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Houston fans hate to watch their star athletes leave town
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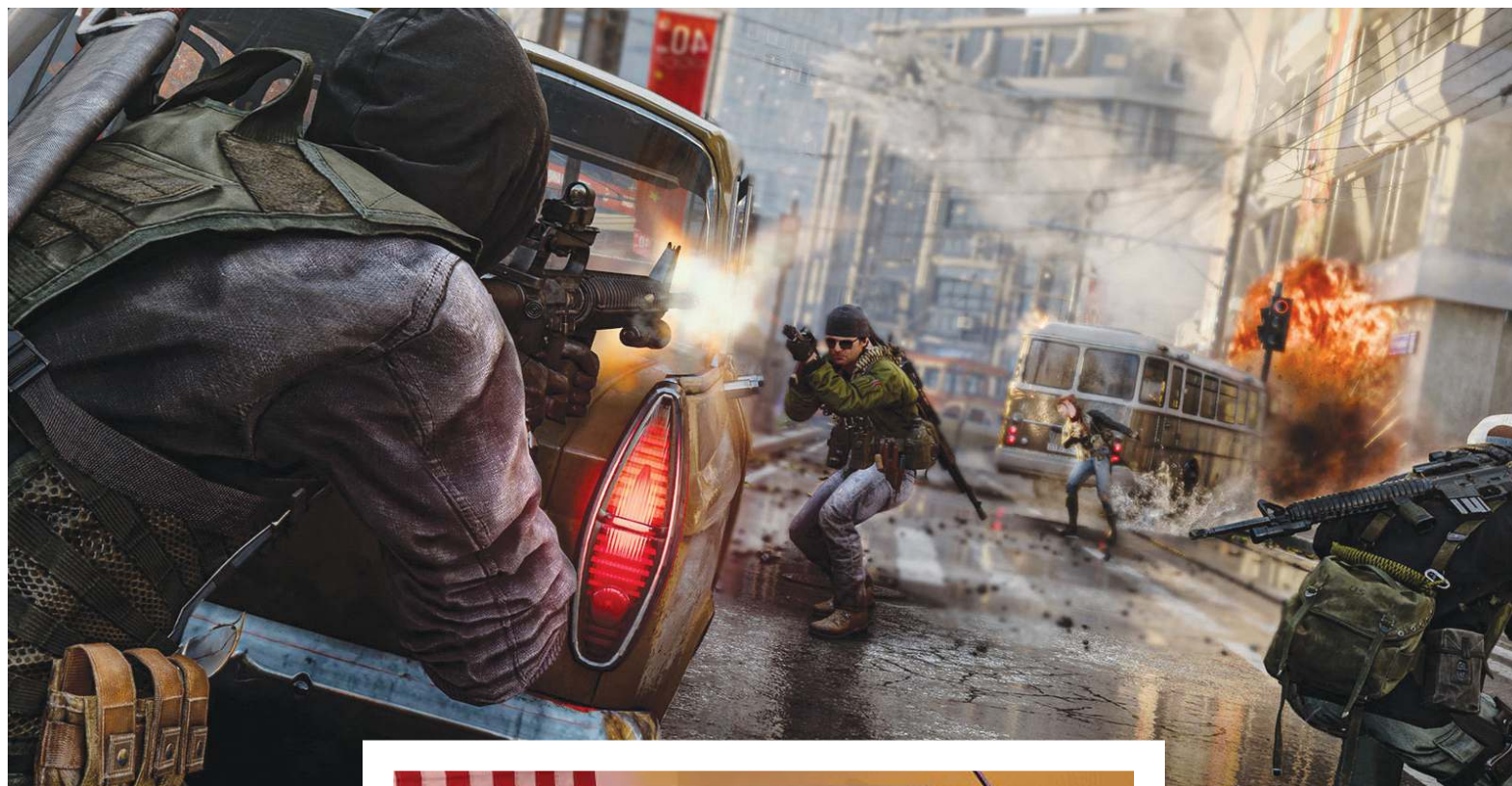
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CONTINGENCY EDITION

FRIDAY, MARCH 5, 2021

Free to Deployed Areas



AFRICOM must get White House OK for airstrikes, report says

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. Africa Command now needs White House approval to launch airstrikes against militants in Somalia as the Biden administration weighs whether to put limits on commanders for authorizing attacks, The New York Times reported this week.

The restrictions were applied while the White House examines former President Donald Trump's policy, which delegated decision-making on strikes to combatant commanders, unnamed U.S. officials said in the report.

The White House wants to develop its own rules for conducting strikes and commando raids in countries such as Somalia and Yemen, in order to reduce civilian casualties, the newspaper reported. White House approval also is being required for the CIA, the report added.

The order, issued by national security adviser Jake Sullivan on Jan. 20, was never announced publicly. AFRICOM did not immediately respond to a Stars and Stripes request for comment Thursday.

SEE AFRICOM ON PAGE 6



U.S. Africa Command

A screenshot from video shows airstrikes on an al-Shabab compound in Somalia on Jan. 1.

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

Jody Farmer spent the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic with little to do as she struggled with injuries from her military career, until an opportunity to coach college esports came along and restored some of the camaraderie she missed from her service.

Farmer, a 38-year-old Navy and Army veteran with a spinal cord injury, never thought of herself as a gamer. But she now spends up to 20 hours a week preparing two teams for collegiate video game tournaments.

"It wasn't something I was looking for, that's for sure," Farmer said. "But [esports] opened my mind to new possibilities of how I can be productive."

She is one of several veterans leading competitive gaming at the University of Oklahoma, which has announced \$100,000 in scholarships for students who want to work in the esports industry. The university's esports department opened last year after beginning as a club founded by Mike Aguilar, another veteran.

Millions of people watch gam-



Above: The first-person shooter "Call of Duty Black Ops Cold War" is popular for esports competitions.

Activision

Left: Jody Farmer, a wounded Army and Navy veteran, works as a coach for the esports team at the University of Oklahoma. She had been playing video games through online meetups hosted by the Wounded Warrior Project.

Lillie Farmer

Call her coach

Wounded Navy, Army veteran finds camaraderie in competitive esports

ers compete against each other in organized events, complete with live commentary like a basketball or football game. Revenues for es-

ports are projected to surpass \$1 billion this year, Business Insider reported in January.

Esports is more than just the

people playing the video games, said Aguilar, director of the university's esports department.

Each competition also has organizers, coaches, commentators, reporters and technicians working behind the scenes. He hopes his program can prepare students for these jobs in the future.

Aguilar recalled life as a military dependent in Germany in the 1980s, playing video games on an Atari 2600. The whole family would watch as he and his siblings took turns playing.

"Gaming was another method for us to stay connected," said

SEE COACH ON PAGE 6

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Google ends Chrome ad-tracking

Associated Press

LONDON — Google says it won't develop new ways to follow individual users across the internet after it phases out existing ad-tracking technology from its Chrome browser, a change that could shake up the online advertising industry.

Google says it's taking the move to protect user privacy. It's part of a broader shift in the industry as marketers such as Apple and regulators in the U.K., U.S. and elsewhere increasingly are seeking

ways to phase out more egregious data collection practices.

Still, there are concerns that it will add to the tech giant's already dominant power in online advertising. And the change won't affect Google's largest advertising money-makers: Search and YouTube.

"There's a growing idea that if you can't persuade consumers to part with their data willingly, you probably don't deserve it," said Brian Wieser, global president of business intelligence at media

agency GroupM. "Consumers are more aware of their data being used unwittingly. Brands (thinking long term) are asking 'do you really want to irritate consumers with messages that create a perception of privacy being violated in some form?' No."

The digital giant already said it would remove so-called third party cookies from Chrome. Those are snippets of code used by advertisers to record users' web-browsing histories in order to target personalized ads.

EXCHANGE RATES

| Military rates | | South Korea (Won) | 1125.49 |
|----------------------------|---------|---|---------|
| Euro costs (March 5) | \$1.17 | Switzerland (Franc) | .9242 |
| Dollar buys (March 5) | 0.8102 | Thailand (Baht) | 30.37 |
| British pound (March 5) | \$1.36 | Turkey (NewLira) | 7.4216 |
| Japanese yen (March 5) | 104.00 | (Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.) | |
| South Korean won (March 5) | 1098.00 | INTEREST RATES | |
| Commercial rates | | Prime rate | 3.25 |
| Bahrain (Dinar) | .3771 | Interest Rates Discount rate | 0.25 |
| Bahrain (Pound) | 1.3979 | Federal funds market rate | 0.07 |
| Canada (Dollar) | 1.2636 | 3-month bill | 0.05 |
| China (Yuan) | 6.4687 | 30-year bond | 2.25 |
| Denmark (Krone) | 6.1771 | | |
| Egypt (Pound) | 15.6800 | | |
| Euro | .8307 | | |
| Hong Kong (Dollar) | 7.7585 | | |
| Hungary (Forint) | 303.21 | | |
| Israel (Shekel) | 3.3084 | | |
| Japan (Yen) | 107.45 | | |
| Kuwait (Dinar) | .3026 | | |
| Norway (Krone) | 8.4976 | | |
| Philippines (Peso) | 48.51 | | |
| Poland (Zloty) | 3.79 | | |
| Saudi Arabia (Riyal) | 3.7514 | | |
| Singapore (Dollar) | 1.3318 | | |

WEATHER OUTLOOK



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RELOCATION GUIDE

Every Friday in the European and Pacific editions of Stars and Stripes AND online daily at www.stripes.com/relo

MILITARY

Rocket attack raises concerns about escalation

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The rocket attack on an air base in Iraq where American troops are stationed is a “troubling development” following the recent U.S. airstrike meant to deter attacks by Iranian-backed militia groups, the Pentagon’s chief spokesman said Wednesday.

“Nobody wants to see the situation escalate,” John Kirby told reporters at the Pentagon. “That is why when we conducted the strike last weekend in Syria, we said we believed it was measured and proportionate.”

Al Asad Air Base in Iraq was hit Wednesday morning by 10 rockets fired from multiple locations east of the base, according to Kirby. No injuries of U.S. service members have been reported, but an American civilian contractor suffered a “cardiac episode” while taking shelter and later died.

The rocket attack comes after the U.S. airstrike last Thursday on a compound in Syria manned by Iranian-back militia groups that included Kait’ib Hezbollah and Kait’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, which U.S. officials believe were behind other recent attacks against American and Iraqi forces.

Al Asad Air Base was also the site of the Jan. 8, 2020, ballistic missile attack by Iran in retaliation for the death of Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the commander of Iran’s elite Quds Force. More than 100 American service members suffered traumatic brain injuries from the attack.

On Wednesday, Iraqi security forces were at al Asad investigating and U.S. officials have yet to determine who is responsible for the attack or the extent of the damage, Kirby said. He did say, however, that the use of rockets is similar to previous attacks by

Shiite militias backed by Iran.

The base’s Counter-Rocket, Artillery, Mortar, or C-RAM systems, were engaged, but it is unclear how effective it was during the rocket attack. The C-RAM might have shot down other rockets or some of the impacts were from the rockets that were first hit by the system, Kirby said, but that is still being determined.

Last week, Kirby said the U.S. airstrike in Syria was meant to eliminate the compound’s use and send a “deterrence message” about any future attacks against American and Iraqis.

“And I said back then that we hope it will have a deterrent effect. We still do. So, nobody wants to see this escalate into as you described it, a tit for tat. That is not in our interest, it’s not in the Iraqi people’s interest,” Kirby said.

If the United States does decide to respond against those responsible for the al Asad attack, however, it will do so “in a manner of our own choosing,” Kirby said.

The activities of Iranian-backed militia groups in the region has been a concern for the U.S. for a long time, Kirby said, and he called out the previous administration’s actions regarding Iran as counterproductive, including its “maximum pressure campaign.”

“[The campaign] only emboldened Iran further to pull back its commitments under the [Iran nuclear deal] and certainly has done nothing to limit, constrain or curtail their other malign activities,” he said. “Because the previous administration pulled out of the Iran deal, now there’s no direct method of communicating as there was before.”

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ERIC DIETRICH/U.S. Air Force

Chief of Space Operations Gen. John W. Raymond delivers remarks during a ceremony unveiling the newly decorated Space Force hallway at the Pentagon in December. Raymond is calling for a set of guidelines for operating in space.

Space Force general wants established rules for space

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Just like the rules of the road and laws of the sea, Space Force commander Gen. John Raymond wants to see guidelines established for operating in space as more countries increase their involvement commercially and militarily.

“There are really no norms of behavior in space. It’s the Wild, Wild West,” Raymond, the chief of space operations for the force, said Wednesday during a virtual event with the National Press Club in Washington.

Space Force is now in its second year of existence. The service has grown from one person — Raymond — to enlisting and commissioning about 600 new members each year. The newest U.S. service branch also has been working with American allies, including the United Kingdom and France, that are establishing their own versions of a Space Force.

Space is becoming more competitive as commerce increases as well as military activity, Raymond said. The United States and its allies also face a number of threats, especially from China, which is developing

space capabilities and threats including jammers that affect communication and global positioning satellites, lasers that can damage satellites and missiles that can destroy satellites in low orbit, he said.

“So they’ll enjoy the same benefits that we’ve enjoyed by integrating space into our way of war and our way of life. But most concerning is that they’re developing a spectrum of threats to negate our access to space and to keep our nation and our allied partners from being able to realize the benefits that we derive from those space capabilities,” Raymond said.

He would not say Wednesday whether an attack on a satellite would constitute an act of war, but it would depend on the larger picture of what is happening in the world.

“In my opinion, there’s no such thing as a space war. It’s war,” Raymond said. “And nations might choose to conduct operations in that war ... either on the sea, or in the air, or on the ground, or now in space. And so, I think just like every other traditional domain of warfare, this is just integrated into that larger strategic conflict.”

The first U.N. treaty to address

space was the Outer Space Treaty from 1967, and it includes principles such as not placing nuclear weapons in space and that celestial bodies such as the moon could not be militarized. Four other U.N. treaties also govern space law, with the last one enacted in 1984.

“Other than that, there’s no rules. We really believe — I really believe — there needs to be some rules [on] safe and professional conduct. I think our allies and partners that we operate with also think that,” Raymond said.

Space Force is working on developing those norms of behavior for operating in space. Raymond said Space Force is transparent about operating in a safe and professional manner, though he understands that others might not follow the U.S. lead.

“I’m not naive to think if there was a set of norms of behavior that everybody’s going to follow them,” he said. “But I do think if you have those rules, it will help identify those that are running the red lights, if you will. And I think that would be important.”

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Pentagon probe slams ex-White House doctor’s behavior

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Department of Defense inspector general released a scathing report Wednesday on the conduct of Ronny Jackson, now a congressman from Texas, when he worked as a top White House physician.

The internal investigation con-

cluded that Jackson made “sexual and denigrating” comments about a female subordinate, violated the policy on drinking alcohol on a presidential trip and took prescription-strength sleeping medication that prompted worries from his colleagues about his ability to provide proper medical care.

The yearslong investigation into Jackson, who was elected to the House in November, examined allegations into his conduct during his time serving the administrations of both Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump.

Jackson, who gained notoriety for his over-the-top pronouncements

about Trump’s health, denied the allegations, and declared that he was the victim of a “political hit job” because of his close ties to the former Republican president.

After interviewing 78 witnesses and reviewing a host of White House documents, investigators found that Jackson, who achieved the rank of

rear admiral, failed to treat his subordinates with dignity and respect.

The report also said the investigation into Jackson “was limited in scope and unproductive” as Trump’s White House counsel insisted on being present at all interviews, which had a “potential chilling effect” on the probe.

MILITARY

Greater access to service dogs for vets sought

By SARAH CAMMARATA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A group of House lawmakers is reigniting calls to expand access to service dogs for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder amid a growing number of studies that show the treatment works.

Rep. John Rutherford, R-Fla., on Wednesday reintroduced the Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers Act that would create a \$10 million grant program led by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The bill proposes qualified nonprofit organizations receive a stipend worth \$25,000 per veteran to pair that person with a service dog.

Reps. Steve Stivers, R-Ohio, Michael Waltz, R-Fla., and Chris Pappas, D-N.H., joined Rutherford on Wednesday to voice support for the bill at an event to announce the legislation.

Waltz, who is a former Green Beret and a member of the House Armed Services Committee, said he personally suffered from PTSD and traumatic brain injury and has seen the benefits of service dogs.

"I've walked that walk and these dogs absolutely work. ... We're gonna get this bill passed,"

he said.

When Rutherford reintroduced the PAWS Act in 2019, it drew bipartisan support in the House, but further action on it failed. The legislation was first introduced in 2016.

Rutherford said he's hopeful that it will become law this time following the release of a draft study from the VA that has "proven scientifically, it works — something that we have known all along."

The VA has not publicly released the draft study and did not immediately respond to a request Wednesday asking for a copy of the report.

The department restarted a congressionally mandated study in 2015 on service dogs and PTSD. The study's results were expected in summer 2020, but were never released.

The rate of suicide among veterans has steadily increased in recent years, according to a VA study released in 2020 that analyzed data from 2005-18. Veterans accounted for 13.8% of all deaths by suicide in 2018, according to the report, despite increased public awareness of the issue.

Rory Diamond, the CEO of K9s For Warriors, one of the largest



PHOTOS BY JOE GROMELSKI/Stars and Stripes

Veteran David Crenshaw, with his service dog, Doc, at his side, speaks at a Capitol Hill news conference to promote House bill, H.R. 1022 on Wednesday. Behind him, from left, are K9s For Warriors CEO Rory Diamond and veteran Becca Stephens and her service dog, Bobbi.

nonprofit organizations connecting service dogs with veterans, said at the event that lowering veteran suicide rates underscores the importance of the bill.

"We have seen the magic of what a service dog can do for a disabled veteran who's suffering from truly extreme PTSD. We are on the front line of fighting veteran suicide... and we are beating the odds. That's why this act is so important and why it must be passed," he said.

Among the 660 veterans that K9s For Warriors has served, 72% of them have made a suicide attempt before they reach the group, Diamond said.

Between 20 and 22 veterans die by suicide each day, Stivers said.

The congressman, who introduced a similar bill this week, pointed to research from Kaiser Permanente that found veterans who work with service dogs show fewer symptoms of PTSD and depression, have a lower risk of substance abuse and improved overall mental health.

Stivers said there are two different bills, but "we are one, working together. One for all and all for one on dog veteran therapy."

The VA has "finally released a draft study that recognizes what the science at Purdue and Kaiser Permanente and what K9s For Warriors recognizes every time they graduate a class: Service dogs make a huge difference for our veterans suffering from PTSD. They save their lives," he said.

Funding that would be provided under the PAWS Act would benefit nonprofits such as K9s For Warriors that often train and connect service dogs to veterans with a mental illness with no charge.

Diamond said a service dog can play a variety of roles in a veteran's life, more than basic needs such as constant companionship.

In the midst of a panic attack or another mental health crisis, if the person can focus on their dog and continues to pet the animal, symptoms such as cloudy vision, sweating, heightened heart rate and anxiety can start to fade, Diamond explained.

"If they do that enough times when those things happen, it stops happening... and that's the genius. It's just like an amazing bridge



Veteran David Crenshaw and his service dog, Doc.

back out into the world," he said.

The VA does not fully fund service dog programs now, according to K9s For Warriors. The VA also pushed back on efforts like the PAWS Act, citing a lack of research on the benefits of the treatment, according to a 2019 New York Times report.

