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Protecting the fleet



MAXWELL ORLOSKY/U.S. Navy

The Arleigh Burke-class, guided-missile destroyers USS Winston S. Churchill, front, and USS Bainbridge, rear, escort the USS Gerald R. Ford during a training event on March 23.

Ford carrier group equipped with new anti-drone weapons for possible Mideast deployment

By CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

ABOARD THE USS GERALD R. FORD — Two F-18 fighter jets roared above the USS Gerald R. Ford, flying past the aircraft carrier in the direction of a destroyer sitting on the horizon.

Four other destroyers were also spread across the ocean as the strike group conducted its final training exercise recently in the Atlantic, preparing for a summer deployment that could take the

warships to the Middle East, where Iran-backed Houthi militants have been attacking merchant vessels regularly. If sent to the region, the strike group will put newly adapted counter-drone weapons to the test as the Navy explores alternatives to shooting down cheap Houthi drones with multimillion-dollar munitions.

The strike group's Arleigh Burke-class, guided-missile destroyers will deploy with the Coyote and Roadrunner systems,

two interceptor-style drone systems that the Navy has spent the past year developing for ship-based launches, two service officials said. The Coyote and Roadrunner systems, which were modified from existing land-based technologies, are specialized drones designed to stop other drones before they reach their intended targets. The new weapons are intended to counter Houthi drones for a fraction of the price of a standard missile typically used

by the Navy.

"Those two systems are part of that attempt to get after the cost curve, give our commanding officers more options to engage the threat and ultimately be more effective in defending a high-value unit," Capt. Mark Lawrence, commander of Destroyer Squadron 2, said aboard the Ford as the aircraft carrier trained some 100 miles off the East Coast.

SEE WEAPONS ON PAGE 6

About \$376M spent on new border ops by the Pentagon

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon has spent about \$376 million on new border operations for thousands of active-duty service members since President Donald Trump's return to the White House, Defense Department officials told lawmakers Tuesday.

The new military deployments have surged to the southern border since Jan. 20 when Trump ordered the Defense Department to support efforts by the Department of Homeland Security to seal the border.



Guillot

The enhanced military mission will likely be measured in "years not months," Air Force Gen. Gregory Guillot, the commander of U.S. Northern Command, told the House Armed Services Committee.

Guillot testified alongside Adm. Alvin Holsey, who leads U.S. Southern Command, Rafael Leonardo, the acting assistant defense secretary for homeland defense and hemispheric affairs, and Robert Salasses, who leads the Pentagon's Washington Headquarters Services.

"The initial results of sealing the border have been fantastic, if you look at the stats, but we need to make sure that that's lasting and goes through all the cycles of illegal migration that we see — seasonal impact is significant on this," he said. "And then we need to make sure that it is sealed, and it remains sealed. And I think that

SEE BORDER ON PAGE 9

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Tesla sales fall 13% as backlash, aging lineup turn off buyers

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Tesla sales fell 13% in the first three months of the year, another sign that Elon Musk’s once high-flying electric car company is struggling to attract buyers.

The double-digit drop is likely due to a combination of factors, including its aging lineup, competition from rivals and a backlash from Musk’s embrace of right wing politics. It also is a warning that the company’s first-quarter earnings report later this month

could disappoint investors.

Tesla reported deliveries of 336,681 globally in the January to March quarter. The figure was down from sales of 387,000 in the same period a year ago. The decline came despite deep discounts, zero financing and other incentives.

Tesla’s stock has plunged by roughly half since hitting a mid-December record as expectations of a lighter regulatory touch and big profits with Donald Trump as president were replaced by fear

that the boycott of Musk’s cars could hit the company hard.

Analysts are still not sure exactly how much the fall in sales is due to the protests or other factors. Electric car sales have been sluggish in general, and Tesla in particular is suffering as car buyers hold off from buying its bestselling Model Y because of plans for an updated version later this year.

Still, even bullish analysts who downplayed the backlash are acknowledging that it is hurting the company.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		
Euro costs (April 3)	\$0.90	
British pound (April 3)	\$1.26	
Japanese yen (April 3)	146.00	
South Korean won (April 3)	1431.00	
Commercial rates		
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770	
Britain (Pound)	1.2940	
Canada (Dollar)	1.4328	
China (Yuan)	7.2702	
Denmark (Krone)	6.8915	
Egypt (Pound)	50.5689	
Euro	0.9236	
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7819	
Hungary (Forint)	369.41	
Israel (Shekel)	3.6961	
Japan (Yen)	149.52	
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3083	
Norway (Krone)	10.4304	
Philippines (Peso)	57.10	
Poland (Zloty)	3.86	
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7513	
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3424	
South Korea (Won)	1461.99	
Switzerland (Franc)	0.8828	
Thailand (Baht)	34.15	
Turkey (NewLira)	37.9125	

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

INTEREST RATES		
Prime rate	7.50	
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50	
Federal funds market rate	4.38	
3-month bill	4.30	
30-year bond	4.53	

WEATHER OUTLOOK

THURSDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



THURSDAY IN EUROPE



FRIDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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MILITARY

General: ‘This loss is simply devastating’

4 soldiers who were killed in Lithuania accident were part of a close-knit unit

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The soldiers who died last week during a mission in Lithuania were remembered Tuesday as a mix of dedicated young fathers, talented Army mechanics and key members of a close-knit unit.

The 3rd Infantry Division named the soldiers who were killed after their M88A2 Hercules armored vehicle sank into a bog March 25 during an early morning operation that sparked a nearly weeklong rescue effort.

Sgt. Jose Duenez Jr., 25, of Joliet, Ill.; Sgt. Edwin F. Franco, 25, of Glendale, Calif.; and Pfc. Dante D. Taitano, 21, of Dededo, Guam, all perished in the accident, the division said Wednesday.

“This loss is simply devastating,” Maj. Gen. Christopher Norrie, 3rd Infantry Division commander, said in a statement. “These men were honored Soldiers of the Marne Division. We are wrapping our arms around



Duenez Jr.



Franco



Taitano



Knutson-Collins

the families and loved ones of our Soldiers during (an) incredibly difficult time.”

The bodies of three of the soldiers were found Monday after a recovery operation involving hundreds of troops and emergency response personnel. The fourth soldier, Collins, was recovered Tuesday, the Army said.

The soldiers all were part of a deployment of the Fort Stewart, Ga.-based division’s 1st Brigade.

The Army is investigating the cause of the accident, which happened while the soldiers were on a mission to retrieve a broken-down tactical vehicle.

Duenez, in a GoFundMe page set up by family, was referred to as “Junior” and remembered for his “giving nature, huge heart and pure soul.”

“His passing leaves a deep hole in the hearts of all who knew him,” the tribute said. “He was a loving husband, father, son, brother, uncle, and friend who brought joy and light into

the lives of everyone around him.”

In a separate fundraiser, it was noted that Franco was the father of a 6-month-old child while Duenez had a 2-year-old boy.

“The money will be used for whatever (their families) need it for as they grieve and navigate the unexpected loss of their spouse,” according to the joint GoFundMe drive for the two soldiers.

Collins was remembered by his father for his talent with machinery from a young age.

“I was thinking back ... when this happened the other day, and I was like ‘Man, I got a picture of him holding the wrenches and everything’ and he is a mechanic today,” Robert Collins told the NBC television affiliate WOOD8, based in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Collins was the father of five children and enlisted in the Army in 2017 at the age of 20, the television station reported.

Robert Collins said that he had

briefly spoken with his son on the Sunday before the mission in Lithuania.

“For 34 seconds. That’s not normal, but his wife called,” he said. “And to me, he has a family and children, I’ll wait. And it looks like I will have to wait a long time.”

Taitano was remembered as the “spark of the team,” said Capt. Matthew Lund, Darkhorse Troop commander with the 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment.

“He wore a smile on his face no matter the environment or task and constantly brought the team together with his charisma and laughter,” Lund said.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Tuesday extended condolences to the families and credited U.S. troops and their Lithuanian hosts “who labored alongside them.”

“The recovery was conducted with urgency, resolve and deep respect for the fallen,” Hegseth said.

The accident happened near the city of Pabrade at a base about 6 miles from the border with Belarus. The area has been a training hub for U.S. forces for many years.

The lengthy recovery operation was complicated by the terrain. Several hundred tons of

gravel and earth were added to stabilize the soft ground near the bog, where the vehicle was submerged some 15 feet under water and thick sludge, the Army said.

U.S. Navy divers also were part of the effort. After they attached cables to the M88A2, several heavy vehicles using winches for roughly two hours finally removed the armored vehicle from the bog, the Army said.

Three of the soldiers were recovered soon afterward. Scores of personnel remained on the scene Tuesday as the search for the fourth soldier continued, the Army said.

To assist in the search for the missing fourth soldier, recovery dogs and two specialized drone systems — including one equipped with ground-penetrating radar — were added to the effort, the Army said.

Gen. Christopher Donahue, commander of U.S. Army forces in Europe, said his command team leaned heavily on the support of Lithuania, Poland and Estonia to carry out the recovery operation.

“This is a tragic event, but it reinforces what it means to have Allies and friends,” Donahue said in a statement Tuesday, after the fourth soldier was recovered.

Lithuanians gather outside US Embassy to grieve US soldiers

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Mourners carrying wreaths and flags filled the streets in Lithuania’s capital of Vilnius on Wednesday to memorialize four U.S. soldiers who died last week during a military training exercise.

Hundreds of residents gathered near the U.S. Embassy for the fallen troops, all from the Fort Stewart, Ga.-based 3rd Infantry Division.

The deaths have moved the public in Lithuania, a small Baltic state bordering Russia’s military exclave of Kaliningrad. The country, which was annexed by the Soviet Union during World War II and which gained its independence after the Cold War, has long viewed the U.S. military as a protector from potential aggression directed by the Kremlin.

“The tragic incident has shaken us all to the depths of our hearts,” Lithuania’s defense ministry said in a statement Tuesday. “These soldiers will never be forgotten.”

The crowd, which began gath-

ering Tuesday evening soon after it was announced that all four soldiers were found dead, is expected to increase for a larger community observance Thursday.

The Lithuanian government has organized a ceremony marking the dignified departure of the soldiers as they depart Vilnius for Dover Air Force Base in Delaware.

Civic and military leaders will be among those paying tribute Thursday morning as a convoy carries the remains of the soldiers to the airport in Vilnius. Officials are preparing for crowds to line the streets.

An honor platoon from the 3rd Infantry Division also will take part in the ceremony, U.S. Army Europe and Africa said Wednesday.

After a nearly weeklong rescue and recovery effort, the Army on Tuesday announced the deaths of Staff Sgt. Jose Duenez Jr., 25, of Joliet, Ill.; Staff Sgt. Edwin F. Franco, 25, of Glendale, Calif.; and Pfc. Dante D. Taitano, 21, of Dededo,



Lithuanian Defense Ministry

People lay flowers and light candles on Tuesday at a memorial in Vilnius, Lithuania, for the four U.S. soldiers who died in a training accident in the country last week.

Guam, in the March 25 accident on a Lithuanian training site.

On Wednesday, the Army identified Staff Sgt. Troy S. Knutson-Collins, 28, of Battle Creek, Mich., as the fourth soldier, who was recovered Tuesday from the bog where the group’s armored vehicle had sunk during an early morning mission.

Duenez, Franco and Collins all were promoted posthumously.

The effort to recover the soldiers involved hundreds of personnel from the U.S. Army, Lithuania, Estonia and Poland.

The accident, which happened near the city of Pabrade, was complicated by muddy terrain.

Several hundred tons of gravel and earth were added to stabilize the soft ground near the bog, where the vehicle was submerged some 15 feet under water and

thick sludge, the Army said.

U.S. Navy divers, rescue dogs, helicopters and drones also were part of the recovery effort.

“We mourn this tragic loss with profound sorrow. In this time of grief, the Lithuanian nation stands in solidarity with the families of the soldiers and with the American people,” Lithuanian Foreign Minister Kestutis Budrys said Tuesday.

MILITARY

Naval Academy removes books in DEI purge

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Naval Academy has removed nearly 400 books from its library after being told by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth’s office to review and get rid of ones that promote diversity, equity and inclusion, U.S. officials said Tuesday.

Academy officials were told to review the library late last week, and an initial search had identified about 900 books for a closer look. They decided on nearly 400 to remove and began doing so Monday, finishing before Hegseth arrived for a visit Tuesday that had already been planned and was not connected to the library purge, officials said. A list of the books has not yet been made available.

Pulling the books off the shelves is another step in the Trump administration’s far-reaching effort to eliminate so-called DEI content from federal agencies, including policies, programs, online and social media postings and curriculum at schools.

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said late Tuesday, “All service academies are fully committed to executing and implementing President Trump’s Executive Orders.”

The Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., the Air Force Academy near Colorado Springs, Colo., and the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y., had not been included in President Donald Trump’s executive order in January that

banned DEI instruction, programs or curriculum in kindergarten through 12th grade schools that receive federal funding. That is because the academies are colleges.

Pentagon leaders, however, suddenly turned their attention to the Naval Academy last week when a media report noted that the school had not removed books that promoted DEI. A U.S. official said the academy was told late last week to conduct the review and removal. It isn’t clear if the order was directed by Hegseth or someone else on his staff.

A West Point official confirmed that the school had completed a review of its curriculum and was prepared to review library con-

tent if directed by the Army. The Air Force and Naval academies had also done curriculum reviews as had been required.

An Air Force Academy official said the school continually reviews its curriculum, coursework and other materials to ensure it all complies with executive orders and Defense Department policies. Last week, Lt. Gen. Tony Bauernfeind, the Air Force Academy superintendent, told Congress that the school was in the middle of its course review, but there was no mention of books.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss academy policies.

Hegseth has aggressively pushed the department to erase

DEI programs and online content, but the campaign has been met with questions from angry lawmakers, local leaders and citizens over the removal of military heroes and historic mentions from Defense Department websites and social media pages.

In response, the department has scrambled to restore some of those posts as their removals have come to light.

The confusion about how to interpret the DEI policy was underscored Monday as Naval Academy personnel mistakenly removed some photos of distinguished female Jewish graduates from a display case as they prepared for Hegseth’s visit. The photos were put back.

Wary Europe awaits Rubio with the future of NATO on the line

By Matthew Lee
and Lorne Cook
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio travels this week to a gathering of top diplomats from NATO countries and is sure to find allies that are alarmed, angered and confused by the Trump administration’s desire to reestablish ties with Russia and its escalating rhetorical attacks on longtime transatlantic partners.

Allies are deeply concerned by President Donald Trump’s readiness to draw closer to Russian leader Vladimir Putin, who sees NATO as a threat, amid a U.S. effort to broker a ceasefire in Ukraine. Recent White House comments and insults directed at NATO allies Canada and Denmark — as well as the military alliance itself — have only increased the angst, especially as new U.S. tariffs are taking effect against friends and foes alike.

Rubio arrives in Brussels on Thursday for two days of meetings with his NATO counterparts and European officials, and he can expect to be confronted with questions about the future U.S. role in the alliance.

For 75 years, NATO has been anchored on American leadership, and based on what they have seen and heard since Trump took office in January, European officials have expressed deep concerns that Trump may upend all of that when he and other NATO

leaders meet for a June summit in the Netherlands.

As Rubio did last month at a meeting of foreign ministers from the Group of 7 industrialized democracies, America’s top diplomat, who is regarded by many overseas as a more pragmatic and less dogmatic member of Trump’s administration, may be able to salvage a watered-down group consensus on the war in Ukraine.

That’s even as Trump said this week that Ukraine “was never going to be a member of NATO” despite leaders declaring at last year’s summit that the country was on an “irreversible” path to join.

But Rubio will be hard-pressed to explain Washington’s unprovoked verbal attacks on NATO allies Canada, which Trump says he wants to claim as a 51st state, and Denmark, whose territory of Greenland he says the U.S. should annex. Both have been accused of being “bad allies” by Trump and Vice President JD Vance.

“It’s pretty clear neither territory has any interest in joining a Trumpian America,” said Ian Kelly, U.S. ambassador to Georgia during the Obama and first Trump administration and now an international studies professor at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

“There’s going to be a lot of very anxious Euros about what Trump is going to call for and what announcements he’s going to make,” he said. “If he isn’t already, Rubio is going to be in a mode of trying to reassure European allies that we are not, in fact, not dependable.”



Rubio



CALEB PAVAO/U.S. Air Force

A pregnant Air Force pilot conducts preflight inspections at Hurlburt Field, Fla., in October 2022.

Air Force returns to old flight limitations on pregnant airmen

By Zade Vadnaïs
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force is reinstating flight restrictions for airmen in the early stage of pregnancy and elevating waiver decisions for expectant aircrew members from flight surgeons to higher command, according to the service.

The changes apply to all pregnant airmen with in-flight duties and are based on recommendations from medical professionals across the service, a Tuesday statement from the Air Force surgeon general’s office said.

Under the new guidance, aircrew members may no longer fly without a waiver during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy due to increased risk of miscarriage during the first trimester.

The change reverts to the Air

Force’s 2019 policy and brings the branch in line with broader Defense Department standards.

