which slowed arrests and complicated efforts to mediate disputes on the streets before they turned violent. Many people struggled with the stress of job loss and, with schools and community programs shuttered or moved online, safety nets were limited for young people.

Added to that were months of demonstrations in the District and

across the country against police brutality, sparked by the killing of George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis.

Both Contee and Newsham said the District's homicide rate has been driven by an increase in gun violence.

Police cite the rise in shootings and said the number of homicides from guns increased each of the past three years. In 2020, 87% of the killings were committed with a firearm.

Violent crime overall dropped 4% in the District in 2020, largely because the number of robberies has decreased.

The number of homicides in 2020 is far below the 482 recorded in the District in 1991, when the city earned the dubious reputation as the nation's murder capital, but far exceeds the half-century low of 88 in 2012. There were 166 homicides in the District in 2019.

Most victims of deadly violence in 2020 were Black males. Twenty-six were women, and nine were homeless.

The youngest was an 11-month-old girl who was injured while living at a homeless shelter; the oldest an 81-year-old man.

In a few instances, the victim was injured or killed in a prior year and the case was declared a homicide in 2020. Some fatal shootings were ruled justified and not included in the police count.

Detectives made arrests in more than half of the killings in 2020.

Oklahomans recognizing 100-year anniversary of race massacre in Tulsa

Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. — Oklahoma began a centennial remembrance Friday of a once-thriving African American neighborhood in Tulsa decimated by deadly white violence that has received growing recognition during America's reckoning over police brutality and racial violence.

Emmy Award-winning actress and Tulsa native Alfre Woodard and U.S. Sen. James Lankford both delivered remarks via video to a small crowd that gathered in chilly, snowy weather at the John Hope



Woodard

Franklin Reconciliation Park.

State Sen. Kevin Matthews, who represents the North Tulsa area where the massacre happened 100 years ago said the park, named in honor of Oklahoma native and noted American historian John Hope Franklin, provided the perfect backdrop for a message of reconciliation.

“We can be a beacon of reconciliation around the world,” Matthews said. “And ultimately, we can revive the spirit of Black Wall Street and cooperative economics that once lived here and that we

want to see in a greater way in the future.”

Violence erupted May 31 and June 1 in 1921, when a white mob killed an estimated 300 people and wounded 800 while burning 30 blocks of Black-owned businesses and homes and neighborhood churches in the Greenwood neighborhood, also known as “Black Wall Street.”

A renewed search for bodies in 2020 found at least 12 in an unmarked mass grave in a Tulsa cemetery.

A team led by Oklahoma's state archaeologist has not identified the bodies or confirmed they are victims of the massacre. But they were found in an area adjacent to two gravestones of victims and where old funeral home records show both identified and unidentified victims were buried.

Tulsa and the race massacre received new national interest over the summer when President Donald Trump picked the city for the first of his signature campaign rallies of the coronavirus era. His initial plan to hold the rally on June 15 — the day the last enslaved African Americans learned they had been freed in 1865 — also sparked interest in Tulsa's turbulent racial legacy, although Trump later changed the date of his rally.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Fake teen doctor arrested again for fraud

FL WEST PALM BEACH — A 23-year-old Florida man who posed as a doctor and spent time in prison as a teenager, was arrested again on charges of fraud and grand theft, police said.

According to police, Malachi Love-Robinson asked clients to send money to his personal bank account rather than to the shipping company he worked for. He is accused of taking over \$10,000 that belonged to the company.

Patients told investigators Love-Robinson claimed he held several degrees, including a Ph.D. and an M.D. They didn't realize he was only 18 years old at the time.

Scientists find slope with tsunami potential

AK ANCHORAGE — Alaska scientists have found a second slope that has the potential to create a landslide or a destructive tsunami to its surrounding area.

The slope in the Prince William Sound area is next to a previously discovered slope that Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys Geohydrologist Ronald Daanen said is much larger, KTUU-TV reported.

But Daanen said the smaller slope could create a tsunami just as big.

The state Department of Natural Resources had issued a statement in May when the first slope was discovered saying it could "generate a wave with devastating effects on fishermen and recreationalists." Scientists had estimated that a collapse was likely within two decades, the New York Times reported.

Truck crashes into home; 1 killed, 4 injured

AZ MESA — A tractor-trailer rig getting off a Mesa freeway crashed through a wall and into a house, killing one person and injuring four others, authorities said.

Police said the person killed was among 10 people inside the home when the crash occurred and that the truck driver was among those injured.

Police spokesman Nik Rasheta said impairment hadn't been ruled out but that the preliminary investigation indicated the truck's driver may have had a medical emergency before the crash.

The truck went fully into the home, pushing a car that was in the garage outside.

3 youths arrested in connection with mall fire

KS TOPEKA — An 18-year-old and two juveniles have been taken into custody in connection with a fire at an abandoned Topeka mall that authorities believe was intentionally



NICKI KOHL, TELEGRAPH HERALD (DUBUQUE, IOWA)/AP

Snow angels

Jeff Vogler (left) waits as Hudson Vogler (top), 7, and Colin Vogler, 9, all of Dubuque, make snow angels before heading out on a hike at Mines of Spain State Recreation Area in Dubuque, Iowa, on Friday. The state called off its popular, guided First Day Hikes this year due to COVID-19 concerns but launched a First Day Hike Challenge in its place.

set.

The fire at White Lakes Mall caused an estimated \$100,000 in damage.

The mall was built on the site of the former White Lakes Country Club and opened in 1964. It once was anchored by an 85,000-square-foot Sears store and a 52,300-square-foot J.C. Penney store.

Neighbors keep eye out for fierce rodent

NY NEW YORK — Residents of a Queens neighborhood are dealing with a squirrely threat.

Denizens of the New York City borough's Rego Park neighborhood said an aggressive squirrel has jumped on them and bitten them in the past several weeks, WCBS-TV reported.

Micheline Frederick pointed to a bruise on her wrist where she said the squirrel landed on her and then sank its teeth into her fingers and hand.

"We're wrestling in the snow and there's blood everywhere and my fingers getting chewed and it won't let go," Frederick said. "Eventually, it just stopped and there I was a big bloody mess."

A photo Frederick said she took after the attack shows a snowy pathway covered in blood.

"This was an MMA cage match! And I lost!" she added.

THE CENSUS

21 The approximate amount in gallons of blood and plasma a Kentucky man has given. Gary Justice said he's been donating for 13 years. His parents, both dying from cancer, inspired him to help. "Sometimes they do have to do blood transfusions to help your body recover from the treatment that you're receiving for the cancer," he said. "Without the donors, without the blood supply, those folks can't receive the treatment they need."

Man rescues injured bald eagle during bird count

KY LOUISVILLE — A Kentucky man participating in an annual bird-watching hike helped rescue an injured bald eagle, The Courier Journal reported.

Eric Nally was participating in the Christmas Bird Count at the Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest, about a half hour south of Louisville, when he spotted the eagle in a creek, he said.

Nally thought the bird was dead and feared it had been shot, but when he climbed down to the creek bed for a closer look, the bird turned its head to look at him.

The bald eagle was found to be suffering from lead poisoning and had internal damage to its abdomen.

Man threatens church after mask request

MO JENNINGS — A former church employee was charged with threatening to "shoot up" the church after he

was asked to wear a mask, according to St. Louis County authorities.

Timothy Percy Taylor, 29, was fired from Radiant Life in Christ Church in Jennings after he became upset when a co-worker asked him to wear a mask inside the building, KSDK-TV reported.

The co-worker told police Taylor threatened to "pop" the employee and "shoot up the whole church," according to court documents.

When Taylor was arrested across the street from the church, he had three loaded firearms in his possession, according to the charging documents.

Driver abandoned rolling truck on highway

CA MENIFEE — Police are searching for a man they said drove a stolen pickup through a fence and onto a Southern California highway in the wrong direction, where he and a passenger leaped from the moving vehicle and allowed it to roll until it struck an oncoming van.

The driver of the van, a 55-year-

old woman, was hospitalized with major injuries following the crash in Riverside County, California Highway Patrol Officer Mike Lassig said.

The Dodge Ram pickup was initially pursued by Hemet police when the driver turned off the headlights, bounced over a dirt shoulder and crashed through a barb-wire fence and onto the freeway's northbound lanes traveling south, Lassig said.

Man jailed after using extinguisher to dry off

FL TALLAHASSEE — A Florida man who wasn't on fire was arrested after police said he sprayed himself with a fire extinguisher in an attempt to dry himself off.

Florida State University police found David Mann, 54, on the top floor of a parking garage with an extinguisher and covered in powder, the Tallahassee Democrat reported.

Mann told police he had been drinking and fell asleep and then fell in water when he woke up. He said he was using the extinguisher to try to dry himself off, police said.

He was charged with interfering with firefighter equipment, a third-degree felony punishable by up to five years in prison.

YEAR IN REVIEW — MUSIC

TOP 10 ALBUMS

Splendid isolation

BETH GARRABRANT/Universal Music Group

Taylor Swift used the isolation of quarantine to record the quiet, introspective “folklore” with new collaborators such as Bon Iver and the National’s Aaron Dessner.

No matter when they were recorded, 2020’s best were all heard in the context of COVID

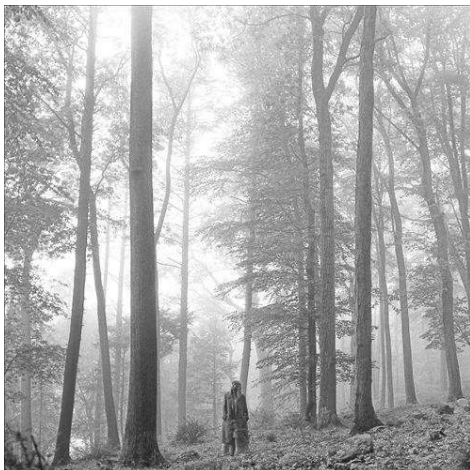
BY MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times

Not every album released in 2020 was made during the pandemic. But every one of them was heard during it — context that couldn’t help but shape the way music sounded or what it seemed to say.

Here are the 10 that stood out, along with 10 runners-up from a year with more listening time than most.

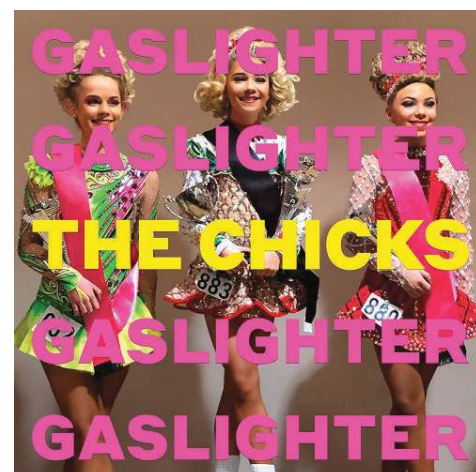
1. Taylor Swift, “folklore”:

Pop’s most closely scrutinized diarist used a season of isolation to dream beyond herself. Yet for all its experimentation with point of view, “folklore” — recorded remotely in quarantine with fresh collaborators including Bon Iver and the National’s Aaron Dessner — retains the intimate air of introspection, a songwriter’s trick as enchanting as Swift’s newly complicated melodies.



2. Fiona Apple, “Fetch the Bolt Cutters”:

It takes a master of texture to make a record that sounds like it’s falling apart — and a person of extreme emotional fortitude to make one that digs up so much trauma. After an eight-year break during which her legend only grew, Apple returned right as the world was tipping into chaos; nothing about the music suggests she was surprised.



3. The Chicks, “Gaslighter”:

President Donald Trump, a cheating ex-husband, spineless country-radio programmers — the Chicks’ thrilling comeback (minus the “Dixie” but with vocal harmonies intact) accommodated all comers in vivid, funny songs about the varied systems that enable men to claim positions for which they’re not cut out.

SEE ALBUMS ON PAGE 13

YEAR IN REVIEW — MUSIC

TOP 10 SONGS

‘I Just Wanna Live’ helped to heal in 2020

By MESFIN FEKADU
Associated Press

1. Keedron Bryant, “I Just Wanna Live”: During times of turmoil and unrest, people respond differently. Some protest. Some cry. And some sing. Following the gruesome death of George Floyd, Johnnetta Bryant turned to God and asked for a prayer — and the lyrics to “I Just Wanna Live” were born. She asked her son, then 12-year-old Keedron Bryant, to sing the song and the rest is for the history books. Keedron Bryant’s powerful performance about being a young Black man in today’s world went viral, with everyone from Barack Obama to LeBron James praising the singer and his

family for their strength and positive message. The song not only helped Keedron Bryant land a record deal, it helped to heal the world at a time when music is a language that unites us all. **2. Chloe x Halle, “Do It”:** To the window, to the walls, ‘till the sweat drops down my... Chloe x Halle took us to the clubs — aka the living room — during a pandemic year when we desperately needed an epic dance tune to help us get through the day. **3. Mickey Guyton, “Black Like Me”:** Digging deep to write personal lyrics about her upbringing — and being that rare Black singer on the country music scene — Mickey Guyton birthed a beautiful, touching song that is

bound to become a country music classic. **4. Kelly Rowland, “Coffee”:** A smooth, sexy number from an R&B goddess. **5. Charlie Wilson featuring Smokey Robinson, “All of My Love”:** Uncle Charlie plus Uncle Smokey equals musical bliss. The soul icons joined forces for one of the year’s best collaborations that will surely put a smile on your face. **6. Roddy Ricch, “The Box”:** Insert fire emoji here. **7. Dua Lipa, “Don’t Start Now”:** With this addictive pop gem and updated dance moves, Dua Lipa is well on her way to world domination. **8. Gabby Barrett featuring**

Charlie Puth, “I Hope”: Breakthrough country singer Gabby Barrett already had a hit with the original version of “I Hope,” but then Charlie Puth slid into her DMs and asked to add his vocals to the song and update the beat. The result is an undeniable pop smash. **9. Pop Smoke featuring DaBaby and Lil Baby, “For the Night”:** Late rapper Pop Smoke clearly had a knack for hip-hop melodies, which explains why most of his songs have exploded on TikTok. “For the Night” is a monster hit that also featured other acts leading the new class of rap. **10. BLACKPINK featuring Selena Gomez, “Ice Cream”:** K-pop all-stars BLACKPINK



JOHNETTA BRYANT/AP

Keedron Bryant, who was 12 when he recorded “I Just Wanna Live,” earned widespread praise and a record deal.

came out swinging with this trap-pop bop that was as sweet and irresistible as ice cream.