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Rep. Steve Stivers, R-Ohio, speaks at the news conference.

Sailor killed in Calif. military convoy collision identified

Stars and Stripes

Authorities in California have identified the sailor who died Tuesday in a freeway accident that injured five others, according to The Associated Press.

Aaron Michael Fish, 26, died in the pileup on southbound Inter-

state 5 near San Onofre State Beach, just north of Oceanside, the AP reported Wednesday, citing the San Diego County Medical Examiner's Office.

Stars and Stripes could not confirm Fish's rank and job title.

Four sailors in the crash were

hospitalized for minor injuries and one, in his 20s, was hospitalized with severe injuries, according to the report.

The accident happened while the sailors, assigned to the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5, were driving in a convoy en route to

Camp Pendleton to pick up equipment, according to a Facebook post from the unit's official page.

The accident happened at 6:50 a.m., according to the California Highway Patrol.

"For reasons that are still under investigation, the convoy began to

slow, causing a chain reaction collision," CHP said in a news release. "One of the truck trailers was pushed forward into a cab, causing fatal injuries to the driver."

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EUROPE

EU food import rules may leave US bases lacking

**By JENNIFER H. SVAN
AND MARCUS KLOECKNER**
Stars and Stripes

Thousands of items sold in commissaries and exchange stores at U.S. military bases in Europe could soon be missing from shelves because of previously unenforced European Union rules on food imports, military and industry officials said.

The issue arose unexpectedly after 17 shipping containers destined for U.S. facilities were held up last week in Germany for not having the proper EU health certificates, said Stephen Rossetti, president of the American Logistics Association, which represents product manufacturers and distributors.

The EU requires imports with animal byproducts to meet its own standards, but in the past has allowed U.S. items for consumption on American military bases in Europe to pass through without the certificates, Rossetti said. The containers were released “but with a warning — ‘no more,’” he said.

Commissary and Exchange officials said this week their stores haven’t yet experienced product shortages from port delays in Europe. They are working with federal agencies to resolve the issue with the EU and continue to monitor the flow of products, they said. Military Times first reported on the potential shortages



Stars and Stripes

Newly enforced European Union restrictions on food imports could cause shortages of some items sold in commissaries and exchange stores.

The restrictions apply to dry food items that contain animal components, “shipped via ocean carriers solely for U.S. service members and their families while they perform national security missions in Europe,” Defense Commissary Agency spokesman Kevin Robinson said.

The agency will “work with our military resale partners and industry suppliers to ensure our customers in Europe are supported,” he said.

Some 2,000 items sold by the commissary could be affected if more shipments are

held up, ranging from baby food and canned meats to powdered milk and pet food, officials said.

But it would not affect U.S.-shipped products kept at the Kaiserslautern cold storage facility near Ramstein Air Base, because frozen or chilled products and fresh meat already have health certificates.

“If they impose this across the board, it would be catastrophic for military families who are still coping with concerns about product shortages during the pandemic,” Rossetti said. “It could cause empty shelves; it could cause some facilities to shut down.”

The Exchange carries about 5,700 U.S.-origin food items with animal byproducts, such as honey, creamer, frosting, lunch meat and pork rinds, said Chris Ward, an Army and Air Force Exchange Service spokesman.

A million cases of food in more than 400 shipping containers in various stages of transit could be immediately affected, Rossetti said. There’s up to a six-week pipeline to get products to Europe and many items have expiration dates, so border delays could pose problems, he said.

The new enforcement actions could also affect base restaurants, the school lunch program and dining halls, officials said.

The Defense Logistics Agency’s prime food services vendor has experienced is-

sues with health certificates in Germany and Poland due to new local inspection policies, said Patrick Mackin, a DLA spokesman.

“We are continuing to keep a close watch on the situation, but at this time there hasn’t been a major impact on customer support,” he said.

The American Logistics Association contends that the certificates, which show conformity with EU health requirements, shouldn’t apply to its members “because they never have and it’s U.S. to U.S., so why now?” Rossetti said. “It’s sudden, it appears arbitrary ... and sporadic.”

The logistics association, which is working with federal agencies, would like to see a waiver or a statement from the EU that they’re not going to require the certifications, he said.

“At the very least we need time ... a delay on this so it can be sorted it out,” he said.

An official at the German Central Customs Authority referred Stars and Stripes to Germany’s veterinary and import office in Hamburg, saying entrance documents are reviewed by border veterinarians who decide whether to let in a product.

DeCA is coordinating with the Foreign Agricultural Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture on current and future EU requirements, Robinson said.



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MILITARY



TEDX TALKS

Mike Aguilar, founder of the esports department at the University of Oklahoma, gives a talk about the emerging competitive video gaming industry in a speech posted on YouTube in 2019.

Coach: Gamers drawn to teamwork

FROM PAGE 1

Aguilar, who served in the military like his father and grandfather. "It was gaming that my dad and I would bond over."

He recruited Farmer, a fellow veteran, to become a coach for the game "Call of Duty."

The culture of the shooting game can be toxic at times, Aguilar said, as many of the game's fans are used to playing alone against random people, with little accountability for bad behavior. Aguilar saw Farmer, a nontraditional student and female veteran in her 30s, as a "unique gem" who could mentor gamers.

Farmer had initially been drawn to gaming because she missed the team spirit of the mil-

itary. She began playing the game when the pandemic hit, and felt less alone playing with other veterans in the Wounded Warrior Project.

Without this community, "I don't know how I would have made it through the summer," Farmer said in a Facebook post.

She found people, including her son and a band of disabled veterans from England, willing to help her learn the game.

Now she teaches her players the strategy of "Call of Duty," which Farmer likens to another war-themed game: chess. She runs her players through drills that teach them key routes in each map, situations they may face, and above all, teamwork.

Working with your teammates makes the victories sweeter, said Jonathan Tolle, an Air Force veteran who also joined the esports program at OU.

"Actually knowing the people you're playing with and competing for your school, that's why I like it," Tolle said.

Farmer's injuries from her military service have prevented her from doing a lot of things she once could do, such as running. And like other veterans, she misses the teamwork she experienced while serving.

"Esports allows us to get that back," Farmer said.

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AFRICOM: Strikes have increased in Somalia

FROM PAGE 1

Since the Jan. 20 order, there have been no reported airstrikes in Somalia by AFRICOM, which conducted its last strikes there on Jan. 19. Those came days after the U.S. military finished moving about 700 troops from the country, following a Trump administration order to reposition forces.

In recent years, the number of

strikes has increased in Somalia, where the al-Qaida-aligned militant group al-Shabab has waged a guerrilla war for more than a decade.

AFRICOM has come under criticism by advocacy groups, which have argued that airstrikes over the years have killed more civilians than publicly acknowledged.

The command has disputed

those claims and defended the attacks, which they say have helped blunt al-Shabab's momentum. AFRICOM has substantiated five civilian deaths in recent years.

In 2020, AFRICOM launched 52 airstrikes in Somalia, down from 63 in 2019.

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Gunmen kill at least 7 workers, bomb kills doctor in Afghanistan

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — At least seven Afghan civilians were shot and killed by a group of gunmen overnight in the country's east and a physician died when a bomb attached to her rickshaw exploded on Thursday, provincial officials said.

Islamic State in a statement claimed responsibility for the bombing, saying its fighters had detonated a so-called sticky bomb placed on the vehicle of a woman. The statement claimed she worked for the Afghan intelligence service

in Jalalabad, the capital of eastern Nangarhar province.

Gen. Juma Gul Hemat, provincial police chief in Nangarhar, said the shooting attack victims were workers at a plaster factory in the Sorkh Rod district. Police arrested four suspects, he added.

The laborers were all from Afghanistan's minority Shiite Hazara community, according to Farid Khan, spokesman for the provincial police chief. Some had come from the capital of Kabul, as well as central Bamyán and northern

Balkh provinces, to work in the factory.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for that attack, but militants from Islamic State have declared war on Shiites and frequently target the Hazaras. Eastern Afghanistan has witnessed and increase of attacks by IS, including an attack on Tuesday in which three women who worked at a private TV station were gunned down in Jalalabad.

ISIS claimed responsibility for killing the three women — Mursal

Report card on DOD management is a mixed record

By JOHN M. DONNELLY
CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department has made progress tackling management problems in the last two years but "significant" challenges remain, the Government Accountability Office told Congress in its latest annual assessment of "high-risk" challenges across the government.

Of 36 areas identified by the GAO, five are chiefly a concern for the Pentagon. For other issues, such as cybersecurity or security clearance reviews, the Pentagon is one of the departments that plays a partial role in dealing with the problem.

The report cites Pentagon progress in a number of areas but calls out the department for falling short on several issues. One top concern, according to the GAO, is the lack of an adequate plan for replacing the functions performed by the Pentagon's chief management officer, a position terminated a few months ago by the fiscal 2021 defense authorization act, or NDAA.

Another Pentagon problem area, the report said, is shortages of expert personnel in cybersecurity and software. And a third imperative is for the Pentagon to decide which organization will lead the way in protecting certain critical technologies.

Comptroller General Gene Dodaro, head of the GAO, presented the report Tuesday to a hearing of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

"Tens of billions of dollars in additional benefits and substantial improvements to the health, well-being, and security of the nation would be achieved by fully addressing high-risk issues," Dodaro wrote in the report, referring to

GAO's governmentwide recommendations.

The Defense Department's chief management officer was created, at the GAO's urging, in the fiscal 2017 NDAA to centralize control over Defense Department business operations in an office that would become, at least for a few years, one of the department's most powerful.

However, Congress was unimpressed with the work of the new office. Lawmakers disbanded it in the latest NDAA and gave the Pentagon a year to transfer the duties to other offices.

The Pentagon expected Congress to do that and announced in January a plan to divvy up the CMO's work, giving the Defense Department comptroller many of the CMO's old duties. Now comes the GAO with a warning that key oversight functions could fall through the cracks during this transition.

"While DOD's actions over the past two years demonstrate a continued leadership commitment to business transformation, uncertainty about the responsibility for spearheading DOD reform and efficiency efforts calls into question whether this leadership commitment can be sustained," the report said.

It is not clear, the GAO said, whether the offices taking on business oversight roles will have appropriate "authorities and resources."

The GAO also warned that such reorganizations take years.

"We have previously reported that in cases in which leadership changed — or was briefly absent — interagency collaborative mechanisms and related progress either disappeared or were considerably hindered," it said.

Wahidi, Sadia Sadat and Shahnaz Raufi. The three left work together and were gunned down in separate attacks while on their way home, almost at the same time.

But many other attacks have gone unclaimed. The government blames most on the resurgent Taliban, who today hold sway over nearly half the country. The Taliban, in turn, deny any role in some of the attacks and blame the government.

In Thursday's bombing in Jalalabad, the female doctor was killed

while on her way to work at the provincial hospital's maternity ward.

Meanwhile in western Herat province, 39 people, both military and civilians, were wounded when security forces launched an operation to arrest a local militia commander, sparking a firefight, the governor's office said. The wounded, including three children, are being treated.

The militiaman was not arrested and remains on the run, said Wahid Qatali, the provincial governor in Herat.

PACIFIC

Missile agency seeks input on 2 new Hawaii radar sites

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The Missile Defense Agency is once again seeking public feedback on potential locations in Hawaii for a radar defense array in Hawaii after earlier dropping two proposed sites in the wake of public opposition.

The agency is evaluating two sites for the Homeland Defense Radar, which would identify, track and classify long-range ballistic missile threats while still in mid-course flight.

The sites being considered are the U.S. Army Kahuku Training Area on the northern tip of Oahu and the U.S. Navy Pacific Missile Range Facility on the island of Kauai. Two sites on Oahu in

earlier consideration have been dropped, the agency said in a notice first published last month in the Federal Register.

The 2017 National Defense Authorization Act required the agency to develop plans to construct and operate a so-called "discrimination radar" to defend Hawaii against missile threats by quickly and narrowly identifying objects as lethal or nonlethal.

The most recent defense act passed in January provided further funding for "siting and development" of the Hawaii radar "should a deployment decision be made and is funded," the agency said in the Federal Register.

Construction of a similar ra-

dar in Alaska has been mostly completed, the agency said in a news release late last month. The Long-Range Discrimination Radar at Clear Air Force Station, about 90 miles southwest of Fairbanks in central Alaska, will begin initial operations later this year.

In Hawaii, the agency held "scoping meetings" for the public in June 2018 for the original three locations, all on Oahu. Some Oahu residents expressed concern over yet another military facility on an island that already hosts the four services and thousands of service members.

Some opponents of one site were worried about overdevelopment, while some Native Ha-

waiians promised to protest a second site over cultural issues.

But the agency also determined that one of the sites — near the U.S. Air Force Kaena Point Satellite Tracking Station — was impractical because of radio frequency interference between the two facilities.

Airspace above the site ultimately selected would be restricted because the radar would emit high-intensity radiation that could adversely affect aircraft electrical systems, the agency said.

The public input now sought by the Missile Defense Agency is being gathered in advance of an environmental impact statement for the proposed sites, should the Defense Department

move ahead with funding the project, the agency said.

Due to pandemic restrictions, no in-person public meetings are being held. Instead, the agency is holding an "online open house" at <https://hdrheis.com> through April 12.

In addition, two conference-call public meetings are being held. The first on March 23 is from 4-6 p.m. Hawaii time at 855-756-7520, access code 69947. The call on March 25 is from 6-8 p.m. Hawaii time at the same number, access code 70114.

The information provided in each call is identical, the agency said.

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Police make arrest after incident at Yokota Base

By SETH ROBSON
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A former U.S. service member was arrested this week after allegedly throwing a sheet of glass at an entry gate late last year at the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo.

Louis Bonamigo, 51, an unemployed man living in Mizuho, a city near Yokota Air Base, was taken into custody Tuesday on suspicion of forcible obstruction of business, a Tokyo Metropolitan Police spokesman said Wednesday.

Traffic and military police operations were interrupted at Gate 20 after the glass shattered there at 4:40 a.m. Dec. 15, according to the spokesman. It's customary in Japan for

some government officials to speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

There were no injuries, according to Japanese broadcaster TBS. Police are looking into links to other incidents involving objects thrown onto the base, including a sofa in December and a large plastic box in September.

A spokeswoman for Yokota's 374th Airlift Wing, Kaori Matsukasa, in an email Thursday declined to comment because Bonamigo is not in Japan under the status of forces agreement. She referred questions to the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, which did not immediately respond Thursday.

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General relieved for security issue that allowed defection

By JOSEPH DITZLER
AND YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

A South Korean major general has been relieved of his command after his troops failed to quickly apprehend a North Korean defector who crawled into the country last month through a seaside drainage pipe, the defense ministry said Thursday.

Several times, surveillance cameras spotted the intruder, who swam across the border in chilly East Sea waters wearing a dive suit. But guard troops of the 22nd Infantry Division failed to notice, according to earlier accounts from the Ministry of National Defense.

Troops took the man into custody at 7:20 a.m. Feb. 16, six hours after he entered the country and three hours after guards finally spotted him on camera at 4:16 a.m. He was captured inside the civilian control

line, a six-mile-wide swathe south of the Demilitarized Zone that the military keeps secure.

The division commander, Maj. Gen. Pyo Chang-soo, was relieved and referred to a disciplinary committee of the defense ministry, according to a text message Thursday from a ministry spokesman. The major general's superior, Eighth Army Corps commander Lt. Gen. Kang Chang-koo, was also issued a "stark warning" in writing from the army's chief of staff.

Four other senior officers will be referred to a disciplinary committee and 18 service members will be referred to the ground operations command for performance reviews, according to the spokesman.

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

Navy says J&J's vaccine is coming to Japan

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Hang in there, more coronavirus vaccines, including a new one-dose version, are bound for U.S. bases in Japan, a pair of Navy medical officers said this week.

The U.S. military in coming weeks expects further shipments of the Moderna vaccine, the two-shot series that first arrived Dec. 26 at bases in the country. It also expects shipments of a new vaccine developed by Johnson & Johnson, also called the Janssen vaccine after the pharmaceutical division of the company that developed it.

The Johnson & Johnson dose is 85% effective in preventing severe or critical cases of COVID-19 at least 28 days after vaccination, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The FDA approved the drug for emergency use on Saturday. COVID-19 is the respiratory disease caused by the coronavirus.

Medical officers at Yokosuka Naval Base south of Tokyo and Sasebo Naval Base on the southern island of Kyushu bolstered their audiences with encouraging news Wednesday and Thursday during



MATTHEW CAVENAILE/U.S. Navy

A Navy hospitalman fills syringes with the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine aboard the USS America at Sasebo Naval Base, Japan, on Feb. 26.

Facebook Live sessions, but they were short on details of when and how much vaccine they expect to arrive.

"I know it is frustrating. It is frustrating waiting and I am frustrated with you, and for you," said Capt. Carolyn Rice, a physician and commander of Yokosuka Naval Hospital, on Thursday.

Ninety percent of those offered the vaccine at Yokosuka have accepted it, she said. That's higher

than the 70% of all military personnel offered the shots, so far, the Defense Department said recently.

The Moderna vaccine is one of three approved by the FDA for emergency use, which means the military cannot mandate its use. It must be taken voluntarily. The other is the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

More than a third, 33%, of the base population has received the

first dose of Moderna and 6% has received the second, Rice said.

Bad weather and deliveries to sites that were designated after Yokosuka and other bases in Japan slowed the rollout of vaccine supplies the past three weeks, Rice said.

Her counterpart at Sasebo's Branch Health Clinic, Cmdr. Kyle Dohm, said he expects further vaccine deliveries within two to three weeks. He appeared in a Facebook Live session Wednesday.

Everyone at Sasebo waiting on a second Moderna shot should have it by the end of March, Dohm said.

The clinic is inoculating everyone in phase 1a and 1b on the Defense Department priority list, or schema, he said. Phase 1a consists of health care workers, and emergency services and public safety personnel. Phase 1b are service members deployed or preparing to deploy, essential workers and some people 75 and older.

The remaining population, the bulk of those waiting for the vaccine, constitute phase two.

"Hopefully by the time April rolls around we'll go into that phase two, or that healthy population," Dohm said, "and some of

our high-risk folks may be coming sooner than that, I don't know."

The Defense Health Agency set a goal of inoculating 80% of the 9 million people in the military health care system by July 4, Rice and Dohm said.

Other U.S. services in Japan in some cases are ahead of the Navy in the DOD schema, both said. The reason is the Army and Air Force are 1/20th of the Navy's population in Japan, which is about 40,000 people, according to Dohm and Rice.

"Some of the other installations they've maybe been able to move into that phase two way before the Navy has," Dohm said.

A representative for U.S. Forces Japan did not respond Thursday to a request from Stars and Stripes for further information.

Dohm also said the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is coming to Sasebo.

"We do expect to get some of that vaccine here in the next month or so, maybe as soon as next week," he said. "It may come, it may not. But we will have that as an option at some point in time."

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US military in Japan, S. Korea report 21 cases

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — U.S. Forces Korea reported 16 new coronavirus patients Thursday, the bulk of them new arrivals to the peninsula, and U.S. commands in Japan reported five new cases.

In Japan, the capital city reported another 279 infections Thursday, according to the public broadcaster NHK. About 270 people per day are still contracting the virus in Tokyo, according to metro government data.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga on Thursday extended the coronavirus state of emergency in Tokyo and the surrounding prefectures of Saitama, Kanagawa and Chiba another two weeks, its second extension, according to Nikkei Asia. The emergency was set to expire Sunday.