The previous policy aimed to remove barriers suggesting to women that parenthood and an aviation career were incompatible, Air Force director of staff Lt. Gen. Jacqueline Van Ovost said at the time. The policy didn’t force pregnant women to work as aircrew, the service said in 2019.

Meanwhile, the authorized flying window following the first trimester has been extended under the new policy. Aircrew members may now be reinstated to fly from week 12 through week 32 of pregnancy, four weeks longer than the previous policy allowed.

The Air Force cited medical research indicating no significant increase in risk between weeks 28

and 32.

Aircrew members who are expecting also are prohibited from flying in high-performance aircraft or planes with ejection seats at any point during pregnancy.

The service said that there is insufficient medical data on the effects of g-forces on pregnancy and that the restriction is a precaution.

The change requiring waiver requests to be reviewed at the major command level gives senior medical personnel a broader view of cases and servicewide trends, Air Force medical officials said in the statement.

Aircrew members who are temporarily grounded due to pregnancy may still use flight simulators, take courses and fulfill other duties, the statement said.

MILITARY

Suspected US strikes hit Houthis in Yemen

By JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Suspected U.S. airstrikes battered rebel-controlled areas of Yemen into Wednesday, with the Houthis saying that one strike killed at least four people near the Red Sea port city of Hodeida.

Meanwhile, satellite images taken Wednesday and analyzed by The Associated Press show at least six stealth B-2 Spirit bombers now stationed at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean — a highly unusual deployment amid the Yemen campaign and tensions with Iran.

The intense campaign of airstrikes in Yemen under U.S. President Donald Trump, targeting the rebels over their attacks on shipping in Mideast waters stemming from the Israel-Hamas war, has killed at least 65 people, according to casualty figures released by the Houthis.

The campaign appears to show no signs of stopping as the Trump administration again linked their airstrikes on the Iranian-backed Houthis to an effort to pressure Iran over its rapidly advancing nuclear program.

While so far giving no specifics about the campaign and its targets, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt put the overall number of strikes on Tuesday at more than 200.

The Houthis haven't acknowl-



PLANET LABS PBC/AP

This satellite photo shows six B-2 stealth bombers parked at Camp Thunder Cove in Diego Garcia on Wednesday as a U.S. airstrike campaign continues against Yemen's Houthi rebels.

edged the loss of any of its leadership so far — and the U.S. hasn't identified any official by name. However, messages released by the leak of a Signal conversation between Trump administration officials and their public comments suggest a leader in the rebels' missile forces had been targeted.

Overnight, a likely U.S. airstrike targeted what the Houthis de-

scribed as a "water project" in Hodeida governorate's Mansuriyah District, killing four people and wounding others. Other strikes into Wednesday targeted Hajjah, Saada and Sanaa governorates, the rebels said.

The rebels say they've continued to launch attacks against U.S. warships in the Red Sea, namely the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman, which is carrying out the

majority of the strikes on the Houthis. No warship has been struck yet, but the U.S. Navy has described the Houthi fire as the most intense combat its sailors have faced since World War II.

The aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson, now in Asia, is on its way to the Middle East to back up the Truman. Early Wednesday, Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell said that "additional squadrons

and other air assets" would be deployed to the region, without elaborating.

That likely includes the deployment of nuclear-capable B-2 bombers to Camp Thunder Bay on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. Satellite photos taken Wednesday by Planet Labs PBC analyzed by the AP showed at least six B-2s at the base.

The deployment represents nearly a third of all the B-2 bombers in Washington's arsenal. It's also highly unusual to see that many at one base abroad. Typically, so-called show of force missions involving the B-2 have seen two or three of the aircraft conduct operations in foreign territory.

The nuclear-capable B-2, which first saw action in 1999 in the Kosovo War, is rarely used by the U.S. military in combat, because each aircraft is worth around \$1 billion. It has dropped bombs in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya as well. The bombers are based at Whiteman Air Base in Missouri and typically conduct long-range strikes from there.

An AP review has found the new American operation against the Houthis under Trump appears more extensive than those under former U.S. President Joe Biden, as Washington moves from solely targeting launch sites to firing at ranking personnel and dropping bombs on cities.

Houthi aid to al-Shabab could imperil shipping

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Africa's most lethal terrorist organization is expected to gain strength in Somalia, raising the security threat through a Middle East choke point for commercial shipping, a new report cautions.

Somali militant group al-Shabab is poised to take advantage of its budding alliance with Yemen's Houthi rebels, a team-up that could allow the former to attack vessels with drones or even missiles, according to a global terrorism threat assessment by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The report, which was published Friday, called al-Shabab a de facto state and a "direct threat" to U.S. interests that is "likely to grow more capable in 2025."

Citing a senior aide to the leader of an anti-Houthi coalition known as the National Resistance Front, it said the group intends to supply al-Shabab fighters with more advanced weapons to give them the capability to target ships transiting the Gulf of Aden.

"The Houthis could provide, and potentially already are pro-

viding, Al Shabab with some of the benefits of state sponsorship," in the area of military training and drone technology, the report said.

For over a year, U.S. warships have been battling the Iran-backed Houthis in an effort to stop the group from launching strikes at commercial ships.

The militants in Yemen have fired on commercial and military shipping in the Red Sea since shortly after the Hamas attack on Israel in October 2023, starting the war in Gaza.

The Houthis maintained that they were targeting ships linked to Israel or its allies, most notably the U.S. However, many of the ships attacked had little or no connection to the conflict.

Should al-Shabab enter the fray, that could complicate the effort to free up shipping lanes that run from the Gulf of Aden into the Red Sea.

Signs of closer ties between the Somali group and the Houthis could emerge as an issue Thursday, when U.S. Africa Command's Gen. Michael Langley is slated to appear before the Senate Armed Services Committee in Washing-



JACKSON MANSKE/U.S. Air Force

A U.S. Navy F/A-18E Super Hornet, assigned to the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group, flies a mission over the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, March 2.

ton.

The command's efforts to counter al-Shabab have been the military's main effort in Africa for years. Over the course of more than two decades, the group aligned to al-Qaida has been waging a war for control of Somalia.

And despite an internal campaign against it, the group has proved resilient. AFRICOM has launched numerous airstrikes against al-Shabab and sent special

operations troops to advise and assist Somali fighters.

Nonetheless, such efforts have made little difference, the CSIS report stated. Al-Shabab has somewhere between 7,000 and 12,000 fighters and controls a large swath of territory across southern Somalia, it said.

The organization also generates more than \$100 million a year in revenue through various means, including taxation, the report said,

adding that al-Shabab is wealthy enough to distribute funds to other al-Qaida affiliates.

Still, a stepped-up U.S. airstrike campaign could be counterproductive, the report said, pointing to previous years when the group intensified attacks against U.S. interests in response to American strikes.

For instance, in 2020, al-Shabab launched a cross-border attack on a military site in Kenya, killing one U.S. soldier and two contractors at a time when drone attacks were at their peak.

"Hostility will probably increase if President (Donald) Trump resumes a highly kinetic approach to the group," the report said.

However, it didn't offer any clear-cut prescriptions to improve the security situation in Somalia or weaken al-Shabab, saying only that a range of measures such as military assistance and increased diplomatic and financial support for the country's weak government are needed.

Regardless, the group "will remain a threat for the foreseeable future," the report said.

MILITARY

Weapons: Analyst sees merit in pushing new systems to fleet

FROM PAGE 1

Six destroyers will support the Ford during its deployment, strike group leaders said. It is unclear how many of the destroyers will be Coyote and Roadrunner capable.

The Ford was the first aircraft carrier sent to the Middle East in late 2023 to help deter the Israel-Hamas war from growing into a regional conflict. The carrier, homeported at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., spent about two months off the coast of Israel before it returned to the United States in January 2024.

The Ford and its strike group are now preparing to pick up where they left off — training for a deployment that could task the ships and the air wing with defending merchant vessels from Houthi drone attacks.

The rumble of fighter jets was constant March 21 as F-18s honed landing on and taking off from the Ford as the carrier cruised the ocean. The sway of the ship from the waves appeared to have little impact on pilots successfully tailhooking their aircraft on the wires stretched across the flight deck.

The strike group brought aboard the nine-squadron air wing and took to the sea with its five U.S.-based destroyers for the strike group's Composite Training Unit Exercise, the final training event that tests their ability to operate as a cohesive fighting force. When the group completes the training, which typically takes three weeks, it will be certified to deploy.

Scrimping on expensive munitions — without sacrificing the effectiveness of the mission — was highlighted during the Ford strike group's training.

"We are looking at ways that we can be more effective against the threats that are presented — unmanned, specifically in this case — and we are trying to find ways to make sure that we are going to have the deep missile inventories we might need for other contingencies," Lawrence said.

High-end threats

One-way attack drones are one of the main weapons the Houthis use to attack military and merchant ships, according to U.S. officials.

Since November 2023, the Navy has defended against nearly 400 attacks using drones and missiles in the waters of the Red Sea, a pace that has seen U.S. ships firing back at levels comparable to World War II battles.

Navy forces have fired more than 200 missiles and upward of 150 artillery rounds — missile expenditures that have cost the sea service hundreds of millions of dollars, according to Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance data.

As of January 2025, the Navy

had fired 120 SM-2 missiles, priced at about \$2.1 million apiece. In addition, 80 SM-6 missiles were expended, costing \$3.9 million each. Twenty Evolved Sea Sparrow and SM-3 missiles were also fired, which range in price from \$9.6 million to \$27.9 million.

Missile expenditures are likely higher because the U.S. on March 15 began striking Houthi facilities in Yemen on an ongoing basis. The strikes will continue, the Pentagon has said, until the Iran-backed rebels pledge to halt attacks on ships transiting the Red Sea.

Navy leaders have acknowledged the expense during the past year, saying the service was working to address the modest threats with lower-cost alternatives such as 5-inch guns, while expediting the development and delivery of new, cheaper technology.

The Coyote and Roadrunner counter-drone systems are among those new technologies.

"Both are specifically designed to go after [drones] so we don't have to shoot the big standard missile at them. From inception to fielding and testing — all have been done in the last year. That's a pretty quick turn for the Navy," said Adm. Daryl Caudle of U.S. Fleet Forces, the command that oversees the training and equipment of East Coast-based naval forces.

The Coyote is a small, expendable, tube-launched drone that can be deployed from the ground, air and ships. Defense technology company Northrop Grumman, a Coyote developer, describes the drone as agile, with the ability to perform high-speed maneuvers and climb to altitudes above 50,000 feet before "pouncing" on its target at supersonic Mach 3.5 speeds.

The system has been developed for 25 years, but the variation that will be used by destroyers supporting the Ford's 2025 deployment was recently adapted and tested at sea in August. Neither the company nor the Navy has said how much the Coyote costs per unit, but a similar model developed by Raytheon for the Army costs about \$125,000 per unit.

The Roadrunner, dubbed a "drone hunter," is a twin jet-powered autonomous air vehicle that was unveiled in late 2023 by tech company Anduril. The Roadrunner can detect, track and engage targets at significant distances, according to the company. The system can be operated manually or autonomously.

When the system was announced, Anduril declined to identify its customer, but the Defense Department has awarded the company contracts to develop drones for the Navy since at least June 2024. Company executives have said the cost of the system was in the low hundreds of thou-

sands of dollars, but the price tag was expected to decrease when mass production began.

It took the Navy only seven months — from January to August 2024 — to develop the original land-based concepts of both systems for ship-based use and begin at-sea testing, said a Navy official who spoke on the condition of anonymity. The at-sea testing of the systems was supported by \$88 million in congressional supplemental funding.

The official said the sea service, as well as other services, "pursued a plan" to test and field the systems rapidly in response to the Houthi attacks on military and merchant vessels in the Red Sea. U.S. drone pursuits in the past year have coincided with defense officials raising the alarm on the Navy's increasing missile expenditure, which they say is eating up U.S. inventory that would be needed in a potential conflict with an adversary such as China.

Former national security adviser Jake Sullivan said in December that there was a need to stockpile munitions and invest more in low-cost weapons such as drones after sending billions of dollars in military aid to Ukraine and the Red Sea threat collectively depleting U.S. shelves.

Less than a month earlier, Adm. Samuel Paparo, who leads U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, said he was dissatisfied with U.S. munitions stockpiles at a time when China is conducting a historic amount of large military exercises.

"The ultimate goal for development of these systems is to counter threats posed by drones more efficiently, which will preserve high-end weapons for high-end threats," the Navy official said.

'Systems with promise'

While the military services have been working in earnest to develop drones for more than 10 years, the deployment of the Coyote and Roadrunner systems indicates a push to get the technology in the hands of troops, according to one defense analyst.

"Most counter-drone systems, including the Coyote and the Roadrunner systems, have not become programs of record for the Defense Department or the services," said Mark Cancian with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank. A program of record is one that has been formally funded by the government for mass production after extensive development and testing, often a process that takes years.

But pushing these systems to the fleet now, Cancian said, is a "very sensible thing" for the Navy to do.

"It is a great way to test the system before mass production. And given the immediacy of the threat



CAITLYN BURCHETT/Stars and Stripes

An F-18 fighter jet prepares to launch off the USS Gerald R. Ford as other jets maneuver the flight deck during training last month.

in the Red Sea, it could be a risk the Navy has decided is worth taking," he said.

It was recommended by the Defense Innovation Board in January that the Pentagon "act with the urgency that the changes in warfare and chaotic world security environment demand" to develop and field drone technology.

"We cannot afford the time to find perfect answers for each question," the board said. "We must get unmanned systems in the hands of the warfighters in sufficient quantities to matter now."

Cancian said the Navy is likely leaning on lessons learned from Ukraine's use of drones in its war with Russia. The U.S. sent drones in the developmental stage to Ukraine to help beat back Russia's invasion.

"We used Ukraine as an operational test," he said.

But there is not much available to the public on what the U.S. learned about what works and what doesn't. Standard missiles, Cancian said, should still be relied on for faster, more sophisticated weapons. At least until the testing is completed.

"These are systems with promise, but they have limited target capabilities. They are good against slow, low-flying targets but not much else," Cancian said.

'Tried-and-true' weapons

While the Ford strike group learns the new counter-drone systems, they will lean on conventional weapons, such as the standard missiles and 5-inch guns, strike group leaders said.

"In the meantime, we are also making sure our ships and our crews have confidence in the tried-and-true SM-2 capability, because that's a no-fail mission. So, while we work on fleet initiatives to really get more efficient, I'd say we remain laser focused on staying effective," Lawrence said.

However, he declined to comment on the integration of the technologies across the strike group, stating he would "leave the specifics aside."

Rear Adm. Paul Lanzilotta, commander of the Ford strike group, echoed Lawrence's confi-

dence in the weapons that have been a mainstay of the Navy's deterrence efforts for decades.

"When you see a guided-missile destroyer on the high seas and her 5-inch gun points, God forbid, in your direction, you ought to be thinking twice about what's coming next because it's a very effective weapon," he said.

The Ford is scheduled to deploy in the summer to the 6th Fleet area of operations, which includes waters surrounding Europe and Africa. The strike group will consist of the Ford carrier and six destroyers — five based in the U.S. and one based out of Rota, Spain. Aboard the ships will be an air wing made up of nine aviation squadrons, including four F-18 fighter jet squadrons and one electronic attack Growler squadron.

The U.S.-based destroyers are the USS Winston Churchill from Naval Station Mayport, Fla., and the USS Mitscher, USS Mahan, USS Bainbridge and USS Forrest Sherman, all from Naval Station Norfolk. An unidentified destroyer out of Spain will support the strike group as needed.

The strike group, Lanzilotta said, could be asked to deploy sooner. And it could be directed instead to sail to the Middle East in the 5th Fleet area of operations.

The aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman has been conducting operations in the Red Sea against the Houthis. The Truman was due to transit home to Norfolk at the end of March, but its deployment was extended by at least one month.

The aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson, which has been operating in the Pacific, was ordered to steam toward the Middle East. The Vinson, which was slated to transit home to San Diego in mid-April, will extend its deployment by three months. The aircraft carrier USS Nimitz was deployed last week for likely the final time to the Pacific.

"With the rest of the things going on in the world, we bring the secretary of defense and the president of the United States options for potentially going sooner. And our sailors have that mindset every single day," Lanzilotta said.

PACIFIC

Navy plans treatment plants for Hawaii base

By Wyatt Olson
Stars and Stripes
FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The Navy plans to build treatment plants near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam that would purify the fuel-contaminated water in the Red Hill water shaft for use in its drinking water system.

The service is seeking public comment through April 20 on a draft environmental assessment outlining plans to construct interim and permanent treatment facilities on the grounds of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility.