Albums: 2020’s best had cat hair, comebacks and quarantine

FROM PAGE 12



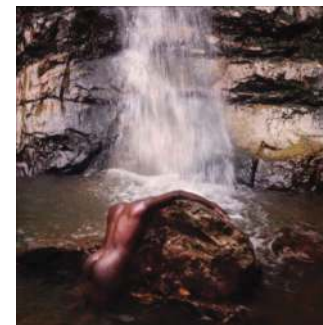
4. Thundercat, “It Is What It Is”: “I may be covered in cat hair, but I still smell good,” this Los Angeles-based funkateer sings over the type of plasmatic bass line that’s made him a go-to collaborator for Kendrick Lamar and Michael McDonald. On his fourth solo record, which addresses the 2018 death of his close friend Mac Miller, Thundercat keeps finding ways to personalize a trippy philosophy of healing.



5. Bob Dylan, “Rough and Rowdy Ways”: Split between bloodthirsty rockers and so-pretty-they-hurt ballads, Dylan’s 39th studio album showcases a lifelong tunesmith who’s only found more things to write about — from sex and violence to history and botany (!) — as he’s aged. At 79, he’s precisely the snowbird you want telling you about the bougainvillea blooming in Key West.



6. Ariana Grande, “Positions”: No large gatherings here: Grande sings almost exclusively about a quar-pod of two on this tender yet raunchy meditation on the only safe contact sport left in the age of COVID. Limiting? Not with her voice (or imagination).



7. Moses Sumney, “Grae”: As kaleidoscopic in style as Sumney’s view is of identity — “I insist upon my right to be multiple,” one interlude declares — this sprawling double album moves between R&B, pop, indie rock and electronic music as Sumney thinks through what it means to be a person with his skin, his background and his desires.



8. The Strokes, “The New Abnormal”: Nobody expected the beautiful princes of New York’s early-’00s retro-garage scene to still be around two decades later. Yet here they are, greeting middle age with an album of gorgeous and empathetic sad-dam jam about what happens when the party ends. “Use me like an oar, and get yourself to shore,” Julian Casablancas moans — a cautionary tale destined to be ignored by some kid in a \$2,000 leather jacket.



9. Kali Uchis, “Sin Miedo (del Amor y Otros Demonios)”: The Spanish-language follow-up to Uchis’ English-language debut feels like a mixtape cataloging her loves and influences, from the boleros she heard growing up to the reggaeton and hip-hop that keep Latin pop moving today. Whatever the setting, her wonderful singing — airy, pleading, tinged with just the right amount of scorn — puts Uchis in the center of the music.



10. Megan Thee Stallion, “Good News”: Debate all you want about whether “Good News,” which follows several mixtapes and a mini-LP, represents Megan’s official debut. What’s clear from this nonstop barrage of hooks and boasts and punchlines is that the 25-year-old rapper knows the world’s eyes are finally on her.



Plus 10 more not to be missed: Haim, “Women in Music Pt. III” (above) Phoebe Bridgers, “Punisher” Justin Bieber, “Changes” Childish Gambino, “3.15.20” The Weeknd, “After Hours” Chris Stapleton, “Starting Over” Beach Bunny, “Honeymoon” Tame Impala, “The Slow Rush” Dua Lipa and the Blessed Madonna, “Club Future Nostalgia” The 1975, “Notes on a Conditional Form”

YEAR IN REVIEW — TELEVISION



"I May Destroy You"

HBO/TNS



Netflix

"The Queen's Gambit"

Reality check

This year's best television shows rose above current events, giving viewers storylines that were new, different or better

New York Daily News

10. 'Normal People'

The beauty of the Irish characters' teenage (then college, then post-grad) romance is in its messiness. Viewers know everything would go smoothly if lovers Marianne (Daisy Edgar-Jones) and Connell (Paul Mescal) would just get over themselves.

Hulu's adaptation of Sally Rooney's 2018 novel of the same name is carried entirely by its two leads, comfortable in their uneasiness, relishing the quiet melancholy of young love. "Normal People" may not be Shakespeare, but like "Romeo and Juliet," it understands the self-inflicted torment of feelings and the refreshing joy of a good cry.

9. 'The Good Fight'

No show has handled the Trump presidency better than "The Good Fight" on CBS All Access. It's a silly show, with pee tapes and hallucinogenic drugs, but it navigates this political climate with reckless abandon and no interest in pretending that any of this is normal. It's also a brave show, with #Me-Too alternate realities and Chinese censorship. But above all, it was unafraid of telling the truth, no matter how bonkers it got.



POP TV/TNS

"Schitt's Creek"

8. 'Lovecraft Country'

Misha Green's terrifying HBO thriller was at times confusing, but it was ambitious. "Lovecraft Country" experimented with every turn. It took on racism in the Jim Crow South, aliens and sexism.

Jurnee Smollett's Leti bashed cars with a baseball bat in a scene that seemed out of a musical. Jonathan Majors' Tic dated a Korean nurse who was actually a nine-tailed fox spirit tasked with killing 100 men during sex. Aunjanue Ellis' Hippolyta traversed time and space. In an era of reboots, remakes and revivals, "Lovecraft Country" was original, and for that, it deserves praise.

7. 'Little America'

"Little America" premiered in January — which feels like a decade ago — but while it may have long ago slipped from the public conscience, the eight-episode Apple TV+ anthology series showed the beauty of this country before it began to crumble. Each immigration tale told a different story — some of acceptance, some of perseverance — but each was hopeful and inspirational. "Little America" believed not only in the American dream, but that it still exists.

6. 'Grand Army'

The Netflix drama about a group of high school kids in Brooklyn handles teenagers better than almost any show before it. It's "Freaks and Geeks," but bigger and darker and more traumatizing. "Grand Army" doesn't infantilize its characters or mock them. It respects them. It's an unflinching look at a generation of teens, surviving on a diet of TikTok, 3 a.m. presidential tweets and protests, and how they deal with that.



Netflix

"The Baby-Sitters Club"

5. 'Schitt's Creek'

You can count on two hands the number of shows that have ended well, with a finale that honors its characters and storytelling.

Two did so this year — "Schitt's Creek" and "The Good Place" — but the former was a transcendent ending to a show that quietly built a fan base around what should go down as one of the best comedies in TV history.

Across six seasons, "Schitt's Creek," which streams on Netflix, proved that people can change, an underlying theme of almost all character-driven art but one rarely handled so beautifully.

The wealthy Rose family started as detestable, self-involved and self-indulgent, and ended not as good people, but as better people. Theirs was a world in which racism and homophobia did not exist simply because it didn't need to. It was hilarious, sure, and the Halloween costumes and novelty gifts it spurred will never get old. But above all, "Schitt's Creek" was a blessing because it believed in the goodness of humanity.

4. 'The Queen's Gambit'

It's not just that "The Queen's Gambit" managed to make chess sexy that made it stand out, though that alone is impressive. But what gave it an edge is the way it created characters who were not altogether likable, but deserving of success nonetheless.

The limited Netflix series is carried by a magnetic performance by Anya Taylor-Joy as young prodigy Beth Harmon and floats on a dizzying array of death, devastation and addiction.

For a girl whose life suffers one calamity after another, Beth is understandably damaged, but Joy plays her with such caution and care that you find yourself not just caring about chess, but rooting for her, along with her messy band of friends.

3. 'What We Do in the Shadows'

FX's Staten Island-set vampire mockumentary is at its best when it's at its weirdest. That's never more obvious than the second season's Jackie Daytona episode, in which Laszlo (Matthew Berry) flees town and goes undercover as a human bartender, with only a toothpick as a disguise.

It's the show's best episode and maybe the best of any show this year, but it's also simply a heightened version of what the show does best: let its fully formed, brilliant characters create chaos.

2. 'The Baby-Sitters Club'

Where "Grand Army" portrayed today's youth as more damaged than most of us, "The Baby-Sitters Club" aimed to show they're also better than adults too. A modern version of Ann M. Martin's beloved 1980s-launched children's books, the Netflix series paints a beautiful, rose-colored-glasses version of a world where people care.

The sitters care about labor issues and trans rights. They deal with crushes and Stacey's diabetes, but they also want to make the world a better place and are more suited to do it than the adults around them. "The Baby-Sitters Club" was adorable nostalgia, but it was also hope in the worst year of many people's lives.

1. 'I May Destroy You'

Through grief comes strength, but also beauty. "I May Destroy You" wants viewers to believe that.

The HBO series explores the trauma, avoidance, anger and resistance of Arabella, who suffers through a drug-induced rape, against a backdrop of the best friendships on television. What creator and star Michaela Coel does with rage and reconciliation is at once messy and beautiful, an experiment in the complexities of sexual trauma. As "I May Destroy You" quietly whispers and shouts at full volume, surviving and living are not the same.

CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

TOY STORY

BY RANDOLPH ROSS / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Randolph Ross is a retired high school principal and math teacher who lives in Manhattan. He has been making crosswords for The Times since 1991. The theme of this one arose out of some factoids about 111-Across and 33-Down that he gave a grandson. "It occurred to me that for this Christmas and Hanukkah, with so many grandparents and family not able to see the children from their lives in person, a crossword about toys might bring a smile." — W.S.

ACROSS

- 1 Currency of Thailand
- 5 Kiss
- 9 U.S. city just south of Timpanogos Cave National Monument
- 13 Minus
- 17 Something to shoot for
- 19 One who hasn't turned pro?
- 20 Strong adhesive
- 21 Indiana governor Holcomb
- 22 She debuted on March 9, 1959, in a black-and-white striped swimsuit
- 24 Virtual pet simulation game that won an Ig Nobel Prize for its Japanese creators
- 26 [Grrr!]
- 27 Glenn Miller classic
- 29 Purchases on 14 de febrero
- 31 Major talent grp. representing athletes and entertainers
- 32 Outpourings
- 36 Overplays, with "up"
- 39 Toy that was originally called "L'Ecran Magique" ("The Magic Screen")
- 44 "Lost ____ is never found again": Benjamin Franklin
- 45 Natl. Humor Month
- 46 Mild, light-colored cigar
- 47 Things found in wandering souls?

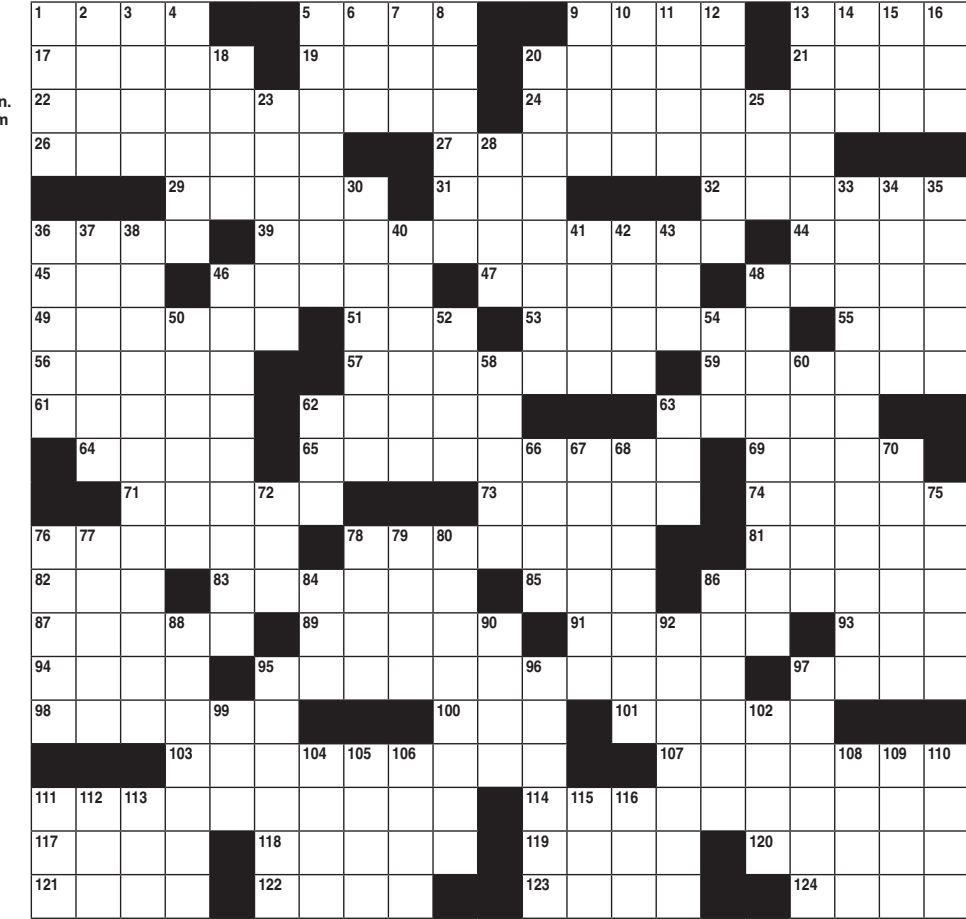
- 48 Rhodes of the Rhodes scholarship
- 49 Photo finishes
- 51 U.S./U.K. divider: Abbr.
- 53 Loyal following
- 55 Flag carrier with an alphabetically ordered name
- 56 Trim
- 57 Game that got a big boost when Johnny Carson demonstrated it with Eva Gabor on "The Tonight Show"
- 59 Showy shrub
- 61 Schleppe
- 62 City in north-central Florida
- 63 Writer Arthur Conan ____
- 64 Umpteen
- 65 Day to play with new toys
- 69 Food ____ (Thanksgiving feeling)
- 71 Like subway walls, often
- 73 Final authority
- 74 William ____, founder of Investor's Business Daily
- 76 ____ area, part of the brain linked to speech production
- 78 Toy that was derived from a wallpaper cleaner
- 81 "I'm here to help"
- 82 Contented sigh
- 83 Phillies div.
- 85 ____ treatment
- 86 Harlem attraction, with "the"
- 87 Golf great Sam
- 89 Place for torn-off wrapping paper