The emergency measures, though voluntary, mean restaurants and other businesses close by 8 p.m., businesses opt for telework when possible and residents refrain from unnecessary travel.

U.S. bases in and around Tokyo have imposed similar restrictions. However, some are easing off-duty travel bans as their case numbers diminish.

The Marine Corps on Thursday had four people test positive on Okinawa, two at Camp Foster and one each at camps Hansen and Kinser, according to a Facebook post. The Marines provided no further information.

Kadena Air Base, also on Okinawa, reported one new coronavirus patient, a person who tested positive before leaving quarantine; that patient had recently traveled outside Japan, according to a Facebook post.

In South Korea, the Central Disease Control Headquarters reported another 401 infections Wednesday, including 117 in Seoul and 177 in



MATTHEW KEELER/Stars and Stripes

People wait to cross a busy intersection outside Osan Air Base, South Korea, on Tuesday.

Gyeonggi province, where the largest U.S. installation, Camp Humphreys, is located.

A soldier at Camp Casey, north of Seoul, who fell ill with symptoms of COVID-19, the coronavirus respiratory disease, tested positive Wednesday, according to USFK.

Two people at Humphreys, 50 miles south of Seoul, tested positive Tuesday. One is a soldier discovered through a screening program. The other is a South Korean contractor who fell ill and last visited Humphreys on Saturday, according to a USFK press release.

Another 13 people tested positive after arriving in South Korea between Feb. 12 and Monday, according to USFK.

One service member arrived Monday from the U.S. at Osan Air Base on a government-chartered passenger flight. Another eight service members and four dependents arrived on commercial flights at Incheon International Airport on Feb. 12, 16-18, 23, Friday and Sunday, according to USFK.

Six came up positive on their first mandatory test before entering quarantine; seven tested positive on the test required to exit quarantine. They are all quarantined at Humphreys, Osan or Kunsan Air Base.

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US jobless claims tick up to 745,000

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits edged higher last week to 745,000, a sign that many employers continue to cut jobs despite a drop in confirmed viral infections and evidence that the overall economy is improving.

Thursday's report from the Labor Department showed that jobless claims rose by 9,000 from the previous week. Though the pace of layoffs has eased since the year began, they remain high by historical standards. Before the virus flattened the U.S. economy a year ago, applications for unemployment aid had never topped 700,000 in any week.

All told, 4.3 million Americans are receiving traditional state unemployment benefits. Counting supplemental federal unemployment programs that were established to soften the economic damage from the virus, an estimated 18 million people are collecting some form of jobless aid.

In Texas, applications for benefits surged by nearly 18,000 in Texas in the aftermath of freezing weather and power outages. And jobless claims rose by more than 17,000 in Ohio, where the weekly totals have been thrown off by potentially fraudulent claims.

NATION

Police request 60-day stay of Guard at Capitol

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Capitol Police have requested that members of the National Guard continue to provide security at the U.S. Capitol for another two months, The Associated Press has learned. Defense officials say the new proposal is being reviewed by the Pentagon.

The request underscores the continuing concerns about security and the potential for violence at the Capitol, two months after rioters breached the building in violence that left five people dead. And it comes as law enforcement was on high alert Thursday around the U.S. Capitol after intelligence uncovered a “possible plot” by a militia group to storm the building.

The potential plot is tied to the far-right conspiracy theory promoted by QAnon supporters that former President Donald Trump will rise again to power on March

4, the original presidential inauguration day.

U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin, D-Mich., said she learned that the request for a 60-day extension was made in the last 36 hours, and that the Guard is now seeking volunteers from states around the country to fill the need.

Defense officials confirmed that the request is under review at the Pentagon, and that the Guard has started checking states for availability of their troops, in an effort to be prepared if final Defense Department approval is given. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

The more than 5,000 Guard members currently in Washington, D.C., are all slated to go home on March 12, ending the mission.

Slotkin said some members of Congress have been concerned about whether there is a solid plan to provide security for members and staff going forward.



JOE GROMELSKI/Stars and Stripes

National Guard soldiers take a break near the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday.

“We want to understand what the plan is,” she said. “None of us like looking at the fencing, the gates, the uniformed presence around the Capitol. We can’t depend on the National Guard for our security.”

She said there has to be a plan that provides the needed security for the buildings and personnel

by the Capitol Police and local law enforcement. Slotkin said it was telling that House members hastened to complete major votes Wednesday so they wouldn’t have to be in the building where many fled violent rioters in January. Lawmakers, she said, “don’t feel totally secure” in the Capitol.

U.S. Capitol Police officials

have also told congressional leaders the razor-wire topped fencing around the Capitol should remain in place for several more months.

Slotkin said, however, that she was going to her office to work on Thursday. “I’m not going to let these guys scare me away,” she said.

Law enforcement on alert after plot threat at US Capitol

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Law enforcement was on high alert Thursday around the U.S. Capitol after authorities said intelligence had uncovered a “possible plot” by a militia group to storm the building again. The alert came two months after Donald Trump supporters smashed through windows and doors to try to stop Congress from certifying now-President Joe Biden’s victory.

The threat appeared to be connected to a far-right conspiracy theory, mainly promoted by supporters of QAnon, that former President Trump would rise again to power on March 4 and that thousands would come to Washington to try to remove Democrats from office. March 4 was the original presidential inauguration day until 1933, when it was moved to Jan. 20.

There were no signs of disturbance Thursday at the heavily secured building, with Capitol Police and National Guardsmen on duty and a large fence around the

perimeter that was put in place after the Jan. 6 riot. The Pentagon is reviewing a request to extend the Guard deployment 60 days beyond its current expiration date of March 12.

Online chatter identified by authorities included discussions among members of the Three Percenters, an anti-government militia group, concerning possible plots against the Capitol on Thursday, according to two law enforcement officials who were not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. Members of the Three Percenters were among the extremists who stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6.

The threat came as the Capitol police and other law enforcement agencies were taking criticism from Congress in contentious hearings this week on their handling of the Jan. 6 riot. Police were ill-prepared for the mass of Trump supporters, some in tactical gear and armed, and it took hours for National Guard reinforcements to come. By

then, rioters had broken into the building and they roamed the halls for hours, stalling Congress’ certification effort temporarily and sending lawmakers into hiding.

Lawmakers, congressional staffers and law enforcement officials are still on edge after the attack on Jan. 6, even as security around the Capitol remains at an unprecedented level.

The U.S. House wrapped up its work for the week Wednesday night, but the U.S. Senate still had a busy day scheduled for Thursday with votes into the evening. Police beefed up their presence in and around the Capitol. About 5,200 National Guard members remain in D.C., the remainder of the roughly 26,000 who were brought in for Biden’s inauguration in January, which went off with no problems.

Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, the former chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee and among those briefed about the new threat, said lawmakers were

braced.

“I think we’ll see some violence here,” he said in an interview.

But unlike on Jan. 6, the Capitol is now fortified against intrusions. “We have the razor wire, we have the National Guard. We didn’t have that January 6. So I feel very confident in the security,” he said.

Initially it seemed as though the online chatter did not rise to the level of serious concern; an advisory sent earlier this week to members of Congress by Timothy Blodgett, the acting House sergeant-at-arms, said the Capitol Police had “no indication that groups will travel to Washington, D.C., to protest or commit acts of violence.”

But that advisory was updated in a note to lawmakers Wednesday morning. Blodgett wrote that the Capitol Police had received “new and concerning information and intelligence indicating additional interest in the Capitol for the dates of March 4th — 6th by a militia group.”

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NATION

House passes GOP-opposed voting reforms

By BRIAN SLODYSKO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Democrats passed sweeping voting and ethics legislation over unanimous Republican opposition, advancing to the Senate what would be the largest overhaul of the U.S. election law in at least a generation.

House Resolution 1, which touches on virtually every aspect of the electoral process, was approved Wednesday night on a near party-line 220-210 vote. It would restrict partisan gerrymandering of congressional districts, strike down hurdles to voting and bring transparency to a murky campaign finance system that allows wealthy donors to anonymously bankroll political causes.

The bill is a powerful counterweight to voting rights restrictions advancing in Republican-controlled statehouses across the country in the wake of Donald Trump's repeated false claims of a stolen 2020 election. Yet it faces an uncertain fate in the Democratic-controlled Senate, where it has little chance of passing without

changes to procedural rules that currently allow Republicans to block it.

The stakes in the outcome are monumental, cutting to the foundational idea that one person equals one vote, and carrying with it the potential to shape election outcomes for years to come. It also offers a test of how hard President Joe Biden and his party are willing to fight for their priorities, as well as those of their voters.

This bill "will put a stop at the voter suppression that we're seeing debated right now," said Rep. Nikema Williams, a new congresswoman who represents the Georgia district that deceased voting rights champion John Lewis held for years. "This bill is the 'Good Trouble' he fought for his entire life."

To Republicans, however, it would give license to unwanted federal interference in states' authority to conduct their own elections—ultimately benefiting Democrats through higher turnout, most notably among minorities.

"Democrats want to use their ra-

zor-thin majority not to pass bills to earn voters' trust, but to ensure they don't lose more seats in the next election," House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy said from the House floor Tuesday.

The measure has been a priority for Democrats since they won their House majority in 2018. But it has taken on added urgency in the wake of Trump's false claims, which incited the deadly storming of the U.S. Capitol in January.

Courts and even Trump's last attorney general, William Barr, found his claims about the election to be without merit. But, spurred on by those lies, state lawmakers across the U.S. have filed more than 200 bills in 43 states that would limit ballot access, according to a tally kept by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University.

In Iowa, the legislature voted to cut absentee and in-person early voting, while preventing local elections officials from setting up additional locations to make early voting easier. In Georgia, the House on Monday voted for legislation re-

quiring identification to vote by mail that would also allow counties to cancel early in-person voting on Sundays, when many Black voters cast ballots after church.

On Tuesday, the Supreme Court appeared ready to uphold voting restrictions in Arizona, which could make it harder to challenge state election laws in the future.

When asked why proponents sought to uphold the Arizona laws, which limit who can turn in absentee ballots and enable ballots to be thrown out if they are cast in the wrong precinct, a lawyer for the state's Republican Party was stunningly clear.

"Because it puts us at a competitive disadvantage relative to Democrats," said attorney Michael Carvin. "Politics is a zero-sum game."

Battle lines are quickly being drawn by outside groups who plan to spend millions of dollars on advertising and outreach campaigns.

Republicans "are not even being coy about it. They are saying the 'quiet parts' out loud," said Tiffany Muller, the president of End Citizens United, a left-leaning group

that aims to curtail the influence of corporate money in politics. Her organization has launched a \$10 million effort supporting the bill. "For them, this isn't about protecting our democracy or protecting our elections. This is about pure partisan political gain."

Conservatives, meanwhile, are mobilizing a \$5 million pressure campaign, urging moderate Senate Democrats to oppose rule changes needed to pass the measure.

"H.R. 1 is not about making elections better," said Ken Cuccinelli, a former Trump administration Homeland Security official who is leading the effort. "It's about the opposite. It's intended to dirty up elections."

Still, the biggest obstacles lie ahead in the Senate, which is split 50-50 between Republicans and Democrats. On some legislation, it takes only 51 votes to pass, with Vice President Kamala Harris as the tiebreaker. On a deeply divisive bill like this one, they would need 60 votes under the Senate's rules to overcome a Republican filibuster—a tally they are unlikely to reach.

Cuomo to remain in office

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Wednesday said he intends to remain in office in the face of sexual harassment allegations that have weakened his support and led to calls for his resignation.

The Democratic governor, speaking somberly in his first public appearance since three women accused him of inappropriate touching and offensive remarks, apologized and said that he "learned an important lesson" about his behavior around women.

"I now understand that I acted in a way that made people feel uncomfortable," Cuomo said. "It was unintentional and I truly and deeply apologize for it."

Asked about calls for him to step aside, the third-term governor said: "I wasn't elected by politicians, I was elected by the people of the state of New York. I'm not going to resign."

Cuomo acknowledged "sensitivities have changed and behavior has changed" and that what he considers his "customary greeting" — an old-world approach that often involving kisses and hugs — is no longer acceptable.

But the allegations against the governor go beyond aggressive greetings.



OFFICE OF THE NEW YORK GOVERNOR/AP

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo addressed sexual harassment allegations Wednesday in Albany, saying, "I now understand that I acted in a way that made people feel uncomfortable."

Former aide Lindsey Boylan, 36, accuses Cuomo of having harassed her throughout her employment and said he once suggesting a game of strip poker aboard his state-owned jet. Another former aide, Charlotte Bennett, 25, said Cuomo once asked her if she ever had sex with older men.

Both women rejected Cuomo's latest apology, doubling down on their disgust after he issued a statement Sunday attempting to excuse his behavior as his way of being "playful."

"How can New Yorkers trust you @NYGovCuomo to lead our state if you 'don't know' when you've been inappropriate with your own staff?" Boylan tweeted.

Cuomo said he will "fully cooper-

ate" with an investigation into the allegations being overseen by the state's independently elected attorney general. Attorney General Letitia James, also a Democrat, is in the process of selecting an outside law firm to conduct the probe and document its findings in a public report.

Cuomo addressed the allegations during a news conference that otherwise focused on the state's response to the coronavirus pandemic, the kind of briefings that made him a daily fixture on TV and a national star among Democrats.

Two of the women accusing Cuomo worked in his administration. The other was a guest at a wedding that he officiated.

White House: Most in US will qualify for next relief check

By JOSH BOAK
Associated Press

Roughly 98% of U.S. households that received a COVID-19 relief check in December will also qualify for the next round of payments being championed by President Joe Biden, according to a White House official.

Biden has said that Americans were promised \$2,000 in direct checks, but only \$600 was approved in December. The president views that promise as a cornerstone of his \$1.9 trillion relief package pending in the Senate. His proposal offers \$1,400 in additional payments that would quickly phase out based on income, so that money is better aimed at the middle class and poor.

Under the current Senate bill, the Biden administration estimates that 158.5 million households will receive direct payments, according to the White House official who insisted on anonymity to discuss private conversations. The official stressed that almost everyone gets a check twice as large as in December, although 3.5 million households that received some payment from the \$900 billion December package would no longer qualify.

The decrease is due to tighter limits in the Senate bill on who can receive checks. The Biden administration has wanted to honor the promise made to voters, but it also does not want to be viewed as sending money to the affluent.

Under the Senate bill, anyone earning up to \$75,000 qualifies for the full \$1,400 with the payment being cut off entirely at \$80,000. Couples earning up to \$150,000 also receive checks with the payments disappearing at an income of \$160,000.

Still, families that do not receive a direct check might still come out ahead in the massive \$1.9 trillion package. The bill expands tax credits for children and child care and those benefits will go to some of the households that received a check in December but no longer qualify for it.

WORLD

Protesters march despite previous deaths in Myanmar

Associated Press

Demonstrators in Myanmar protesting last month's military coup returned to the streets Thursday, undaunted by the killing of at least 38 people the previous day by security forces.

New protests were held in at least three areas of Yangon, the country's largest city, that have been scenes of violence for the past few days. Police again used force to try to disperse the crowds, according to social media accounts.

Protests also continued in Mandalay, the second-biggest city. A formation of five fighter planes flew over the city Thursday morning in what appeared to be a threatening show of force.

The U.N. special envoy for Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgener, said 38 people were killed Wednesday, a figure consistent with other reports.

The death toll was the highest since the Feb. 1 takeover, when the military ousted the elected government of leader Aung San Suu Kyi. More than 50 civilians, mostly peaceful protesters, are confirmed to have been killed by police and soldiers since then.

The U.N. Security Council has scheduled closed-door consultations on Friday on calls to reverse the coup — including from U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres — and stop the escalating military crackdown.

Any kind of coordinated action at the United Nations will be difficult

since two permanent members of the Security Council, China and Russia, are likely to veto it. Some countries have already imposed or are considering their own sanctions.

Schraner Burgener said she warned Myanmar's army that the world's nations and the Security Council "might take huge strong measures."

"And the answer was, 'We are used to sanctions and we survived those sanctions in the past,'" she said. When she also warned the army that Myanmar would become isolated, she said, "the answer was, 'We have to learn to walk with only a few friends.'"

Schraner Burgener said the army has been taken aback by the strong opposition, which has been led by young people.

"I think that the army is very surprised that it doesn't work because in the past, in 1988 and 2007 and 2008, it worked," she said, referring to previous violent crackdowns on uprisings against military rule.

Demonstrators have flooded the streets of towns and cities across Myanmar since last month's coup, even though gatherings of five or more people are banned and security forces have repeatedly fired tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds to disperse the crowds, and arrested protesters en masse.

Wednesday's highest death toll was in Yangon, where an estimated 18 people died. Most if not all of



AP

Anti-coup protesters discharge fire extinguishers Thursday to counter the impact of the tear gas fired by police during a demonstration in Yangon, Myanmar.

the deaths occurred in the eastern neighborhood of North Okkalapa.

Stark video shot Wednesday night at the main hospital there showed grieving relatives collecting the blood-soaked bodies of family members who were shot. Some relatives sobbed uncontrollably, while others looked in shock at the scene around them.

Protesters in Mandalay flashed a three-fingered salute of resist-

ance on Thursday as they rode their motorbikes to follow a funeral procession for Kyal Sin, also known by her Chinese name Deng Jia Xi, a university student who was killed as she attended a demonstration on Wednesday. The black hearse that carried her remains had a photo of her on the windshield, and the hearse was preceded by a truck full of floral bouquets.

3 hurt in knife attack in Sweden

Associated Press

STOCKHOLM — Swedish authorities were investigating Thursday whether an knife attack by an Afghan man who stabbed seven men and left three of them in critical but stable condition had any links to terrorism.

The suspect, who was not named under Swedish policy rules, now faces several counts of attempted murder. He was shot in the leg and is being treated in a hospital, police said.

"There also was initial information in the investigation that led police to believe that they should look at terrorism as being the motive," Home Affairs Minister Mikael Damberg told reporters.

The suspect, who was formally arrested on Thursday, had been waiting to see if he would be issued a residence permit, Swedish tabloid Aftonbladet wrote quoting the Swedish Migration Board. The Board declined to confirm the report.

The other victims of Wednesday's assault in the small town of Vetlanda, 118 miles southeast of Goteborg, Sweden's second-largest city, include three people who were critically wounded, another two who sustained moderate injuries and one who was only slightly hurt, hospital officials said.

S. Korea's first known trans soldier found dead

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's first known transgender soldier, who protested the military's decision last year to discharge her for undergoing gender reassignment surgery, was found dead at her home on Wednesday.

Shin Jeong-hwan, a fire department official in the central city of Cheongju, said rescue workers visited the home of Byun Hui-su after local mental health counselors reported that she had been out of contact for days.

The cause of death wasn't immediately known. Shin said the decomposition of the body indicated she had been dead for days.

Byun, who had been a staff sergeant and tank driver, pleaded to be allowed to continue serving as a

female soldier after the army discharged her in January 2020, triggering criticism by human rights advocates who saw the decision as discriminatory.

She said she had sex reassignment surgery in Thailand in November 2019 after suffering depression over her sexual identity for an extended period.

South Korea prohibits transgender people from joining the military and the army rejected Byun's petition for reinstatement in July last year.

South Korea's Defense Ministry spokesperson Moon Hong-sik during a briefing on Thursday expressed condolences over Byun's death but said the military has no ongoing discussions about allowing transgender people to serve.