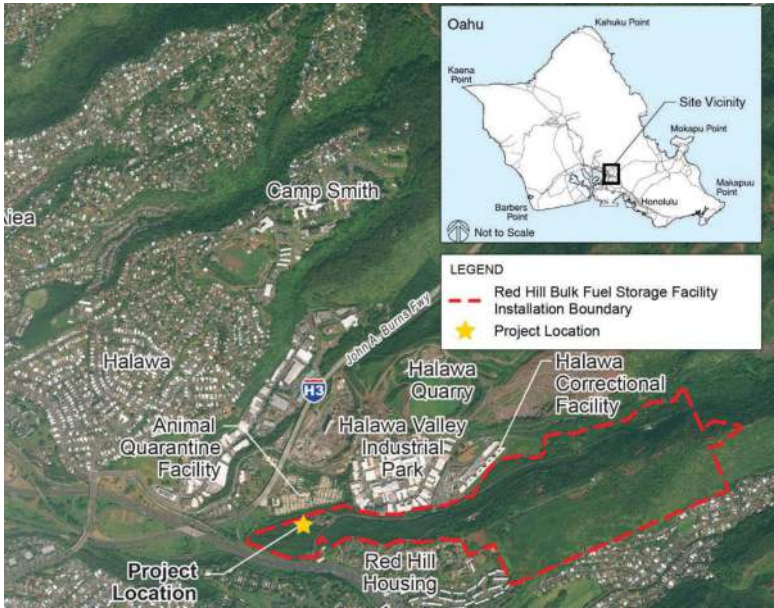
The World War II-era facility is in the process of permanent shut-down after a 2021 leak contaminated the aquifer.

The interim treatment facility, which would filter the water using granular activated carbon, is already under construction and expected to be completed in 2026, the assessment states.

No timeline was given for the subsequent completion of a permanent water treatment plant.

Water from both treatment facilities would meet drinking water standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Hawaii Department of Health, the assessment states.

A jet fuel leak in November 2021 contaminated the Red Hill water shaft, one of three sources the Navy used in a distribution system



U.S. Navy

A Navy map shows the location for planned water treatment facilities within the boundaries of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Oahu, Hawaii.

serving more than 90,000 people in military housing communities on and near the joint base.

Many residents complained of ill health after consuming and bathing in the water.

Thousands of people were relocated to area hotels for months as the Navy flushed and cleaned the system.

The Red Hill shaft, which extends horizontally through the aquifer, was isolated from the Na-

vy's water system in the wake of the contamination.

The Navy stopped pumping its Aiea-Halawa shaft in early December 2021 after traces of petroleum contamination were detected in it, leaving the Navy's water system solely dependent on the Waiawa shaft.

In January 2022, the Navy installed a series of massive carbon filters at the Red Hill shaft site.

Each day, millions of gallons of

tainted water are pumped up, filtered and released into the nearby Halawa Stream.

The continuous pumping is intended to prevent petroleum contamination in the well from migrating elsewhere.

The planned interim treatment facility would replace the existing emergency filtering system, the assessment states. The interim plant would initially pump treated water into the Halawa Stream.

It would later be connected to the Navy's drinking water system following completion of the environmental assessment process and approval by the Hawaii Department of Health, the assessment states.

In an email Tuesday, Wayne Tanaka, chapter director of the Sierra Club of Hawaii, said he would welcome ending the waste of draining millions of gallons of water daily into the stream.

But he said he was concerned that the draft assessment did not address the need to test soil in the construction area for the presence of toxic chemicals known as PFAS.

In addition, the treatment facilities "must also not be used to excuse the Navy from its responsibility to remediate the environment itself — especially with up to 2 million gallons of fuel and other toxic chemicals that may have

been released over our island's primary drinking water aquifer throughout the last 80 years," he said.

The Hawaii Department of Health in February gave the Navy conditional approval to begin using water from the Aiea-Halawa shaft, provided the water would be filtered using a granular activated carbon system, among other requirements.

Some members of the Red Hill Community Representation Initiative have questioned the "safety and transparency" of the decision to restart use of that shaft.

The group consists of 10 members from the Hawaiian community who work directly with the Navy, Defense Logistics Agency and EPA on matters related to the defunct Red Hill facility, including its defueling, permanent closure and drinking water safety.

"This community has already suffered enough," Healani Sonoda-Pale, a member of the CRI, said in a March 26 news release.

"We will not stand by while the Navy quietly turns the tap back on without full transparency and accountability," she said. The draft environmental assessment for the Red Hill shaft treatment plants can be viewed at <https://pacific.navfac.navy.mil/About-Us/National-Environmental-Policy-Act-NEPA-Information/>.

Man sentenced for smuggling attempt

By Alex Wilson
Stars and Stripes
A Chinese man was sentenced to a short federal prison term for attempting to smuggle 12 Chinese migrants from the Northern Marianas Islands to Guam last year, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Guam announced Tuesday.

The Northern Marianas Islands District Court sentenced Zhongli Pang, 36, to three months in prison, with credit for time served; one year of supervised release; 50 hours of community service; and a \$200 fine, according to a news release Tuesday from the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Chief Judge Ramona Manglona sentenced Pang on Friday, according to court records. Pang pleaded guilty Feb. 25 to conspiracy and aiding and abetting transportation of illegal aliens and conspiracy to defraud the U.S.

He will serve approximately one month in prison after credit with two months in jail prior to sentencing, U.S. Attorney's Office spokeswoman Carmela Rapadas told Stars and Stripes.

Pang will likely be monitored after his release from prison until he either returns to China or is formally deported from Saipan.

The route from Saipan — the Northern Marianas Islands' capital - to Guam over the past several years has been regularly used as a pathway for illegal immigration, according to U.S. authorities.

Both are U.S. territories, but Saipan allows Chinese citizens to stay without a visa for up to two weeks. Those who attempt to enter Guam typically do so in search of better pay or opportunities.

Pang on June 23 attempted to transport the 12 immigrants via a small vessel, the Helen, but the trip went awry when the boat ran out of fuel.

One passenger told investigators she had paid \$3,500 to "Captain Pang" for the trip, according to court records.

Chinese immigrants typically pay between \$3,000 and \$5,000 to be smuggled from Saipan to Guam, Ha Noul Lee, a special agent with Homeland Security Investigations, said in the criminal complaint against Pang.



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NATION

Wis., Fla. results provide warning to Trump, GOP

By JILL COLVIN
Associated Press

A trio of elections on Tuesday provided early warning signs to Republicans and President Donald Trump at the beginning of an ambitious term, as Democrats rallied against his efforts to slash the federal government and the outsize role being played by billionaire Elon Musk.

In the marquee race for a Wisconsin Supreme Court seat, the conservative judge endorsed by Trump and backed by Musk and his groups to the tune of \$21 million lost by a significant margin in a state Trump won in November. And while Florida Republicans held two of the most pro-Trump House districts in the country, both candidates also underperformed Trump's November margins.

The elections — the first major contests since Trump's return to power — were seen as an early measure of voter sentiment as Trump works with unprecedented speed to dramatically upend the

federal government, clashing with the courts and seeking revenge as he tests the bounds of presidential power.

The party that loses the presidency in November typically picks up seats in the next midterm elections, and Tuesday's results provided hope for Democrats — who have faced a barrage of internal and external criticism about their response to Trump — that they can follow that trend.

Charlie Kirk, the conservative activist and podcaster whose group worked alongside Musk to boost conservative Brad Schimel in Wisconsin, argued Tuesday's Supreme Court loss underscored a fundamental challenge for Republicans, particularly in races where Trump is not on the ballot.

"We did a lot in Wisconsin, but we fell short. We must realize and appreciate that we are the LOW PROP party now," he said in an X post, referring to low-propensity voters who don't regularly cast ballots. "The party has been remade.



KAYLA WOLF/AP

Wisconsin Supreme Court candidate Susan Crawford, center, speaks during her election night party after winning the election Tuesday, in Madison. Crawford was backed by national Democrats and George Soros.

Special elections and off-cycle elections will continue to be a problem without a change of strategy."

Trump won Wisconsin in November by 0.8 percentage points, or fewer than 30,000 votes. In the first major test since he took office, the perennial battleground state shifted significantly to the left.

Sauk County, northwest of the state capital of Madison, is a state bellwether. Trump won it in November by 626 votes. Sauk shifted 14 points in the direction of Judge Susan Crawford, the liberal favorite backed by national Democrats

and billionaire donors like George Soros.

Besides strong turnout in Democratic-heavy areas, Crawford did measurably better in the suburban Milwaukee counties that Republicans rely on to run up their margins statewide.

Trump had better luck in Florida, where Republican Randy Fine won his special election in the 6th District to replace Mike Waltz, who stepped down to serve as Trump's national security adviser. But Fine beat his Democratic challenger, Josh Weil, by 14 percentage

points less than five months after Waltz won the district by 33.

Jimmy Patronis, the state's chief financial officer, fended off a challenge from Democrat Gay Valimont to win the northwest Florida seat vacated by Matt Gaetz but also underperformed Gaetz's last margin of victory.

The pair of wins gave Republicans a 220-213 margin in the House of Representatives, when concerns about a thin GOP majority led Trump to pull the nomination of New York Rep. Elise Stefanik to be United Nations ambassador.

Booker breaks Thurmond's record with 25-hour Senate speech

By MIKE CATALINI
AND STEPHEN GROVES
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a feat of determination, New Jersey Democratic Sen. Cory Booker held the Senate floor with a marathon speech that lasted all night and into Tuesday night, setting a historic mark to show Democrats' resistance to President Donald Trump's sweeping actions.

Booker took to the Senate floor on Monday evening, saying he would remain there as long as he was "physically able." It wasn't until 25 hours and 5 minutes later that the 55-year-old senator, a former football tight end, finished speaking and limped off the floor. It set the record for the longest continuous Senate floor speech in



Booker

Senate floor.

It was a remarkable show of stamina as Democrats try to show their frustrated supporters that they are doing everything possible to contest Trump's agenda. Yet Booker also provided a moment of historical solace for a party searching for its way forward: By standing on the Senate floor for more than a night and day and refusing to leave, he had broken a record set 68 years ago by then-

the chamber's history. Booker was assisted by fellow Democrats who gave him a break from speaking by asking him questions on the

Sen. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, a segregationist and southern Democrat, to filibuster the advance of the Civil Rights Act in 1957.

"I'm here despite his speech," said Booker, who spoke openly on the Senate floor of his roots as the descendant of both slaves and slave-owners. He added, "I'm here because as powerful as he was, the people are more powerful."

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, the first Black party leader in Congress, slipped into the Senate chamber to watch Booker on Tuesday afternoon. He called it "an incredibly powerful moment" because Booker had broken the record of a segregationist and was "fighting to pre-

serve the American way of life and our democracy."

Still, Booker centered his speech on a call for his party to find its resolve, saying, "We all must look in the mirror and say, 'We will do better.'"

Booker railed for hours against cuts to Social Security offices led by Trump adviser Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency. He listed the impacts of Trump's early orders and spoke to concerns that broader cuts to the social safety net could be coming, though Republican lawmakers say the program won't be touched.

Booker also read what he said were letters from constituents. One writer was alarmed by the Republican president's talk of an-

nexing Greenland and Canada and a "looming constitutional crisis."

Throughout the day Tuesday, Booker got help from Democratic colleagues, who gave him a break from speaking to ask him questions. Booker yielded for questions but made sure to say he would not give up the floor. He read that line from a piece of paper to ensure he did not slip and inadvertently end his speech. He stayed standing to comply with Senate rules.

As Booker stood for hour after hour, he appeared to have nothing more than a couple glasses of water to sustain him. He later told reporters that he had fasted for days before the speech and stopped drinking fluids the night before.

Trump administration halts dozens of research grants at Princeton

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration has halted dozens of research grants at Princeton University, the latest Ivy League school to see its federal money threatened in a pressure campaign targeting the nation's top universities.

Princeton was notified this week that several dozen federal grants are being suspended by agencies including the Department of Energy, NASA and the Defense Department, according to a campus message sent Tuesday by Christopher Eisgruber, the university's president.

Eisgruber said the rationale was not fully clear but that Princeton will comply with the law. The school is among dozens facing federal investigations into antisemitism following a wave of pro-Palestinian protests last year.

"We are committed to fighting antisemitism and all forms of dis-

crimination, and we will cooperate with the government in combating antisemitism," Eisgruber wrote. "Princeton will also vigorously defend academic freedom and the due process rights of this University."

As President Donald Trump presses his political agenda on

universities across the country, he has paid special attention to Ivy League institutions.

On Monday, a federal antisemitism task force said it was reviewing almost \$9 billion in federal grants and contracts at Harvard University amid an investigation into campus antisemitism.

NATION

Musk’s days in DC may be winding down

By CHRIS MEGERIAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — DOGE’s days appear to be numbered.

Elon Musk recently suggested that he will be done with his work in the near future. President Donald Trump told reporters this week that “at some point, he’s going to be going back” to running his companies. As far as the Department of Government Efficiency, Trump said “it will end.”

All of that talk was before Musk faced a setback Tuesday in Wisconsin, where voters rejected his

choice for a state Supreme Court candidate despite more than \$21 million in personal donations and his campaign appearance over the weekend. There are more problems for the billionaire entrepreneur at Tesla, his electric automaker, which saw a 13% drop in sales in the first three months of the year.

The White House has not disclosed any clear timeline for closing down DOGE, and the government cost-cutting organization was never supposed to become a permanent fixture in Washington.

But it could be reaching a conclusion faster than anticipated. DOGE was originally intended to operate until July 4, 2026.

Now there are signs that it already is winding down. DOGE employees have been shifted to various federal agencies, which are supposed to take the lead on cutting costs. Government-wide layoffs are underway to accomplish some of the goals laid out by Musk and Trump.

“We think probably over the next two or three months, we’ll be pretty much satisfied with the

people that are working hard and want to be members of the administration,” Trump said last week.

The potential end of DOGE does not mean Trump will stop shaking up Washington. But it appears the administration’s efforts will be entering a new phase that is less focused on Musk, whose chain saw-wielding work as an adviser made him a political lightning rod.

DOGE was initially envisioned as an independent advisory panel, with Musk sharing leadership with Vivek Ramaswamy, a biotech entrepreneur. Ramaswamy

dropped out and is running for Ohio governor, and DOGE became part of the government. It was stocked with Musk’s allies, who were dispatched throughout the bureaucracy to cancel contracts, access sensitive data and push for cuts.

Musk presumably has a ticking clock on his tenure. He was hired as a special government employee, which means he can only work 130 days in a 365-day time period. On May 30, it will be 130 days since Trump’s inauguration on Jan. 20.

Border: Pentagon deploys 6,700 active-duty troops

FROM PAGE 1

will take probably a couple of years.”

Guillot reported a 97% drop last month in migrant crossings at the southern border, according to Customs and Border Protection data that showed only 11,709 crossings in February compared with 189,913 in February 2024. It marked the lowest reported migrant crossings in years, down from a previous high of about 302,000 in December 2023.

Pentagon officials who testified Tuesday did not provide additional details about the money spent on the new operations, including what the operations might cost in the future.

The Pentagon now has about 6,700 active-duty troops deployed to support Homeland Security in their border operations, according to Guillot. The general said he expects the new active-duty deployments to reach about 10,000 troops soon. The National Guard had already deployed some 2,500 forces on the border mission, which dates back years.

Another roughly 1,000 troops have been sent to Naval Station Guantanamo Bay in Cuba to support Homeland Security’s operations to detain some migrants there ahead of their scheduled deportations, according to the Pentagon.

At the border, troops work with Border Patrol agents to identify and monitor migrant movements, provide transportation and vehicle maintenance, data entry services, warehousing and logistical support, officials have said.

Active-duty troops are prohibited by law from conducting arrests on U.S. soil and rarely directly interact with migrants. Guillot said when troops identify migrants crossing the border and Border Patrol agents are not immediately available, they can only continue to monitor the migrants.

The general said he has received no orders to expand troops’

authorities to conduct law enforcement operations.

Recent deployments have included helicopter units, which can conduct aerial reconnaissance for Border Patrol agents, and infantry units with Stryker combat vehicles. The mission also includes engineers, logisticians, drone operators and intelligence analysts, defense officials have said. In recent weeks, the Navy has also deployed two destroyers to support border operations.

Guillot told lawmakers that his forces could be more effective if they were authorized to shoot down drones along the border. The general said he would like to give troops operating within 5 miles of the border permission to shoot down small drones flown from Mexico.

He said it was the only change that he had requested in their ability to use force. For now, troops close to the border carry rifles or handguns and are only authorized to use force for self-defense or to shoot down drones that are flying over military installations.



Soldiers assigned to Joint Task Force - Southern Border navigate vegetation and terrain of the East Presidio sector during a patrol near Presidio, Texas, March 25.

Several Democrats on Tuesday told Guillot that they worried the troops along the border would be better off at their home station preparing to fight a war against an adversary such as Russia or China.

Having 6,500 troops at the border, said Rep. Salud Carbajal, D-Calif., “sounds like an excessive number to me.”

Rep. Gabe Vasquez, D-N.M., whose district includes about 180 miles of the southern border, said he was grateful for the impact the operations have had on drug trafficking, but he was concerned the Defense Department was taking an outsized role in the effort.

“It is [Homeland Security’s] job to enforce our domestic immigration laws,” Vasquez said. “And I believe DOD has to remain focused on preparing to fight and win America’s wars. And I’m very concerned the department is wasting some of these precious re-

sources.”