- 91 Combined
- 93 Most common day to call in sick: Abbr.
- 94 Right away
- 95 Toy with 18 spoken phrases, including "I love you" and "May I have a cookie?"
- 97 Investment firm T. ____ Price
- 98 A halogen-containing salt
- 100 ____-Locka, Fla.
- 101 "My luck has to change at some point"
- 103 Politician parodied by Dana Carvey on 1990s "S.N.L."
- 107 Performed a Latin ballroom dance
- 111 Puzzle toy solved in a record 3.47 seconds in 2018
- 114 Toy that astronauts brought to space to secure tools in zero gravity
- 117 Goes off
- 118 Grannies
- 119 Not on solid ground, say
- 120 Piece in the game go
- 121 Strong criticism
- 122 Chichi
- 123 Spring event
- 124 Rigging pole

DOWN

- 1 Longest-serving Israeli prime minister, familiarly
- 2 Driver around Hollywood
- 3 "And, touching ____, make blessed my rude hand": Romeo
- 4 Small snare drums
- 5 Inaccurate information

- 6 Game with red and yellow cards
- 7 1904 World's Fair city: Abbr.
- 8 Flint is a form of it
- 9 Moonfish
- 10 Sacking site in A.D. 410
- 11 Physical, e.g.
- 12 "Holy cow!"
- 13 Appointment that may be hard to change
- 14 Curve
- 15 Dr. Fauci's agcy.
- 16 Poli ____
- 18 Premiere arrival
- 20 Classic comics teenager with good manners
- 23 They can elevate art
- 25 Alley ____
- 28 Org. with boosters
- 30 The beginning, in an idiom
- 33 By the end of 1996, one million of this toy was sold in a shopping frenzy
- 34 "South Pacific" hero
- 35 2014 film directed by Ava DuVernay



- 50 Promoting peace
- 52 Actress Taylor of "Mystic Pizza"
- 54 "That was Zen, this is ____" (philosophy pun)
- 58 Smart
- 60 "The Tempest" king
- 62 Cleanliness fixation, e.g., in brief
- 63 Brit. military award
- 66 Little bits
- 67 Reason for glasses
- 68 Singer with a self-titled No. 1 album in 2002

- 70 Be less than ambitious
- 72 Subj. for some aspiring bilinguals
- 75 Sierra ____
- 76 Operatic villains, often
- 77 Totaled
- 78 Legal assistant, briefly
- 79 Future J.D.'s hurdle
- 80 Not just available online
- 84 Biblical ending
- 86 Soon

- 88 With some downside
- 90 Shot from a doc
- 92 Statement of resistance
- 95 Big name in small planes
- 96 Took care of a tabby, say
- 97 Counters
- 99 Tik ____ (app)
- 102 Ballpark figures
- 104 Lasting impression
- 105 Give up (on)
- 106 Shopping site with a "Toys" section

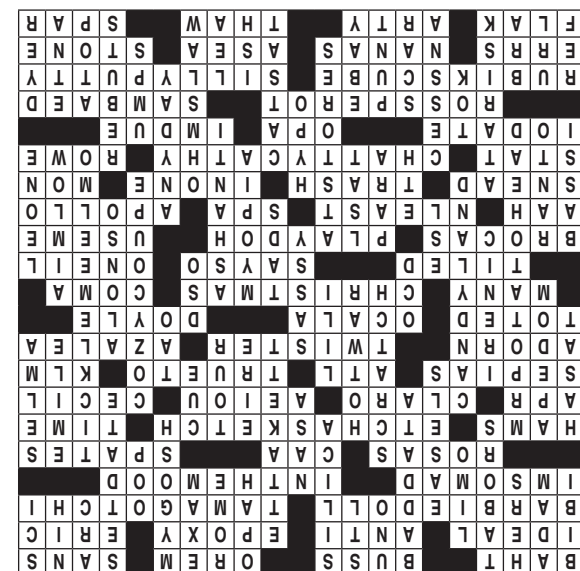
- 108 Straddling
- 109 Sight from the Sicilian town of Taormina
- 110 Textile worker
- 111 One whistling while working in the Garden?
- 112 Address with dots
- 113 Swimsuit part
- 115 Suffix suggested by the wiggling of one's hand
- 116 Calf-eteria?

GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

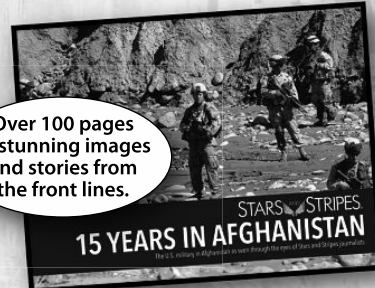
RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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YEAR IN REVIEW

Breakthrough Entertainers

These 5 performers created buzz and art in a year like no other

Associated Press

Making a breakthrough in pop culture during any year is hard. Doing it during a global pandemic is entirely different.

This year's five Associated Press' Breakthrough Entertainers of the Year managed to create buzz and art against a year like no other. They brightened a 2020 that badly needed light.

They are Anya Taylor-Joy, Yahya Abdul-Mateen II, Daisy Edgar-Jones, Sarah Cooper and Finneas. These performers broke through into the mainstream and made a mark on entertainment this year, despite lockdowns — and, in the case of Edgar-Jones, perhaps because of them, sending people desperate for connection to her series "Normal People."

The AP's fourth annual list spotlights how fast fame can come: It took a mere four months from when Cooper started posting videos of herself on TikTok lip-syncing President Donald Trump to filming her own hourlong Netflix special alongside Helen Mirren.

Abdul-Mateen's career may have started later than most, but he was all over 2020, in

the films "All Day and a Night" and Aaron Sorkin's "The Trial of the Chicago 7." His year was highlighted with the Emmy for Supporting Actor in a Limited Series or Movie for his acclaimed performance as Dr. Manhattan in HBO's lauded series "Watchmen."

And while Billie Eilish is a sensation, it's time her brother, Finneas, is also celebrated. She won five honors at the Grammy Awards earlier this year, including album of the year for "When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?" But since Finneas produced, co-wrote and engineered that album, he walked away with six Grammys, one more than his sister.

In a year when many people's output slackened, Anya Taylor-Joy seemed to find another gear: She played a meddling British brat in "Emma," a Russian mutant with teleportation powers in the latest "X-Men" film, and an American orphan who turns out to be a chess phenom who can checkmate grown men by the time she's 8 in "The Queen's Gambit."

Taylor-Joy said when she was a kid, she dreamed of flying off to imaginary lands. "Now as an adult, I'm like, 'I live in Narnia.' This is amazing." In a year like 2020, it was appropriate that millions escaped with her.

Finneas finds his lane in music industry

Onstage, Finneas and Billie Eilish come across like a seasoned, veteran musical duo. With her beautifully aching and raw tone singing relatable and profound lyrics in the starring role, Finneas brilliantly supports on piano or guitar.

That was how the pair spent last year on the road promoting Eilish's debut album, which helped make the then-17-year-old a breakout star.

But as Eilish's star power grew brighter, so did Finneas'. He was recognized for producing and engineering his sister's music. He also co-wrote the hits that made her famous — some of them he even wrote alone.

As people discovered Eilish, they also uncovered Finneas.

The 2020 Grammy Awards solidified this: In January, Eilish won five honors — making her the night's second big winner, only to be behind Finneas. He won six awards and became one of the youngest acts to be named non-classical producer of the year at 22.

It kicked off a productive year for the artist: In 2020 he re-released his debut EP, dropped the theme song for the upcoming James

Bond film with Eilish, earned three nominations for the 2021 Grammys and began lending his talents to folks he's not related to, including Justin Bieber, Demi Lovato, Halsey, Kid Cudi, Ben Platt and Tove Lo.

Finneas is the white-hot producer on the pop music scene, and he's got a few collaborations cooking up, though he's not spilling all the tea: "It's like when they interview 'Avengers' cast members — they can never say anything," he said.

He's fielding calls left and right from artists about getting together to make magical music, but Finneas said he's careful about who he works with.

"The baseline is — if it's something that I like — I'm interested. I don't play a game with that. I'm not trying to do the thing that's the best strategic career move," he said. "Sometimes there's a huge opportunity and I'm like, 'I don't like their music; I can't do it.' The other criteria is that I do try to work with people who I know I'm going to be effective and helpful with. Some people don't need me."

— Mesfin Fekadu



MATT LICARI, INVISION/AP

Sarah Cooper: From TikTok to Netflix star

The video was simple: A woman in her apartment, lip-syncing audio of President Donald Trump as he expounded on possible coronavirus treatments.

"We hit the body with a tremendous — whether it's ultraviolet or just very powerful light," Trump said at the time. "I see the disinfectant where it knocks it out in a minute. One minute. And is there a way we can do something like that by injection inside or almost a cleaning?"

Comedian Sarah Cooper demonstrated "injecting" herself with a cleaning spray, posting the 49-second video, "How to Medical," on TikTok in April. Four months later, Cooper was filming her own hourlong Netflix special alongside dream guest stars Helen Mirren, Marisa Tomei, Ben Stiller, Jon Hamm, Winona Ryder, Jane Lynch, Fred Armisen and Maya Rudolph.

Rudolph said she first saw one of Cooper's videos after a friend sent it to her. "I was just so impressed with just the natural joy of it," Rudolph said. "I felt like she just clicked into this thing that was coming out of her so effortlessly that it was making all of us laugh."

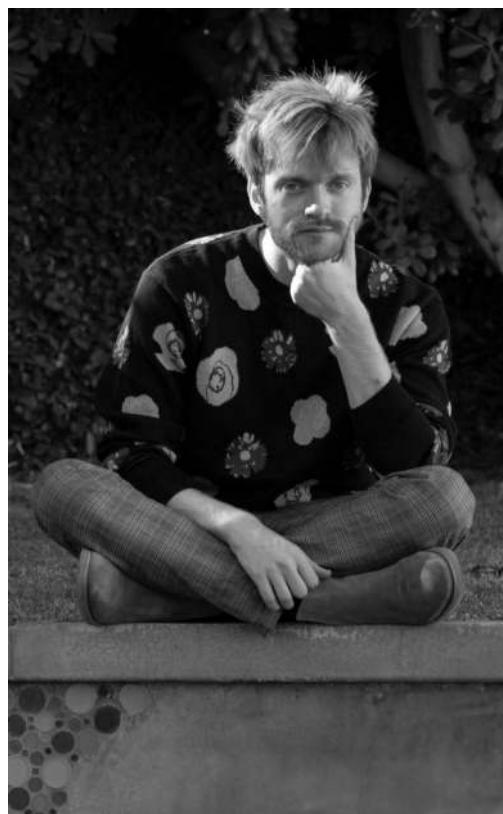
Cooper's Netflix special, "Sarah Cooper: Everything's Fine," was the first project for Animal Pictures, Rudolph's new production company.

Cooper's lip-syncing videos renewed interest in her books, "100 Tricks to Appear Smart in Meetings" and "How to Be Successful Without Hurting Men's Feelings." The latter is being turned into a sitcom for CBS.

Now that Trump is on his way out of the Oval Office and her career is taking off, Cooper, 42, says the lip-syncing videos will be something she does "just for fun every once in a while."

"Looking back in my career, I evolve. I want to do something different. And the second anything gets stale, I don't really want to do it anymore," she said.

— Amanda Lee Myers



REBECCA CABAGE, INVISION/AP

YEAR IN REVIEW



PETER MORRISON/AP

Anya Taylor-Joy living in a dreamworld

In a span of seven months this year alone, Anya Taylor-Joy played a meddling British brat in “Emma,” a Russian mutant with teleportation powers in the latest “X-Men” film, and an American orphan who turns out to be a chess phenom who can checkmate grown men by the time she’s 8 in “The Queen’s Gambit.”

She’s just getting started.