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NATION



JAY REEVES/AP

Liza Scott, who is running a lemonade stand to help fund her own brain surgery, holds a donation at her mother's bakery in Homewood, Ala., on Tuesday. Liza's mother, Elizabeth Scott, said the family has good health insurance, but expenses are still high and the 7-year-old girl wanted to help out.

7-year-old Ala. girl helps to fund her own brain surgery

BY JAY REEVES
Associated Press

HOMEWOOD, Ala. — Liza Scott, 7, started a lemonade stand at her mom's bakery last summer so she could buy some frills like toys and sequined high-heel shoes. The bouncy little girl is still in business months later, yet the money is going toward something entirely different: surgery on her brain.

Last month, doctors determined a series of seizures that Liza began suffering were caused by cerebral malformations that needed repair, said her mother, Elizabeth Scott. Always eager to help out and with an eye toward entrepreneurship after a childhood spent around a small business, the little girl volunteered to help raise money for her upcoming operation.

Located near the cash register of Savage's Bakery in suburban Birmingham, her stand of bright pink and yellow wooden crates offers lemonade for a quarter, plus other treats. But people are putting in a lot more as word spreads of her medical condition and her attitude.

"I've got a \$20 bill, and a \$50 bill and a \$10 bill and a \$5 bill and a \$100 bill," Liza said Tuesday as she counted donations from the morning.

Liza was still in the hospital after suffering two major seizures when she came up with the idea to help out with the stand, said her mom, who also has a preschool-age boy.

"I told her, 'You don't have to do that,'" Elizabeth Scott said. "There's no expectation of her doing anything to help pay the bills.

"I'm not worried, but I'm afraid."

Liza Scott

7-year-old who suffers from seizures

I'm a single mom, I take care of my kids on my own."

Yet Liza wanted to help, and she has. Her little stand has made more than \$12,000 in a few days — nearly all through donations.

"She likes being part of the team. This is something she can really take ownership of," Scott said.

While Liza's story has warmed plenty of hearts, some are outraged over the idea that a child facing brain surgery would feel a need to raise funds for her own care. The story is yet another sign that the U.S. health system is broken beyond repair and driving families into bankruptcy, critics say.

Despite having good insurance through the popular bakery she runs with her father, Elizabeth Scott could quickly see that she was still going to be responsible for some "pretty exorbitant" expenses. So, she also set up an online fundraiser.

"Just one week in the hospital and the ambulance rides is more than my monthly salary, and that's without the surgery and travel expenses," she said. "I can't fund that by myself, and we have a business to support."

Friends, family and others who have been touched by Liza's story have already donated more than \$300,000.

A bubbly little girl who likes

Barbie dolls, dressing up — and lemonade — Liza hadn't shown any signs of major health problems until Jan. 30, her mom said.

"She had a massive seizure at 5 in the morning and it lasted like 45 minutes," said Elizabeth Scott. Another one occurred hours later. It was a few days before tests revealed Liza had three malformations that were both causing the seizures and posing a risk of rupture that could lead to a stroke or other problems.

Now on medication, Liza was quickly accepted as a patient at Boston Children's Hospital, where a representative said Dr. Ed Smith, a neurosurgeon, and Dr. Darren Orbach, an interventional radiologist, will be part of a team set to operate Monday. The family will fly to Boston on Thursday, and Liza could need follow-up visits into her 30s, her mother said.

Liza said she enjoys helping with her stand, where she makes the lemonade and puts donations in a big jar. "It's better than just begging," she said.

Temporarily out of school because of her condition, the girl is spending a lot of time at the bakery running the stand and playing with her dolls. A whirlwind of energy, she runs from one spot to the next, climbs atop a table in an empty room and swings upside down on a handrail as her mother speaks to a well-wisher.

In a quiet moment, Liza said she is trying not to think too much about what she called "my brain thingy."

"I'm not worried, but I'm afraid," she said.

SpaceX Starship lands upright, then explodes

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — SpaceX's futuristic Starship looked like it aced a touchdown Wednesday, but then exploded on the landing pad with so much force that it was hurled into the air.

The failure occurred just minutes after SpaceX declared success. Two previous test flights crash-landed in fireballs.

The full-scale prototype of Elon Musk's envisioned Mars ship soared more than 6 miles after lifting off from the southern tip of Texas on Wednesday. It descended horizontally over the Gulf of Mexico and then flipped upright just in time to land.

The shiny bullet-shaped rocket-ship remained intact this time at touchdown, prompting SpaceX commentator John Insprucker to declare, "third time's a charm as the saying goes" before SpaceX

ended its webcast of the test.

But then the Starship exploded and was tossed in the air, before slamming down into the ground in flames.

There was no immediate comment from SpaceX on what went wrong. But Musk looked on the bright side in a tweet: "Starship 10 landed in one piece! RIP SN10, honorable discharge."

He added: "SpaceX team is doing great work! One day, the true measure of success will be that Starship flights are commonplace."

Musk plans to use Starships to send people to the moon and Mars.

The last two prototypes reached a similarly high altitude in December and February, but slammed into the ground at Boca Chica, Texas, and exploded.

Each of these last three test flights lasted 6½ minutes.

Calif.'s 'I-5 Strangler' strangled to death in prison, coroner says

The Sacramento (Calif.) Bee

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The serial killer known as the I-5 Strangler was strangled to death in his cell early Sunday morning.

On Wednesday, the Amador County Sheriff's Office released the results of an autopsy on Roger Reece Kibbe, an 81-year-old convicted murderer from Citrus Heights who was serving consecutive life sentences for raping and strangling seven women across Northern California in the 1970s and '80s.

"A forensic autopsy was performed at the Sacramento County Coroner's Office. The cause of death was manual strangulation and the manner of death is homicide," deputies said in Wednesday's announcement.

At 12:45 a.m. on Sunday, a guard conducting a headcount at Mule Creek State Prison in Amador County found Kibbe lying on the floor of his cell. His cellmate, Jason Budrow, 40, was standing over him, prison officials announced Monday.

Budrow, a self-described Satanist and sex offender, was convicted in 2011 of strangling his then-girlfriend in Riverside County.

Prison officials said Budrow was



Kibbe

placed into segregation while a homicide investigation took place.

Kibbe was first convicted of raping and murdering Darcie Rene Frackenhohl, a 17-year-old runaway from Seattle, in 1987, and dumping her body in the mountains south of Lake Tahoe.

He was arrested in 1988 for Frackenhohl's murder just two days before his sentence was up after being convicted of beating a sex worker in Sacramento. The woman was able to escape and flag down a passing police officer who spotted Kibbe throwing a bag out the window when the officer pulled him over. In the bag was a garrote fashioned out of a pair of dowels and some parachute cord, a pair of scissors, a sex toy, some women's hair ties and a pair of handcuffs, detectives said.

The evidence in the bag proved critical to securing Kibbe's conviction for Frackenhohl's murder. Later, DNA evidence linked Kibbe to two other murders, and he confessed to four more in exchange for prosecutors not seeking the death penalty.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

First prison, now lawsuits for fake psychologist

VA FREDERICKSBURG — A Virginia woman serving an 11-year prison sentence for treating patients while pretending to be a psychologist is now facing multiple civil lawsuits seeking millions of dollars, according to court records.

Sharonda L. Avery, 44, treated more than 100 patients while posing as a doctor at the former Pediatric Partners for Attention and Learning in Stafford, The Free Lance-Star of Fredericksburg reported Tuesday. Avery was sentenced in October to 46 years in prison with all but 11 years suspended after being convicted of nine offenses.

The victims of those offenses, or their parents, have filed four civil lawsuits in Stafford Circuit Court. The lawsuits say numerous patients, most of them children, suffered as the result of faulty diagnoses and medications that were prescribed for conditions that didn't exist.

No sign of arson found at Newman's camp

CT ASHFORD — A police investigation into the fire that tore through the Hole in the Wall Gang camp for seriously ill children in Connecticut could not determine the cause but found no indication it was set intentionally, officials said Monday.

The Feb. 12 fire at the Ashford camp, which was founded by the late actor Paul Newman, destroyed buildings including a large wood-frame structure that was made to look like the center of an old western town. The investigation was closed with the cause of the blaze listed as undetermined.

The camp plans to replace the lost structures with a larger, single-level complex.

The camp was built in 1988. The charity now serves about 20,000 kids a year.

Pipe bomb, 'zip gun' found near school

CA SACRAMENTO — A pipe bomb and a hand-made gun were found Tuesday near a Sacramento elementary school and authorities were trying to determine who left them and why.

An employee at Ethel Baker Elementary School found the devices sitting on the sidewalk in front of the school and called authorities shortly before 8:30 a.m., the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office said.

One device was a steel pipe "sealed at both ends with an improvised fuse" that contained metal shrapnel, clay putty, firecrackers and gasoline, according to a Sheriff's Office statement.

Also found was a "zip gun" made of a steel pipe with a spring-loaded cap and containing a 12-gauge shotgun shell, the office said.

"They were both loaded and ready to go," Sgt. Rodney Grassmann told the Sacramento Bee.



MIKE SIMONS, TULSA (OKLA.) WORLD/AP

In the habit of dining together

Sister Pierre, left, and Sister Mary Clare with St. Joseph Monastery eat lunch outside at Woodward Park on Tuesday, in Tulsa, Okla.

A sheriff's bomb disposal team made the devices safe, the statement said.

Grassman said nearly 50 students go to the campus to take part in distance learning, aided by staffers from the Boys and Girls Club. A staffer spotted the bomb and gun, and the school principal called authorities and turned away students before they could enter the school, Tara Gallegos, a Sacramento City Unified School District spokeswoman, told the Bee.

Lawmakers OK concealed guns at more churches

NC RALEIGH — Churches that meet on private school campuses in North Carolina could allow members or visitors to carry concealed handguns if they're otherwise permitted in legislation approved Monday night by the state Senate.

The measure is essentially a portion of a 2020 concealed weapons bill that Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper vetoed. An override failed.

Supporters of this year's legislation say they're trying to treat churches that operate a school the same as standalone houses of worship in the name of safety and security of attendees. Current law allows a standalone church to let its parishioners and others wear concealed weapons if they have a permit or otherwise exempt. But that's prohibited at churches that hold services at the same site where the school operates.

THE CENSUS

12M The approximate number of visits made to Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 2020, despite closing for more than a month because of COVID-19. The park on the Tennessee-North Carolina border had a total of 12,095,720 visits last year, its second busiest year on record, according to a news release. It saw a record 12.5 million visitors in 2019, a 1.1 million increase over 2018. Great Smoky Mountains is America's most visited national park.

Firm fined \$280K for violating no-call laws

MS JACKSON — A company based in Kissimmee, Fla., has been fined for violating Mississippi's phone call laws.

The Mississippi Public Service Commission fined Arrowbridge Holdings LLC \$280,000 for 32 violations of the state's laws involving unsolicited calls. The commission said the company made unauthorized telephone solicitations and failed to register as a telephone provider, WLBT-TV reported.

The Mississippi Telephone Solicitation Act of 2003 prohibits attempting to sell consumer goods and services by telephone from calling telephone numbers that appear on the "No-Call List."

2nd Sumatran orangutan baby in 2 years at zoo

LA NEW ORLEANS — It's cute, cuddly, red-haired, and critically endangered — and the second Sumatran orangutan born in two years at the zoo in New Orleans.

Veterinarians haven't yet been

able to weigh, measure and determine the sex of the baby born early Sunday to 12-year-old Reese, Audubon Zoo spokeswoman Annie Kinler Matherne said Monday.

Sumatran orangutans are one of three species of the long-haired great apes. Fewer than 14,000 are believed to live in the wild, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

The baby is Reese's first, but she has seen two different orangutans giving birth and raising babies — her own mother at Albuquerque BioPark Zoo in New Mexico, and Audubon's orangutan matriarch, Feliz, in 2019, the statement noted.

Hunter banned from 48 states after poaching

CO COLORADO SPRINGS — A hunter from Colorado Springs has been permanently banned from hunting in 48 states, including Colorado, after he pleaded guilty to several poaching charges across the state.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife said hearing examiner Steven Cooley decided last week to permanently suspend hunting privileges for Iniki

Vike Kapu, 28, after he pleaded guilty, KMGH-TV reported. Colorado is a member of the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact, meaning the lifetime hunting ban also extends to the other 47 member states, not including Hawaii and Massachusetts.

Kapu was accused of killing 12 deer, 2 turkeys and a bighorn sheep ram across three Colorado counties.

Couple accused of taking copper, causing outage

SC MANNING — A couple accused of posing as electrical workers and stealing power lines for the copper cable caused an outage in a South Carolina neighborhood, according to authorities.

Michael Wayne Buttery, 58, and Kimberly Kay Buttery, 55, of Summerville, were both charged with obtaining non-specious metals unlawfully, Clarendon County Sheriff Timothy Baxley told The State on Tuesday. The sheriff said the two used a white service truck with a bucket on the back to resemble the appearance of a power company vehicle, then tampered with the lines to take the copper wiring.

Power crews responding to an outage near Manning discovered lines had been cut down and copper wire had been stripped from the poles, the newspaper said. Someone later reported that a truck was seen near power lines in the area.

From wire reports

FACES

‘That sounds amazing!’

Keanu Reeves on the joy of writing his first comic book

By MICHAEL CAVNA
The Washington Post

It was the fall of 2017, and Keanu Reeves had been carrying around a character in his head. The actor so associated with portraying a phalanx of dark-clad fighters kept envisioning a world-weary warrior whose birth predated even human language. Who knows, he thought, this character just might be a future film role.

But that was before he decided to sit with the suits at Boom! Studios. The savvy Los Angeles publishing company knew: One does not simply walk into a conference with Keanu. Be prepared to engage his perceptive questions and passionate physicality.

On a morning Zoom interview from Los Angeles last week, Reeves pithily recounts that meeting of like minds: “They went, ‘Comic book.’ I went: ‘Yeah! Why not? That sounds amazing!’”

And just like that, the man who has long performed on soundstages and rock ‘n’ roll stages decided to dive into something new. Reeves has published beautiful art books — and even played a comics-sprung detective of the occult (“Constantine”) — but nowhere on his four-decade résumé was a credit as a comic-book author.

That changes this week with Wednesday’s release of the first issue “BRZRKR” (pronounced Berzerker), a limited 12-issue series, co-created with Matt Kindt and artist Ron Garney. The comic, centering on a raven-locked title assassin who unleashes hyper-stylized violence with supernatural ability, stirs comparisons to Reeves’ own cinematic battlers, including Neo in the “Matrix” movies and title fighter John Wick in that high-body-count franchise. Yet Boom! assures that its comic series will blaze a different trail.

The first issue’s bloody hand-to-hand combat, so visceral and viscous, spares no crimson ink. As this 80,000-year-old fights his way across the epochs while trying to uncover personal truths, he embodies Reeves’ vision: “I had an im-

pression of a guy in a Viking kind of battle who could punch people’s chests and their backs and rip people’s arms off.”

“BRZRKR” opens with maximum carnage and minimal verbiage. The creative team promises that more textured themes are on the horizon. Discussing the comic’s scope, Reeves riffs until he’s in full mellifluous monologue: “We do want to take on morality, ethics, peacetime, war, violence, whose side, what’s right, what’s wrong, truth, fiction, memory, what do we believe in, who are we, with not only violence but also love — and then our own identities and who we are as humans.”

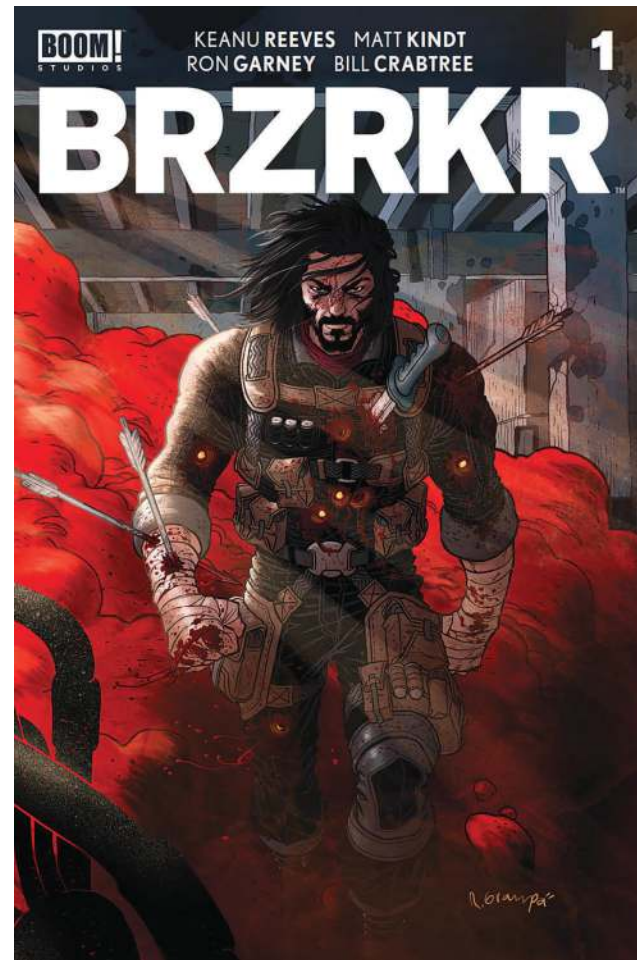
The writers met in person early on, bonding over some of their favorite cartoonists (Frank Miller and Geof Darrow) and comics (“The Dark Knight” and “Watchmen”). Once the pandemic hit, the creators texted and Zoomed for hours on end, plotting scenes and fine-tuning dialogue and joyously spurring each other on. And Reeves’ teammates agree that his truest gift as a comics storyteller is his ability to vividly inhabit a character — what Kindt calls stoking “the heat” of a creation.

Boom! wasn’t precisely sure, though, just what it had on its hands — how many readers would embrace this series? — so it launched a Kickstarter to back the books. The studio hoped to use it to sell perhaps \$400,000 in preorders; instead, it was \$1.5 million.

Now the natural question becomes: Why not adapt the comic into a film?

Reeves, the internet’s favorite “immortal” movie star in fan posts and memes, says they are looking for a movie partner to adapt the adventures of his immortal character. So would the actor consider playing himself? “That was my intention — I’m a little prec-iousss about that,” he says, laughing as he drops a quick lisping impression of Gollum. “I would love to play the role.”

Reeves says he doesn’t yet have a dream director in mind. Yet Garney, who worked on the Francis Lawrence film “I Am Legend,” has strong thoughts. He cites two



RAFAEL GRAMPA/BOOM! Studios

Keanu Reeves adds comic book creator to his list of accomplishments with the Wednesday release of “BRZRKR.” The 12-issue limited series was co-created with Matt Kindt and graphic artist Ron Garney.

filmmakers who have previously directed Keanu action vehicles — Lawrence and Chad Stahelski — but thinks Reeves should take the professional step and direct himself.

“I think he’d be a natural, and he has the experience at this point to do it, and this is his character,” the artist says. “There’s no one better to pull it off than him.”

Zeta-Jones joins Sheen in ‘Prodigal Son’

By BETH HARRIS
Associated Press

Catherine Zeta-Jones was already a fan of “Prodigal Son,” so when the chance came to join the show, she jumped, lured by the prospect of working alongside Michael Sheen.

The Welsh actors were born in cities about an hour apart and moved in similar circles during their youth without ever knowing each other. She was born in Swansea and Sheen was born in Newport seven months apart.