Guillot defended the deployments, saying the operations have proven effective to date in curbing illegal migration and dealing blows to the Mexican cartels, which Trump deemed terrorists earlier this year.

Sealing the border has damaged cartel operations, he said, including an estimated 40% drop in drugs entering the United States via the southern border.

“They’re now trying to find new ways to get their products, whether that’s drugs or people, across the border, because of the seal efforts that have gone on over the last two months,” Guillot said. “That’s also forced them to have more cartel-on-cartel violence as the limited ability to get across the border has forced cartels to incur into other cartels’ territories to try to get across, and so we’re seeing an increase in that violence as well.”

Judge narrows rehiring order

Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — A federal judge who had ordered the Trump administration to reinstate fired federal probationary employees across the country at more than a dozen agencies has narrowed the scope of his ruling so that it now applies to workers in the 19 states and the District of Columbia that filed the challenge to the mass dismissals.

U.S. District Judge James Breder in Baltimore issued a preliminary injunction Tuesday night that protects those workers while the lawsuit continues.

The order requires that the 18 agencies originally named in the lawsuit follow the law when conducting future reductions in force.

Bredar has also now added the Defense Department and the Office of Personnel Management to that number.

Bredar previously found that the firings amount to a large-scale reduction subject to specific rules, including giving advance notice to the states affected by the layoffs.

The lawsuit contends the mass firings will cause irreparable burdens and expenses on the states and the District of Columbia that will have to support large numbers of unemployed workers and review and adjudicate claims of unemployment assistance.

The states suing the Trump administration include Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Wisconsin.

WORLD

China simulates port strikes in Taiwan drills

BY YIAN LEE
The Washington Post

China conducted a second day of drills around Taiwan on Wednesday, adding to the unprecedented military pressure it is applying to President Lai Ching-te, a leader it strongly dislikes.

The latest exercises, labeled Strait Thunder-2025A, were held in the central and southern parts of the Taiwan Strait, Chinese military spokesman Senior Colonel Shi Yi said in a statement. They tested the ability of the People's Liberation Army to conduct a blockade and involved "precision strikes" on simulated targets including ports and energy facilities.

The PLA also held "long-range live-fire drills" in the East China Sea, Shi said, referring to the body

of water north of Taiwan. The Shandong aircraft carrier task group traveled east of Taiwan's main island as part of the maneuvers, he said separately. The drills were completed on Wednesday, according to state-run China Central Television.

Some 37 Chinese aircraft crossed the mid-line in the strait, the Defense Ministry in Taipei said on X, adding that its own warplanes, ships and missile systems responded, without saying what that entailed. The airspace and waters around Taiwan were normal, a ministry spokesman said in an afternoon briefing.

The latest drills add to Beijing's campaign of intimidation against Taipei, and come a day after exercises that involved the most naval warships in nearly a year. The

PLA has now held at least seven sets of drills of varying intensity around Taiwan since Lai took office in May last year. That's easily the most that any president of the archipelago has faced since democratic elections started some three decades ago. The PLA didn't say when it planned to hold the B version of Strait Thunder-2025, but it is a clear sign that the PLA is preparing more drills.

"Targeted military exercises against Taiwan with a high degree of political coercion have surpassed those of previous administrations, at least in terms of frequency," said Chieh Chung, adjunct associate research fellow at the Institute for National Defense and Security Research in Taipei.

China has held major high-profile exercises during past Taiwa-

nese administrations, such after former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taipei in 2022 when Tsai Ing-wen was president. That episode involved China sending missiles over Taiwan, recalling a crisis in the mid-1990s precipitated by Taiwan's president at the time, Lee Teng-hui, traveling to the US. And for years the PLA has held regular drills closer its own shores that practice maneuvers like amphibious landings that would be crucial to any invasion of Taiwan.

Beijing has many reasons for holding the latest drills now, including better weather in the strait at this time of year and responding to the Trump administration's foreign policy coming into focus. The US has been encouraging NATO allies to step up their

defense spending to counter Russia, while the US prioritizes China. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth used a recent trip to Japan and the Philippines to pledge a range of military resources that allies require to counter the PLA.

Despite its rhetoric, there is little sign that China is actually preparing to invade Taiwan soon, a move that would massively disrupt its own economy and that of its trade partners, let alone the supply chains for the advanced semiconductors that are the archipelago's specialty. Last month, Taiwanese Defense Minister Wellington Koo said the PLA wasn't ready to execute a major amphibious operation. A running purge of China's military also complicates the outlook for any major action by the PLA.

Myanmar declares ceasefire to ease earthquake relief effort

Associated Press

BANGKOK — Myanmar's ruling military declared a temporary ceasefire in the country's civil war Wednesday to facilitate relief efforts following a 7.7 magnitude earthquake that has killed more than 3,000 people.

The surprise announcement by military leaders who also head the unelected government came late Wednesday on state television MRTV, which said the halt in fighting would run until April 22 to show compassion for people affected by Friday's quake.

The announcement followed unilateral temporary ceasefires announced by armed resistance groups opposed to military rule, and the military warned that those groups must refrain from attacking the state and regrouping, or else face "necessary" measures.

The resistance forces have also reserved the right to fight in self-defense.

Earlier Wednesday, rescuers pulled two men alive from the ruins of a hotel in Myanmar's capital, a third from a guesthouse in another city, and another in the country's second city, Mandalay, five days after the quake. But most teams were finding only bodies.

The quake hit midday Friday, toppling thousands of buildings, collapsing bridges and buckling roads. The death toll rose to 3,003 on Wednesday, with more than 4,500 people injured, MRTV reported. Local reports suggest much higher figures.

The quake worsened an already dire humanitarian crisis due to Myanmar's civil war. More than 3 million people had been displaced from their homes and nearly 20

million were in need even before it hit, according to the United Nations.

In the capital, Naypyitaw, a team of Turkish and local rescue workers used an endoscopic camera to locate Naing Lin Tun on a lower floor of the damaged hotel where he worked. They pulled him gingerly through a hole jackhammered through a floor and loaded him on to a gurney nearly 108 hours after he was first trapped.

Another man, a 47-year-old primary school principal, was rescued by a team of Malaysian and local crews from a collapsed guesthouse in the Sagaing township, near the epicenter of the earthquake close to Myanmar's second-largest city, Mandalay, where a fourth rescue was reported Wednesday night.



Local residents ride motorbikes while rescuers clean debris from damaged buildings in the aftermath of Friday's earthquake in Naypyitaw, Myanmar, Wednesday.

Israel's operations expands to seize 'large areas' in Gaza

BY ISAAC SHARF
AND WAFAA SHURABA
Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip is expanding to seize "large areas," the defense minister said, while officials at hospitals inside the Palestinian territory said that Israeli strikes overnight and into Wednesday had killed more than 40 people, nearly a dozen of them children.

Israel's offensive in the Palestinian territory was "expanding to crush and clean the area" of militants and "seizing large areas that will be added to the security zones of the State of Israel," Defense

Minister Israel Katz said in a written statement.

The Israeli government has long maintained a buffer zone just inside Gaza along its security fence and has greatly expanded since the war began in 2023.

Israel says the buffer zone is needed for its security, while Palestinians view it as a land grab that further shrinks the narrow coastal territory, home to around 2 million people.

Katz didn't specify which areas of Gaza would be seized in the expanded operation, which he said includes the "extensive evacuation" of the population from fighting areas.

His statement came after Israel ordered the full evacuation of the southern city of Rafah and nearby areas.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel aims to maintain an open-ended but unspecified security control of the Gaza Strip once it achieves its aim of crushing Hamas.

The minister called on Gaza residents to "expel Hamas and return all hostages."

The militant group still holds 59 captives, of whom 24 are believed to still be alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

Since the breakdown of the cea-

sfire last month, when Israel ordered people to move and expand their areas of operation.

The "no-go" zones in Gaza now constitute more than 60% of the strip, said Olga Cherevko, a spokesperson for the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Israel has continued ramp up its to target of the Gaza Strip, with airstrikes overnight killing 17 people in the southern city of Khan Younis.

Another 15 people were killed in a strike in the north of the strip Wednesday, according to officials at hospitals where the bodies were taken.

Officials at the Nasser Hospital said the bodies of 12 people killed in an overnight airstrike that were brought to the hospital included five women, one of them pregnant, and two children.

Officials at the Gaza European Hospital said they received five bodies of people killed in two separate airstrikes.

Later Wednesday, officials at the Indonesian Hospital said an Israeli strike on a building used by the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, or UNRWA, in the Jaba-liya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip killed 15 people, including nine children and two women.

STARS AND STRIPES

MONTH OF THE
MILITARY
CHILD

ADAPTABILITY

A PERSON'S ABILITY TO ADJUST
TO CHANGES IN THE ENVIRONMENT.

As we know, some military children have to move every few years or even months, while others can stay in one place for most of their school years. Here at Stars and Stripes, we wanted to get both perspectives on what it's like to uproot often and what it is like to stay in one school while so many others don't.



From the voices and minds
of Vogelweh Elementary
School students.

Enzo A. / 1st Grade

Sponsored by



MONTH OF THE
MILITARY
CHILD

The students of Vogelweh Elementary School in Germany were asked what their favorite places to live are, who their heroes are, what they struggle with, and what they like about being a military child.

My favorite place to live is Pennsylvania because all my friends and family are there and I've lived there a long time.

Heroes are my mom and dad because they take care of me and raise me well.

Home to me is Pennsylvania because I spent most of my life there and my friends and family are there.

My favorite thing is **getting to see other parts of the world**, meet new people, and explore history I would only read about in the US.

It's enjoyable because I get to meet people from all over and see cool places.

I struggle with leaving friends I've known for years and missing family.

Jacen D. / 5th grade

Something I struggle with is missing my friends.

Jameson B. / 5th grade

My favorite things about being a military child are moving and meeting new friends.

I struggle with **moving** and leaving friends.

Cole B. / 5th grade

I struggle moving because of leaving **family and friends**.

Blakely J. / 1st grade

My mom and dad are **my heroes**. My mom is my hero because she's kind, and my dad is my hero because he's thoughtful.

Charlie J. / 1st grade

My favorite thing is moving and **making friends**.

Axel K. / 1st grade

Something I struggle with being a military child is the fact that it feels like I'm starting over in a whole other world when we move. New school, friends, and I don't know the layout of the place. This is something I've struggled with being a military child.

Where home is to me is near my extended family in Bowling Green, Ohio. Why this is home to me is because I love to be around my family, and they've all been so loving and supportive of me. It also just feels right to be there with them.

My favorite thing about being a military child is getting to experience different places as we move to different cities. It is amazing to see all the different cultures, and scenery. Also, it's nice getting to meet new people and make new friends, I also enjoy trying new foods.

Lily H. / 5th grade



Lexi C. / 1st Grade





Sorin G. / 1st Grade



Lillian M. / 1st Grade



Emily B. / 1st Grade



View more entries at europe.stripes.com/military-child

Do you know someone at
Joint Base Lewis-McChord,
Joint Base San Antonio,
or Fort Cavazos ?



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MONTH OF THE
MILITARY
CHILD

Where is **home** to you?

Being a military child is complicated. It is so fun but can also be sad or scary. It is fun because you make a bunch of friends and because you travel a lot and get a lot of happy memories. However, it can be sad or scary because when you move, you will have to leave your friends, your house, and your school, and be scary because you go to a new school, new house, and new friends. There are no guarantees. But No matter what, you will always find something happy, like your family being with you every step of the way or your friend moving to the same place you are. Being a military child is complicated but awesome.

Zoey M. / 5th grade



Evelynn A. / 1st Grade



Giovanni B. / 1st Grade

I struggle with being
away from my dad.



Darius W. / 1st Grade



Makayla W. / 1st Grade

Mi home to me
is America



Mathew B. / 1st Grade

Stars and Stripes would like to acknowledge the hard work of **Asher Boggs**, **Gina Walt** and **Maryn Ennis** toward the creation of our special Month of the Military Child inserts. These three military-affiliated youth work at our Stripes Europe office as part of a practicum program through DoDEA's Kaiserslautern High School.

FACES

‘Top Gun,’ ‘Batman’ star Val Kilmer dies

Brooding actor known for versatility, intense approach

By MARK KENNEDY
AND ANDREW DALTON
Associated Press

Val Kilmer, the brooding, versatile actor who played fan favorite Iceman in “Top Gun,” donned a voluminous cape as Batman in “Batman Forever” and portrayed Jim Morrison in “The Doors,” has died. He was 65.

Kilmer died Tuesday night in Los Angeles, surrounded by family and friends, his daughter, Mercedes Kilmer, said in an email to The Associated Press. The New York Times was the first to report his death on Tuesday.

Val Kilmer died from pneumonia. He had recovered after a 2014 throat cancer diagnosis that required two tracheotomies.

“I have behaved poorly. I have behaved bravely. I have behaved bizarrely to some. I deny none of this and have no regrets because I have lost and found parts of myself that I never knew existed,” he says toward the end of “Val,” the 2021 documentary on his career. “And I am blessed.”

Kilmer, the youngest actor ever accepted to the prestigious Juilliard School at the time he attended (age 17, in 1981), experienced the ups and downs of fame more dramatically than most. His break came in 1984’s spy spoof “Top Secret!” followed by the comedy “Real Genius” in 1985. Kilmer would later show his comedy chops again in films including “MacGruber” and “Kiss Kiss Bang Bang.”

His movie career hit its zenith in the early 1990s as he made a name for himself as a dashing leading man, starring alongside Kurt Russell and Bill Paxton in 1993’s “Tombstone,” as Elvis’ ghost in “True Romance” and as a bank-robbing demolition expert in Michael Mann’s 1995 film “Heat” with Al Pacino and Robert De Niro.

“While working with Val on ‘Heat’ I always marvelled at the range, the brilliant variability within the powerful current of Val’s possessing and expressing character,” director Mann said in a statement Tuesday night.

Actor Josh Brolin, a friend of Kilmer, was among others paying tribute.

“You were a smart, challenging, brave, uber-creative firecracker,” Brolin wrote on

Instagram. “There’s not a lot left of those.”

Kilmer — who took part in the Method branch of Suzuki arts training — threw himself into parts. When he played Doc Holliday in “Tombstone,” he filled his bed with ice for the final scene to mimic the feeling of dying from tuberculosis. To play Morrison, he wore leather pants all the time, asked castmates and crew to only refer to him as Jim Morrison and blasted The Doors for a year.

That intensity also gave Kilmer a reputation that he was difficult to work with, something he grudgingly agreed with later in life, but always defending himself by emphasizing art over commerce.

“In an unflinching attempt to empower directors, actors and other collaborators to honor the truth and essence of each project, an attempt to breathe Suzukian life into a myriad Hollywood moments, I had been deemed difficult and alienated the head of every major studio,” he wrote in his memoir, “I’m Your Huckleberry.”

One of his more iconic roles — hotshot pilot Tom “Iceman” Kazansky opposite Tom Cruise — almost didn’t happen. Kilmer was courted by director Tony Scott for “Top Gun” but initially balked. “I didn’t want the part. I didn’t care about the film. The story didn’t interest me,” he wrote in his memoir. He agreed after being promised that his role would improve from that of the initial script. He would reprise the role in the film’s 2022 sequel, “Top Gun: Maverick.”

One career nadir was playing Batman in Joel Schumacher’s goofy, garish “Batman Forever” — before George Clooney took up the mantle for 1997’s “Batman & Robin” and after Michael Keaton played the Dark Knight in 1989’s “Batman” and 1992’s “Batman Returns.”

Kilmer, who was one and done as Batman, blamed much of his performance on the suit.

“When you’re in it, you can barely move and people have to help you stand up and sit down,” Kilmer said in “Val,” in lines spoken by his son Jack, who voiced the part of his father in the film because of his inability to speak. “You also can’t hear anything and after a while people stop talking to you; it’s very isolating. It was a struggle for me to get a



AP

Actor Val Kilmer, shown in 2005, made a name for himself in the 1990s with roles in “Tombstone,” as Elvis’ ghost in “True Romance” and in Michael Mann’s “Heat.”

performance past the suit, and it was frustrating until I realized that my role in the film was just to show up and stand where I was told to.”

His next projects were the film version of the 1960s TV series “The Saint” — fussily putting on wigs, accents and glasses — and “The Island of Dr. Moreau” with Marlon Brando, which became one of the decade’s most infamously cursed productions.

David Gregory’s 2014 documentary “Lost Soul: The Doomed Journey of Richard Stanley’s Island of Dr. Moreau,” described a cursed set that included a hurricane, Kilmer bullying director Richard Stanley, the firing of Stanley via fax (who sneaked back on set as an extra with a mask on) and extensive rewrites by Kilmer and Brando.

In 1996, Entertainment Weekly ran a cover story about Kilmer titled “The Man Hollywood Loves to Hate.” The directors Schumacher and John Frankenheimer, who finished “The Island of Dr. Moreau,” said he

was difficult. Frankenheimer said there were two things he would never do: “Climb Mount Everest and work with Val Kilmer again.”