The 24-year-old just wrapped shooting “The Northman” alongside Nicole Kidman, Alexander Skarsgard, Willem Dafoe and Ethan Hawke. In October, Warner Bros. announced that Taylor-Joy will play Furiosa in the highly anticipated prequel to “Mad Max: Fury Road.” Oh, and she’ll have another movie coming out in April: Edgar Wright’s psychological thriller “Last Night in Soho.”

“When I was a kid, all I wanted to do was go to Narnia and, you know, fly to Neverland and go to all of these incredible places,” Taylor-Joy recently told The Associated Press. “And now as an adult, I’m like, ‘I live in Narnia. Like, this is amazing.’”

Taylor-Joy is “the busiest person I’ve ever met,” said Marielle Heller, who plays Taylor Joy’s foster mother in “The Queen’s Gambit” and directed “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” and “Can You Ever Forgive Me?” “I don’t know how she’s doing so many projects at the same time. It’s really kind of mind-blowing,” Heller said.

Netflix says “The Queen’s Gambit” was its biggest scripted limited series ever, and “Emma” received critical and box-office acclaim, as did her big screen debut as a lead in Robert Eggers’ 2015 horror hit “The Witch,” which won Taylor-Joy a Gotham Independent Film Award for breakthrough actor. She’s also drawn praise for her performances in M. Night Shyamalan’s “Split,” the dark comedy/thriller “Thoroughbreds” and BBC One’s “Peaky Blinders.”

Taylor-Joy is so well-liked among those who’ve directed her, they’ve formed what’s almost a club of adoration, calling each other and talking about how she’s doing, said Autumn de Wilde, who directed Taylor-Joy in “Emma.”

“We share a common bond in that we just 100% believe in her and we’re so excited to see how our ideas will flower with her,” de Wilde said. “She’s not an empty vessel. She’s a never-ending box of drawers and secret passageways.”

Though she says her skyrocketing fame “can be a bit intense,” the journey has been “a beautiful process.”

“I have a ton of energy, and I think this career and the hours of this career requires, they make me tired enough to be sane, which I appreciate,” she said.

— Amanda Lee Myers

Daisy Edgar-Jones connects

When 22-year-old Daisy Edgar-Jones ditched her British accent for the dulcet Irish tones of Marianne in “Normal People,” the actor’s stardom hit a new trajectory.

Based on Sally Rooney’s best-selling novel, “Normal People” became one of the biggest and most talked-about television shows of 2020, mesmerizing audiences with the haunting love affair of Edgar-Jones and newcomer Paul Mescal as Marianne and Connell.

Launched during a global lockdown, the actor jokes in an interview they had a “captive audience” with a lot of spare time. “It caught fire maybe in a way that I don’t know if it would have had it not been for the circumstance,” she says.

But more importantly, “being so much about a human connection and a relationship between two people,” the show really struck a chord with audiences, “when we were all indoors not being able to see our friends or families or loved ones,” she says.

Despite a background in Britain’s National Youth Theatre and U.K. television, “Normal People” was Edgar-Jones’ first big press campaign, and the fact it was virtual made the experience “quite disarming and a bit strange.”

“That’s a very kind of intimate way to meet somebody when you’re in your own bedroom,” she says.

And then there was the stresses of working solo. “I was trying to do my own hair and makeup and trying to look half decent half the time.”

Even getting recognized during a pandemic was confusing for the actor, who left the house for daily walks.

“If that was because they just hadn’t seen another person in three weeks or if they were like,



JOEL RYAN, INVISION/AP

‘Oh, I’ve been watching a show and she looks like the person from it,’” she says.

Success was felt more immediately at home where her phone was constantly buzzing and she was surprised to see some high-profile fans reaching out to say they were watching.

This led to “a real pinch yourself kind of moment” when she discovered Kourtney Kardashian was one such fan.

“There’s a scene actually in the final episode where we’re playing the game where you have Post-it notes with names on them. And one of them is Kim Kardashian. So that was quite funny that she had seen it.”

As for Edgar-Jones, there are already exciting things on the horizon. She has just completed shooting the second series of “War of the Worlds” in Cardiff, Wales, a modern-day reimagining of H.G. Wells’ story, and is “really excited to get back at it” when she begins filming “Where the Crawdads Sing” in January.

— Louise Dixon



DREW GURIAN, INVISION/AP

Yahya Abdul-Mateen II: ‘Making a strong statement’

It’s been a strange and bittersweet year for Yahya Abdul-Mateen, capped with an Emmy for his acclaimed performance as Dr. Manhattan in HBO’s lauded series “Watchmen.” That role, along with performances in the films “All Day and a Night” and Aaron Sorkin’s “The Trial of the Chicago 7,” in which he portrays Black Panther Bobby Seale, has earned him praise and recognition from critics and fans.

“This year has been obviously, personally, just a little bit strange, but there’s a lot of good things going on the professional side,” said Abdul-Mateen, 34. “This year has really just been about a lot of the loose ends of my career finally coming together and making a strong statement.”

Previously, Abdul-Mateen played opposite Jason Momoa as the villainous Black Manta in the 2018 blockbuster “Aquaman,” shined in Jordan Peele’s “Us” in

2019 and starred in the “Striking Vipers” episode of “Black Mirror.”

It’s an impressive array of roles for an actor whose first major credits were in Baz Luhrmann’s 2016 short-lived Netflix hip-hop series “The Get Down.”

“It goes back to my training, having the confidence to try on different roles,” said Abdul-Mateen. “I think my calling card right now is that when I show up on the screen, that you never know what to expect. I think people have come to expect a strong performance, and I work really hard to ensure that. But I also work with spontaneity and I chase my appetite, which changes from time to time.”

Born in New Orleans with his family eventually moving to Oakland, Abdul-Mateen graduated with a degree in architecture from UC Berkeley. Although he took a theater class in college and continued to take a weekly class while working

as a city planner, it wasn’t until he was laid off that he decided to put all of his eggs into the acting basket. He’d eventually earn an MFA from the Yale School of Drama.

He wants to use his example to help young people who come from backgrounds and neighborhoods similar to his to recognize that working in entertainment doesn’t have to be a pipe dream.

“The thing that I want to do is let young people know ... that this is a viable career path; this is a viable profession. So whether that be acting, writing, designing, set design or any of the various parts of this of this profession, that it’s a reality,” said Abdul-Mateen. “... This all started with me chasing my curiosity, but also making a real strong commitment to saying, ‘OK, if this is something I’m interested in doing, let’s put everything that I have into it.’”

— Gary Gerard Hamilton

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OPINION

Max D. Lederer Jr., Publisher
Lt. Col. Marci Hoffman, Europe commander
Lt. Col. Richard McClintic, Pacific commander
Caroline E. Miller, Europe Business Operations

EDITORIAL

Terry Leonard, Editor
leonard.terry@stripes.com

Robert H. Reid, Senior Managing Editor
reid.robert@stripes.com

Tina Croley, Managing Editor for Content
croley.tina@stripes.com

Sean Moores, Managing Editor for Presentation
moores.sean@stripes.com

Joe Gromelski, Managing Editor for Digital
gromelski.joe@stripes.com

BUREAU STAFF

Europe/Mideast

Erik Slavin, Europe & Mideast Bureau Chief
slavin.erik@stripes.com
+49(0)631.3615.9350; DSN (314)583.9350

Pacific

Aaron Kidd, Pacific Bureau Chief
kidd.aaron@stripes.com
+81.42.552.2511 ext. 88380; DSN (315)227.7380

Washington

Joseph Cacchioli, Washington Bureau Chief
cacchioli.joseph@stripes.com
(+1)(202)886-0033
Brian Bowers, Assistant Managing Editor, News
bowers.brian@stripes.com

CIRCULATION

Mideast

Robert Reismann, Mideast Circulation Manager
robert.w.reismann.naf@mail.mil
xsscirculation@stripes.com
DSN (314)583-9111

Europe

Karen Lewis, Community Engagement Manager
lewis.karen@stripes.com
memberservices@stripes.com
+49(0)631.3615.9090; DSN (314)583.9090

Pacific

Mari Mori, customerhelp@stripes.com
+81-3 6385.3171; DSN (315)227.7333

CONTACT US

Washington

tel: (+1)202.886.0003
633 3rd St. NW, Suite 116, Washington, DC 20001-3050

Reader letters

letters@stripes.com

Additional contacts

stripes.com/contactus

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Ernie Gates

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US killing its top general didn't deter Iran

BY GEOFF LAMEAR

Special to Stars and Stripes

There are decades when nothing happens, and there are weeks when decades happen. At the start of the eventful year of 2020, it was the latter. The U.S. nearly inaugurated the decade with a war against Iran after assassinating Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani. Unfortunately, like the global pandemic, the ramifications of this will linger into 2021 and beyond. Iranian proxies have declared the anniversary of Soleimani's killing on Jan. 3 will not go by without retaliation. The threat of war is still real, and the U.S. needs to reevaluate its presence in the Middle East if it seeks to avoid a new chapter of the forever wars.

Soleimani was not a faceless bureaucrat. He was the foremost symbol of Iran's "Axis of Resistance" in the Middle East. As Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah remarked, there is no American equivalent to Soleimani. In former Gen. David Petraeus' words, the closest equivalent would be a combination of, "CIA director, CENTCOM commander, JSOC commander, and presidential envoy for the region." Soleimani's death prompted mass rallies in Iran that quickly gave way to promises of harsh revenge against the United States.

Given Soleimani's symbolic importance, it's easy to overstate the impact of his death. His death was immensely impactful in bringing Iran and the U.S. to the verge of war. But it wasn't impactful in curtailing Iran's regional activities. The Islamic Revolu-

tionary Guard Corps still operates in the same theaters as before, and Soleimani's successor boasts substantial experience coordinating Iranian proxies in Syria. In other words, the U.S. picked a flashy target, not one that would dampen Iran's proxy activities.

Predictably, this strike had the opposite effect than U.S. decision makers intended. Rather than reinforce deterrence to protect U.S. personnel, the Soleimani strike prompted Iran to conduct a retaliatory strike that injured over 100 U.S. troops in Iraq. Nor did Iran's proxies dampen their efforts. In December, rocket strikes against the U.S. embassy in Baghdad prompted President Donald Trump to reiterate his red line of no dead Americans.

While the U.S. fears Iran may cross the point of no return, Iran is likewise anticipating Washington could conduct another attack in Trump's waning days in office. This isn't out of the question, as Trump reportedly considered a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities in November. Some of Iran's proxies have called for restraint in response to the embassy attack, recognizing that war would be disadvantageous to both sides. At the same time, however, Iran is reportedly prepping its proxies to respond in the event of a U.S. attack.

Both on the Iranian and the U.S. side, there is suspicion of an impending attack by the other side. But if the United States fears American troops will die, and that's a sufficient reason to go to war, then why not leave Iraq? Iran's proxy activities have continued

despite a heavy sanctions campaign and military force. There's no acceptable avenue the U.S. can pursue that hasn't already been tried and failed. And there's no strategic reason to stay in Iraq that would justify the overwhelming risks the U.S. incurs.

Iraq is already in a political environment that's likely to stave off Iranian domination of the country. Even the formerly anti-American cleric Muqtada al-Sadr denounced the embassy attack because it undermined the authority of the Iraqi state. The Iraqi government has also ramped up pressure on these militias, and issued an arrest warrant for the leader of one of Iran's favored proxies. Iraqis are best suited to handling security in their own country. The U.S. should stick to protecting its own people. That means a military withdrawal from the country.

Such a move isn't drastic; it's long overdue. The overwhelming majority of Americans support such measures. Moreover, the choice of military occupation or abandonment is a false dichotomy. The U.S. can still be a diplomatic and economic player in the region. That's not isolationism but rather a recognition that the costs from strangling Iran far outweigh the potential benefits. Diplomacy is an underutilized tool in American policymaking, and it would behoove President-elect Joe Biden to bring it back to prominence. The alternative is another decade of American foreign policy where nothing happens for the better.

Geoff LaMear is a fellow at Defense Priorities.

Stimulus money will still flow, even if not needed

BY GARY ABERNATHY

Special to The Washington Post

The biggest complaint about the \$900 billion stimulus package that President Donald Trump signed a week ago was that it is too small and contains no funding for state and local governments. But that misses the bigger picture. If the \$2 trillion package enacted last March hadn't been so haphazardly distributed, there wouldn't be such a need for more stimulus spending now.

Under the CARES Act passed in March, local governments that flourished despite shutdowns and stay-at-home orders received millions anyway. Stimulus checks went to Americans who never lost their jobs or suffered any other economic hardships. Businesses that didn't need them received millions in forgivable Paycheck Protection Program loans.

Now, we're doing much of it again, consistent with the philosophy adopted by Democrats and Republicans alike that even though the national debt is already unconscionable, Uncle Sam will shovel money at the pain and consequences from our disastrous decision to crash the economy this year.

How do I know this? Until October, I served a two-year-plus stint as a member of the Highland County (Ohio) Board of Commissioners. County commissioners are primarily tasked with overseeing the county budget. When Republican Gov. Mike DeWine ordered business closures in March, local governments were naturally worried about the loss of sales taxes that, for many, represent 50% or more of their annual revenue.

In Highland County, we issued a memo-

randum to department heads urging them to consider cuts based on the shortfalls that would almost surely come. Then a funny thing happened on the way to insolvency — our county auditor, Bill Fawley, informed us that sales tax revenue was actually increasing. In 2019, Highland County's sales tax reaped about \$6.8 million. For 2020, it's anticipated to reach \$7.5 million — a record by at least \$500,000, Fawley told me Monday.