“We have all these mutual friends, but we’ve never crossed. My mom and dad know his dad,” she said Tuesday in a virtual Television Critics Association panel. “It’s bizarre. That was, of course, a huge pull for me.”

Zeta-Jones joins Fox’s “Prodigal Son” in Tuesday’s episode, directed by co-star Lou Diamond Phillips. Previously, the Oscar winner had done guest episodes and appeared in TV movies and miniseries, but never a regular series role.

She plays Dr. Vivian Capshaw, and Alan Cumming appears in two episodes as a cocky Europol agent.



AP

Catherine Zeta-Jones, left, at the 26th annual Screen Actors Guild Awards in 2020, in Los Angeles, and Michael Sheen, at the FOX Upfront party in 2019 in New York, joined the cast of “Prodigal Son.”

“It’s a family drama with a twist of danger, and it’s a dark family,” Zeta-Jones said. “I gravitate to kind of dark material.”

Sheen’s presence increased the comfort level for Zeta-Jones to come onto a set where the cast and crew had already been together for a season. He plays an incarcerated serial killer surgeon.

“As soon as Lou shouted, ‘Cut,’

Michael and I went into inside jokes, Tommy Cooper impressions,” she said, referring to the British comedian.

Phillips said, “She came like a team player; she came to play. It was seamless.”

The show’s second season is currently airing on Fox, and the first season began streaming Tuesday on HBO Max.

Miss Universe to air live in May

After a year and a half, the Miss Universe competition will return with a live telecast on May 16.

The 69th Miss Universe event will be held at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood.

The last Miss Universe pageant was in December 2019 and its winner, Zozibini Tunzi of South Africa, has worn the crown longer than anyone else.

Paula M. Shugart, the president of the Miss Universe Organization, said in a press release Wednesday that they’ve spent months planning a safe competition. It will follow similar guidelines as November’s 2020 Miss USA competition held in Memphis.

It’s still under consideration whether a limited audience will be permitted to watch in person.

The Miss Universe competition will air in more than 160 territories and countries across the globe. In the U.S., it will air in Spanish on Tele-mundo and the English-language broadcasters will soon be announced.

‘The Simpsons’ renewed for two more seasons

Homer Simpson isn’t getting off his couch any time soon.

“The Simpsons” has been renewed for two more seasons, its 33rd and 34th, Fox announced Wednesday.

“Everyone at ‘The Simpsons’ is thrilled to be renewed once more, and we are planning lots of big surprises,” creator Matt Groenig teased in a statement. “Homer will lose a hair, Milhouse will get contact lenses, and Bart will celebrate his tenth birthday for the thirty-third time.”

Already the longest-running prime-time scripted series in history, the animated comedy, which premiered in 1990, will remain on the air until at least 2023, with 757 episodes.

Dan Castellaneta, Julie Kavner, Nancy Cartwright, Yeardley Smith, Hank Azaria and Harry Shearer will all return in their iconic voice roles around Springfield. Kevin Richardson recently joined the cast to voice Dr. Hibbert, taking over for Shearer after criticism about white actors playing nonwhite characters.

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OPINION

In a bureaucracy no one has the answers

BY ROBIN GIVHAN

The Washington Post

The federal bureaucracy came to a hearing room on Capitol Hill to explain itself. It failed.

On Wednesday afternoon, a quartet of witnesses gave testimony before a joint committee in the Senate about the security failures at the U.S. Capitol building on Jan. 6. These men and women, with their sober presence and affinity for acronyms, perfectly personified the blurry, confusing, often impenetrable — occasionally well-intentioned — officialdom in which they work. During all of the questioning and the awkward answering, there was little plain talk about biases built into the system — about minorities, about leftists, about people who call themselves patriots — and how they influence perceptions of danger, which means they barely discussed what happened at all.

They sat at a black-draped table. The three civilians formed a gray triptych of governmental regrets and promises to follow-up on an array of questions. The major general, his uniform adorned with a mosaic of colorful ribbons, sat at the end of the table and made a good-faith effort not to place blame where blame so clearly belonged.

The four-hour hearing sent the attentive citizen plummeting into a governmental morass in which no one was responsible for the calamities of that infamous day because no one was apparently in charge. The buck never stopped — least of all with the assistants and senior officials and acting undersecretaries in the hot seat. It certainly didn't come to a halt at the feet of the senators asking the questions, specifically Josh Hawley, R-Mo., and Ted Cruz, R-Texas, who stoked the mob that stormed the Capitol to overturn the election, for which both Hawley and Cruz voted. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., for his part, continues working hard to reimagine the violent insurrection as an afternoon of dress-up with a few rowdy knuckle-

heads by reading selective eyewitness narratives into the public record.

Other senators peppered the witnesses with pointed questions, one of the most reasonable being why the FBI did not seem to grasp the level of violence that was likely to occur that day. Jill Sanborn, the assistant director of the FBI's counterterrorism division, testified that agents do not follow public social media conversations. This lack of Twitter knowledge was pointed to as a mitigating factor in explaining why pretty much everyone except the FBI seemed well aware that serious trouble was brewing on the day Congress met to certify the 2020 election.

Robert Salesses, whose last name more than one senator could not get right even though it was printed out in big bold letters on a placard in front of him, is performing the duties of the assistant secretary of defense for homeland defense and global security. That is the sort of convoluted, explanatory title that only the government could have come up with, and one that could easily symbolize the tangle of officials and agencies and non-responsible parties involved in this epic security breach. Salesses could not explain in clear terms why it took more than three hours for the Defense Department to dispatch the District of Columbia National Guard to the Capitol, in part, because he was not on the phone call during which law enforcement requested the Guard — a fact that raised the question: Why was Salesses even at the hearing if he couldn't — or wouldn't — answer this most fundamental question?

Also in attendance was Melissa Smislova, acting undersecretary in the Office of Intelligence and Analysis at the Department of Homeland Security, who basically admitted that officials screwed up and that her job is hard — two facts no one seriously disputed.

Rounding out the bureaucratic representation was Maj. Gen. William Walker, who is the commander of the D.C. National Guard. He came to the hearing with a sheath of notes and

memos from which he quoted and was the only one at the witness table who was definitive about what unfolded and what went wrong, mainly because everything that transpired within the chain of command seemed to have been aimed at preventing him from doing the one thing he was trying to do, which was to get the go-ahead to send his uniformed men and women to the U.S. Capitol as quickly as possible.

"I just came to the conclusion that eventually I'm going to get approval," Walker said. And so he had his troops board buses and wait for the yes command. "Seconds mattered." When the buses could finally pull away, members of the National Guard arrived at the Capitol in 18 minutes, he said.

It was a frustrating hearing, if only because everyone seemed to be spinning in circles explaining how things unfolded, but no one could really get to the heart of why. No one drilled down on whether race influenced how dangerous authorities perceived the mostly white crowd to be. Did all the flags and declarations of patriotism slow the reaction time? Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich., asked the witnesses to explain the difference in how law enforcement was deployed during the racial-justice demonstrations over the summer of 2020 compared with how it was used during the protest on the Ellipse that preceded the Capitol riot. Sanborn explained the difference by noting that precedent dictated each response, which was to suggest that rallies similar to the one that occurred on Jan. 6 with Trump followers and extremist groups had not in the past sparked violence, which is simply not true. Smislova just said there was no comparison. No similarities. Nothing to discuss.

The bureaucracy would not second-guess itself. There would be no follow-up. It was ready to move things along.

Robin Givhan is The Washington Post's senior critic-at-large writing about politics, race and the arts.

Emergency price gouging curbs can be detrimental

BY GAVIN ROBERTS

AND RIK CHAKRABORTI

Tribune News Service

One year ago, California and Hawaii were the first states to announce emergency declarations to fight COVID-19. In doing so, they activated preexisting price gouging regulations. The reasoning, California Gov. Gavin Newsom claimed, was so that "consumers (will be) able to purchase what they need, at a fair price." Unfortunately, for some of those consumers that fair price cost them their lives.

Thirty-nine more states and the District of Columbia, including 11 states who didn't have previous legislation, subsequently activated price gouging regulations over the next month for health and safety reasons. The main goal of this policy, as it has been since New York enacted the first of its kind in 1979, was to make goods broadly available at low prices during a public emergency. But at what cost?

According to our new research, last year, that cost increased the spread of COVID-19.

You may recall early on in the pandemic the phenomenon of panic shopping and hoarding. It might have taken you multiple trips to the store, causing you to be in contact with an increased number of people, to find even the smallest amounts of two-ply toilet

paper or a tiny bottle of hand sanitizer. You were not alone. Our research looked at how many individuals people came into contact with both before and after these laws were enacted. The data shows that the average individual in states with price gouging laws had more contact in commercial spaces than in states without these regulations. What they tried to do was stabilize prices, but what they actually did was subsidize hoarders and increase the number of coronavirus cases, and in turn, coronavirus-related deaths.

On average, the increased social contacts in these states accounted for one out of every four deaths per day in the month of April. Adding insult to injury, it is clear the burden was not shared equally. The highest-income households were able to spend more of their income in order to have less contact with people, in turn decreasing their risk of exposure. They utilized delivery apps like Postmates and TaskRabbit. They also had jobs that allowed them to work from home more easily than some essential workers, like grocery store clerks or gas station attendants. Clearly, price gouging regulations helped undermine virus mitigation efforts, often hurting the poorest among us.

If the intended goal is to provide sufficient quantities of essential goods, in the midst of an emergency, there has to be a safer and more effective path forward, but that means

state policymakers need to have some flexibility in their decision-making processes. There's no doubt lawmakers are in a difficult position, but they can make safer and more innovative choices. Some of the best ideas come from people working in industries most affected by these regulations. For example, in Denmark, one grocer was able to prevent hoarding by charging consumers a higher price if they intended to purchase a second bottle of hand sanitizer, proving there are ways to stop the spread of the virus while making sure people have the goods they need without trading one at the expense of the other.

As we continue to contemplate the deaths of 500,000 Americans, we need to examine all policies — no matter the justification — ensuring they achieve their intended goals.

Policymakers in states with price gouging laws have a clear trade-off before them: they can try to stabilize prices or they can mitigate the spread of a virus. But trying to do both simply doesn't work well. In this case, the choice is an easy one, remove the regulations and let prices temporarily rise.

Gavin Roberts and Rik Chakraborti are the authors of "How Price-Gouging Regulation Undermined COVID-19 Mitigation," published by the Center for Growth and Opportunity at Utah State University. Gavin is an assistant professor of economics at Weber State University and Rik is an assistant professor of economics at Christopher Newport University.

Frazz



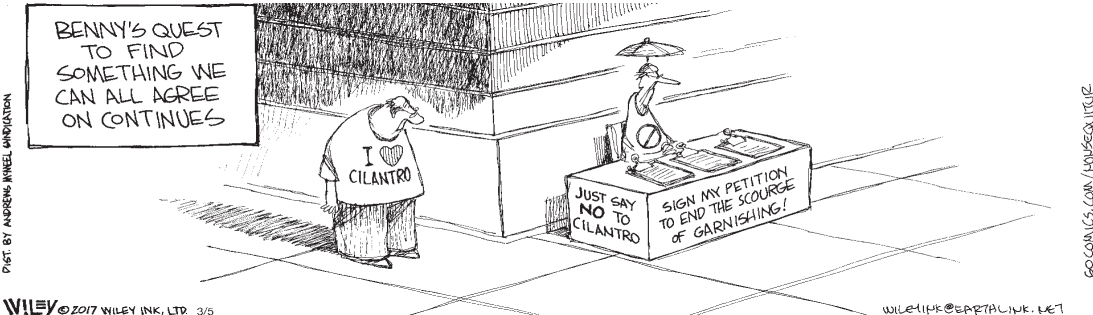
Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



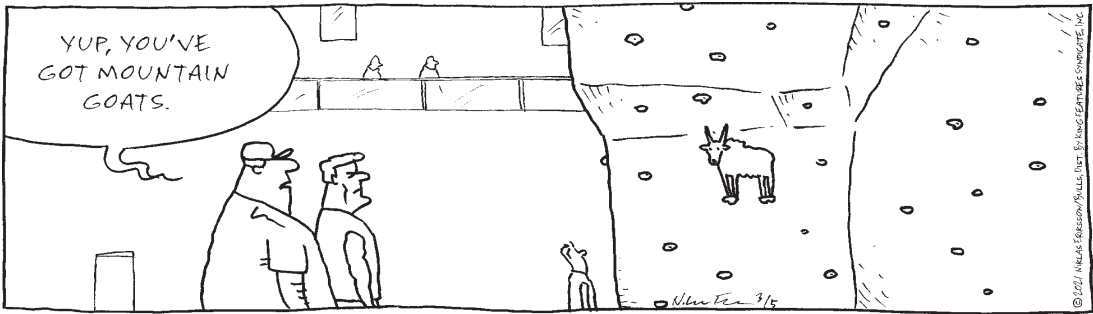
Non Sequitur



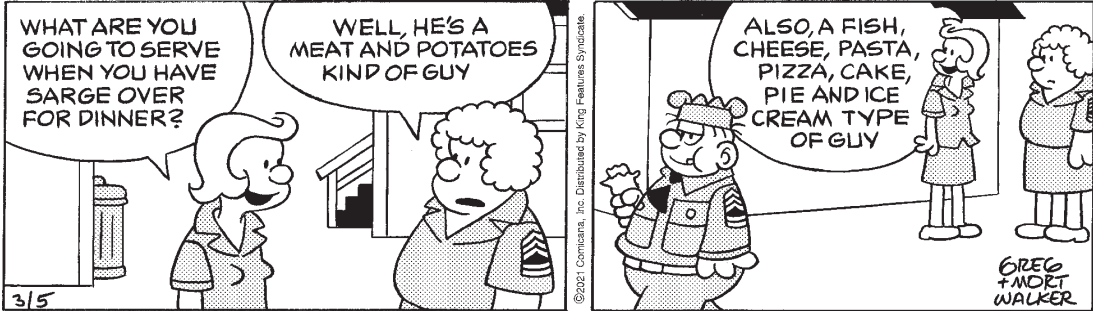
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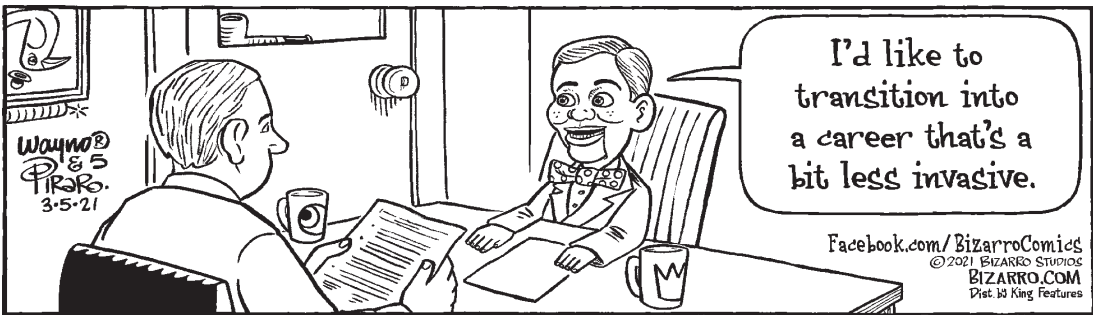
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 1 | 2 | 3 | | 4 | 5 | 6 | | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
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| 31 | 32 | 33 | | | | | | 34 | | | | |
| 35 | | | | | 36 | | 37 | | | | | |
| 38 | | | | | 39 | 40 | | | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 |
| | | | | 45 | | | | 46 | | 47 | | |
| 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | | | | | | | 52 | | |
| 53 | | | | | | 54 | | | | 55 | | |
| 56 | | | | | | 57 | | | | 58 | | |

- ACROSS
- 1 "CSI" find
- 4 West of Hollywood
- 7 Place for a watch
- 12 "Shiny Happy People" band
- 13 Non-Rx
- 14 Book after Daniel
- 15 French assent
- 16 Pop up in someone's picture
- 18 Assoc.
- 19 Justice Sotomayor
- 20 Challah unit
- 22 Chic, to Austin Powers
- 23 Pearl Harbor site
- 27 "Norma —"
- 29 Aerie builders
- 31 Farm units
- 34 Andean beast
- 35 Partner in marriage
- 37 Fr. holy woman
- 38 Full house, e.g.
- 39 Make lace
- 41 Colorless
- 45 Discard
- 47 French article
- 48 Jaw-dropping shocker
- 52 Ad- — (improvise)
- 53 Start
- 54 Hearty brew
- 55 Punk-rock subgenre
- DOWN
- 1 Slobber
- 2 Prefix with surgeon
- 3 Spanish girlfriend
- 4 Floor cleaners
- 5 Not on the road
- 6 — Lodge
- 7 Horse's halter?
- 8 Filch
- 9 Equi-
- 10 Religious sch.
- 11 Indent key
- 17 Ocean motion
- 21 Sigmund or Anna
- 23 Gawked at
- 24 Carte lead-in
- 25 Height of fashion?
- 26 Dos Passos trilogy
- 28 Ninny
- 30 Flight stat
- 31 Fire sign?
- 32 Tax pro
- 33 Director Howard
- 36 Engrave
- 37 Stable enclosures
- 40 Locales
- 42 Game sheet info
- 43 Jung's inner self
- 44 Jazz genre
- 45 Bygone fliers
- 46 Entreaty
- 48 Physique
- 49 Undivided
- 50 Flavor enhancer, for short
- 51 Actress Arthur

Answer to Previous Puzzle

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| F | A | B | | A | V | E | R | | S | P | E | W |
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| O | R | E | L | | C | U | C | U | M | B | E | R |
| A | M | A | N | | C | H | A | T | | E | M | O |
| T | Y | P | E | | A | R | T | Y | | R | U | T |

3-5

CRYPTOQUIP

G X J W V L C X W T I V A Z I Y U O J P P J

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X J T Z A O I V A J O A P A Z B L W U ? J

T X I I W L D C T W J B .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: DIMWITTED CANADIAN CARTOON CHARACTER WHO'S A REALLY HANDSOME, MACHO GUY: STUDLY DO-RIGHT.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals R

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MILITARY MATTERS

The podcast cover for 'Military Matters' features two men, one with glasses and one without, standing back-to-back against a large, stylized 'M' logo. Below the image, it says 'A STARS AND STRIPES PODCAST'.