Other artists came to his defense, like D. J. Caruso, who directed Kilmer in “The Salted Sea” and said the actor simply liked to talk out scenes and enjoyed having a director’s attention.

“Val needs to immerse himself in a character. I think what happened with directors like Frankenheimer and Schumacher is that Val would ask a lot of questions, and a guy like Schumacher would say, ‘You’re Batman! Just go do it,’” Caruso told the Times in 2002.

Kilmer once dated Cher, and married and divorced actor Joanne Whalley. He is survived by their two children, Mercedes and Jack.

“I have no regrets,” Kilmer told the AP in 2021. “I’ve witnessed and experienced miracles.”

Director Gunn, cast celebrate upcoming ‘Superman’ at CinemaCon

By KRYSTA FAURIA
Associated Press

The 2025 box office has been hit with a deficit. Can the James Gunn-dubbed “summer of ‘Superman’” save it?

Warner Bros. showed off a diverse and starry slate of its upcoming films on Tuesday — but the night was carried on the shoulders of Clark Kent.

“I really do believe in this movie. And I do believe that there is a lack of human kindness, or at least



Gunn

a degradation of human kindness,” Gunn said. “This is a movie that celebrates kindness and human love.”

At the annual CinemaCon convention and trade show in Las Vegas, Gunn — the director and writer of the first film in the new iteration of the connected DC Universe — also brought out its stars, who gushed over their

experience making the film.

“It’s a great honor to play a role that exists so clearly in the public consciousness, to the point where everyone I think, even if you haven’t seen a film or read a comic, you sort of know what the Superman symbol means and you know what it stands for,” said David Corenswet, adding that he hopes to “illuminate something new about the character, or even just bring the beloved character to a new audience.”

Corenswet was joined onstage by Rachel Brosnahan, who plays Lois Lane, and Nicholas Hoult, who plays Lex Luthor.

“James makes a family out of every set,” Brosnahan said. “The set is full of people who want to be there, who love making these movies. And it’s such a joy to come to work every day.”

The film will be released theatrically in July amid a summer of superhero titles, including “The Fantastic Four: First Steps” and

“Thunderbolts*.”

In addition to “Superman,” Warner Bros. teased some of its April releases on the convention’s main stage, like Ryan Coogler’s “Sinners” and “A Minecraft Movie,” but they also looked further down the road for 2025.

Director Joseph Kosinski and producer Jerry Bruckheimer treated the audience to an extended sneak peek of “F1,” Brad Pitt’s Formula One racing drama premiering in June.



Laura Law, Chief Operating Officer
 Lt. Col. Katie R. Fidler, Europe commander
 John Rodriguez, Europe chief of staff
 Lt. Col. Marci Hoffman, Pacific commander

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OPINION

Trump’s too casual on Signal security lapse

BY CARL P. LEUBSDORF
The Dallas Morning News

When Donald Trump first sought the presidency, one of his main issues against Democratic rival Hillary Clinton was her use of a private email server for communications, including some with secret or classified information.

Though the Justice Department absolved Clinton of any wrongdoing, FBI Director James Comey’s unfortunate reopening of the case in the week before the election may have played a significant role in Trump’s narrow victory.

The irony of the situation is that, both in office and in between, Trump has displayed a far more dangerous disregard of the requirements for security than Clinton — exemplified by his stashing secret documents at his Florida home and his casual response to the administration’s inclusion of a journalist in a secret discussion of a pending U.S. attack.

Indeed, only the delays by a friendly judge and Trump’s election last November prevented him from facing a federal trial on charges that included misuse of classified documents and obstruction of the investigation into his improper possession of them.

The controversy over including The Atlantic’s Jeffrey Goldberg on a Signal app message chain detailing the timeline for a forthcoming U.S. attack is just the latest of these incidents, rekindling concern among national security experts about the potential for serious security failures.

“This is a serious security breach,” former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told the “PBS NewsHour.” “War plans, attack plans are among the most sensitive and classified information that you can have.”

Administration officials insist the information wasn’t classified. “There’s no units, no locations, no routes, no flight paths, no sources, no methods, no classified information,” the current defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, told the “NewsHour.”

Questions of inattention to security requirements have dogged Trump since early

in his first administration when he took a cell-phone call about a North Korean missile launch during dinner at Mar-a-Lago with Japan’s prime minister and discussed it within hearing of dozens of dinner guests.

Soon after, Trump himself caused a more serious security lapse, when he apparently revealed classified information and jeopardized a critical intelligence source during an Oval Office meeting with the Russian ambassador and foreign minister. According to The Washington Post, Trump “revealed more information to the Russians than we have shared with our own allies.” It said he “went off script” in the meeting with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Ambassador Sergey Kislyak and “began describing details of an Islamic State terrorist threat related to the use of laptop computers on aircraft.”

Later during his presidency, CNN and The New York Times reported that Trump routinely violated the Presidential Records Act that requires keeping all documents by shredding papers, flushing some down the toilet and showing classified documents to people unauthorized to see them.

“I watched him show documents to people at Mar-a-Lago on the dining room patio,” former White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham told MSNBC. “So, he has no respect for classified information, never did.”

Her comments came after Trump was indicted on 37 counts of alleged mishandling of classified documents and obstructing government efforts to recover them, charges to which he pleaded not guilty.

The indictment included a partial transcript of a July 2021 meeting at his Bedminster golf club in New Jersey, in which Trump appeared to show off a classified Pentagon document that he had taken with him from the White House.

Last week’s disclosure of Goldberg’s inclusion in a discussion of pending attack plans brought expressions of concern from outside security experts, denials by the administration and a telling effort by Trump to sidestep the whole controversy.

“I don’t know anything about it” was

Trump’s initial comment, a day after the news of the breach first surfaced. He then attacked the Atlantic as “a magazine that’s going out of business.”

“The main thing is that nothing happened,” he told NBC News a day later. He called criticism of the administration “a witch hunt” but noted, “I wasn’t involved with it.”

National security adviser Mike Waltz told Fox News’ Laura Ingraham that he took “full responsibility” for Goldberg’s inclusion in the discussion. And there have been subsequent reports his job may be on the line.

Top administration intelligence officials insisted to Congress that nothing disclosed was classified, even though the transcript included a detailed timeline for the pending attack.

After the Atlantic published the entire conversation, under a headline “Here are the Attack Plans that Trump’s Advisers Shared on Signal,” White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt seized on the wording to declare, “The Atlantic has conceded: these were NOT ‘war plans.’”

And Attorney General Pam Bondi told reporters, “If you want to talk about classified information, talk about what was in Hillary Clinton’s home,” she said. “Talk about the classified documents in Joe Biden’s garage, that Hunter Biden had access to.” Both were cleared of improper use of classified documents.

Fortunately, senators from both parties may be taking the breach more seriously. Both the Republican chairman and senior Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee asked the Pentagon’s inspector general to look into whether classified information was shared in the discussion.

Meanwhile, Trump sought to end the discussion. “Michael Waltz has learned a lesson, and he’s a good man,” he told NBC, adding that the leak was “the only glitch in two months, and it turned out not to be a serious one.”

Based on his history, it won’t be the last.

Carl P. Leubsdorf is a former Washington bureau chief of The Dallas Morning News.

SAVES Act can help turn tide against veteran suicide

BY REP. MORGAN LUTTRELL
Special to Stars and Stripes

As a combat veteran and a member of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee, I have witnessed firsthand the epidemic of suicide and its devastating impact on the veteran community. Too often I have heard of a fellow brother or sister in arms losing their battle with mental health.

This is a deeply personal issue to me. In Congress, it is my priority to represent the silent voices of those who are suffering alone. No veteran should have to face this battle by themselves.

An estimated 17 veterans die each day by suicide — this is 17 too many. Our mission must be to eradicate suicide within the veteran community; anything less is unacceptable. These tragedies leave families devastated — mothers and fathers burying sons or daughters, spouses losing their partners, children growing up without parents, and a nation mourning. No one should have to endure such pain or ever be asked to carry that burden for the rest of their lives.

While veterans make up just 8.2% of the population, they account for nearly 14% of all

suicides nationally. In 2024, the Department of Veterans Affairs published its annual National Veteran Suicide Prevention report, revealing that in 2022, there were 6,407 veteran suicides. Suicide was the second leading cause of death among veterans under 45, with the highest rates occurring among those aged 18 to 34. The report also highlighted that 50.4% of veterans who died by suicide in 2022 had utilized Veterans Health Administration or Veterans Benefits Administration services in 2021 or 2022. Between 2020 and 2022, data from the VA Behavioral Health Autopsy Program showed that the leading factors contributing to veteran suicides reported to VHA Suicide Prevention teams were pain (53.8%), sleep issues (51.4%), health problems (42.5%), declines in physical ability (34.3%), relationship difficulties (33.1%), and feelings of hopelessness (30.4%).

As we look to address this dire issue facing our veteran community, I am reintroducing the Service Dogs Assisting Veterans Act, also known as SAVES Act. This bipartisan, bicameral legislation would establish a five-year, \$50 million VA-administered grant program for eligible nonprofit organizations dedicated to providing service dogs to veterans. This in-

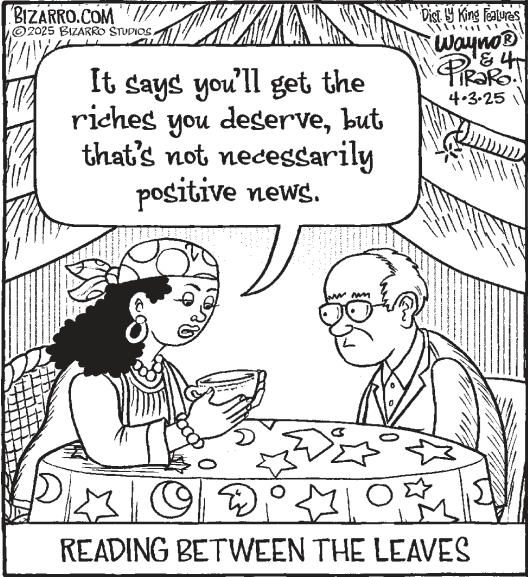
cludes individuals with disabilities like post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.

Funding is critical, as training a single service dog costs over \$50,000 on average. With thousands of veterans on waitlists for these organizations, this would expedite the process. Mental health is not a one-size-fits-all approach, but this legislation will take an important step forward in addressing the different needs of our veterans. It’s vital we provide a wide array of tools to treat their mental health issues. Simply put, veterans and active military personnel with PTSD, TBI, military sexual trauma, suicidal ideation, and other mental health challenges cannot keep waiting. For them, the SAVES Act grant program could mean the difference between life and death.

As a congressman and fellow veteran, it is my duty to stand up for those who served. For too long, we have lost countless veterans to this epidemic. It’s time to honor those who gave everything by taking real action.

Rep. Morgan Luttrell, a Republican, represents Texas’ 8th District in the U.S. House of Representatives. He is a Navy combat veteran who serves as chairman of the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs subcommittee of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee.

Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
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ACROSS

- 1 Spirited horse
5 Farm grazer
8 Ella's style
12 Prom rental
13 Commotion
14 Apiece
15 Earth sci.
16 Classic car
17 Sea eagle
18 Crafty
20 Basswood tree
22 Outdoor gear brand
23 Predetermine
24 — de gallo
27 Sobriquet
32 Simile center
33 In the manner of
34 Silent
35 Pacifica maker
38 Cincinnati team
39 Medico
40 Sheepish remark
42 Starting point
45 Figures of speech
49 Prego rival
50 Personal
52 The Mets' old home
53 Bygone ruler
54 Compete
55 Hostels
56 Faxed
57 Reply (Abbr.)
58 Entre —

DOWN

- 1 Pub orders
2 Opulent
3 Roman god of love
4 Ravel composition
5 St. Louis athlete
6 Verse by Pablo Neruda
7 Sweater material
8 Shown to one's seat
9 Gin or bridge, e.g.
10 Teen's woe
11 Subsequently
19 You and I
21 Annoy
24 Lobbying gp.

- 25 "Kinda" suffix
26 Song on Taylor Swift's "Folklore" album
28 — -de-France
29 Cavalry rifles
30 Wet dirt
31 Type measures
36 Dairy case buy
37 Biol. or chem.
38 Shriveled grape
41 Commercial
42 Scraps
43 Demolish, in Dover
44 Bright star
46 "It can't be!"
47 Bistro handout
48 Get lippy
51 Take first place

Answer to Previous Puzzle

S	L	I	D		R	A	H		A	F	A	R	
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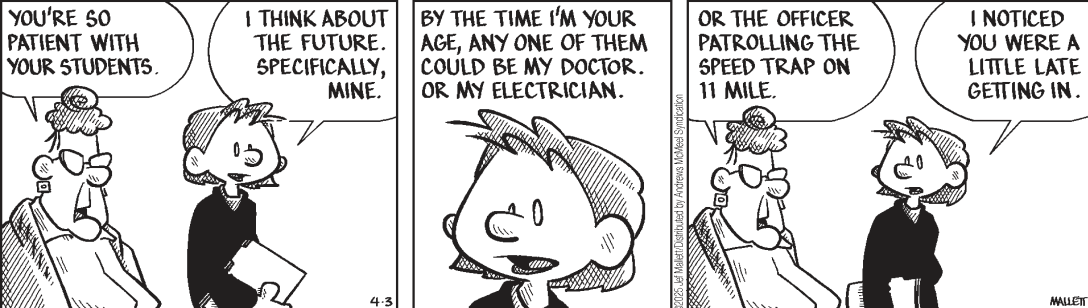
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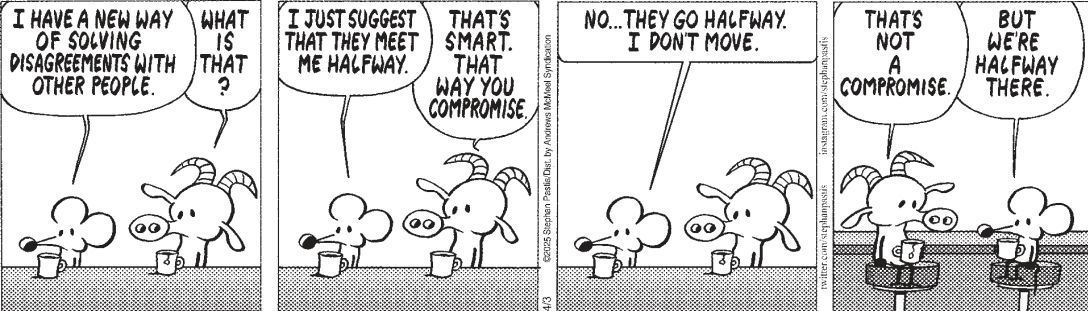
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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT COULD YOU CALL A RESEARCH SCIENTIST WHO REALLY LOVES TO SNITCH ON EVERYBODY? A LAB RAT.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals G

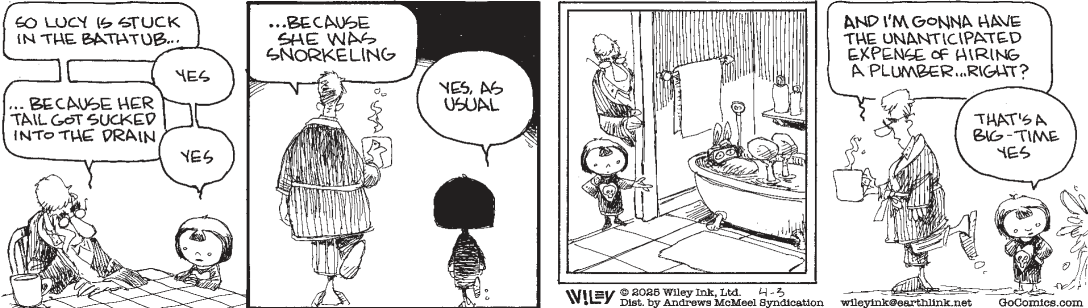
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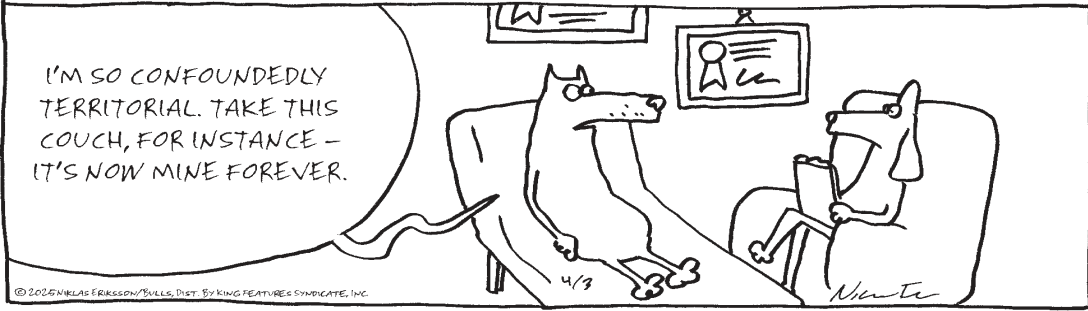
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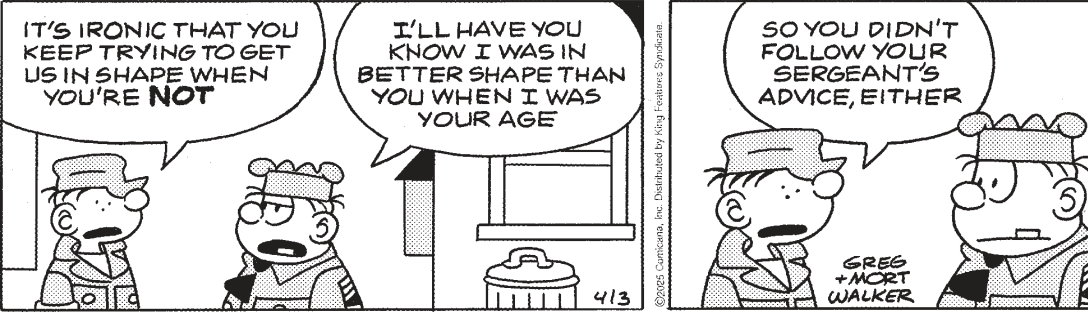
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Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



SCOREBOARD/MLB/SPORTS BRIEFS

DEALS

Tuesday’s transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

BOSTON RED SOX — Agreed to terms with LHP Garret Crochet on six-year contract for 2026-31. Sent RHP Brayan Bello to Worcester (IL) on a rehab assignment .