Highland County wasn't alone in not only weathering the shutdowns but also thriving. According to a report by the National Association of Counties, "Many rural counties throughout the Midwest have experienced upward trends in sales tax collections" during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kenosha County, Wis., "had all-time record collections for sales tax revenue in the months of May, July and August." Hickory County, Mo., "is up over \$100,000 in sales tax revenue for the month of September compared to last year's numbers."

Since March, rather than travel to the malls and outlets in nearby metropolitan areas, rural residents have stayed home to shop, driving local sales tax revenue through the roof. But rather than set up a system based on need, state officials merely divvied up the federal money proportionally. So far, Highland County has been allocated more than \$4 million, the auditor told me — a windfall that dwarfs the sales tax windfall. The same thing happened in small counties across the nation. That doesn't count the millions provided directly to schools, hospitals, health departments and other local entities.

In Highland County, the biggest CARES Act expenditures were installing glass barriers at county offices, upgrading law en-

forcement vehicles with computers to reduce personal contact, digitizing records to reduce the number of people coming into an office to peruse musty old books, and other similar items, many of which had long been on department wish lists.

Was it great to be able to do those things? Sure. Were they all necessary? No. But no local government is going to look a gift horse in the mouth. Coronavirus or not, small counties are often just one calamity away from ruin — in our region, see the closure of a DHL distribution hub and 7,000 lost jobs in 2008 — so they're going to use the funds for allowable wish-list expenditures.

Granted, at first, no one knew the impact the shutdowns would have everywhere. But once that was clear, redirecting money away from thriving local governments to the areas in need would have made more sense — and perhaps reduced the need for subsequent stimulus packages.

Congress' new package doesn't contain money for states and localities, but there are hundreds of millions for another round of stimulus checks and PPP loans. And President-elect Joe Biden promises to push for even more spending in the months to come; state and local governments are sure to be a part of that.

Will it be done more responsibly next time? Probably not. There are voters to be courted everywhere, not just in suffering communities. When it comes to spending money that doesn't really exist in the first place, being frugal about it seems silly, doesn't it?

Gary Abernathy, a contributing columnist for The Washington Post, is a freelance writer based in southwestern Ohio.

SCOREBOARD

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Bowl schedule

Canceled

Bahamas Bowl
Birmingham Bowl
Celebration Bowl
Fenway Bowl
Frisco Bowl
Gasparilla Bowl
Guaranteed Rate Bowl
Hawaii Bowl
Holiday Bowl
Independence Bowl
LA Bowl
Las Vegas Bowl
Military Bowl
Music City Bowl
Pinstripe Bowl
Quick Lane Bowl
Redbox Bowl
Sun Bowl
Texas Bowl

Monday, Dec. 21 Myrtle Beach Bowl Conway, S.C.

Appalachian St. 56, North Texas 28

Tuesday, Dec. 22 Famous Idaho Potato Bowl

Boise
Nevada 38, Tulane 27
Boca Raton (Fla.) Bowl
No. 13 BYU 49, UCF 23

Wednesday, Dec. 23 New Orleans Bowl

Georgia Southern 38, Louisiana Tech 3

Montgomery (Ala.) Bowl

Memphis 25, FAU 10

Thursday, Dec. 24 New Mexico Bowl

Frisco, Texas
Hawaii 28, Houston 14

Friday, Dec. 25 Camellia Bowl

Montgomery, Ala.
Buffalo 17, Marshall 10

Saturday, Dec. 26 Cure Bowl

Orlando, Fla.
No. 23 Liberty 37, No. 9 Coastal Carolina 34, OT

SERVPRO First Responder Bowl

Dallas
No. 16 Louisiana 31, UTSA 24

Lendingtree Bowl

Mobile, Ala.
Georgia St. 39, W. Kentucky 21

Tuesday, Dec. 29 Cheez-it Bowl

Orlando, Fla.
Oklahoma St. 37, No. 18 Miami 34

Alamo Bowl

San Antonio
No. 20 Texas 55, Colorado 23

Wednesday, Dec. 30 Duke's Mayo Bowl

Charlotte, N.C.
Wisconsin 42, Wake Forest 28

Cotton Bowl Classic

Arlington, Texas
No. 8 Oklahoma 55, No. 10 Florida 20

Thursday, Dec. 31 Armed Forces Bowl

Ford Worth, Texas
Mississippi St., 28, No. 22 Tulsa 26

Arizona Bowl

Tucson, Ariz.
No. 19 San Jose St. 13, Ball State 34

Liberty Bowl

Memphis, Tenn.
West Virginia 24 Army 21

Texas Bowl

Houston
TCU vs. Arkansas, canceled

Friday, Jan. 1 Peach Bowl

Atlanta
No. 11 Georgia 24, No. 6 Cincinnati 21

Citrus Bowl

Orlando, Fla.
No. 15 Northwestern 35, Auburn 19

Rose Bowl: CFP Semifinal Game 1

Arlington, Texas
No. 1 Alabama 31, No. 4 Notre Dame 14

Sugar Bowl: CFP Semifinal Game 2

New Orleans
No. 3 Ohio St. 49, No. 2 Clemson 28

Saturday, Jan 2 Gator Bowl

Jacksonville, Fla.
No. 24 NC State vs. Kentucky

Outback Bowl

Tampa, Fla.
No. 7 Indiana vs. Mississippi

Fiesta Bowl

Glendale, Ariz.
No. 12 Iowa State vs. No. 25 Oregon

Orange Bowl

Miami Gardens, Fla.
No. 5 Texas A&M vs. No. 14 North Carolina

Monday, Jan. 11 College Football Championship

Miami Gardens, Fla.
No. 1 Alabama vs. No. 3 Ohio St.

AP SPORTLIGHT

Jan. 3

1920 — Boston Red Sox owner Harry Frazee sells pitcher-outfielder Babe Ruth to the New York Yankees for \$125,000 plus a \$350,000 loan.

COLLEGE HOCKEY

Friday's scores

EAST

UConn 2, New Hampshire 1
Clarkson 4, Colgate 1
UMass 4, Northeastern 3
Vermont 0, Providence 0, 2OT, Providence wins shootout 2-1

MIDWEST

Colorado College 4, Denver 2

PRO FOOTBALL

NFL

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
yx-Buffalo	12	3	0	.800	445	349
Miami	10	5	0	.667	378	282
New England	6	9	0	.400	298	339
N.Y. Jets	2	13	0	.133	229	429

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Indianapolis	10	5	0	.667	423	348
Tennessee	10	5	0	.667	450	401
Houston	4	11	0	.267	346	423
Jacksonville	1	14	0	.067	292	464

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
yx-Pittsburgh	12	3	0	.800	394	288
Baltimore	10	5	0	.667	430	300
Cleveland	10	5	0	.667	384	397
Cincinnati	4	10	1	.300	308	386

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
*yx-Kansas City	14	1	0	.933	452	324
Las Vegas	7	8	0	.467	402	447
L.A. Chargers	6	9	0	.400	346	405
Denver	5	10	0	.333	292	414

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Dallas	6	9	0	.400	376	450
Washington	6	9	0	.400	315	315
N.Y. Giants	5	10	0	.333	257	338
Philadelphia	4	10	1	.300	320	398

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
yx-New Orleans	11	4	0	.733	449	330
x-Tampa Bay	10	5	0	.667	448	328
Carolina	5	10	0	.333	343	369
Atlanta	4	11	0	.267	369	370

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
yx-Green Bay	12	3	0	.800	474	353
Chicago	8	7	0	.533	356	335
Minnesota	6	9	0	.400	393	440
Detroit	5	10	0	.333	342	482

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
yx-Seattle	11	4	0	.733	433	348
L.A. Rams	9	6	0	.600	354	289
Arizona	8	7	0	.533	403	349
San Francisco	6	9	0	.400	353	364

x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division
z-clinched first round bye
*-clinched home-field advantage

Sunday's games

Atlanta at Tampa Bay
Baltimore at Cincinnati
Dallas at N.Y. Giants
Miami at Buffalo
Minnesota at Detroit
N.Y. Jets at New England
Pittsburgh at Cleveland
Arizona at L.A. Rams
Green Bay at Chicago
Jacksonville at Indianapolis
L.A. Chargers at Kansas City
Las Vegas at Denver
New Orleans at Carolina
Seattle at San Francisco
Tennessee at Houston
Washington at Philadelphia

NFL injury report

NEW YORK — The National Football League injury report, as provided by the league (DNP: did not practice; LIMITED: limited participation; FULL: Full participation):

SUNDAY

ARIZONA CARDINALS at LOS ANGELES RAMS — **CARDINALS:** QUESTIONABLE: S Budda Baker (neck), TE Darrell Daniels (hamstring), RB Chase Edmonds (hip), WR Larry Fitzgerald (groin), TE Maxx Williams (ankle). LIMITED: TE Maxx Williams (ankle). FULL: E Dan Arnold (back), WR DeAndre Hopkins (hip), CB Dre Kirkpatrick (hamstring, calf), QB Kyler Murray (lower leg), DT Domata Peko (not injury related), LB Haason Reddick (hip), S Jalen Thompson (ankle), RB Jonathan Ward (ankle). **RAMS:** OUT: QB Jared Goff (right thumb), LB Micah Kiser (knee). QUESTIONABLE: RB Cam Akers (ankle).

ATLANTA FALCONS at TAMPA BAY BUCCANERS — **FALCONS:** OUT: CB Darqueze Dennard (quadricep), WR Julio Jones (hamstring), WR Brandon Powell (foot). DNP: DE Charles Harris (not injury related), T Jake Matthews (not injury related). LIMITED: G James Carpenter (groin), DE John Cominsky (shoulder), DT Marlon Da-

vidson (knee), LB Foyesade Oluokun (ankle), RB Ito Smith (rib), TE Luke Stocker (elbow). FULL: C Matt Hennessy (knee), DE Steven Means (hand). **BUCCANERS:** OUT: DT Jeremiah Ledbetter (calf). DOUBTFUL: CB Carlton Davis (groin). QUESTIONABLE: DT Steve McLendon (not injury related). DNP: LB Jason Pierre-Paul (knee), DT Ndamukong Suh (not injury related). LIMITED: S Mike Edwards (hip), RB Leonard Fournette (abdomen), LB Jason Pierre-Paul (knee). FULL: QB Tom Brady (not injury related), S Mike Edwards (hip), RB Leonard Fournette (abdomen), TE Rob Gronkowski (not injury related), RB Ronald Jones (finger).

BALTIMORE RAVENS at CINCINNATI BENGALS — **RAVENS:** QUESTIONABLE: DT Calais Campbell (calf, not injury related), RB Gus Edwards (back), T D.J. Fluker (knee), CB Marlon Humphrey (knee, shoulder), RB Mark Ingram (illness), C Patrick Mekari (back), DE Yannick Ngakoue (thigh), CB Marcus Peters (calf), CB Jimmy Smith (ribs, shoulder), WR Willie Snead (ankle). DNP: DE Derek Wolfe (not injury related). **BENGALS:** OUT: C B.J. Finney (abdomen), CB William Jackson (concussion), LB Logan Wilson (ankle). FULL: WR Tyler Boyd (concussion), DT Mike Daniels (not injury related), LB Jordan Evans (hamstring), WR A.J. Green (not injury related), WR Tee Higgins (hamstring), CB Darius Phillips (not injury related).

DALLAS COWBOYS at NEW YORK GIANTS — **COWBOYS:** OUT: CB Rashard Robinson (knee), LB Leighton Vander Esch (ankle). QUESTIONABLE: S Darian Thompson (concussion), S Xavier Woods (ribs). FULL: CB Chidobe Awuzie (hamstring, groin), QB Ben DiNucci (right wrist), S Donovan Wilson (illness). **GIANTS:** OUT: RB Elijahhaa Penny (illness). DOUBTFUL: WR Golden Tate (calf). QUESTIONABLE: LB Cam Brown (illness). LIMITED: TE Evan Engram (calf), S Jabrill Peppers (ankle), WR Sterling Shepard (rib). FULL: CB Darnay Holmes (knee), QB Daniel Jones (hamstring).

GREEN BAY PACKERS at CHICAGO BEARS — **PACKERS:** OUT: T David Bakhtiari (knee), DE Kingsley Keke (concussion). QUESTIONABLE: G Simon Stepaniak (knee). LIMITED: CB Kevin King (groin), WR Allen Lazard (core, wrist), LB Za'Darius Smith (ankle, thumb), WR Equanimeous St. Brown (knee), G Rick Wagner (knee). FULL: S Adrian Amos (ankle), TE Mercedes Lewis (knee), S Will Redmond (concussion), S Darnell Savage (finger), G Simon Stepaniak (knee), TE Jace Sternberger (concussion), RB Jamaal Williams (quadricep). **BEARS:** OUT: CB Jaylon Johnson (shoulder), CB Buster Skrine (concussion). QUESTIONABLE: S Deon Bush (foot), S Tashaun Gipson (neck), TE Demetrius Harris (foot), TE Cole Kmet (shoulder), WR Cordarrelle Patterson (knee). LIMITED: LB Khalil Mack (shoulder), WR Allen Robinson (hamstring), CB Duke Shelley (knee). FULL: WR DeAndre Carter (shoulder), TE Jimmy Graham (not injury related), DT Akiem Hicks (illness), T Charles Leno (toe), DT Bilal Nichols (finger), LB Roquan Smith (eye, rib), LB Danny Trevathan (not injury related).