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SCOREBOARD/NFL

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Wednesday's men's scores

EAST
Boston U. 69, Lehigh 58
George Washington 53, Fordham 49
Penn St. 84, Minnesota 65
Saint Joseph's 72, La Salle 66
St. John's 81, Providence 67
Syracuse 64, Clemson 54
UConn 69, Seton Hall 58
Villanova 72, Creighton 60
Wagner 64, Merrimack 59

SOUTH
Belmont 78, SIU-Edwardsville 61
Florida A&M 65, NC Central 58
Florida St. 93, Boston College 64
Louisiana Tech 99, Our Lady of the Lake 66

Missouri 72, Florida 70
Morehead St. 61, SE Missouri 54
New Orleans 92, Northwestern St. 83
Wichita St. 78, Tulane 70

MIDWEST
NC State 80, Notre Dame 69
Northwestern 60, Maryland 55

SOUTHWEST
Abilene Christian 63, Stephen F. Austin 61
Cent. Arkansas 88, SE Louisiana 71
Houston Baptist 72, Incarnate Word 67
Mississippi St. 63, Texas A&M 57
Sam Houston St. 84, Texas A&M-CC 61

FAR WEST
Colorado St. 87, New Mexico 73
Idaho St. 68, E. Washington 63
Oregon 82, UCLA 74
Oregon St. 75, Utah 70
San Diego St. 71, UNLV 62
Southern Cal 79, Stanford 42

Wednesday's women's scores

EAST
Buffalo 75, Miami (Ohio) 70

SOUTH
Belmont 54, Austin Peay 50
Boston College 67, Pittsburgh 56
Campbell 52, UNC-Asheville 51
Florida 69, Auburn 62
New Orleans 65, Northwestern St. 48
Nicholls 71, McNeese St. 68
Norfolk St. 83, NC Central 64
Presbyterian 67, Winthrop 50
UT Martin 65, E. Illinois 56

MIDWEST
Akron 71, Ohio 67
Bowling Green 82, Kent St. 65
Cent. Michigan 87, Ball St. 81, 2OT
Indiana 89, Iowa 80
Iowa St. 83, Kansas 53
N. Illinois 75, E. Michigan 66
Toledo 82, W. Michigan 73
West Virginia 72, Kansas St. 64

SOUTHWEST
Cent. Arkansas 44, SE Louisiana 43
Incarnate Word 68, Houston Baptist 59
Sam Houston St. 64, Texas A&M-CC 47
Stephen F. Austin 82, Abilene Christian 55
Utah Valley 67, Tarleton St. 54

FAR WEST
Montana St. 61, Sacramento St. 57
N. Colorado 84, Weber St. 60
Nevada 59, Air Force 56
Oregon St. 71, California 63
S. Utah 58, Portland St. 51
Southern Cal 71, Arizona St. 65
Washington 68, Colorado 54
Washington St. 57, Utah 48

AP SPORTLIGHT

March 5

1924 — Frank Caraura, of Buffalo, N.Y., becomes the first to bowl two straight perfect 300 games. Caraura throws five strikes to open his third game, giving him 29 straight strikes.

1931 — WGL radio broadcasts the first game of the American Basketball League championship series. The Brooklyn Visitations beat the Fort Wayne Hoosiers 14-10 in the first professional basketball game to be broadcast live on radio.

1981 — Scott Hamilton wins the men's title at the World Figure Skating Championships held in Hartford, Conn.

1985 — Mike Bossy of the New York Islanders scores his 50th goal, becoming the first NHL player to score 50 goals in eight consecutive seasons.

2004 — Ottawa and Philadelphia combine for an NHL-record 419 penalty minutes, with the Flyers setting a single-team mark with 213. There are five consecutive brawls in the final two minutes, including one involving both goalies. The previous record for penalty minutes was 406 by the Minnesota North Stars and Boston Bruins in 1981. The Flyers beat the Senators 5-3.

2016 — Makai Mason scores 22 points to lead Yale to a 71-55 victory over Columbia, clinching the Bulldogs' first NCAA Men's Tournament bid since 1962. The Bulldogs shared the Ivy championship last year with Harvard, but lost the playoff game with the Crimson. The win ends the second longest NCAA drought of any team that has made the tournament previously.

2016 — Clemson beats Boston College 66-50, completing the Eagles' winless regular season in Atlantic Coast Conference play. The Eagles (7-24, 0-18) are the first men's ACC team to go winless in their conference regular-season games since Maryland went 0-14 in 1986-87. Worse, BC's football team went 0-8 in league play, making the school the first in ACC history to go winless in both sports in the same academic year.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Friday's game

EAST
Albany (NY) at New Hampshire

Saturday's games

EAST
Maine at Delaware
Villanova at Stony Brook

SOUTH
ETSU (1-0) at Wofford (1-1), ppd.
VMI (1-0) at W. Carolina (0-5)
Chattanooga (1-1) at The Citadel (0-5)
Samford (1-1) at Furman (1-1)
Presbyterian at Gardner-Webb (1-0)
William & Mary at Richmond
Jackson St. (1-0) at Grambling St.
James Madison (2-0) at Elon (1-1)
Ark.-Pine Bluff at Southern U. (1-0)
Nicholls (2-0) at Northwestern St.
McNeese St. (1-1) at SE Louisiana (0-1)
Alabama A&M at MVSU, ppd.

MIDWEST
S. Illinois (2-1) at Youngstown St. (0-2)
W. Illinois (0-1) at S. Dakota St. (1-1)
N. Dakota St. (2-1) at Missouri St. (1-3)
Illinois St. (0-1) at N. Iowa (1-1)

SOUTHWEST
Mississippi College at Tarleton St. (1-2)
Incarnate Word (1-0) at Lamar (0-1)
Texas Southern at Prairie View

FAR WEST
Weber St. (1-0) at Cal Poly, ppd.
Idaho St. (0-1) at S. Utah (0-1)
UC Davis at Idaho (1-0)
N. Arizona (1-0) at E. Washington (0-1)

Sunday's games

EAST
Wagner at Merrimack College, ppd.
Sacred Heart at Duquesne
Bryant at LIU

SOUTH
E. Illinois (0-1) at UT Martin (0-1)
Jacksonville St. (4-1) at Tennessee St. (0-1)

MIDWEST
Murray St. (1-0) at SE Missouri (1-1)

FAR WEST
Dixie State (1-0) vs. New Mexico St. (0-1) at El Paso, Texas

PRO BASEBALL

Spring training

Tuesday's games
Detroit 6, Pittsburgh 1
Boston 9, Tampa Bay 3
Atlanta 6, Minnesota 0
N.Y. Yankees 4, Baltimore 2
St. Louis 0, Miami 0
Toronto 4, Philadelphia 2
N.Y. Mets 2, Houston 0
Chicago Cubs 3, Kansas City 2
Texas 5, Chicago White Sox 5
Cleveland 6, Seattle 1
Oakland 2, Milwaukee 1
San Diego 7, Arizona 2
Cincinnati 7, L.A. Angels 5
L.A. Dodgers 1, San Francisco 1

Wednesday's games
St. Louis 14, N.Y. Mets 9
Tampa Bay 3, Pittsburgh 1
Boston 14, Minnesota 6
Philadelphia 4, Detroit 2
Baltimore 8, Atlanta 1
Miami 8, Washington 5
Seattle 8, Chicago Cubs 8
Kansas City 6, Chicago White Sox 5
Arizona 9, Cleveland 4
Milwaukee 8, San Diego 5
Colorado 10, Oakland 7
L.A. Angels 6, Texas 2
N.Y. Yankees 4, Toronto 1
Cincinnati 4, L.A. Dodgers 4

Thursday's games
Boston vs. Baltimore at Sarasota, Fla.
Toronto vs. Detroit at Lakeland, Fla.
Tampa Bay vs. Minnesota at Fort Myers, Fla.

Atlanta vs. Pittsburgh at Bradenton, Fla.
N.Y. Yankees vs. Philadelphia at Clearwater, Fla.
Washington vs. N.Y. Mets at Port St. Lucie, Fla.
San Diego vs. Texas at Surprise, Ariz.
Chicago White Sox vs. San Francisco at Scottsdale, Ariz.
Colorado vs. Seattle at Peoria, Ariz.
Cleveland vs. Milwaukee at Phoenix
L.A. Angels vs. Arizona at Scottsdale, Ariz.
St. Louis vs. Houston at West Palm Beach, Fla.
Kansas City vs. Cincinnati at Goodyear, Ariz.
Chicago Cubs vs. L.A. Dodgers at Glendale, Ariz.

Friday's games
Tampa Bay vs. Boston at Fort Myers, Fla.
Pittsburgh vs. Philadelphia at Clearwater, Fla.
Minnesota vs. Atlanta at North Port, Fla.
Detroit vs. N.Y. Yankees at Tampa, Fla.
Houston vs. Miami at Jupiter, Fla.
Baltimore vs. Toronto at Dunedin, Fla.
L.A. Dodgers vs. Kansas City at Surprise, Ariz.
Seattle vs. Chicago White Sox at Glendale, Ariz.
L.A. Angels vs. Oakland at Mesa, Ariz.
Cleveland vs. Chicago Cubs at Mesa, Ariz.
Milwaukee vs. Colorado at Scottsdale, Ariz.
St. Louis vs. Washington at West Palm Beach, Fla.
Arizona vs. Cincinnati at Goodyear, Ariz.
San Francisco vs. San Diego at Peoria, Ariz.

TENNIS

Lyon Open
Wednesday
At Palais des Sports Gerland
Lyon, France
Purse: Euro 189,708
Surface: Hardcourt indoor
Women's Singles
Round of 32
Viktorija Golubic, Switzerland, def. Vera Lapko, Belarus, 5-7, 6-4, 6-3.
Clara Burel, France, def. Alize Cornet (5), France, 6-1, 1-6, 6-3.

Women's Singles
Round of 16
Clara Tauson, Denmark, def. Timea Babos, Hungary, 6-2, 6-3.
Fiona Ferro (2), France, def. Tereza Martincova, Czech Republic, 6-2, 4-1, ret.
Camila Giorgi, Italy, def. Nina Stojanovic, Serbia, 2-6, 6-1, 7-6 (5).

Women's Doubles
Round of 16
Renata Voracova, Czech Republic, and Makoto Ninomiya (2), Japan, def. Katarzyna Kawa and Magdalena Frech, Poland, 6-2, 6-4.
Laura-Ioana Paar, Romania, and Julia Wachaczkyk, Germany, def. Margarita Gasparyan, Russia, and Cornelia Lister, Sweden, 6-4, 6-2.
Eugenie Bouchard, Canada, and Olga Danilovic, Serbia, def. Sabrina Santamaria and Kaitlyn Christian (3), United States, 6-3, 6-4.

Women's Doubles
Quarterfinals
Lidziya Marozava, Belarus, and Anna Danilina, Kazakhstan, def. Yana Sizikova and Ekaterina Alexandrova (4), Russia, 6-1, 6-4.

ABN AMRO World Tournament

Wednesday
At Ahoy Rotterdam
Rotterdam, Netherlands
Purse: Euro 980,580
Surface: Hardcourt indoor
Men's Singles
Round of 32
Alexander Bublik, Kazakhstan, def. Alexander Zverev (3), Germany, 7-5, 6-3.
Tommy Paul, United States, def. Lorenzo Sonego, Italy, 6-4, 7-6 (7).

David Goffin (6), Belgium, def. Jan-Lennard Struff, Germany, 6-4, 6-0.
Dusan Lajovic, Serbia, def. Daniil Medvedev (1), Russia, 7-6 (4), 6-4.
Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, Spain, def. Roberto Bautista Agut (5), Spain, 6-2, 7-6 (3).

Men's Singles
Round of 16
Kei Nishikori, Japan, def. Alex de Minaur, Australia, 6-3, 2-6, 7-5.
Andrey Rublev (4), Russia, def. Andy Murray, Britain, 7-5, 6-2.
Karen Khachanov, Russia, def. Cameron Norrie, Britain, 6-2, 6-2.

Men's Doubles
Round of 16
Stefanos Tsitsipas and Petros Tsitsipas, Greece, def. Sander Gille and Joran Vliegen, Belgium, 6-2, 6-3.
Edouard Roger-Vasselin, France, and Henri Kontinen, Finland, def. Robert Farah and Juan Sebastian Cabal (1), Colombia, 4-6, 6-3, 11-9.

Men's Doubles
Quarterfinals
Fabrice Martin and Jeremy Chardy, France, def. Lukasz Kubot, Poland, and

DEALS

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Named Gary Kendall manager, Kennie Steenstra pitching coach, Tim Gibbons hitting coach, Ramon Sambo fundamentals coach, Malcom Holland development coach, Chris Poole athletic trainer and Trey Weidman strength and conditioning coach for Norfolk (Triple-A East); Buck Britton manager, Justin Ramsey pitching coach, Ryan Fuller hitting coach, Jeff Kunkel fundamentals coach, Marty Brinker athletic coach and Jon Medici strength and conditioning coach for Bowie (Double-A Northeast); Kyle Moore manager, Josh Conway pitching coach, Tom Eller hitting coach, Tim DeJohn fundamentals coach, Ryan Goll development coach and Adam Sparks athletic trainer for Aberdeen (High-A East); Dave Anderson manager, Robbie Aviles pitching coach, Patrick Jones hitting coach, Matt Packer fundamentals coach, David Barry development coach, Gary Smith athletic trainer and Liz Pardo strength and conditioning coach for Delmarva (Low-A East); Kevin Bradshaw and Alan Mills managers, Adam Bleday and Joe Haumacher pitching coaches, Brandon Becker and Anthony Villa hitting coaches, Christian Frias and Collin Woody fundamentals coaches, Adam Schuck development coach, Alikis Lorie athletic trainer and Brandon Farish strength and conditioning coach for the Complex League staff.

LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Optioned LHP Jose Quijada to Salt Lake (Triple-A West).
NEW YORK YANKEES — Announced manager Aaron Boone to take immediate leave of absence for medical reasons and named Carlos Mendoza acting manager.

National League
MIAMI MARLINS — Agreed to terms with LHP Glo Gonzalez on a minor league contract.

FOOTBALL
National Football League
ARIZONA CARDINALS — Signed DE J.J.

Wesley Koolhof (3), Netherlands, 6-4, 6-3.

Qatar Open
Wednesday
At Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex
Doha, Qatar
Purse: \$564,530
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Women's Singles
Round of 16
Anett Kontaveit, Estonia, def. Angelique Kerber, Germany, 6-1, 6-4.
Victoria Azarenka (8), Belarus, def. Laura Siegemund, Germany, 6-4, 6-2.
Jessica Pegula, United States, def. Jelena Ostapenko, Latvia, 6-2, 7-5.
Petra Kvitova (4), Czech Republic, def. Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, Russia, 6-1, 6-3.

Maria Sakkari, Greece, def. Madison Keys, United States, 6-2, 6-2.
Elina Svitolina (1), Ukraine, def. Misaki Doi, Japan, 6-1, 6-2.
Garbine Muguruza, Spain, def. Aryna Sabalenka (3), Belarus, 6-2, 6-7 (5), 6-3.
Karolina Pliskova (2), Czech Republic, def. Ons Jabeur, Tunisia, 6-4, 4-6, 7-5.

Women's Doubles
Quarterfinals
Barbora Krejickova and Katerina Sinikova (1), Czech Republic, def. Kiki Bertens and Lesley Pattinama Kerkhove, Netherlands, 4-6, 6-4, 13-11.
Sania Mirza, India, and Andreja Klepac, Slovenia, def. Gabriela Dabrowski, Canada, and Anna Blinkova (4), Russia, 6-2, 6-0.
Nicole Melichar, United States, and Demi Schuurs (2), Netherlands, def. Bethanie Mattek-Sands and Jessica Pegula, United States, 6-1, 6-1.
Monica Niculescu, Romania, and Jelena Ostapenko, Latvia, def. Elena Vesnina, Russia, and Laura Siegemund, Germany, 6-3, 6-4.

Argentina Open

Wednesday
At Buenos Aires Lawn Tennis Club
Buenos Aires
Purse: \$329,550
Surface: Red clay
Men's Singles
Round of 16
Miomir Kecmanovic (4), Serbia, def. Thiago Monteiro, Brazil, 5-7, 6-3, 6-4.
Albert Ramos-Vinolas (5), Spain, def. Dominik Koepfer, Germany, 7-5, 6-4.
Laslo Djere (7), Serbia, def. Federico Delbonis, Argentina, 7-6 (1), 6-3.
Sumit Nagal, India, def. Cristian Garin (2), Chile, 6-4, 6-3.

Men's Doubles
Round of 16
Franko Skugor, Croatia, and Austin Krajicek (1), United States, def. Pablo Andujar and Jaume Munar, Spain, 2-6, 6-3, 10-8.
Federico Coria and Francisco Cerundolo, Argentina, def. Nicholas Monroe, United States, and Artem Sitak, New Zealand, 3-6, 7-6 (3), 10-7.
Oliver Marach, Austria, and Luis David Martinez, Venezuela, def. Benoit Paire, France, and Romain Arneodo, Monaco, 6-4, 3-6, 11-9.
Nikola Cacic, Serbia, and Tomislav Brkic, Bosnia-Herzegovina, def. Roberto Carballes Baena, Spain, and Salvatore Caruso, Italy, 6-3, 6-4.
Joao Sousa, Portugal, and Dominik Koepfer, Germany, def. Andres Molteni and Guillermo Duran, Argentina, 6-2, 6-1.

CHICAGO BEARS — Re-signed OL Alex Bars, TE J.P. Holtz, RB Ryan Nall and LBs James Vaughters and Josh Woods to contract extensions.
CINCINNATI BENGALS — Re-signed LS Clark Harris and CB Jalen Davis to one-year contract extensions.
LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Re-signed LS Trent Sieg to a three-year contract extension.
NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Re-signed S J.T. Gray to a two-year contract extension. Released TE's Jared Cook and Josh Hill.
NEW YORK JETS — Released DE Henry Anderson.
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Claimed CB Mark Fields II off waivers from Houston.
WASHINGTON FOOTBALL TEAM — Released LB Thomas Davis.

DEALS

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Named Gary Kendall manager, Kennie Steenstra pitching coach, Tim Gibbons hitting coach, Ramon Sambo fundamentals coach, Malcom Holland development coach, Chris Poole athletic trainer and Trey Weidman strength and conditioning coach for Norfolk (Triple-A East); Buck Britton manager, Justin Ramsey pitching coach, Ryan Fuller hitting coach, Jeff Kunkel fundamentals coach, Marty Brinker athletic coach and Jon Medici strength and conditioning coach for Bowie (Double-A Northeast); Kyle Moore manager, Josh Conway pitching coach, Tom Eller hitting coach, Tim DeJohn fundamentals coach, Ryan Goll development coach and Adam Sparks athletic trainer for Aberdeen (High-A East); Dave Anderson manager, Robbie Aviles pitching coach, Patrick Jones hitting coach, Matt Packer fundamentals coach, David Barry development coach, Gary Smith athletic trainer and Liz Pardo strength and conditioning coach for Delmarva (Low-A East); Kevin Bradshaw and Alan Mills managers, Adam Bleday and Joe Haumacher pitching coaches, Brandon Becker and Anthony Villa hitting coaches, Christian Frias and Collin Woody fundamentals coaches, Adam Schuck development coach, Alikis Lorie athletic trainer and Brandon Farish strength and conditioning coach for the Complex League staff.

LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Optioned LHP Jose Quijada to Salt Lake (Triple-A West).
NEW YORK YANKEES — Announced manager Aaron Boone to take immediate leave of absence for medical reasons and named Carlos Mendoza acting manager.

National League
MIAMI MARLINS — Agreed to terms with LHP Glo Gonzalez on a minor league contract.

FOOTBALL
National Football League
ARIZONA CARDINALS — Signed DE J.J.

Jets may be open to trading Darnold

By DENNIS WASZAK JR.
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Sam Darnold's time as the face of the New York Jets franchise might be nearing a disappointing end.

The 23-year-old quarterback was considered an untouchable player on the roster only a year ago. General manager Joe Douglas has backed off that stance, though, and it could signal a major change at the position as free agency and the NFL Draft approach.

"I will answer the call if it's made," Douglas said Wednesday when asked if he'd listen to offers for Darnold. "As it pertains to Sam, Sam's, we think, a dynamic player in this league with unbelievable talent and who really, really has a chance to really hit his outstanding potential moving forward."