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Sent RF Mike Tauchman and LHP Tyler Gilbert to Charlotte (IL) on a rehab assignment.

HOUSTON ASTROS — Acquired RHP Nick Robertson from Toronto in exchange for minor league RHP Edinson Batista. Transferred RHP Cristian Javier from the 15-day IL to the 60-day IL.

LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Sent SS Zach Neto to Salt Lake (PCL) on a rehab assignment.

NEW YORK YANKEES — Agreed to terms with RHP Adam Ottavino on a one-year contract. Transferred RHP JT Brubaker from the 15-day IL to the 60-day IL. Placed RHP Devin Williams on the paternity list.

SEATTLE MARINERS — Agreed to terms with RHP William Fleming on a minor league contract. Selected the contract of LHP Jhonathan Diaz from Tacoma (PCL). Optioned RHP Emerson Hancock to Tacoma. Sent RHP Troy Taylor to Tacoma on a rehab assignment. Placed 2B Jorge Polanco on the paternity list. Recalled INF Leo Rivas from Tacoma.

National League

ATLANTA BRAVES — Selected the contract of RHP Zach Thompson from Gwinnett (IL). Designated RHP Jesse Chavez for assignment. Activated CF Stuart Fairchild. Sent C Sean Murphy to Gwinnett on a rehab assignment.

CINCINNATI REDS — Sent LHP Andrew Abbott to Louisville (IL) on a rehab assignment.

MIAMI MARLINS — Sent RHP Edward Cabrera to Jacksonville (IL) on a rehab assignment.

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Sent RHP Nick Mears to Nashville (IL) on a rehab assignment. Activated RHP Abner Uribe.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Claimed RHP Brett de Geus off waivers from Miami and optioned him to Lehigh Valley (IL). Sent 2B Buddy Kennedy outright to Lehigh Valley.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Selected the contract of RHP Thomas Harrington from Indianapolis (IL). Designated C Jason Delay for assignment. Optioned RHP David Bednar to Indianapolis.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association

NBA — Suspended Detroit F/C Isaiah Stewart for two games without pay for escalating an on-court altercation. Suspended Detroit F Ron Holland II and Detroit G Marcus Sasser, Minnesota C/F Naz Reid and Minnesota G Donte DiVincenzo for one game without pay for their roles in the on-court altercation.

INDIANA PACERS — Assigned F Johnny Furphy to the Indiana Mad Ants of the G League.

NEW YORK KNICKS — Signed F P.J. Tucker to a rest-of-season contract.

Women’s National Basketball Association

DALLAS WINGS — Renounced their rights to G Kedra Holland-Corn.

WASHINGTON MYSTICS — Waived F Taylor Soule.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

ARIZONA CARDINALS — Agreed to terms with DL Calais Campbell on a one-year contract.

CAROLINA PANTHERS — Re-signed RB Raheem Blackshear to a one-year contract.

CLEVELAND BROWNS — Signed WR DeAndre Carter to a contract.

TENNESSEE TITANS — Re-signed DB Justin Hardee Sr. to a contract extension.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

BOSTON BRUINS — Signed F Dans Locmelis to a three-year, entry-level contract.

CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS — Signed D Taiqe Harding to a two-year, entry-level contract.

EDMONTON OILERS — Signed D Damien Carfagna to a two-year, entry-level contract.

NEW YORK RANGERS — Singed G Callum Tung to a three-year, entry-level contract. Reassigned G Talyn Boyko to Hartford (AHL) from Tulsa (ECHL).

OTTAWA SENATORS — Recalled F Angus Crookshank from Belleville (AHL).

VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS — Signed F Trevor Connelly to a three-year, entry-level contract.

WASHINGTON CAPITALS — Signed C Spencer Smallman to a two-year, entry-level contract.

COLLEGE

MARYLAND — Hired Buzz Williams as head men’s basketball coach

COLLEGE HOCKEY

NCAA Division I tournament

FROZEN FOUR
St. Louis
National Semifinals
Thursday, April 10

Denver vs. W. Michigan
Boston Univ. vs. Penn St.

National Championship
Saturday, April 12

Semifinal winners

PRO BASKETBALL				
NBA				
EASTERN CONFERENCE				
Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
y-Boston	56	19	.747	—
x-New York	48	27	.640	8
Toronto	28	48	.368	28½
Brooklyn	25	51	.329	31½
Philadelphia	23	53	.303	33½
Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	37	40	.481	—
Atlanta	36	39	.480	—
Miami	34	41	.453	2
Charlotte	19	56	.253	17
Washington	16	59	.213	20
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
y-Cleveland	60	15	.800	—
x-Indiana	44	31	.587	16
Detroit	42	33	.560	18
Milwaukee	41	34	.547	19
Chicago	34	42	.447	26½
WESTERN CONFERENCE				
Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	49	27	.645	—
Memphis	44	32	.579	5
Dallas	37	39	.487	12
San Antonio	31	44	.413	17½
New Orleans	21	54	.280	27½
Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
z-Oklahoma City	63	12	.840	—
Denver	47	29	.618	16½
Minnesota	44	32	.579	19½
Portland	33	43	.434	30½
Utah	16	60	.211	47½
Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	46	29	.613	—
Golden State	44	31	.587	2
L.A. Clippers	43	32	.573	3
Sacramento	36	39	.480	10
Phoenix	35	41	.461	11½
x-clinched playoff spot				
y-clinched division				
z-clinched conference				
Tuesday’s games				
New York 105, Philadelphia 91				
Portland 127, Atlanta 113				
Milwaukee 133, Phoenix 123				
Chicago 137, Toronto 118				
Orlando 116, San Antonio 105				
Golden State 134, Memphis 125				
Minnesota 140, Denver 139, 2OT				
Wednesday’s games				
Charlotte at Indiana				
New York at Cleveland				
Sacramento at Washington				
Miami at Boston				
Utah at Houston				
Atlanta at Dallas				
San Antonio at Denver				
Detroit at Oklahoma City				
New Orleans at L.A. Clippers				
Thursday’s games				
Milwaukee at Philadelphia				
Orlando at Washington				
Memphis at Miami				
Minnesota at Brooklyn				
Portland at Toronto				
Golden State at L.A. Lakers				
Friday’s games				
Sacramento at Charlotte				
Utah at Indiana				
Detroit at Toronto				
Phoenix at Boston				
Cleveland at San Antonio				
Oklahoma City at Houston				
Portland at Chicago				
Denver at Golden State				
Dallas at L.A. Clippers				
New Orleans at L.A. Lakers				
Saturday’s games				
New York at Atlanta				
Memphis at Detroit				
Minnesota at Philadelphia				
Milwaukee at Miami				
Dallas at L.A. Clippers				

Scoring leaders					
Through Tuesday					
	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Gil.-Alex., OKC	72	814	580	2361	32.8
Antetokoun., MIL	62	737	397	1882	30.4
Jokic, DEN	65	732	342	1933	29.7
Edwards, MIN	73	657	385	1991	27.3
Tatum, BOS	68	632	341	1845	27.1
Durant, PHO	62	592	303	1647	26.6
Brunson, NY	61	558	350	1606	26.3
Cunningham, DET	66	631	295	1698	25.7

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Women’s NCAA Tournament

Spokane 1
Regional Semifinals
Friday, March 28

UCLA 76, Mississippi 62
LSU 80, NC State 73

Regional Championship
Sunday, March 30

UCLA 72, LSU 65

Spokane 4
Regional Semifinals
Saturday, March 29

Southern Cal vs. Kansas St.
UConn 82, Oklahoma 59

Regional Championship
Monday, March 31

UConn 78, Southern Cal 64

Birmingham 2
Regional Semifinals
Friday, March 28

South Carolina 71, Maryland 67
Duke 47, North Carolina 38

Regional Championship
Sunday, March 30

South Carolina 54, Duke 50

Birmingham 3
Regional Semifinals
Saturday, March 29

Texas 67, Tennessee 59
TCU 71, Notre Dame 62

Regional Championship
Monday, March 31

Texas 58, TCU 47

Final Four
Tampa, Fla.
National Semifinals
Friday, April 4

UCLA vs. UConn, **AFN-Sports, 1 a.m. Saturday CET, 9 a.m. Saturday JKT**
South Carolina vs. Texas, **AFN-Sports, 3:30 a.m. Saturday CET, 11:30 a.m. Saturday, JKT**

National Championship
Sunday, April 6

UCLA-UConn winner vs. South Carolina-Texas winner, **AFN-Sports, 9 p.m. Sunday CET, 5 a.m. Monday JKT**

Men’s NCAA Tournament

East Regional
Newark, N.J.
Regional Semifinals
Thursday, March 27

Duke 100, Arizona 93
Alabama 113, BYU 88

Regional Championship
Saturday, March 29

Duke 85, Alabama 65

South Regional

Atlanta
Regional Semifinals
Friday, March 28

Auburn 78, Michigan 65
Michigan St. 73, Mississippi 70

Regional Championship
Sunday, March 30

Auburn 70, Michigan St. 64

Midwest Regional
Indianapolis
Regional Semifinals
Friday, March 28

Houston 62, Purdue 60
Tennessee 78, Kentucky 65

Regional Championship
Sunday, March 30

Houston 69, Tennessee 50

West Regional
San Francisco
Regional Semifinals
Thursday, March 27

Florida 87, Maryland 71
Texas Tech 85, Arkansas 83

Regional Championship
Saturday, March 29

Florida 84, Texas Tech 79

Final Four
San Antonio
Saturday, April 5

Florida vs. Auburn. **AFN-Sports, mid-night Saturday CET, 8 a.m. Sunday JKT**
Duke vs. Houston. **2:30 a.m. Sunday CET, 10:30 a.m. Monday JKT**

National Championship
Monday, April 7

Auburn-Florida winner vs. Duke-Houston winner. **AFN-Sports, 3 a.m. Tuesday CET, 11 a.m. Tuesday JKT**

AP SPORTLIGHT

April 3

1988 — Mario Lemieux wins the NHL scoring title, stopping Wayne Gretzky’s seven-year streak.

2012 — Brittney Griner scores 26 points and grabs 13 rebounds to help Baylor finish off an undefeated season with an 80-61 win over Notre Dame in the women’s national championship game. Baylor becomes the first team in NCAA history to win 40 games.

2019 — San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich is ejected after an NBA-record low 63 seconds in the Spurs’ 113-85 loss in Denver. Popovich receives 2 technical fouls in a verbal confrontation with a referee.

Merrill, Padres agree to \$135M, 9-year deal

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — All-Star outfielder Jackson Merrill and the San Diego Padres agreed Wednesday to a \$135 million, nine-year contract covering 2026-34.

Merrill gets a \$10 million signing bonus, \$1 million payable within 30 days of the contract’s approval by Major League Baseball and \$3 million on Jan. 15 in each of the next three years.

Merrill will get salaries of \$1 million in 2026, \$6 million in 2027, \$8 million in 2028, \$10 million in 2029 and \$20 million annually from 2030-34.

San Diego has a \$21 million option for 2034 that would become a player option at the same salary if he finishes among the top five in MVP voting in any season from 2026-34.

Merrill’s salary would escalate by \$1 million for all remaining years



Merrill

for any season in which he has 500 or more plate appearances.

The option price would escalate by \$1 million each time Merrill finishes among the top 10 in MVP voting. He will also get a hotel suite on the Padres’ road trips.

Merrill, who turns 22 on April 19, made his major league debut last season and became an All-Star, hitting .292 with 24 homers, 90 RBIs and 16 stolen bases. He finished second in NL Rookie of the Year voting to Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher Paul Skenes.

Merrill has an \$809,500 salary while in the major leagues this year after earning the \$740,000 minimum last year and gaining \$1,191,534 from the pre-arbitration bonus pool.

Merrill would have been eligible for arbitration after the 2026 season and for free agency after the 2029 World Series.

BRIEFLY

Study: MLB’s average salary hits \$5M mark for first time

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Major League Baseball’s average salary broke the \$5 million barrier on opening day for the first time, according to a study by The Associated Press.

The New York Mets, with Juan Soto’s record \$61.9 million pay, led MLB for the third straight opening day with a \$322.6 million payroll, just ahead of the World Series champion Los Angeles Dodgers at \$319.5 million. Those two teams each spent roughly five times as much as the Miami Marlins, who at \$64.9 million ended the Athletics’ three-year streak as the lowest spender.

Still, the Mets were down from their record high of \$355.4 million in 2023.

The average rose 3.6% to \$5,160,245. That was up from a 1.5% increase last year but down from an 11.1% increase in 2023.

Adding Blake Snell, Michael Conforto, Tanner Scott and Kirby Yates, the Dodgers boosted payroll by a big league-high \$69 million from opening day last year. Baltimore hiked spending by \$66 million, followed by Arizona (\$55 million), San Diego (\$47 million), Philadelphia (\$41 million) and Detroit (\$39 million).

Los Angeles’ payroll figure was held down by deferred payments. Shohei Ohtani’s \$70 million salary was discounted to a present-day value of \$28.2 million because it

won’t be paid in full until 2035, causing him to be listed as the 18th-highest-paid player. Other Dodgers with deferred payments include Mookie Betts, Tommy Edman, Freddie Freeman, Teoscar Hernández, Scott, Will Smith and Snell.

NBA suspends 5 for brawl that spilled into stands

NEW YORK — Detroit’s Isaiah Stewart was suspended for two games and four other players from the Pistons and Minnesota Timberwolves drew one-game suspensions for their roles in an on-court altercation between the teams this week, the NBA said Tuesday.

Stewart got two games “based in part on his repeated history of unsportsmanlike acts,” the league said. The NBA handed the one-game bans to Detroit’s Ron Holland II and Marcus Sasser along with Minnesota’s Naz Reid and Donte DiVincenzo. All five of those players were ejected from Sunday’s game, as were Pistons coach J.B. Bickerstaff and Timberwolves assistant Pablo Prigioni.

Reid and DiVincenzo served their suspensions Tuesday when Minnesota visits Denver.

Stewart will begin serving his suspension Wednesday when Detroit visits Oklahoma City, and Holland and Sasser will also serve their suspensions in that game.

MLB

Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Tampa Bay	4	1	.800	—
New York	3	1	.750	½
Toronto	4	2	.667	½
Baltimore	3	2	.600	1
Boston	1	4	.200	3
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	2	3	.400	—
Cleveland	2	3	.400	—
Detroit	2	3	.400	—
Kansas City	2	3	.400	—
Minnesota	1	4	.200	1
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	4	1	.800	—
Texas	4	2	.667	½
Houston	2	3	.400	2
Athletics	2	4	.333	2½
Seattle	2	4	.333	2½
National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	3	1	.750	—
Miami	4	2	.667	—
New York	2	3	.400	1½
Washington	1	4	.200	2½
Atlanta	0	6	.000	4
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
St. Louis	3	2	.600	—
Chicago	4	4	.500	½
Cincinnati	2	3	.400	1
Milwaukee	1	4	.200	2
Pittsburgh	1	5	.167	2½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	7	0	1.000	—
San Diego	6	0	1.000	½
San Francisco	4	1	.800	2
Arizona	3	2	.600	3
Colorado	1	3	.250	4½
Tuesday's games				
Texas 1, Cincinnati 0				
L.A. Dodgers 3, Atlanta 1				
Miami 4, N.Y. Mets 2				
Tampa Bay 7, Pittsburgh 0				
Arizona 7, N.Y. Yankees 5				
Toronto 5, Washington 3				
Minnesota 8, Chicago White Sox 3				
Milwaukee 5, Kansas City 0				
L.A. Angels 9, St. Louis 7, 11 innings				
San Francisco 3, Houston 1				
Detroit 4, Seattle 1				
San Diego 7, Cleveland 0				
Chicago Cubs 7, Athletics 4				
Wednesday's games				
Texas at Cincinnati				
Kansas City at Milwaukee				
Pittsburgh at Tampa Bay				
L.A. Angels at St. Louis				
Minnesota at Chicago White Sox				
Washington at Toronto				
Chicago Cubs at Athletics				
Cleveland at San Diego				
Detroit at Seattle				
San Francisco at Houston				
N.Y. Mets at Miami				
Boston at Baltimore				
Colorado at Philadelphia				
Arizona at N.Y. Yankees				
Atlanta at L.A. Dodgers				
Thursday's games				
Colorado (Senzatela 0-0) at Philadelphia (Walker 0-0)				
Boston (Houck 0-1) at Baltimore (Morton 0-1)				
Houston (TBD) at Minnesota (Ryan 0-0)				
Arizona (Kelly 1-0) at N.Y. Yankees (Carasco 0-0)				
Cincinnati (Lodolo 1-0) at Milwaukee (Cortes 0-1)				
Friday's games				
Chicago White Sox at Detroit				
St. Louis at Boston				
San Diego at Chicago Cubs				
Toronto at N.Y. Mets				
Athletics at Colorado				
N.Y. Yankees at Pittsburgh				
Seattle at San Francisco				
L.A. Dodgers at Philadelphia				
Arizona at Washington				
Miami at Atlanta				
Baltimore at Kansas City				
Tampa Bay at Texas				
Cincinnati at Milwaukee				
Cleveland at L.A. Angels				
This day in baseball				
April 3				
1966 — After having his original contract with the Atlanta Braves voided by MLB, Tom Seaver signs with the New York Mets, who won a lottery for his signing rights.				
1987 — The Chicago Cubs trade Dennis Eckersley to the Oakland Athletics, who would transition him from a starting pitcher to a closer.				