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS at INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — **JAGUARS:** OUT: WR D.J. Chark (shin), WR Collin Johnson (hamstring), RB James Robinson (ankle). QUESTIONABLE: RB Nathan Cottrell (hip). LIMITED: LB Dakota Allen (ankle). FULL: TE James O'Shaughnessy (not injury related). **COLTS:** OUT: T Will Holden (ankle), S Khari Willis (concussion), CB Rock Ya-Sin (concussion). QUESTIONABLE: WR Michael Pittman (concussion). DNP: TE Mo Alie-Cox (not injury related), WR T.Y. Hilton (not injury related), G Quenton Nelson (not injury related), DT Grover Stewart (toe), DE Kemoko Turay (not injury related). LIMITED: S Julian Blackmon (knee, pelvis), DT DeForest Buckner (ankle). FULL: DT Denico Autry (hip), TE Trey Burton (not injury related), TE Jack Doyle (quadricep), LB Jordan Glasgow (illness), DE Justin Houston (not injury related), C Joey Hunt (illness), WR Marcus Johnson (quadricep), S George Odum (knee), WR Michael Pittman (concussion), LS Luke Rhodes (ankle), QB Philip Rivers (toe).

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS at DENVER BRONCOS — **RAIDERS:** OUT: T Trenton Brown (knee). QUESTIONABLE: G Denzelle Good (ankle), DT Maurice Hurst (calf), CB Lamarcus Joyner (thigh). LIMITED: C Rodney Hudson (knee, back), G Gabe Jackson (knee), T Sam Young (knee). FULL: K Daniel Carlson (left ankle), DT Johnathan Hankins (ribs), LB Nicholas Morrow (concussion), DE Carl Nassib (elbow, ankle), WR Hunter Renfrow (ankle), DE Chris Smith (illness). **BRONCOS:** OUT: WR K.J. Hamler (concussion). QUESTIONABLE: RB LeVante Bellamy (ankle), LB Anthony Chickillo (ribs), DE Bradley Chubb (ankle), G Graham Glasgow (shoulder), S Trey Marshall (quadricep). FULL: RB LeVante Bellamy (ankle), T Demar Dotson (hand), DT DeShawn Williams (knee).

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS at KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — **CHARGERS:** OUT: DE Joey Bosa (shin, concussion), T Bryan Bulaga (foot), CB Casey Hayward (hamstring), LB Malik Jefferson (shoulder), S Rayshawn Jenkins (ankle). QUESTIONABLE: S Jahleel Addae (calf), T Sam Tevi (knee). FULL: S Nasir Adderley (ankle), WR Jalen Guyton (hamstring), CB Chris Harris (foot), TE Donald Parham (illness), LB Denzel Perryman (back). **CHIEFS:** OUT: RB Clyde Edwards-Helaire (ankle), WR Tyreek Hill (hamstring), LB Ben Niemann (hamstring), T Mike Remmers (back), WR Sammy Watkins (calf). QUESTIONABLE: RB Le'Veon Bell (knee), DT Derrick Nnadi (knee). LIMITED: LB Damien Wilson (knee). FULL: DE Frank Clark (illness), DT Mike Pennel (back), CB Charvarius Ward (hamstring).

MIAMI DOLPHINS at BUFFALO BILLS

DOLPHINS: QUESTIONABLE: WR Jakeem Grant (ankle), G Solomon Kindley (knee, foot), DE Shaq Lawson (shoulder), WR DeVante Parker (hamstring). FULL: G Ereck Flowers (ankle), S Kavin Frazier (shoulder), TE Mike Gesicki (shoulder), CB Xavien Howard (shoulder), S Bobby McCain (ankle), CB Jamal Perry (foot), LB Kyle Van Noy (hip). **BILLS:** OUT: WR Cole Beasley (knee), TE Reggie Gilliam (knee, hamstring). LIMITED: QB Jake Fromm (not injury related). FULL: WR John Brown (not injury related), G Jon Feliciano (illness).

MINNESOTA VIKINGS at DETROIT LIONS — **VIKINGS:** OUT: RB Dalvin Cook (not injury related), CB Cameron Dantzler (hamstring), DE Jalyn Holmes (groin), CB Chris Jones (groin), LB Eric Kendricks (calf), DE Ifeadi Odenigbo (chest). QUESTIONABLE: K Dan Bailey (back). FULL: LB Todd Davis (ribs), LB Troy Dye (concussion, hamstring), RB C.J. Ham (quadricep), RB Alexander Mattison (concussion), DT Armon Watts (ankle). **LIONS:** OUT: T Tyrell Crosby (ankle), G Joe Dahl (back), WR Kenny Golladay (hip). QUESTIONABLE: LB Jamie Collins (neck), C Frank Ragnow (throat), QB Matthew Stafford (right thumb, rib, ankle). FULL: WR Danny Amendola (not injury related).

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS at CAROLINA PANTHERS — **SAINTS:** OUT: TE Josh Hill (hand), S Marcus Williams (ankle). FULL: DT Malcolm Brown (calf), G Nick Easton (concussion), DE Trey Hendrickson (neck), RB Latavius Murray (quadricep), DT David Onyemata (knee), G Andrus Peat (ankle). **PANTHERS:** DOUBTFUL: DE Brian Burns (shoulder), RB Mike Davis (ankle), RB Christian McCaffrey (thigh), T Russell Okung (calf), CB Troy Pride (hip). QUESTIONABLE: DE Yetur Gross-Matos (shoulder), DE Austin Larkin (shoulder), DE Efo Obada (shoulder, toe). LIMITED: CB Troy Pride (hip). FULL: WR Robby Anderson (groin), RB Alex Armah (thigh), DE Yetur Gross-Matos (shoulder), DE Marquis Hayes (shoulder), CB Natrell Jamerson (hip), DE Austin Larkin (shoulder), G John Miller (shoulder), DE Efo Obada (shoulder, toe).

NEW YORK JETS at NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — **JETS:** QUESTIONABLE: CB Blessuan Austin (illness), CB Javelin Guidry (knee), WR Jeff Smith (shoulder). FULL: G Pat Elflein (ankle), RB Ty Johnson (hip), CB Arthur Maulet (ankle), DT Nathan Shepherd (calf). **PATRIOTS:** OUT: C David Andrews (calf), RB Damien Harris (ankle), G Shaquille Mason (calf). QUESTIONABLE: LB Ja'Whaun Bentley (shoulder), CB Justin Bethel (neck), DT Adam Butler (shoulder), LB Shilique Calhoun (knee), LB Joe Cardona (ankle), DT Byron Cowart (back), T Jermaine Eluemunor (ankle), K Nick Folk (back), DT Lawrence Guy (shoulder), LB Terez Hall (ankle), T Justin Herron (ankle), CB J.C. Jackson (knee), LB Anfernee Jennings (shoulder), S Devin McCourty (shoulder), WR Donte Moncrief (thigh), WR Matt Slater (knee).

PITTSBURGH STEELERS at CLEVELAND BROWNS — **STEELERS:** OUT: K Chris Boswell (groin), S Terrell Edmunds (shoulder), QB Ben Roethlisberger (not injury related). DNP: DT Cameron Heyward (not injury related), WR Diontae Johnson (illness), C Maurkice Pouncey (not injury related), LB T.J. Watt (not injury related). FULL: LB Oluosunkanmi Adeniyi (shoulder), S Marcus Allen (neck), DE Tyson Alualu (ankle), G David DeCastro (not injury related), DE Stephon Tuitt (back). **BROWNS:** OUT: C Nick Harris (knee). QUESTIONABLE: LB Tae Davis (ankle), T Kendall Lamm (illness), LB Sione Takitaki (ankle), G Wyatt Teller (ankle). LIMITED: T Jack Conklin (knee), DT Sheldon Richardson (neck), C J.C. Tretter (knee). FULL: Ronnie Harrison (shoulder), WR Jarvis Landry (hip), T Jedrick Wills (illness).

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS at SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — **SEAHAWKS:** OUT: RB DeeJay Dallas (ankle), CB Jayson Stanley (hamstring). QUESTIONABLE: RB Carlos Hyde (illness), G Mike Iupati (neck), TE Greg Olsen (foot), S Damarious Randall (foot). **49ERS:** OUT: WR Brandon Aiyuk (ankle), DT Kevin Givens (not injury related), LB Dre Greenlaw (calf), DT Javon Kinlaw (knee), WR Deebo Samuel (hamstring), CB Richard Sherman (calf), CB K'Waun Williams (shin). QUESTIONABLE: S Tarvarius Moore (ankle), CB Emmanuel Moseley (hamstring), LB Mark Nzeocha (illness). FULL: DE Dion Jordan (knee), T Justin Skule (knee), S Jimmie Ward (concussion), TE Charlie Woerner (not injury related). **TENNESSEE TITANS at HOUSTON TEXANS** — **TITANS:** OUT: LB Derrick Roberson (hamstring). QUESTIONABLE: LB Daren Bates (hip), RB Khari Blasingame (ankle). DNP: WR A.J. Brown (ankle). FULL: WR Corey Davis (not injury related), RB Derrick Henry (not injury related), CB Adoree' Jackson (knee), C Ben Jones (ankle), T Dennis Kelly (knee), G Rodger Saffold (ankle), DT Jeffery Simmons (knee), CB Tye Smith (not injury related). **TEXANS:** OUT: T Brent Vaile (concussion). DOUBTFUL: Laremy Tunsil (ankle). QUESTIONABLE: CB Phillip Gaines (knee), RB Duke Johnson (neck). FULL: WR Keke Coutee (foot).

WASHINGTON FOOTBALL TEAM at PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — **WASHINGTON:** OUT: LB Thomas Davis (knee). QUESTIONABLE: RB Antonio Gibson (toe), WR Terry McLaurin (ankle), LB Kevin Pierre-Louis (ankle), QB Alex Smith (calf). FULL: DT Jonathan Allen (not injury related), G Wes Schweitzer (hip), DT Tim Settle (shoulder). **EAGLES:** OUT: DE Derek Barnett (calf), LB Shaun Bradley (neck), DT Fletcher Cox (neck), TE Dallas Goedert (calf), WR DeSean Jackson (ankle), T Jordan Mailata (concussion), LB Duke Riley (biceps), TE Richard Rodgers (ankle), RB Miles Sanders (knee). QUESTIONABLE: CB Michael Jacquet (calf). DNP: WR Alshon Jeffery (not injury related). FULL: WR Quez Watkins (rib).

DEALS

Friday's transactions

BASKETBALL

National Basketball Association

NBA — Fined F James Johnson, Dallas Mavericks, F's Cody Martin and Caleb Martin, Charlotte Hornets, for their roles in an on-court altercation on Dec. 30. Fined G Jordan Clarkson, Utah Jazz, for making contact with a game official on Dec. 31.

FOOTBALL

National Football League

BUFFALO BILLS — Activated WR Josh Brown from the reserve/COVID-19 list. Activated S Josh Thomas and RB Christian Wade from the reserve/COVID-19 list to the practice squad. Signed WR J.J. Nelson and CB Duke Thomas to the practice squad. Released OL Marguel Harrell, LB Deon Lacey and CB Lafayette Pitts from the practice squad.

CINCINNATI BENGALS — Activated CB Brian Allen from the reserve/COVID-19 list to the practice squad. Signed TE Mitchell Wilcox from the practice squad to the

NBA/SPORTS BRIEFS



DARREN ABATE/AP

The San Antonio Spurs' Dejounte Murray, left, looks to pass the ball as he is defended by the Los Angeles Lakers' Talen Horton-Tucker (5), Montrezl Harrell (15), and Markieff Morris during the second half of Friday's game in San Antonio.

Lakers rally to second win over Spurs in three days

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Anthony Davis had 35 points and 11 rebounds, and LeBron James added 26 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists and the Los Angeles Lakers rallied to beat the San Antonio Spurs 109-103 on Friday night.

The Lakers closed with a 9-0 run for their second victory over the Spurs in three days.

Keldon Johnson had a career-high 26 points and added 10 rebounds, and DeMar DeRozan had 23 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for San Antonio.

Johnson blocked James' layup attempt, but Kyle Kuzma tipped in the follow to give the Lakers a 105-103 lead with 53.9 seconds remaining. James followed with a layup, and Davis closed the scoring with two free throws.

Suns 106, Nuggets 103: Chris Paul hit a clutch jumper with 7.3 seconds remaining after a successful coach's challenge on the other end and Phoenix beat host Denver to improve to 5-1 for the first time since 2009-10.

Deandre Ayton had 22 points and 11 rebounds, Devin Booker added 22, and Paul 21 for Phoenix, which won the night before in Utah. The red-hot Suns have won 13 of their last 14 dating to their perfect stint inside the NBA bubble.

Bucks 128, Bills 96: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 29 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists and host Milwaukee used torrid three-

point shooting to blast short-handed Chicago.

Chicago played its second straight game without forwards Lauri Markkanen and Chandler Hutchison as well as guards Ryan Arcidiacono and Tomas Satoransky as part of the NBA's health and safety protocols related to COVID-19. Markkanen is the Bulls' second-leading scorer (17.3) and top rebounder (6.8).

Wizards 130, Timberwolves 109: Bradley Beal had 31 points and seven assists and visiting Washington beat Minnesota without Russell Westbrook for its first victory in six games this season.

Westbrook sat out for rest on the second game of a back-to-back, but the Wizards (1-5) didn't look like the same team that lost the night before at home to Chicago.