"But, you know, like I said earlier, if calls are made, I will answer."

Douglas' comments during a video call that included new coach Robert Saleh marked the first time the GM directly acknowledged being willing to trade Darnold. And that has the quarterback's future with the Jets murky — just three years after being hailed as a potential long-term solution at a position that has long lacked consistent production.

"Our stance on Sam hasn't changed," Douglas insisted. "He's an extremely talented player and he's very smart, very tough. And we have no doubt that Sam is going to achieve his outstanding potential. Obviously, we're in the process of getting as much information as we can leading up through free agency and the draft."

Then-GM Mike Maccagnan traded up in the draft to select Darnold with the No. 3 overall pick in 2018, but the quarterback has not lived up to those lofty expectations because of inconsistency and injuries. Former coach Adam Gase acknowledged he didn't help Darnold enough to thrive, and the Jets lacked play-making talent to help him take the next step in his development.

New York currently holds the No. 2 overall pick in the draft next month, and BYU's Zach Wilson and Ohio State's Justin Fields are among the names being mentioned as options for the Jets.



Darnold

NHL

Knights complete sweep of Wild

By W.G. RAMIREZ
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Jonathan Marchessault's goal in the second period was the winner, Marc-Andre Fleury made 36 saves and the Vegas Golden Knights beat the Minnesota Wild 5-1 on Wednesday night.

Vegas swept the two-game set against Minnesota and remained atop the West Division, one point ahead of the St. Louis Blues.

Alex Tuch, Mark Stone, Chandler Stephenson and William Karlsson also scored for the Golden Knights, who improved to 10-2-1 at home this season.

"We know that every game is huge, especially when every game is in the division," said Tuch, whose nine goals rank second on the team. "They're a good team, they're hard-working, and I thought we put together a good 60 minutes."

Making his 10th consecutive start, Fleury improved to 11-3-0. He has limited teams to two goals or fewer in 10 of his 14 appearances. His 11 wins rank third in the NHL, behind Tampa Bay's Andrei Vasilevskiy and Toronto's Frederik Andersen.

"The more you play, you just go out and play and not think as



Golden Knights goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury blocks a shot by the Minnesota Wild during the first period of Wednesday's game in Las Vegas. Fleury finished with 36 saves and allowed just one goal.

much," said Fleury, who surpassed Gump Worsley for 12th all-time with his 861st game played. "You react to what's happening in front of you. You just wait for the puck more. The play

slows down a little bit, so it's been good."

Marcus Foligno scored for the Wild and Cam Talbot made 23 saves.

Minnesota, which outshot the

Vegas 37-28, saw its season-high seven-game point streak and five-game road point streak both come to an abrupt halt. The 37 shots were the Wild's third-highest tally of the season.

ROUNDUP

Vrana's SO goals lifts Caps over Bruins

Associated Press

BOSTON — Jakub Vrana scored the only goal in the shootout and the Washington Capitals beat the Bruins 2-1 on Wednesday night in Zdeno Chara's return to Boston.

Lars Eller scored in regulation, and Vitek Vanecsek made 18 saves to help the Capitals improve to 7-1-1 in their last nine games.

The 43-year-old Chara, the Bruins' captain for his 14 seasons with the club, signed a one-year contract as a free agent with Washington in the offseason. He helped Boston win the 2011 Stanley Cup, and was a key part of its runner-up teams in 2013 and 2019.

David Pastrnak scored for the Bruins and Tuukka Rask stopped 27 shots.

Maple Leafs 6, Oilers 1: Jimmy Vesey scored twice, Frederik Andersen made 26 saves in his return from an injury and NHL-leading Toronto completed a three-game sweep of host Edmonton.

John Tavares and Zach Hyman each had a goal and an assist, and William Nylander and Ilya Mikheyev also scored to help the Maple Leafs improve to 18-4-2.

Andersen returned after missing four games with a lower-body



Washington Capitals left wing Jakub Vrana, right, beats Bruins goaltender Tuukka Rask for a goal during the shootout portion of Wednesday's game in Boston. The Capitals won 2-1.

injury. Auston Matthews, the NHL goals leader with 18, also was back after missing the last two games with a sore wrist/hand.

Toronto outscored the Oilers 13-1 in the three games, winning 4-0 on Saturday night and 3-0 on Monday night.

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins scored for Edmonton.

Blues 3, Ducks 2: Jordan Binnington made 27 saves and visit-

ing St. Louis scored on all three of its power plays to beat skidding Anaheim.

Oskar Sundqvist, Brayden Schenn and Zach Sanford scored for the Blues, who are 6-for-10 with the man advantage against the Ducks this season. Overall, St. Louis has converted 17.1% of its power plays.

The Blues have won all four meetings against Anaheim this

year and six of its last seven.

Max Comtois and Rickard Rakell scored for the Ducks, who are 0-6-2 in their last eight.

Coyotes 3, Kings 2: Clayton Keller and Nick Schmaltz scored power-play goals in the second period and Antti Raanta made 40 saves in visiting Arizona's victory over Los Angeles.

Johan Larsson scored 13 seconds after Schmaltz's goal, and the Coyotes snapped a two-game skid by hanging on in the final minute of their only road game in a 27-day span.

Drew Doughty and Gabriel Vi- lardi scored for the Kings.

Avalanche 4, Sharks 0: Mikko Rantanen scored twice and had two assists as visiting Colorado blanked San Jose.

Philipp Grubauer made 26 saves for his 14th career shutout and the Avalanche got payback for a 6-2 loss Monday night in San Jose.

Gabriel Landeskog added a goal and three assists for Colorado, which went 3-1 on its road trip and pulled into a three-way tie for third place in the West Division with Arizona and Minnesota.

Martin Jones stopped 34 shots for the Sharks.

Scoreboard

| East Division | | | | | | | |
|------------------|----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|
| | GP | W | L | OT | Pts | GF | GA |
| Washington | 22 | 13 | 5 | 4 | 30 | 75 | 70 |
| N.Y. Islanders | 22 | 12 | 6 | 4 | 28 | 58 | 50 |
| Boston | 20 | 12 | 5 | 3 | 27 | 60 | 52 |
| Philadelphia | 19 | 11 | 5 | 3 | 25 | 63 | 59 |
| Pittsburgh | 21 | 12 | 8 | 1 | 25 | 65 | 67 |
| N.Y. Rangers | 20 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 19 | 53 | 54 |
| New Jersey | 18 | 7 | 9 | 2 | 16 | 46 | 54 |
| Buffalo | 20 | 6 | 11 | 3 | 15 | 46 | 60 |
| Central Division | | | | | | | |
| | GP | W | L | OT | Pts | GF | GA |
| Tampa Bay | 20 | 15 | 4 | 1 | 31 | 71 | 39 |
| Carolina | 22 | 15 | 6 | 1 | 31 | 76 | 60 |
| Florida | 21 | 13 | 4 | 4 | 30 | 67 | 60 |
| Chicago | 23 | 12 | 7 | 4 | 28 | 73 | 68 |
| Columbus | 24 | 9 | 10 | 5 | 23 | 66 | 78 |
| Nashville | 22 | 10 | 12 | 0 | 20 | 51 | 68 |
| Detroit | 25 | 7 | 15 | 3 | 17 | 52 | 82 |
| Dallas | 17 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 16 | 46 | 47 |
| West Division | | | | | | | |
| | GP | W | L | OT | Pts | GF | GA |
| Vegas | 19 | 14 | 4 | 1 | 29 | 61 | 41 |
| St. Louis | 23 | 13 | 8 | 2 | 28 | 75 | 73 |
| Colorado | 20 | 12 | 7 | 1 | 25 | 61 | 48 |
| Minnesota | 20 | 12 | 7 | 1 | 25 | 62 | 54 |
| Arizona | 22 | 10 | 9 | 3 | 23 | 59 | 66 |
| Los Angeles | 21 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 22 | 62 | 59 |
| San Jose | 20 | 8 | 10 | 2 | 18 | 59 | 77 |
| Anaheim | 23 | 6 | 12 | 5 | 17 | 48 | 69 |
| North Division | | | | | | | |
| | GP | W | L | OT | Pts | GF | GA |
| Toronto | 24 | 18 | 4 | 2 | 38 | 87 | 56 |
| Winnipeg | 22 | 14 | 7 | 1 | 29 | 74 | 59 |
| Edmonton | 25 | 14 | 11 | 0 | 28 | 80 | 78 |
| Montreal | 21 | 10 | 6 | 5 | 25 | 68 | 61 |
| Calgary | 23 | 10 | 11 | 2 | 22 | 59 | 70 |
| Vancouver | 26 | 9 | 15 | 2 | 20 | 74 | 90 |
| Ottawa | 25 | 8 | 16 | 1 | 17 | 67 | 95 |

| Tuesday's games | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| N.Y. Rangers 3, Buffalo 2 | |
| Columbus 4, Detroit 1 | |
| N.Y. Islanders 2, New Jersey 1 | |
| Winnipeg 5, Vancouver 2 | |
| Carolina 4, Nashville 2 | |
| Tampa Bay 2, Dallas 0 | |
| Montreal 3, Ottawa 1 | |
| Pittsburgh 5, Philadelphia 2 | |
| Wednesday's games | |
| Washington 2, Boston 1, SO | |
| Toronto 6, Edmonton 1 | |
| St. Louis 3, Anaheim 2 | |
| Arizona 3, Los Angeles 2 | |
| Vegas 5, Minnesota 1 | |
| Colorado 4, San Jose 0 | |
| Thursday's games | |
| Buffalo at N.Y. Islanders | |
| Detroit at Carolina | |
| N.Y. Rangers at New Jersey | |
| Philadelphia at Pittsburgh | |
| Winnipeg at Montreal | |
| Florida at Nashville | |
| Tampa Bay at Chicago | |
| Columbus at Dallas | |
| Ottawa at Calgary | |
| Toronto at Vancouver | |
| Friday's games | |
| Washington at Boston | |
| Tampa Bay at Chicago | |
| Anaheim at Colorado | |
| Minnesota at Arizona | |
| St. Louis at Los Angeles | |
| Vegas at San Jose | |
| Saturday's games | |
| Buffalo at N.Y. Islanders | |
| N.Y. Rangers at New Jersey | |
| Philadelphia at Pittsburgh | |
| Florida at Nashville | |
| Minnesota at Arizona | |
| Toronto at Vancouver | |
| Winnipeg at Montreal | |
| Anaheim at Colorado | |
| Columbus at Dallas | |
| St. Louis at Los Angeles | |
| Calgary at Edmonton | |
| Vegas at San Jose | |

| Scoring leaders | |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Through Wednesday | |
| | GP G A PTS |
| Connor McDavid, EDM | 24 14 26 40 |
| Leon Draisaitl, EDM | 24 10 24 34 |
| Patrick Kane, CHI | 23 11 23 34 |
| Mitchell Marner, TOR | 23 10 23 33 |
| Mark Scheifele, WPG | 22 11 20 31 |
| Auston Matthews, TOR | 20 18 13 31 |
| James van Riemsdyk, PHI | 19 10 16 26 |
| Nicklas Backstrom, WSH | 21 10 15 25 |
| Alex DeBrincat, CHI | 19 11 14 25 |
| Brock Boeser, VAN | 26 12 13 25 |
| Jonathan Huberdeau, FLA | 21 8 16 24 |
| Anze Kopitar, LA | 20 4 19 23 |
| Blake Wheeler, WPG | 22 7 16 23 |
| Brad Marchand, BOS | 19 10 13 23 |

NBA

Scoreboard

| Eastern Conference | | | | | |
|---|----|-----|------|------|------|
| Atlantic Division | | | | | |
| | W | L | Pct | GB | |
| Philadelphia | 24 | 12 | .667 | — | |
| Brooklyn | 24 | 13 | .649 | ½ | |
| Boston | 18 | 17 | .514 | 5½ | |
| New York | 18 | 18 | .500 | 6 | |
| Toronto | 17 | 18 | .486 | 6½ | |
| Southeast Division | | | | | |
| | W | L | Pct | GB | |
| Charlotte | 17 | 18 | .486 | — | |
| Miami | 17 | 18 | .486 | — | |
| Atlanta | 16 | 20 | .444 | 1½ | |
| Washington | 13 | 20 | .394 | 3 | |
| Orlando | 13 | 23 | .361 | 4½ | |
| Central Division | | | | | |
| | W | L | Pct | GB | |
| Milwaukee | 21 | 14 | .600 | — | |
| Indiana | 16 | 18 | .471 | 4½ | |
| Chicago | 16 | 18 | .471 | 4½ | |
| Cleveland | 14 | 22 | .389 | 7½ | |
| Detroit | 10 | 25 | .286 | 11 | |
| Western Conference | | | | | |
| Southwest Division | | | | | |
| | W | L | Pct | GB | |
| San Antonio | 18 | 13 | .581 | — | |
| Dallas | 18 | 16 | .529 | 1½ | |
| Memphis | 16 | 15 | .516 | 2 | |
| New Orleans | 15 | 20 | .429 | 5 | |
| Houston | 11 | 23 | .324 | 8½ | |
| Northwest Division | | | | | |
| | W | L | Pct | GB | |
| Utah | 27 | 9 | .750 | — | |
| Portland | 20 | 14 | .588 | 6 | |
| Denver | 20 | 15 | .571 | 6½ | |
| Oklahoma City | 14 | 21 | .400 | 12½ | |
| Minnesota | 7 | 29 | .194 | 20 | |
| Pacific Division | | | | | |
| | W | L | Pct | GB | |
| Phoenix | 23 | 11 | .676 | — | |
| L.A. Clippers | 24 | 13 | .649 | ½ | |
| L.A. Lakers | 24 | 13 | .649 | ½ | |
| Golden State | 19 | 17 | .528 | 5 | |
| Sacramento | 14 | 21 | .400 | 9½ | |
| Tuesday's games | | | | | |
| Memphis 125, Washington 111 Atlanta 94, Miami 80 Boston 117, L.A. Clippers 112 San Antonio 119, New York 93 Denver 128, Milwaukee 97 Phoenix 114, L.A. Lakers 104 Detroit at Toronto, ppd | | | | | |
| Wednesday's games | | | | | |
| Indiana 114, Cleveland 111 Detroit 129, Toronto 105 Philadelphia 131, Utah 123, OT Brooklyn 132, Houston 114 Charlotte 135, Minnesota 102 Atlanta 115, Orlando 112 Chicago 128, New Orleans 124 Dallas 87, Oklahoma City 78 Portland 108, Golden State 106 Sacramento 123, L.A. Lakers 120 | | | | | |
| Thursday's games | | | | | |
| L.A. Clippers at Washington Toronto at Boston Detroit at New York Denver at Indiana Milwaukee at Memphis Miami at New Orleans Oklahoma City at San Antonio Golden State at Phoenix Sacramento at Portland | | | | | |
| Friday's games | | | | | |
| No games scheduled | | | | | |
| Saturday's games | | | | | |
| No games scheduled | | | | | |
| Leaders | | | | | |
| Through Tuesday | | | | | |
| Scoring | | | | | |
| | G | FG | FT | PTS | AVG |
| Beal, WAS | 31 | 359 | 229 | 1020 | 32.9 |
| Embiid, PHI | 29 | 271 | 288 | 865 | 29.8 |
| Lillard, POR | 32 | 296 | 220 | 947 | 29.6 |
| Curry, GS | 34 | 330 | 180 | 1004 | 29.5 |
| Rebounds | | | | | |
| | G | OFF | DEF | TOT | AVG |
| Capela, ATL | 32 | 159 | 294 | 453 | 14.2 |
| Drummond, CLE | 25 | 101 | 236 | 337 | 13.5 |
| Gobert, UTA | 35 | 115 | 348 | 463 | 13.2 |
| Assists | | | | | |
| | G | AST | | | AVG |
| Harden, BKN | 30 | 331 | | | 11.0 |
| Westbrook, WAS | 26 | 254 | | | 9.8 |

Happy return: Harden leads Nets

He puts up triple-double in his first game back in Houston since his trade

Associated Press
HOUSTON — The No. 13 on his jersey, James Harden won so many games for the Houston Rockets. On Wednesday night in the first meeting with his former team, No. 13 had a triple-double for the Brooklyn Nets to send the reeling Rockets to their 13th straight loss. “A lot of mixed emotions from the fans but I knew that was going to happen,” Harden said. “I just wanted to come out here and give them a show.” He did that with 29 points, 10 rebounds and 14 assists in the 132-114 victory. The Nets set a franchise record with their seventh straight road victory. They’ve won 10 of their last 11 overall. Harden has meshed well with his new team and Brooklyn is 17-7 since the trade. “So far, so good,” he said. “It’s everything that I signed up for. Top to bottom it’s been great.”



MARK MULLIGAN / AP
Brooklyn Nets guard James Harden, center, battles for a rebound with Houston Rockets forward Jae'Sean Tate, left, and Houston Rockets forward P.J. Tucker. Hardin had 29 points, 10 rebounds and 14 assists during the Nets' 132-114 win Wednesday in Houston.

ROUNDUP

Embiid, Harris lead 76ers past Jazz

Associated Press
PHILADELPHIA — Joel Embiid isn't content with being one of the NBA's best players. He wants more for himself and the 76ers — and it showed. Embiid had 40 points and 19 rebounds and hit a tying three-pointer late in regulation, Tobias Harris scored 11 of his 22 points in overtime, and Eastern Conference-leading Philadelphia beat the West-leading Utah Jazz 131-123 on Wednesday night. Ben Simmons added 17 points for the 76ers. The game included four players who will be participating in Sunday's All-Star game in Embiid and Simmons, and Donovan Mitchell and Rudy Gobert of the Jazz. Embiid rose above the rest. “Those are the matchups you want to dominate and prove we have a great team,” Embiid said. The four-time All-Star is eager to add the NBA's top defensive award to his mantle. “I want to dominate on the offensive end but mainly on the defensive end,” he said.



MATT SLOCUM / AP
Utah Jazz center Rudy Gobert, left, cannot get a dunk past Philadelphia 76ers center Joel Embiid during the 76ers' 131-123 overtime win Wednesday in Philadelphia.

Once again, he did both to help Philadelphia avenge last month's loss to Utah. The Jazz beat the 76ers 134-123 on Feb. 15 in Utah when Embiid

through the quarter. Harden got a mixed reception from the crowd. Many of the 3,615 fans booed when he was introduced before the game and more boos came the first few times he touched the ball. He said it was a “little weird” being on the visitor's side but denied having any extra emotions. “Once I get on that court I'm just trying to win,” he said. “So that was kind of my feeling. I wasn't trying to show off.”

sat with a back injury. Simmons had 42 points, 12 rebounds and nine assists in that game, but Jordan Clarkson hit eight three-pointers and scored 40 points for Utah. Mike Conley's two free throws put the Jazz ahead 118-115 Wednesday with 21.5 seconds left in regulation. Philadelphia couldn't free its shooters for a tying three, so Embiid stepped back and drained one himself with 5.9 seconds remaining. **Kings 123, Lakers 120:** Buddy Hield shook off a sore ankle to score 29 points and host Sacramento beat short-handed Los Angeles. **Pacers 114, Cavaliers 111:** T.J. McConnell set an NBA record with nine steals in the first half and had his second career triple-double with 16 points, 13 assists and a franchise-best 10 steals, leading Indiana to a win at Cleveland. **Mavericks 87, Thunder 78:** Kristaps Porzingis had 19 points and 13 rebounds with European sidekick Luka Doncic sidelined by a back issue going into his second All-Star appearance, and host Dallas beat Oklahoma City. **Trail Blazers 108, Warriors 106:** Damian Lillard hit a deep three-pointer with 13.7 seconds left and Portland held off visiting Golden State. **Pistons 129, Raptors 105:** Wayne Ellington scored 25 points and visiting Detroit beat virus-depleted Toronto to snap a three-game losing streak. **Hawks 115, Magic 112:** Trae Young scored 32 points and hit the go-ahead free throws with eight seconds remaining as Atlanta rallied from 19 down in the second half to win at Orlando. **Bulls 128, Pelicans 124:** Zach LaVine capped a 36-point performance with a driving layup and four free throws during the final minute, and Chicago won at New Orleans. **Hornets 135, Timberwolves 102:** Terry Rozier scored 31 points, Gordon Hayward added 23 and Charlotte headed into the All-Star break with an easy victory at Minnesota.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL



Villanova forward Damien Jefferson drives past Creighton guard Marcus Zegarowski during the Wildcats' 72-60 win Wednesday in Villanova, Pa.