ROUNDUP

Rangers' Eovaldi shuts out Reds

Texas starter throws first complete game of season in victory

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Nathan Eovaldi pitched a four-hitter for the majors' first complete game of the season, and the Texas Rangers beat the Cincinnati Reds 1-0 on Tuesday night.

Eovaldi struck out eight and walked none in his fifth career complete game. The right-hander threw 99 pitches, 70 for strikes.

It was Eovaldi's first shutout since April 29, 2023, against the Yankees and No. 3 for his career.

Wyatt Langford homered for Texas in the first against Carson Spiers (0-1).

Eovaldi retired his first 12 batters, including five straight strikeouts during one stretch. Gavin Lux hit a leadoff single in the fifth for Cincinnati's first baserunner.

Dodgers 3, Braves 1: Dustin May pitched five strong innings after missing nearly two years, Mookie Betts hit his third go-ahead homer of the season and host Los Angeles beat winless Atlanta.

With a 7-0 mark, the defending World Series champion Dodgers are off to the club's best start since moving to LA. The only better starts in franchise history came in 1955 (10-0) and 1940 (9-0) when the team was located in Brooklyn.

The Braves fell to 0-6 for the first time since opening 0-9 in 2016.

May allowed just one hit and an unearned run. He struck out six and walked three in his first start since May 17, 2023. The right-hander missed last season while rehabbing from a torn flexor tendon in his right arm. In 2023, his season ended with Tommy John revision surgery.

Marlins 4, Mets 2: Sandy Alcantara pitched five effective innings for his first win in 19 months and host Miami beat New York despite getting only three hits.

Alcantara, who missed last season after undergoing Tommy John surgery, allowed two runs and four hits while striking out four in his first victory since Sept. 3, 2023. The 2022 NL Cy Young Award winner got a no-decision in his season debut March 27.

Graham Pauley hit a go-ahead, two-run double in the fourth and Kyle Stowers homered for the Marlins.

Rays 7, Pirates 0: Jake Mangum collected three hits and two RBI and Shane Baz struck out a career-high 10 in six innings as host Tampa Bay beat Pittsburgh.



KAREEM ELGAZZAR/AP

Texas Rangers starter Nathan Eovaldi needed just 99 pitches to throw a complete-game shutout against the Reds on Tuesday in Cincinnati.

Brandon Lowe homered as the Rays earned their third consecutive win. Lowe finished with three hits and three RBIs.

Baz (1-0) allowed seven hits and walked none in his first start of the season. Mason Englert pitched two innings before Mason Montgomery finished the nine-hitter for Tampa Bay.

Diamondbacks 7, Yankees 5: Eugenio Suárez hit a go-ahead grand slam with two outs in the eighth, Corbin Burnes pitched 4⅓ innings in his Arizona debut, and the visiting Diamondbacks handed New York its first loss.

Geraldo Perdomo started Arizona's rally with an RBI single off Tim Hill, and the D-backs loaded the bases on two walks. After Mark Leiter Jr. (0-1) struck out Josh Naylor, Suárez smashed his sixth career slam into the left-field seats for a 7-4 lead.

Arizona rallied for its second straight win after Burnes allowed four runs — two earned — and four hits in his first start since signing a \$210 million, six-year deal with the Diamondbacks as a free agent Dec. 30. The 2021 NL Cy Young Award winner struck out eight in a 98-pitch outing.

Blue Jays 5, Nationals 3: Bo Bichette hit a tiebreaking two-run single with two outs in the eighth inning and host Toronto won its third straight.

Bichette bounced an 0-2 pitch from Washington left-hander Jose A. Ferrer (0-1) down the first base line to drive in George Springer and Will Wagner.

Chad Green (1-0) got one out for

the win and Jeff Hoffman finished with a 1-2-3 ninth for his second save in two opportunities.

Twins 8, White Sox 3: Jose Miranda hit a tiebreaking two-run single in visiting Minnesota's five-run sixth inning, and the Twins beat Chicago for their first win of the season.

Ryan Jeffers and Ty France each had two hits for Minnesota, and Harrison Bader added a three-run homer in the ninth.

White Sox right-hander Shane Smith allowed two hits and two runs in 5⅓ innings in his major league debut. He struck out three and walked four.

Brewers 5, Royals 0: Eric Haase and Christian Yelich hit solo home runs to back a strong start by Chad Patrick and host Milwaukee beat Kansas City for its first win of the season.

Patrick gave the Brewers something they hadn't had thus far — three scoreless innings to begin the game. Milwaukee had surrendered 24 runs in the first three innings of its first four games.

Patrick fell an out short of qualifying for the win in his first career start, giving up three hits and three walks with five strikeouts in 4⅓ innings.

Angels 9, Cardinals 7 (11): Kyren Paris hit a tiebreaking single in the 11th inning, Yoan Moncada followed with a two-run double and visiting Los Angeles beat St. Louis.

The game was tied at 3 after nine innings before each team scored three runs in the 10th — and the Angels added three in the

11th. Victor Scott II had an RBI single in the bottom half, but Ryan Zeferjahn got two outs for his first career save.

Zeferjahn struck out Willson Contreras with a runner aboard to end it as the Angels outlasted the Cardinals in extra innings for the second consecutive night.

Giants 3, Astros 1: Logan Webb pitched seven strong innings, Willy Adames hit a two-run double and visiting San Francisco beat Houston.

Adames' double down the left-field line scored Christian Koss and Patrick Bailey. Heliot Ramos later added a solo homer, his third of the year, and that was all Webb (1-0) would need. He held the Astros to just one run and five hits with six strikeouts and no walks.

Houston's lone run came on a homer by José Altuve to the left-field Crawford Boxes, his first of the year, in the fourth.

Tigers 4, Mariners 1: Casey Mize (1-0) combined with three relievers on a one-hitter, and visiting Detroit beat Seattle.

Riley Greene homered for the second straight day as the Tigers got their second straight win after dropping their first three games. Kerry Carpenter, Colt Keith and Spencer Torkelson drove in runs.

The Mariners got their only hit on Victor Robles' leadoff single in the first inning. Seattle manufactured a run when Randy Arozarena walked and scored on Rowdy Tellez's sacrifice fly in the seventh.

Padres 7, Guardians 0: Michael King struck out 11 in five innings and Jackson Merrill homered for host San Diego, which started 6-0 for the first time in its 57-season history by beating Cleveland.

The Padres' previous best start was 4-0 in 1984, when they went to their first World Series.

King and four relievers combined on a two-hitter for San Diego, which has won the first two games of the three-game series between teams that made the postseason in 2024.

Cubs 7, Athletics 4: Seiya Suzuki hit a three-run homer in the first inning, Kyle Tucker added a solo shot in the third and visiting Chicago slugged away for a second straight game.

The A's answered in the bottom of the first on Brent Rooker's two-run drive, and Shea Langeliers had a two-run shot in the third.

Cubs left-hander Justin Steele (2-1) struck out six in 6⅓ innings and continued his impressive interleague success in his third start of 2025, helping Chicago win back-to-back games for the first time this season.

Washington forward now 4 goals from breaking Gretzky's record after win over Bruins

Tampa Bay at N.Y. Rangers
St. Louis at Winnipeg
Edmonton at Anaheim
Seattle at Los Angeles
Calgary at San Jose

NFL

BRIEFLY

DL Campbell signs with Arizona, set to play his 18th NFL season

TEMPE, Ariz. — Veteran defensive lineman Calais Campbell has agreed to a one-year contract with the Arizona Cardinals, returning to the franchise that drafted him for his 18th NFL season.



Campbell

Arizona announced the move Tuesday.

The six-time Pro Bowl selection played his first nine seasons in the league with the Cardinals and was a member of the team that made the Super Bowl in the 2008 season before losing to the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Campbell, 38, started all 17 games for the Miami Dolphins last season and had 52 tackles, five sacks, 12 quarterback hits, 12 tackles for a loss, five passes defended and a forced fumble. He was an All-Pro for the Jacksonville Jaguars in 2017 and has also played for the Baltimore Ravens and Atlanta Falcons.

Campbell's presence should help improve the Cardinals' defensive line, which was one of the weaker spots for the team last season. Arizona has made the playoffs just once (2021) over the past nine seasons.

Steelers owner: 'Positive signs' QB Rodgers will sign with team

PALM BEACH, Fla. — Steelers owner Art Rooney II says there are "positive signs" Aaron Rodgers will play in Pittsburgh.

The four-time NFL MVP worked out recently with new Steelers wide receiver DK Metcalf after previously visiting the team.

"We keep hearing that he's heading in our direction so that seems to be all signs are positive so far," Rooney told reporters at the NFL meetings on Tuesday.

Pittsburgh coach Mike Tomlin said Monday that he's staying in touch with Rodgers and is comfortable with Mason Rudolph as the starting quarterback.

"That's why we brought him back," Tomlin said. "I'm comfortable with that. And we've been there before."

The Steelers allowed Russell Wilson (Giants) and Justin Fields (Jets) to leave in free agency and brought back Rudolph. Pittsburgh hasn't won a playoff game since reaching the AFC title game following the 2016 season.

Rodgers is a free agent for the first time in his 20-year career. He could be contemplating retirement, signing with the Steelers or waiting for the Minnesota Vikings to express interest. The Vikings seem to ready to go with J.J. McCarthy.

Owners OK use of AAFC stats, which boosts Brown's win total

Paul Brown just moved up a few spots on the NFL career coaching wins list. The NFL owners approved a proposal by Competition Committee to incorporate player, coach and team statistics from the All-America Football Conference into the official NFL records. The AAFC existed from 1946-49 with Paul Brown's Cleveland team winning the title in each of those years. That gives Brown 52 additional regular season and playoff wins to his previous total of 170, moving him from 22nd place all time to seventh with 222.

From The Associated Press

League punts on 'tush push'

By ROB MAADDI
Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. — A decision on the future of the "tush push" has been pushed until next month.

NFL team owners had been set to vote Tuesday on Green Bay's proposal to ban the play that's helped the Philadelphia Eagles reach two Super Bowls and win one in February, but it was tabled until May.

Owners approved modifying the kickoff rule, expanding replay assist and revising overtime rules, along with other changes.

Postponing the "tush push" vote means the debate will continue while teams gather more information. Proponents of the play and those who oppose it presented strong arguments while the league's medical experts expressed safety concerns.

NFL Competition Committee chairman Rich McKay stressed the issues surrounding the play extend beyond safety because there's not enough data to indicate it's dangerous. The league has already said no injuries have been reported on a tush push.

"There are definitely some people that have health and safety concerns, but there's just as many people that have football concerns," McKay said. "So I wouldn't say it was because of one particular health and safety video or discussion. It was much more about the play, the aesthetics of the play, is it part of what football has been traditionally, or is it more of a rugby play? All those types of discussions. Health and safety is still there because of potential, but I wouldn't go beyond that."

The league prohibited pushing or pulling a player before a rule change in 2004.

McKay said the Packers asked to pull the proposal so they could reintroduce the previous language, study it and bring it up for discussion for a vote at the May meetings.

It takes 24 of 32 votes to approve rule changes.

As for changes that did pass, regular-season overtime rules now will match those in the playoffs and both teams will have a chance to get a possession even if the offense scores a touchdown on the opening drive. The proposal was amended to make overtime 10 minutes, not 15 minutes.

Owners also approved a proposal from the NFL Competition Committee to allow replay assist to consult on-field officials to overrule objective calls such as face-mask penalties, whether there was forcible contact to the head or neck area, horse-collar tackles or tripping if there was "clear and obvious" evidence that a foul didn't occur. Replay would also be able to overturn a roughing-the-kicker or running-into-the-kicker penalty if video showed the defender made contact with the ball.

Replay assist could wipe out a foul only if it was incorrectly called, but it will not be used to throw a flag if a penalty wasn't called.

The dynamic kickoff rule becomes permanent, with touchbacks moving to the 35-yard line instead of the 30.

Pittsburgh's proposal to allow teams to have one video or phone call with no more than five prospective unrestricted free agents during the two-day negotiation period was approved. Teams can now make travel arrangements with such players upon agreeing to terms.

Owners also approved a rule to permit



GODOFREDO A. VÁSQUEZ/AP

Philadelphia Eagles QB Jalen Hurts is pushed over the goal line by teammates to score a touchdown against the Kansas City Chiefs during the Super Bowl on Feb. 9 in New Orleans. NFL owners put off until May a vote on whether to ban the "tush push."

clubs to prepare kicking footballs ("K-Balls") before game day, similar to the process permitted for game footballs.

Detroit's proposal for playoff seeding to be based on winning percentage was also tabled for May. The proposal to stop automatic first downs from being awarded on defensive holding and illegal contact penalties didn't pass.

Sportsmanship

The NFL is expanding prohibited acts to include banning the "nose wipe" gesture that league executive Troy Vincent said is affiliated with gangs.

The unsportsmanlike conduct rule now states: "any violent gesture, which shall include but not be limited to a throat slash, simulating firing or brandishing a gun, or using the 'nose wipe' gesture, or an act that is sexually suggestive or offensive.

Vincent said "violent gestures" used by players increased 133% and "sexual taunting" went up 52%.

"We have to be responsible adults," Vincent said. "We're not trying to take away the spontaneous moments. But the shooting and the killing and the sexual acts — you're a professional."

Virtual measurements

The NFL will use Sony's Hawk-Eye technology for virtual line-to-gain measure-

ments next season, but officials will continue to spot the football and the chain crew will remain on the sideline in a secondary role.

The virtual measurement system allows the NFL to accurately and efficiently measure the distance between the spotted ball and the line to gain. The technology was tested extensively last season.

Christmas Day games

The NFL is planning a Christmas Day tripleheader this year after playing two games last year when the holiday fell on a Wednesday. Christmas falls on a Thursday this year.

2028 Olympics

Many NFL players have said they'd like to play flag football in the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles since the sport was added in 2023. But they'll need their teams to sign off on their participation.

"I've heard directly from a lot of players who want to participate and represent their country, whether it's United States or the country that they came from," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said. "I think that's something that we'll continue to discuss with, not just the union, but also the clubs. I think both of those are things that we'll probably resolve sometime in the next 60 days."

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Stigma: Fewer players worried about perception of seeking help

FROM PAGE 24

she needed to get help and get serious about her well-being after seeing the story about Katie Meyer, the Stanford goalie who died by suicide at her campus residence in March 2022.

The TCU guard said she personally invested in a sports psychologist “who kind of doubles as like a normal therapist at the same time.”

“And also, I think I’ve matured a lot,” Van Lith said. “I’m older than I was. When I was going through a lot of my issues, I was like 19. So I was really young and I didn’t know how to handle a lot of things.”

Van Lith began her career at Louisville and then transferred to LSU before landing at TCU.

Like the UConn backcourt, Texas guard Rori Harmon — who is not related to Ashley Harmon — had to rebound from a season-ending injury. Rori Harmon tore her ACL in December 2023.

“It is very mentally taxing,” she said of rehab, adding that while she didn’t speak with a sports psychologist, “it’s just not something you can do alone.”

Ashley Harmon’s group at Texas deals with common areas such as returning from an injury, or getting over a mental block on the court, but she said there has been a lot more time recently spent dealing with off-the-court issues.

UCLA star Lauren Betts is one of those athletes. The 6-foot-7 center, who has led the Bruins to their first

Final Four, has opened up in the past about her mental health issues.