Malik Beasley scored 21 points for Minnesota. The Timberwolves who have lost three in a row with star center Karl-Anthony Towns missing all three games because of a dislocated left wrist.

Mavericks 93, Heat 83: Luka Doncic had season highs of 27 points and 14 rebounds for his first double-double of the season to lead host Dallas past Miami.

Jazz 106, Clippers 100: Mike Conley made seven three-pointers and scored a season-high 33 points to lead Utah past visiting Los Angeles.

Pistons 96, Celtics 93: Jeremi Grant scored 24 points and host Detroit won for the first time this



ANDY CLAYTON-KING/AP

Washington Wizards guard Bradley Beal flexes while guard Russell Westbrook encourages teammates during the fourth quarter against the Timberwolves Friday in Minneapolis.

season, beating Boston.

Grizzlies 108, Hornets 93: Dillon Brooks scored 21 points and undermanned Memphis beat host Charlotte.

Hawks 114, Nets 96: De'Andre Hunter scored 23 points help Atlanta beat host Brooklyn.

Trail Blazers 123, Warriors 98: Damian Lillard joined Hall of Famer Clyde Drexler as the only Portland players to score 15,000 points for the franchise, finishing with 34 as the Trail Blazers spoiled Golden State's home opener.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	4	1	.800	—
Brooklyn	3	3	.500	1½
Boston	3	3	.500	1½
New York	2	3	.400	2
Toronto	1	3	.250	2½

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	4	1	.800	—
Atlanta	4	1	.800	—
Charlotte	2	3	.400	2
Miami	2	3	.400	2
Washington	1	5	.167	3½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Indiana	4	1	.800	—
Cleveland	3	2	.600	1
Milwaukee	3	3	.500	1½
Chicago	2	4	.333	2½
Detroit	1	4	.200	3

Western Conference

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New Orleans	3	2	.600	—
San Antonio	2	3	.400	1
Dallas	2	3	.400	1
Memphis	2	3	.400	1
Houston	1	2	.333	1

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Utah	3	2	.600	—
Portland	3	2	.600	—
Minnesota	2	3	.400	1
Oklahoma City	1	3	.250	1½
Denver	1	4	.200	2

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Phoenix	5	1	.833	—
L.A. Clippers	4	2	.667	1
L.A. Lakers	4	2	.667	1
Sacramento	3	2	.600	1½
Golden State	2	3	.400	2½

Friday's games

Detroit 96, Boston 93
 Memphis 108, Charlotte 93
 Dallas 93, Miami 83
 Atlanta 114, Brooklyn 96
 Washington 130, Minnesota 109
 Milwaukee 126, Chicago 96
 L.A. Lakers 109, San Antonio 103
 Utah 106, L.A. Clippers 100
 Phoenix 106, Denver 103
 Portland 123, Golden State 98

Saturday's games

Sacramento at Houston
 Charlotte at Philadelphia
 New York at Indiana
 Oklahoma City at Orlando
 Cleveland at Atlanta
 Toronto at New Orleans

Sunday's games

Boston at Detroit
 L.A. Lakers at Memphis
 Washington at Brooklyn
 Denver at Minnesota
 Utah at San Antonio
 Dallas at Chicago
 L.A. Clippers at Phoenix
 Portland at Golden State

Monday's games

Charlotte at Philadelphia
 Cleveland at Orlando
 Boston at Toronto
 New York at Atlanta
 Oklahoma City at Miami
 Dallas at Houston
 Detroit at Milwaukee
 Indiana at New Orleans
 Sacramento at Golden State

Tuesday's games

Utah at Brooklyn
 L.A. Lakers at Memphis
 Minnesota at Denver
 San Antonio at L.A. Clippers
 Chicago at Portland

Leaders

Through Jan. 1

Scoring

	G	FG	FT	PTS	SAVG
Harden, HOU	3	32	32	111	37.0
Beal, WAS	6	64	50	187	31.2
Young, ATL	5	41	60	153	30.6
Durant, BKN	5	46	36	141	28.2
McCollum, POR	5	50	14	140	28.0
Brown, BOS	6	66	21	165	27.5
Embiid, PHI	4	34	33	106	26.5
Curry, GS	5	42	30	132	26.4
Irving, BKN	5	49	14	131	26.2

BRIEFLY

Texas fires Herman after four seasons

AUSTIN, Texas — Texas fired football coach Tom Herman on Saturday after four seasons of failing to win a Big 12 championship and only one league title game appearance.

Herman still had three seasons left on a guaranteed contract that was due to pay him more than \$6 million per year, and the move means Texas will soon be on its fourth head coach since its last Big 12 title in 2009 under Mack Brown.

Herman was supposed to end that drought. He was college football's hottest young coach when Texas brought him from Houston to replace Charlie Strong in 2016. But Herman's results never matched his swagger: He never had a losing season and won four bowl games at Texas, including last week's Alamo Bowl. But he couldn't return the Longhorns to consistent league or national title contenders. He was just 1-4 against archrival Oklahoma and leaves Texas 32-18 overall.

In other college football news:

■ Mississippi says it has reached agreement in principle with coach Lane Kiffin on a new contract.

The school made the announcement Saturday, hours before the Rebels (4-5) — in their first season with Kiffin as coach — faced Indiana in the Outback Bowl. It is their first bowl appearance in five seasons.

■ Kentucky offensive lineman Kenneth Horsey is one of three winners announced Saturday of the Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Award, along with Colorado running back Jarek Broussard and Coastal Carolina linebacker Silas Kelly.

Browns close facility again on eve of finale

The NFL is about to reach the final Sunday of its regular season after a week filled with coronavirus-related issues, from the ongoing disruptions of the Cleveland Browns' preparations for their key game to the positive test results for prominent players such as New Orleans Saints running back Alvin Kamara and Miami Dolphins quarterback Ryan Fitzpatrick.

It was the third time in four days that the Browns had closed their facility because of a new positive test result or results in the daily leaguewide coronavirus testing.

In other NFL news:

■ Green Bay Packers offensive tackle David Bakhtiari will miss the rest of the season after the three-time Pro Bowl selection injured his knee in practice Thursday.

Packers coach Matt LaFleur confirmed the severity of the injury Friday.

— Associated Press

NFL

Washington gets 2nd chance at NFC East crown

In season gone awry, Eagles can still play spoiler

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**
Associated Press

The last time Washington faced Philadelphia, the quarterbacks were Dwayne Haskins and Carson Wentz, and the Eagles were the team with playoff expectations.

"It feels like five years ago," Washington offensive coordinator Scott Turner said.

Week 1 was 3 1/2 months ago, but everything has changed for the longtime division rivals going into the regular-season finale. Haskins has been released; Wentz has been benched for Jalen Hurts; Philadelphia is eliminated from playoff contention; and Washington stands on the verge of winning the NFC East — if it can beat the Eagles on the road Sunday night.

"We understand the situation," running back J.D. McKissic said. "You can just tell guys are laser focused out there (at practice). There's not much talking and when there is, it's about football. Guys are just ready to play."

Who plays at quarterback is still unclear between 36-year-old starter Alex Smith and December practice squad pickup Taylor Heinicke, who was taking online college classes when he got the call. Top receiver Terry McLaurin is also questionable with an ankle injury that kept him out of Washington's first chance to clinch the division, a 20-13 home

loss to Carolina last week.

The challenge remains the same, only against an opponent motivated to play spoiler.

"We've got to have a no hat rule this week," Eagles coach Doug Pederson said. "We can't let opponents put division win hats on at the Linc."

Washington coach Ron Rivera has envisioned putting on NFC East champions garb since October when he benched Haskins — whom he has since released — to hand the No. 1 QB job to Kyle Allen. After Allen got hurt, the job fell to Smith, who hadn't started an NFL game since 2018 when he broke his right leg.

Smith is 4-1 since taking over, and if he can play after missing the past two games with a strained calf in that leg that has a titanium rod in it, it's a huge advantage for Washington.

"We all depend on each other," Smith said. "Obviously, the quarterback touching the ball every play carries a lot of responsibility. A lot of people depend on you to go out there and make good decisions and be accurate with the football. That's not something that I take lightly at all. For me, it's a great responsibility and a great challenge."

Washington at 7-9 would be the third division champion with a losing record since realignment in 2002. The same goes for the 7-9 Dallas Cowboys or 6-10 New York



MARK TENALLY/AP

Members of the Washington Football Team huddle before the start of their game against the Carolina Panthers in Landover, Md. Washington can win the NFC East by beating Philadelphia on Sunday.



MICHAEL AINSWORTH/AP

Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts runs for a first down against the Dallas Cowboys in Arlington, Texas, last Sunday.

Giants, who play Sunday afternoon, with the winner only capturing the NFC East if the Eagles ruin Washington's night.

Gibson the key: Rookie running back Antonio Gibson was a revelation for Washington with 11 touchdowns until a turf toe de-

railed his season. He missed two games before returning against Carolina and is questionable again.

"Hopefully we'll get him rolling and he'll be good to go Sunday and he'll give us everything he's got," Turner said.

Losing feeling: Eagles running back Miles Sanders didn't go through a losing season in high school in Pittsburgh or college at Penn State or his rookie year in the NFL, so this "super disappointed" feeling is a first for him.

"I believe that we're a great football team," said Sanders, one of nine players the Eagles ruled out with injury. "We just have to play smarter and that's all around, pre-snap penalties, situational penalties, everything. But I do believe this is a great team and I do believe better days are coming."

History between Garrett, Rudolph too big to ignore

By **WILL GRAVES**
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The scene is forever ingrained in whatever becomes of Myles Garrett and Mason Rudolph's respective NFL careers.

Thirteen months removed from the ugly brawl in Cleveland that both players have painstakingly tried to move past, their paths will cross again on Sunday. Rudolph starts in place of Ben Roethlisberger as the AFC North champion Steelers (12-3) visit Garrett and the Browns (10-5).

Neither Garrett nor Rudolph have any intention of rubbing their fingers over the emotional scars of the fight that ended with Garrett ripping off Rudolph's helmet, then hitting him with it in



DAVID RICHARD/AP

Cleveland Browns defensive end Myles Garrett, right, reacts after swinging a helmet at Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Mason Rudolph during a game in Cleveland on Nov. 14, 2019.

the waning seconds of Cleveland's 21-7 victory in November 2019. There's too much at stake.

The Browns can end an 18-year playoff drought with a victory. A solid performance by Rudolph would quiet — at least momentarily — concerns about his long-term viability as Roethlisberger's eventual successor.

"This game is too big to worry about anything external that happened years ago," Rudolph said Friday.

Rudolph threw four picks while getting drilled repeatedly on national television last time at Cleveland — a place where the lasting image of Rudolph's still fledgling career is of him screaming at Garrett while being restrained by teammates after

getting clubbed with his own helmet.

Asked if there has been any contact between his camp and Garrett's during the interim, Rudolph said no. He added he has "a lot of respect" for Garrett and would welcome any pregame interaction Garrett might initiate.

Cleveland will make Garrett a captain for arguably the franchise's biggest game since it returned in 1999. Browns coach Kevin Stefanski stressed the opponent is a coincidence.

"I do not want that to be misconstrued," he said. "It is a big game so I am sending the big guy out there, but it is in no way a call back to anything previously, so I just want to make sure that is clear."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

BOWLS ROUNDUP

No. 6 Bearcats dealt first loss

Podlesny's FG wins it for Georgia

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Jack Podlesny told Georgia coaches before Friday's Peach Bowl that he felt confident attempting field goals from as long as 55 yards — a full 4 yards past his career best.

Podlesny made good on his claim, kicking a 53-yard field goal with three seconds remaining, and No. 11 Georgia handed No. 6 Cincinnati its only loss of the season with a dramatic 24-21 victory in the Peach Bowl.

Podlesny dropped to one knee following the career-long kick as his teammates surged onto the field. Asked what he was thinking while he was kneeling, Podlesny said he wanted to “try to remember why I'm here. ... God is good and it's amazing to be here.”

Georgia trailed 21-10 in the fourth quarter, but its defense clamped down on Desmond Ridder and Cincinnati and JT Daniels helped rally the Bulldogs with his arm. Daniels, a Southern California transfer, passed for 392 yards while improving to a perfect 4-0 in four starts for Georgia.

Podlesny's winning kick tied a Peach Bowl record for longest field goal and gave Georgia a 22-21 lead. Azeem Ojulari sacked Ridder for a safety on the final play. It was Ojulari's third sack. Georgia tied a school record with eight sacks.

Ridder completed 24 of 37 passes for 206 yards and two touch-

downs. Jerome Ford added a career-long 79-yard touchdown run early in the second half but it wasn't enough for the Bearcats.

Cincinnati (9-1, No. 8 CFP) was motivated to use the Peach Bowl to gain national respect. Coach Luke Fickell said the game was a measuring stick for his team.

“We're not there yet,” Fickell said. “That's what keeps motivating you, and I think that, you know, there's a lot of things we're going to take from this that we know we can do.”

Georgia (8-2, No. 9 CFP) won despite running for only 45 yards.

“I would feel much better if we just played our best game,” Georgia coach Kirby Smart said. “I don't think we played our best game. I want to give Cincinnati credit for that. They created some of that.”

On Georgia's final play before the decisive field goal, Daniels attempted a deep pass that fell incomplete. Asked why he didn't try a shorter pass that might have made the kick more manageable, Smart said: “I felt comfortable with where he was that he would have the leg strength to get there.”