TOP 25 ROUNDUP

Villanova beats Creighton to wrap up Big East title

Creighton coach McDermott said plantation remark was an “awful mistake”

Associated Press
VILLANOVA, Pa. — Creighton coach Greg McDermott said he made an “awful mistake” for using language that caused pain for the players “that look to me as a mentor and as a leader.” He was on the bench for the Bluejays for the first time since he apologized on social media for urging his players over the weekend to “stay on the plantation.”
“We need to get back to Omaha and regroup a little and have some more conversations which we need to have so that I can help them and they can help me,” McDermott said.
McDermott’s use of a phrase evoking slavery overshadowed what was expected to be fantastic showdown between the top two

teams in the Big East.
Justin Moore scored 24 points and helped No. 10 Villanova capture the Big East title with a 72-60 win over 14th-ranked Creighton.
“The pain I saw in their eyes was immense,” McDermott said after the game. “That’s a cross that I’m going to have to bear for a while. I’m going to come out of this on the other end a better person because of it. But it’s going to be a process.”
McDermott did not answer any questions about his remarks and stood by an apology he issued on social media.
McDermott said on Creighton’s pregame radio show that he offered to resign. The coach said he had a long meeting with players on Sunday night and said he saw “pain in their face(s)” and hoped

“one mistake doesn’t define you.”
McDermott said he wanted to make sure the Bluejays (17-7, 13-6 Big East) wanted him to remain as coach and apologized for the “distraction that I brought to this team for the choice that I made.”
No. 11 Florida State 93, Boston College 64: M.J. Walker scored 18 points, hitting six three-pointers, and RaiQuan Gray added 16 points to help the host Seminoles beat the Eagles for their 25th straight ACC home win.
No. 19 San Diego State 71, UNLV 62: Matt Mitchell scored 19 points and Jordan Schakel added 16 for the Aztecs, who beat the Runnin’ Rebels to clinch the Mountain West Conference regular-season title for the second straight year.

Mamukelashvili carries Seton Hall over UConn

Associated Press
STORRS, Conn. — Sandro Mamukelashvili scored 22 points and hit a series of clutch baskets in the second half as Seton Hall held off UConn 80-73 on Saturday, earning its first win at Gampel Pavilion since 1997.
Myles Cale added 20 points, making three three-pointers, for the Pirates, who were playing at

UConn for the first time since 2010. The Huskies had won 13 of the previous 14 meetings.
Seton Hall (11-8, 8-5 Big East Conference) saw a nine-point halftime lead quickly cut down to 38-36 as UConn scored the first seven points of the second half.
The Pirates stopped the rally with five straight points. Mamukelashvili stepped up with one of his two three-pointers. Jared Rhoden

Conference tournaments

| | |
|---|--|
| America East Conference Semifinals Saturday, March 6 UMass Lowell at UMass Hartford at Vermont Championship Saturday, March 14 Semifinal winners Atlantic Sun Conference Thursday, March 4 Quarterfinals Kennesaw St. vs. Liberty North Alabama vs. North Florida Florida Gulf Coast vs. Lipscomb Stetson vs. Bellarmine Semifinals Friday, March 5 lowest remaining seed vs. highest remaining seed second lowest remaining seed vs. second highest remaining seed Atlantic 10 Conference First Round Wednesday, March 3 Saint Joseph's 72, La Salle 66 George Washington 53, Fordham 49 Second Round Thursday, March 4 Duquesne vs. Richmond UMass vs. Saint Joseph's Rhode Island vs. Dayton George Mason vs. George Washington Quarterfinals Friday, March 5 St. Bonaventure vs. Duquesne-Richmond winner Saint Louis vs. UMass-Saint Joseph's VCU vs. Rhode Island-Dayton winner Davidson vs. George Mason-George Washington Big South Conference Quarterfinals Monday, March 1 Winthrop 83, High Point 54 Radford 67, Hampton 52 Longwood 77, UNC Asheville 61 Campbell 63, Gardner-Webb 57 Semifinals Thursday, March 4 Winthrop vs. Longwood Radford vs. Campbell Championship Sunday, March 7 Semifinal winners Colonial Athletic Association First Round Saturday, March 6 Towson vs. Elon UNC-Wilmington vs. William & Mary Quarterfinals Sunday, March 7 Delaware vs. Hofstra Towson-Elon winner at James Madison UNC-Wilmington-William & Mary winner vs. Northeastern Drexel vs. Coll. of Charleston Horizon League Quarterfinals Tuesday, March 2 Cleveland St. 108, Fort Wayne 104, 3OT N. Kentucky 70, Detroit Mercy 69 Milwaukee 94, Wright St. 92, OT Oakland 87, Youngstown St. 83, OT Semifinals Monday, March 8 Cleveland St. vs. Milwaukee Oakland vs. N. Kentucky Missouri Valley Conference First Round Thursday, March 4 S. Illinois vs. Bradley Illinois St. vs. Northern Iowa Quarterfinals Friday, March 5 S. Illinois-Bradley winner vs. Loyola Chicago Evansville vs. Indiana St. Illinois St.-N. Iowa winner vs. Drake Valparaiso vs. Missouri St. Semifinals Saturday, March 6 Loyola Chicago, S. Illinois-Bradley winner vs. Evansville-Indiana St. winner Drake, Illinois St.-Northern Iowa winner vs. Valparaiso-Missouri St. winner | Championship Sunday, March 7 Semifinal winners Ohio Valley Conference Quarterfinals Wednesday, March 3 Belmont 78, SIU-Edwardsville 61 Morehead St. 61, SE Missouri 54 Thursday, March 4 Murray St. vs. Jacksonville St. Austin Peay vs. Eastern Kentucky Semifinals Friday, March 5 Murray St.-Jacksonville St. winner vs. Belmont Morehead St. vs. Austin Peay-Eastern Kentucky winner Championship Saturday, March 6 Semifinal winners Patriot League First Round Wednesday, March 3 Loyola at Holy Cross, cancelled Boston University 69, Lehigh 58 Quarterfinals Saturday, March 6 Loyola at Navy American at Army Bucknell at Lafayette Boston University at Colgate Southern Conference First Round Friday, March 5 W. Carolina vs. The Citadel Samford vs. Mercer Quarterfinals Saturday, March 6 W. Carolina-The Citadel winner vs. UNC-Greensboro ETSU vs. Chattanooga Samford-Mercer winner vs. Wofford VMI vs. Furman Semifinals Sunday, March 7 UNC-Greensboro, W. Carolina-The Citadel winner vs. ETSU-Chattanooga winner Wofford, Samford-Mercer winner vs. VMI-Furman winner Summit League Quarterfinals Saturday, March 6 Omaha vs. South Dakota St. W. Illinois vs. South Dakota Sunday, March 7 North Dakota vs. Oral Roberts Kansas City vs. North Dakota St. Sun Belt Conference First Round Friday, March 5 Arkansas St. vs. Georgia Southern Appalachian St. vs. Little Rock South Alabama vs. Louisiana-Monroe Texas-Arlington vs. Troy Quarterfinals Saturday, March 6 Louisiana vs. South Alabama-Louisiana-Monroe winner Georgia St. vs. Arkansas St.-Georgia Southern winner Semifinal Sunday, March 7 Georgia St.-Arkansas St.-Georgia Southern winner vs. Louisiana-South Alabama-Louisiana-Monroe winner Coastal Carolina-Texas-Arlington-Troy winner vs. Texas St.-Appalachian St.-Little Rock winner West Coast Conference First Round Thursday, March 4 San Diego vs. San Francisco Portland vs. Santa Clara Second Round Friday, March 5 San Diego-San Francisco winner vs. Loyola Marymount Portland-Santa Clara winner vs. Pacific Quarterfinals Saturday, March 6 Loyola Marymount-San Diego-San Francisco winner vs. Saint Mary's Pacific-Portland-Santa Clara winner vs. Pepperdine |
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Northwestern 60, Maryland 55: Boo Buie scored 15 points and Chase Audige added 14, and the host Wildcats scored the last six points of the game to end the Ter-rapins' five-game win streak.
Northwestern (8-14, 5-13 Big Ten) has won two straight since halting a 13-game losing streak. The Wildcats also snapped a five-game skid against Maryland and beat them for the first time at

home.
The Terps (15-11, 9-10) took their first lead of the second half, 51-50, on Aaron Wiggins' three-pointer with 4:50 remaining and led 55-54 with 2:32 to play. The Wildcats' Ryan Young made a layup and then two free throws with 13 seconds remaining. Darryl Morsell missed a three on the other end and Buie sealed it with a pair of free throws.

MLB/GOLF/HOUSTON

Miami playing waiting game

Marlins' top prospects still developing

By STEVEN WINE
Associated Press

MIAMI — Miami Marlins outfield prospect Monte Harrison says he surprised himself when he made his major league debut last year.

It wasn't just that he didn't hit; it was how he reacted when he didn't hit.

"I said I was not going to be that guy who gets called up to the big leagues and struggles mentally," Harrison said. "And then when I got to the big leagues, I struggled mentally. That's very humbling."

Harrison's experience wasn't isolated in Miami last season; several other Marlins prospects also scuffled in their first crack at the majors. In fact, while the farm system rebuilt under CEO Derek Jeter brims with young talent, it has yet to produce a hitter who busts out in the majors.

With pitching it's different. The Marlins have stockpiled young arms so successfully their rotation is expected to be the strength of this year's team, with no starter older than 26.

Development of hitters lags. That's baseball. "There are a few young guys who don't struggle; the majority do," Marlins manager Don Mattingly said Wednesday. "There are very few Sotos, Griffey Jr.s. and Acunas of the world who are instantly stars. It doesn't happen that often."

For the Jeter regime, instant success hasn't happened at all. Four of the Marlins' top 12 prospects made their MLB debuts last year, and none batted above .170.

Harrison went 8-for-47 with 26 strikeouts. Outfielder Jesús Sánchez went 1-for-25 with 11 strikeouts. First baseman Lewin Díaz went 6-for-39 with 12 strikeouts. Infielder Jazz Chisholm went 9-for-56 with 19 strikeouts.

Other heralded youngsters, including second baseman Isan Díaz and outfielder Mag-



LYNNE SLADKY/AP

The Miami Marlins' Monte Harrison scores on a single hit by Connor Scott during a spring training game against the Washington Nationals on Wednesday in West Palm Beach, Fla.

neuris Sierra, also have been unable to win a starting job.

Outfielder Lewis Brinson feels their pain. A prospect acquired in the Christian Yelich trade with Milwaukee, Brinson has a .189 career average in 761 at-bats, although he did show progress in 2020 and might have a role on this year's team.

His advice for scuffling young hitters?

"Embrace that struggle," Brinson said. "Embrace getting slapped, getting humbled a little bit."

"We've killed it in the minors; when you get to the big leagues it's a different ballgame. You can't succeed without failing sometimes. You've got to take your lumps."

Mattingly said he doesn't believe the Marlins have been calling up youngsters too soon. Instead, he thinks the game has changed since 1984, when he won the American League batting title at age 23 by hitting .343.

"There is a bigger separation now between Triple-A and the big leagues," Mattingly said. "It almost always takes that getting slapped, as Lew would say, and then going back and working on your game, and the next time it's usually a little better."

"We're seeing it with Lew. He's making

strides, and it has taken a little bit. Hopefully it's not going to take two or three years with guys, but sometimes that's what it takes."

Or, as Mattingly noted, success may never come. But that's where the Marlins' depth of young talent helps their chances of building on last year's surprising run to their first playoff berth since 2003.

The Marlins remain high on their 2020 rookie class, and even if the entire group flops, there are more young prospects on the way. That includes outfielders JJ Bleday, Kameron Misner, Peyton Burdick and Connor Scott, and shortstop Jose Devers.

Harrison, for one, embraces getting slapped last year. A dynamic player and personality, he failed to make the roster out of camp last summer, and saw only spot duty after later joining the Marlins.

"I think the best thing that ever happened to me was in that time period where I got sent down and called back up and I had to sit on the bench," Harrison said. "The best of Monte will come out. I can't wait for the fans of Miami to see that, and the world."

The Marlins remain confident, too, that they won't continue to strike out with their young hitters.

Detectives look at 'black box' from Woods crash

By STEFANIE DAZIO
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Detectives are looking at data from the "black box" of Tiger Woods' SUV to get a clearer picture of what occurred during the Southern California rollover crash that seriously injured the golf star, authorities said Wednesday.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department said traffic investigators executed a search warrant Monday to retrieve data from the device from the Genesis SUV that Woods was driving.

There was no immediate information regarding what was found in the black box, Deputy Trina Schrader said in a statement.

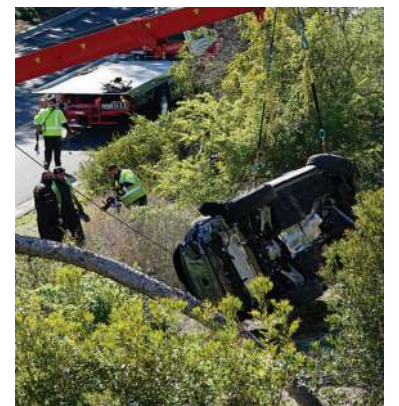
The 2021 GV80, made by the Hyundai luxury brand, is likely to have a newer version of event data recorders nicknamed "black boxes" after more sophisticated recorders in airplanes. The devices store a treasure trove of data for authorities to review.

Woods suffered a serious leg injury when the SUV he was driving went off a Los Angeles County road and rolled over on a downhill stretch known for crashes. Sheriff Alex Villanueva said Woods was not drunk and was driving alone in good weather when the SUV hit a raised median, went across oncoming lanes and rolled several times. The crash injured his right leg, requiring surgery.

Deputies will review data from the black box to "see if they can find out what was the performance of the vehicle, what was happening at the time of impact," said Villanueva, who previously faced criticism for almost immediately calling the crash "purely an accident."

During a live social media event on Wednesday, the sheriff said the new data could provide more information on the cause of the accident.

"And that's all it is, and we'll leave it at that," he said.



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

A vehicle rests on its side after a rollover accident involving golfer Tiger Woods on Feb. 23 outside of Los Angeles.

Wreck: Not much to cheer for lately in Houston

FROM FROM 24

These are uncertain and depressing times for Houston sports fans. Harden's messy departure was just another headline of bad news and the nine-time All-Star joined what has seemed like a mass exodus of superstar athletes from the fifth-largest metropolitan area in the nation.

Standout receiver DeAndre Hopkins was first to go when former Houston Texans coach Bill O'Brien shipped him to Arizona for very little in return. Harden then forced a trade from the Rockets in January and Astros outfielder and 2017 World Series MVP George Springer signed with the Blue Jays about a week later, another blow after the team was embroiled in a cheating scandal.

The biggest blow came when defensive end J.J. Watt asked for and was granted his release from the Texans before joining Hop-

kins in Arizona this week.

And after dealing with all that, fans are now bracing for the possibility they could soon lose Deshaun Watson, too, after the quarterback requested a trade amid turmoil within the Texans. O'Brien was fired after an 0-4 start last season and Houston sank to 4-12 after winning the AFC South the previous two years.

John P. Lopez was a columnist for the Houston Chronicle for 17 years and has hosted a daily show on Sports Radio 610 in Houston since 2007. He said most callers believe the departures of Harden and Springer were inevitable but they are disconsolate about their NFL team — and he can relate: "I legitimately cannot understand how a team that had that much going for it can become this dysfunctional almost overnight."

"Sports are so emotional and personal, and I think people that have identified with the Texans

just feel deceived and let down," Lopez said. "People are legitimately, genuinely just crushed emotionally. They're an emotional wreck that this is happening."

Lopez, like many fans who call in to his show, blames the problems on executive vice president of football operations Jack Easterby, a former chaplain for the Patriots with no personnel experience who gained power in the wake of O'Brien's dismissal. Anger has shifted to owner Cal McNair, who took charge after his father Bob McNair died in 2018.

"McNair, I think, right now is as despised and resented as Bud Adams ever was in this city," Lopez said, referring to the late owner of the Houston Oilers who moved that team to Tennessee.

Watt leaves as one of the most beloved figures in Houston sports history, a three-time NFL Defensive Player of the Year who did as much off the field as he did on it.

His community efforts were unmatched, highlighted by raising more than \$40 million for Hurricane Harvey relief.

Sports Radio 610, which is the flagship station of the Texans, set up the J.J. Watt Goodbye Hotline that received hundreds of messages.

Perhaps the most emotional call came from a 62-year-old man, who said he'd been a Houston sports fan for more than half his life.

"It hurts me," he said between sobs. "Man, you did everything for us and I'm going to miss you. It's gut-wrenching and mind blowing but I'll quit my crying and just tell you how much I love you."

As for Sawyer, her parents have decided to use a different tack with the news that Springer and Watt are also gone.

"We haven't even told her," Chris Brown said. "So, it's been tough."

SPORTS



Phonelines are open
N.Y. Jets would listen to offers for QB Darnold, GM says » **NFL, Page 19**

‘Emotional wreck’

Watching All-Stars leave for greener pastures has been difficult for Houston fans

BY KRISTIE RIEKEN
Associated Press

Five-year-old Sawyer Brown was inconsolable. Her father, Chris Brown, had told her James Harden wouldn't be with the Houston Rockets anymore after being traded to Brooklyn.

"I want James Harden to be on the Texas team," she said, tears filling her eyes, in a video he shared on Facebook. Her dad went on to list other players on the team she could root for instead, but she was not having it. She just shook her head, her blonde hair bouncing across her face.

"James Harden... I just want him," she said.

Sawyer, who has performed twice at Rockets games with her youth basketball program, hasn't cared much about the team since.

"It's been hard because James Harden's very big to her," said her mother, Ellie Brown. "He's bigger than life ... he packs a lot of punch and she was especially fond of his beard. So, I think looking on the court now, she can just see ... how different everything is, and I think that it doesn't have the pizzazz. You can just see that she's not interested."

SEE WRECK ON PAGE 23

Numerous Houston fan favorites have departed the city's sports teams in recent months, including, clockwise from top left, former NBA MVP James Harden, World Series MVP George Springer and three-time NFL Defensive Player of the Year JJ Watt.

Photo illustration; AP photos

"I want James Harden to be on the Texas team. James Harden... I just want him."

Sawyer Brown
5-year-old Houston Rockets fan

Harden tallies triple-double in Nets' win over Rockets » **NBA, Page 21**