“It does seem like mental health awareness has increased with social media, politics, COVID, all that wrapped into one,” said Harmon, who has been with Texas for nearly nine years.

Another stress point she has seen grow over the past few years is the transfer portal. Athletes feel they can talk in a safe place about transferring schools.

“We’re a space they can come to before they make any decisions,” she said. “The transfer portal is stressful, when to go or not go. Do you leave a place you’re familiar with to start over?”

Harmon said she was the first full-time staffer in the department for Texas. It’s grown now to eight or nine people in the department. UConn has several mental health professionals for all of its student-athletes to utilize.

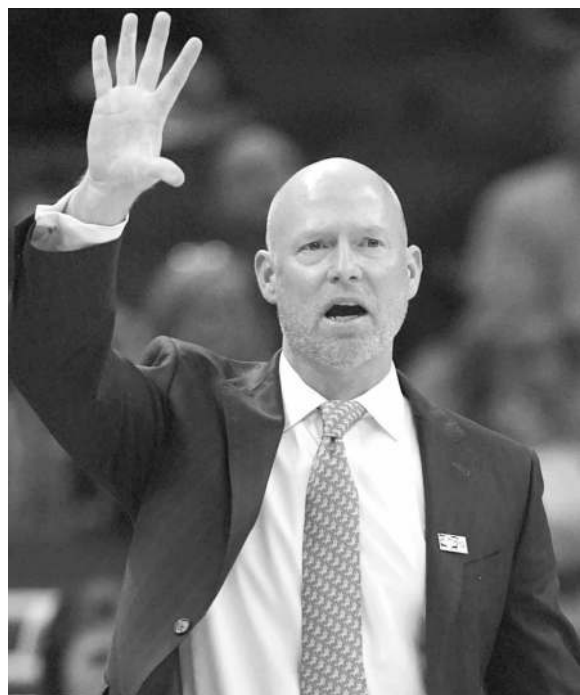
Joe Whitney has been at Tennessee for over two decades in charge of Mental Training at the school. Whitney said the school has a separate group to deal with mental health, but the two groups work hand in hand. His group offers more help for between-the-lines problems.

“We were one of the first to start going into it with a part-time mental health practitioner,” Whitney said. “Having people dedicated to student athletes when they feel those stresses and challenges is important.”



GERALD HERBERT/AP

Texas’ Rori Harmon and TCU’s Hailey Van Lith, two players who have spoken out on their own mental health issues, faced off in the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament on Monday. Texas won 58-47.



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

Buzz Williams, left, was hired from Texas A&M as the new head basketball coach for Maryland after Kevin Willard left for Villanova three days after the Terrapins were eliminated in the NCAA Tournament.

Maryland hires Texas A&M’s Williams after Willard’s exit

BY NOAH TRISTER
Associated Press

Maryland moved on quickly after Kevin Willard’s departure, hiring another coach with plenty of experience at a high level.

Buzz Williams is changing jobs again.

The Terrapins hired Williams as its men’s basketball coach Tuesday, bringing in an accomplished candidate following Willard’s exit to take the Villanova job. Williams arrives after six seasons at Texas A&M. He has also coached at Virginia Tech, Marquette and New Orleans.

He’ll be the first to coach in the Big East, ACC, Southeastern Conference and Big Ten, according to Sportradar.

“It is an honor and privilege to be named the head coach of the University of Maryland men’s basketball team,” Williams said in a statement. “I promise to uphold the history of Maryland basketball and make Terp Nation proud with the men who represent this institution.”

Maryland said it would introduce Williams at a news conference Wednesday.

Willard left for Villanova last weekend after leading the Terrapins to the Sweet 16.

Williams took the Aggies to the NCAA Tournament in each of the past three seasons.

“We would like to thank Buzz for his years of service heading up our men’s basketball program,” Texas A&M athletic director Trev Alberts said. “We are excited about the future of Aggie basketball, and we will find the right leader for our program.”

Williams’ first task is to bring some stability to Maryland after a couple of tumultuous weeks. Around the same time the Terps were beginning their NCAA Tournament run, Willard complained about a lack of support for the program at the school — and athletic director Damon Evans left for SMU.

Colleen Sorem is now the interim AD, and she was able to land Williams, who took Marquette to three Sweet 16s and Virginia Tech to one.

“We are thrilled to bring a coach of the caliber of Buzz Williams to the University of Maryland,” So-

rem said. “His incredible record of success at three prominent basketball programs speaks for itself, but we were equally impressed with his tireless work ethic and his dedication to building a program the right way. He embraces the high expectations here at Maryland and we are all excited to get started on this new era in Maryland basketball.”

The 52-year-old Williams from Greenville, Texas, is one of 12 active Division I head coaches to win at least one NCAA Tournament game at three different programs. His deepest run was in 2013 when he took Marquette to the Elite Eight.

Willard spent three seasons at Maryland, taking it to the NAAs twice. This season’s team — with a starting unit nicknamed the “Crab Five” — came on strong toward the end of the season. But the school confirmed Monday that two starters were in the transfer portal, and star big man Derik Queen was noncommittal about his future after throwing out a ceremonial first pitch at the Baltimore Orioles’ home opener.

Men’s, women’s finalists announced for John R. Wooden Award

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The John R. Wooden Award announced five finalists for its men’s and women’s awards as the nation’s outstanding college basketball player.

The men’s finalists are: Johni Broome, of Auburn; Walter Clayton Jr., of Florida; Duke’s Cooper Flagg, Mark Sears, of Alabama; and Braden Smith of Purdue. On the women’s side, the finalists are Paige Bueckers, of UConn; Lauren Betts, of UCLA; Madison Booker, of Texas; Hannah Hidalgo, of

Notre Dame; and JuJu Watkins, of Southern California.

Broome, Clayton and Flagg will lead their teams at the men’s Final Four in San Antonio this weekend, while Bueckers, Betts and Booker will star in the women’s Final Four in Tampa, Fla.

The other members of the men’s Wooden All-America team announced Tuesday are: L.J. Cryer, of Houston; Kam Jones, of Marquette; Ryan Kalkbrenner, of Creighton; Chaz Lanier, of Tennessee; and John Tonje

of Wisconsin. The players rounding out the women’s All-America team are: Georgia Amoore, of Kentucky; Ta’Niya Latson, of Florida State; Oliva Miles, of Notre Dame; Aneesah Morrow, of LSU; and Hailey Van Lith, of TCU.

Watkins suffered a season-ending ACL injury in the Trojans’ second-round NCAA Tournament win over Mississippi State.

“Thank you all for the incredible love and support. Seeing all your messages and kind words has meant the world to me. y’all have

given me so much hope,” Watkins posted on Instagram after the Trojans lost to Buckers and the Huskies in the Elite Eight on Monday.

“Right now, my heart is with my teammates — I wish I could have been out there battling, but I couldn’t be prouder of the fight we’ve fought together.”

The Wooden Award winner will be honored April 11 at the Los Angeles Athletic Club. Voting was done by sportswriters and sportscasters nationwide.

NBA ROUNDUP

Jokic scores career-high 61 in 2OT loss to Wolves

Associated Press

DENVER — Michael Malone called him Superman. At the moment, Nikola Jokic’s just super-tired.

The Denver Nuggets’ big man can’t wait to get some sleep after a career-best 61-point performance in which he played nearly 53 minutes. He didn’t leave the court after halftime of a 140-139 double-overtime loss to the Minnesota Timberwolves on Tuesday night.

His scoring spree was the most by a player in the NBA this season. Jokic also had 10 rebounds and 10 assists, notching the third 60-point triple-double in NBA history. Luka Doncic did it on Dec. 27, 2022 and James Harden did it on Jan. 30, 2018.

“The guy’s Superman,” Nuggets coach Malone said. “He’s on a whole other level, man. People say he’s not athletic, but not many guys can do what he does.”

Jokic’s previous career best was 56 points in a loss at Washington on Dec. 7. The franchise mark is held by David Thompson, who had 73 points at Detroit on April 9, 1978.

On Tuesday, Jokic attempted 24 free throws — making 19 — to match the team mark held by Carmelo Anthony. For all his exploits, Jokic had just one over-riding emotion: “Tired,” he said. “It was an exhausting game.”

Anthony Edwards gave the three-time NBA MVP major props. Jokic’s in a heated race for another MVP award with Oklahoma City’s Shai Gilgeous-Alexander.

“Nikola Jokic, he might be the best basketball player that I have ever seen close up, besides myself,” cracked Edwards, who had 34 points and 10 rebounds. “He is incredible. The MVP race is tough. I don’t know. He had 60. That is crazy.”

Of course, this game — a sixth straight

loss to Minnesota, including playoffs — will be remembered by Denver fans for Jokic’s exploits on the court. But it will also be remembered for a wild finish.

Leading 139-138 with around 14 seconds left, Russell Westbrook stole the ball and dished it over to Christian Braun who then sent it right back to Westbrook for a layup. But Westbrook’s layup clanked off the rim and started a break the other way.

Westbrook ran down the court and fouled Nickeil Alexander-Walker in the corner with 0.1 seconds remaining. The Timberwolves guard hit two of three free throws to steal the victory.

“Obviously, I feel awful for Russ,” Malone said. “That last play we get the turnover, we don’t convert, and then the foul. It was not from a lack of effort or care.

“Sometimes it goes like that, and that’s why we’ve just got to be strong. We’ve got to be resilient.”

Bucks 133, Suns 123: Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 37 points and host Milwaukee relied on a team-record shooting performance to snap a four-game skid by beating slumping, short-handed Phoenix.

The Bucks shot 68.9% (51 of 73) from the floor to set a franchise record for field-goal percentage. The previous record was 66.7% on Dec. 15, 1985, against Sacramento.

Milwaukee coach Doc Rivers improved his career record to 1,155-816 and tied Phil Jackson for seventh place in NBA history in regular-season wins.

The Suns lost their fourth straight. They were playing without Kevin Durant, Bradley Beal and Royce O’Neale.

Warriors 134, Grizzlies 125: Stephen Curry scored 52 points, including 12 3-pointers, as Golden State held on for a victory at Memphis.



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

Nuggets center Nikola Jokic shoots over Timberwolves center Rudy Gobert on Tuesday in Denver. Jokic played nearly 53 minutes and compiled just the third 60-point triple-double in league history, but Minnesota won 140-139 in double overtime.

Curry was 16-for-31 from the field, making 12 of his 20 shots from distance, the dozen 3-pointers matching his season high.

Ja Morant led the Grizzlies with 36 points and six assists, and Jaren Jackson Jr. finished with 22 points.

Bulls 137, Raptors 118: Coby White scored 28 points, Talen Horton Tucker had 27 points and host Chicago locked in a spot in the Eastern Conference play-in tournament with a victory over Toronto.

The Raptors were led by Ja’Kobe Walter, with 17 points while Immanuel Quickley added 17 points and nine assists.

Trail Blazers 127, Hawks 113: Shaedon

Sharpe had 33 points and 10 rebounds and Deni Avdija finished with 32 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists as Portland beat host Atlanta to snap a four-game skid.

Trae Young had 29 points and 15 assists for the Hawks.

Magic 116, Spurs 105: Paolo Banchero had 24 points and 10 rebounds, Franz Wagner added 24 points and Orlando rallied to a road victory at San Antonio.

Harrison Barnes scored 24 points for San Antonio, which lost its fifth straight.

Knicks 105, 76ers 91: OG Anunoby scored 27 points and host New York sent Philadelphia to its ninth straight loss.

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Not quite enough
Nuggets lose to T-wolves in 2OT despite
Jokic's career-high 61 points » **NBA, Page 23**



COLLEGE BASKETBALL

No stigma

Bueckers, Van Lith, Fudd among stars seeking out mental health specialists

By DOUG FEINBERG
Associated Press
TAMPA, Fla. — Paige Bueckers, Hailey Van Lith and Azzi Fudd have all reached out to a mental health professional for help at one point, seeking assistance to cope with the increasing pressure on college basketball players.

That pressure can come from high expectations, social media attention, sports bettors, the transfer portal or the grueling solitude when rehabbing from an injury. One major difference in today's sports world is a willingness to ignore the stigma attached to seeking professional help and acceptance of psychologists.

"I would say it's grown with an increased demand for services and how many student athletes are using it," said Ashley Harmon, who is the director of Clinical Behavioral Health at Texas. "This generation is a lot more open for seeking mental health. Athletes come in because of anxiety, depression, relationships, navigating things with coaches and teammates."

It is unclear how many athletes are meeting with a mental health professional, but several have been willing to talk openly about their experiences.

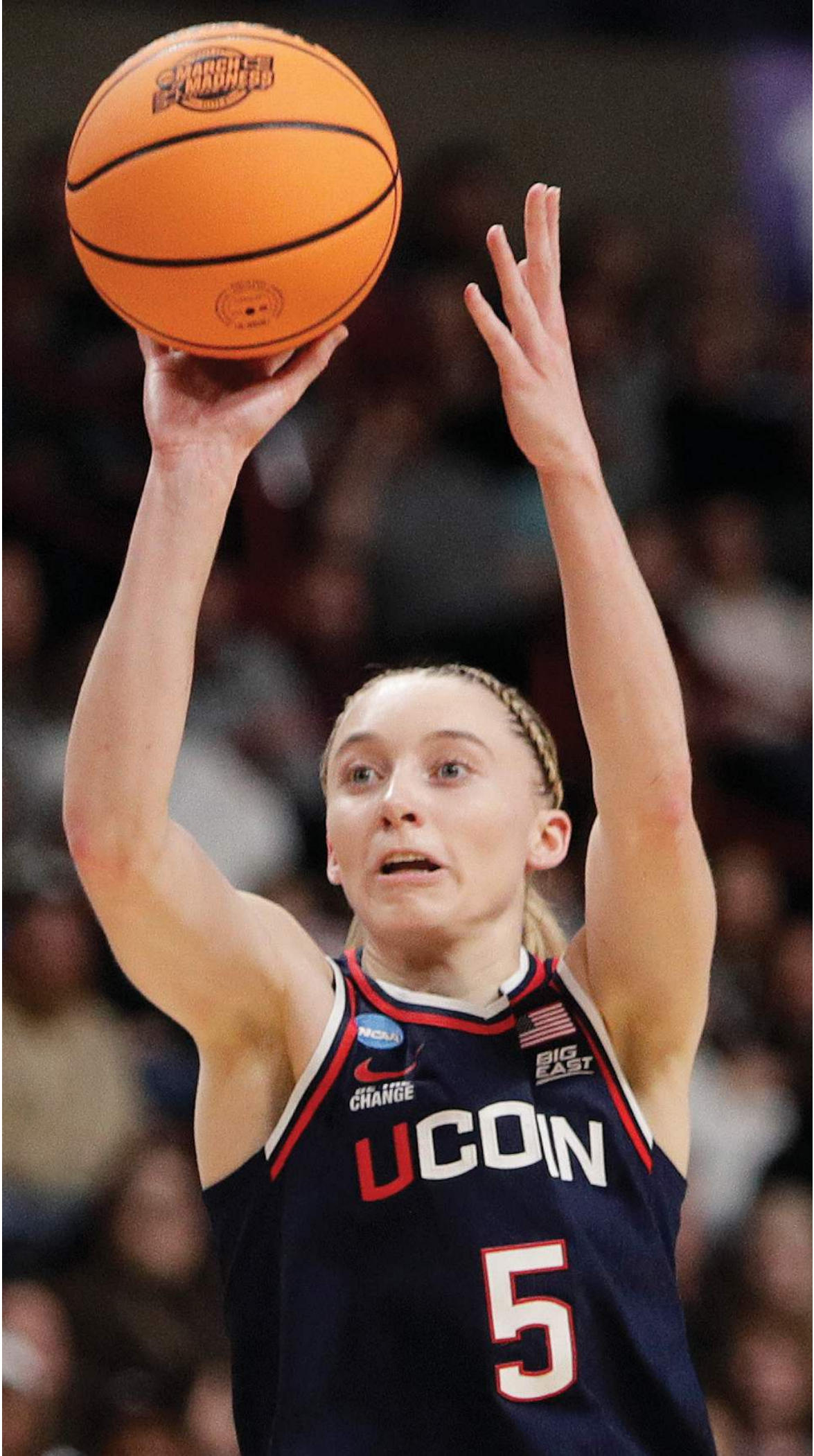
Coaches, teammates and family members can be critical sources of support for athletes, although sometimes more is needed, especially from someone not directly involved with their day-to-day lives.

Bueckers and Fudd, who both have come back from season-ending injuries during their UConn careers, have said that sports psychologists have helped them.

"It's just a grounding point of a person who you can go to and there's no judgments, it's a judgment-free zone, and they can just talk to you about anything," Bueckers said. "Just ease your nerves, calm you down, get you to focus on everything but what's going on in the present and just trying to be, I mean, the best version of yourself."

Van Lith said she first decided

SEE STIGMA ON PAGE 22



PHOTOS BY YOUNG KWAK/AP

UConn teammates Azzi Fudd, left, and Paige Bueckers are among a growing number of college basketball players to seek the help of mental health professionals.

Owners OK new rules, delay 'tush push' ban » **NFL, Page 21**