He was right.

Ridder threw a 14-yard touchdown pass to Alec Pierce in the first quarter and added an 11-yard scoring pass to Josh Wyle late in the first half.

“We've been ready to play this



BRYNN ANDERSON/AP

Georgia wide receiver George Pickens celebrates his touchdown catch against Cincinnati during the first half of the Peach Bowl on Friday in Atlanta. Georgia won on a 53-yard field goal with three seconds left.

game for a long time,” Ridder said. “It's just, you know, disappointing, obviously, the way it ended.”

Daniels overcame an interception and a lost fumble to lead the comeback.

Georgia's defense helped fuel the rally. Ridder fumbled on a sack by Ojulari, and Adam Anderson recovered at the Bearcats 25. Zamir White's 9-yard TD run trimmed Cincinnati's lead to 21-16.

Citrus Bowl

No. 15 Northwestern 35, Auburn 19: At Orlando, Fla., Peyton Ramsey threw three touchdown passes and ran for a score, and the 15th-ranked Wildcats clamped down defensively to beat the Tigers.

Ramsey, a graduate transfer, totaled 291 yards passing and 50 yards rushing for Northwestern (7-2), which won its fourth

straight bowl game. Ramaud Chiaokhiao-Brown, John Raine and Riley Lees had touchdown catches for the Wildcats, who bounced back from an ugly loss to Ohio State on Dec. 19 in the Big Ten championship game.

It was the final game for 73-year-old Northwestern defensive coordinator Mike Hankwitz, who is retiring after a 51-year coaching career that included 400 victories at nine schools. He was the defensive coordinator for Colorado's 1990 national championship team and spent the last 13 seasons as Northwestern's coordinator.

Bo Nix threw for 292 yards for Auburn (6-5) but was often frustrated by Northwestern's defense, which came in allowing 15.5 points per game, ranked fifth in the nation. Auburn was led by interim coach Kevin Steele following the Dec. 13 firing of Gus Malzahn and was missing several key players.

Auburn got within 14-13 when Nix hit Elijah Canion for a 57-yard touchdown midway through the third quarter. But Ramsey responded with a 30-yard touchdown run late in the quarter.

Linebacker Paddy Fisher, the nation's active leader in tackles coming into the game, drilled Nix for no gain on fourth-and-1 on the second play of the fourth quarter. Cam Porter had seven carries on the ensuing drive, including a 1-yard plunge into the end zone that put Northwestern ahead 28-13. Porter rushed for 98 yards on 33 carries, and the Wildcats offense finished with 457 yards and 25 first downs.

The Tigers failed to convert 10 of their first 11 third downs, were unsuccessful on their first two fourth-down tries and mustered 361 yards and 18 first downs. For the game, the Tigers were 2-for-13 on third downs.

Title: Ohio State has only played seven games this season

FROM PAGE 24

moved from Pasadena because of COVID-19 restrictions in California that would have kept family — or any fans — from attending the game.

Ohio State's overwhelming win in the Sugar Bowl was only its seventh game this season.

“We're a great program. We have a lot of pride. Ohio State Buckeyes means something,” coach Ryan Day said. “I don't know how many games we had to play to get here. All we had to do is play and we had to win once. That's really what mattered.”

The Buckeyes had three regular-season games canceled because of virus issues after the Big Ten didn't start its season until late October. The league altered its rules to let them represent the East Division in the conference championship game after only five regular-season games, instead of the six that had been initially mandated.

This will be the fifth meeting overall be-

“I don't know how many games we had to play to get here. All we had to do is play and we had to win once.”

Ryan Day
Ohio State head coach

tween the Tide and Buckeyes, whose only win in the series was that CFP semifinal six seasons ago. Their first game was the Sugar Bowl on Jan. 2, 1978, a 35-6 Alabama win in a matchup of legendary coaches Bear Bryant and Woody Hayes.

Alabama will be going for its sixth national title in coach Nick Saban's 14th seasons, and third in the CFP era. The early lines had the Tide favored by a touchdown over Ohio State.

“I don't know how it's going to end, but I do know one thing: we're going to go out

there and play our butts off, play our hardest,” Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields said after throwing six for TDs in the Sugar Bowl.

DeVonta Smith caught three of fellow Heisman Trophy finalist Mac Jones' four touchdown passes in Alabama's win in the Rose Bowl played at the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys. Smith caught seven passes for 130 yards, while Jones completed 25 of 30 passes for 297 yards.

“Smitty has done as much for our team as any player could do for any team,” Saban

said.

The Heisman Trophy will be presented in a virtual ceremony on Tuesday night.

“Whatever happens, happens,” Smith said. “I mean, I'm looking forward to the next game.”

Smith has 105 catches for 1,641 yards and 20 touchdowns, matching the SEC single-season record and extending his Alabama career mark to 43 TDs. Jones has completed 77% of his passes (275-for-357) for 4,036 yards and 36 TDs.

In his seven games, Fields has completed 73.4% of his passes (141-for-192) for 1,906 yards and 21 touchdowns. Chris Olave, who had two TDs in the Sugar Bowl, has 42 catches for 660 yards and seven TDs, and Garrett Wilson 41 catches for 683 yards and six TDs.

Trey Sermon followed up his 331 yards rushing in the Big Ten title game with 193 yards against Clemson. He has three consecutive 100-yard games.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



JOHN BAZEMORE / AP

Ohio State defensive tackle Haskell Garrett forces a fumble by Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence during the second half of the Sugar Bowl on Friday in New Orleans.

SUGAR BOWL

Buckeyes win rematch with Clemson in semis

By RALPH D. RUSSO
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Numbers have fueled Ohio State all year.

There was 29-23, the score of last season's painful playoff loss to Clemson.

Six, the number of games the Buckeyes played in this pandemic-altered season, which a lot of people thought was too few for them to deserve a return trip to the College Football Playoff.

Then there was No. 11, where Clemson coach Dabo Swinney placed Ohio State on his ballot in the final regular-season coaches' poll.

In a rematch with Swinney's Tigers in the Sugar Bowl, Justin Fields and the Buckeyes had Clemson's number.

Fields threw six touchdown passes to outshine Trevor Lawrence, and No. 3 Ohio State buried the second-ranked Tigers 49-28 in the Sugar Bowl semifinal Friday night.

"Everybody doubting us just pushed us a little more," Fields said.

The Buckeyes (7-0) head to the CFP title game for the first time since the inaugural playoff to face No. 1 Alabama on Jan. 11 at Hard Rock Stadium in South Florida. Ohio State beat the Crimson Tide in the semifinals on the way to the 2014 national championship.

Buckeyes coach Ryan Day called it a statement game for the

29-23

Score of last year's Clemson victory over Ohio State in the College Football Playoff semifinals. The Buckeyes used the score, as well as Tigers coach Dabo Swinney's disparaging remarks about how few games Ohio State played this season, as motivation for this year's game.

SOURCE: Associated Press

program.

"I think this performance, not only by Justin, but this team, hopefully will go down in Ohio State history as a landmark game," Day said. "Because we want to go on to win the national championship. But there was a lot of tough days, a lot of tough days over the last six months."

In a matchup of quarterback prodigies from Georgia, Fields might have given the Jacksonville Jaguars something to think about with that first pick in the NFL Draft. Lawrence is the presumptive No. 1, but Fields outplayed him on this night, going 22-for-28 for 385 yards. He set a Sugar Bowl record for TD passes and did it playing more than half the game after taking a vicious shot to the side that forced him to miss a play and spend time in the medical tent.

Lawrence was 33-for-48 for 400 yards and three total touchdowns in what is expected to be the ju-

nior's final college game.

"We were confident and prepared," he said. "This was just one of those nights."

Lawrence's final pass was intercepted, but Clemson (10-2) finished 34-2 in his starts and won a national title when he was a freshman.

The third meeting between Clemson and Ohio State in the playoff, and fourth bowl matchup since the 2013 season — all Clemson wins — was a game the Buckeyes had been pointing toward ever since that 29-23 loss in the Fiesta Bowl last year.

That score was everywhere the Buckeyes turned in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center in Columbus the past year.

A chance for revenge was nearly derailed when the Big Ten canceled fall football in August because of the pandemic. An abbreviated Big Ten season caused more headaches, with the Buckeyes having three games canceled because of COVID-19 issues, including their own outbreak.

The playoff committee still liked Ohio State enough to put the Buckeyes in the final four, despite much griping from various parts of the country, including Clemson.

Clemson took a 14-7 lead in the first quarter with Lawrence and Travis Etienne running for scores.

From there it was all Buckeyes.

ROSE BOWL

No. 1 Alabama rolls into CFP title game

By STEPHEN HAWKINS
Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — A truly untraditional Rose Bowl setting, a very common result for Alabama in the College Football Playoff.

With Heisman Trophy finalists DeVonta Smith and Mac Jones, the top-ranked Crimson Tide rolled into their fifth CFP championship game in six seasons.

Smith caught three of Jones' four touchdown passes and Najee Harris ran for 125 yards with a high-hurdling highlight in a 31-14 victory over No. 4 Notre Dame in a CFP semifinal Rose Bowl played inside about 1,400 miles from Pasadena, Calif.

"I don't think there's anything quite like the Rose Bowl, the tradition, the setting, the mountains. It's just a phenomenal experience," coach Nick Saban said. "Wish our players had gotten that opportunity."

But Saban and the Tide (12-0, No. 1 CFP) will take yet another win in the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys, which the coach called one of college football's finest venues, and advancing again in the playoff.

The Tide earned a spot in the Jan. 11 championship game in suburban Miami, against No. 3 Ohio State, which beat Clemson 49-28 in the other CFP semifinal at the Sugar Bowl on Friday night.

Alabama missed the CFP last year for the only time since the four-time playoff debuted at the end of the 2014 season. The Buckeyes were the initial CFP champions, after beating the top-seeded Tide 42-35 in a semifinal that year.

Notre Dame (10-2, No. 4 CFP), in football's final four for only the second time, has lost seven consecutive New Year's Six games since 2000.

Alabama scored TDs on its first three possessions, including a 97-

5-0

Alabama's record at AT&T Stadium, home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys. The Crimson Tide advanced to their fifth championship game in six seasons with Friday's 31-14 victory over Notre Dame.

SOURCE: Associated Press

yard drive on which Harris leaped over 6-foot cornerback Nick McCloud just after crossing the line of scrimmage, landed on both feet and then sprinted for a 53-yard gain before getting run out of bounds.

"I don't know why I'm surprised every time he does it. I've seen it for three years, but still, 'Geez!,' " tight end Miller Forristall said.

"I actually try to teach him not to do it, and it didn't work," Saban said, laughing. "Anyway, for a big guy, it's pretty amazing that he can do that. He's kind of got a great feel when a guy's going to try to cut him. ... When he sees that head go down, he'll go over the top of them in a heartbeat."

Jones, who completed 25 of 30 passes for 297 yards, threw a 12-yard TD to tight end Jahleel Billingsley on the next play.

That came between drives when Smith, with 16 TD catches his last seven games, turned short passes into scores of 26 and 34 yards. Smith finished with seven catches for 130 yards, later adding a nifty toe-tapping 7-yarder in the front corner of the end zone right on the pylon.

CFP officials moved the Rose Bowl because of COVID-19 restrictions in California that would have kept family — or any fans — from attending the game at its normal home. There was a limited capacity crowd of 18,373 at AT&T Stadium, the home of the Dallas Cowboys.



MICHAEL AINSWORTH / AP

Alabama running back Najee Harris hurdles Notre Dame cornerback Nick McCloud on his way to a 53-yard gain during the first half of the Rose Bowl on Friday in Arlington, Texas.

SPORTS



Second time in three days

Lakers make it back-to-back wins in San Antonio » **NBA, Page 20**

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



MICHAEL AINSWORTH / AP

Notre Dame quarterback Ian Book, left, is sacked by Alabama defensive lineman Byron Young during the second half of the Rose Bowl on Friday in Arlington, Texas.



GERALD HERBERT / AP

Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields picks up yardage against Clemson during the first half of the Sugar Bowl on Friday in New Orleans.

Tide vs. Buckeyes

Title game set with Alabama, Ohio State

BY STEPHEN HAWKINS
Associated Press

Top-ranked Alabama has two Heisman Trophy finalists and is in the College Football Playoff championship game for a record fifth time. Ohio State is back for the first time since winning the inaugural title in the CFP era.

After the SEC champion Crimson Tide rolled past Notre Dame 31-14 in a Rose Bowl played deep in the heart of Texas, the No. 3 Buckeyes of the Big Ten beat Clemson 49-28 in the other CFP semifinal at the Sugar Bowl on Friday night. The Tigers were trying, like Alabama, to get to the title game for the fifth time in the seven seasons of the



Saban



Day

four-team playoff.

So it's a matchup of storied programs playing Jan. 11 in suburban Miami to determine the champion of this most unusual season played in the middle of a pandemic.

They haven't met since the first year of the CFP at the end of the 2014 regular season. Alabama was the top seed in that first four-team playoff, but Ohio State beat the Tide 42-35 in the semifinal Sugar Bowl. The Buckeyes went on to win the national title over Oregon that year, but had since lost twice to Clemson in the semifinals.

While this season's CFP has provided a third consecutive title-game matchup of undefeated teams, this one is a little different.

Alabama has played 12 games, getting through a conference-only regular season before holding off Florida 52-46 in the SEC championship game and then winning the relocated Rose Bowl. That semifinal was

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