

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Dillon Gabriel's run at Oregon reminiscent of Marcus Mariota era
Page 24

**MILITARY**

NATO eyes ways to counter Russian, Chinese sabotage
Page 3

**FACES**

Williams takes on the Beatles at Abbey Road
Page 15

Watchdog finds Navy, Marines out of sync on ship schedules » Page 6

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LEE JIN-MAN/AP

People attend a candlelight vigil against South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol in Seoul, South Korea, on Wednesday.

S. Korea's Yoon faces impeachment

Opposition parties submit motion following president's martial law attempt

BY HYUNG-JIN KIM
AND KIM TONG-HYUNG
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's opposition parties Wednesday submitted a motion to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol over the shocking and short-lived martial law that drew heavily armed troops to encircle parliament before lawmakers climbed walls to reenter the building and unanimously voted to lift his order.

Impeaching Yoon would require the support of two-thirds of

parliament, and at least six justices of the nine-member Constitutional Court would have to endorse it to remove him from office. The motion, submitted jointly by the main liberal opposition Democratic Party and five smaller opposition parties, could be put to a vote as early as Friday.

Yoon's senior policy advisers and Defense Minister Kim Yong Hyun offered to resign as the nation struggles to make sense of what appeared to be a poorly-thought-out stunt. The Democratic Party on Wednesday submitted

RELATED
US caught off guard by Yoon's martial law move
Page 4

a separate motion to impeach Kim, who it alleged recommended the martial law declaration to Yoon.

In his speech announcing the abrupt order Tuesday night, Yoon vowed to eliminate "anti-state"

forces and continued to criticize the Democratic Party's attempts to impeach key government officials and senior prosecutors. But martial law lasted only about six hours, as the National Assembly voted to overrule Yoon before his Cabinet formally lifted it around 4:30 a.m.

The Democratic Party, which holds a majority in the 300-seat parliament, said Wednesday that its lawmakers decided to call on Yoon to quit immediately or they

SEE YOON ON PAGE 5

Trump considers DeSantis for DOD

BY THOMAS BEAUMONT,
ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON,
ZEKE MILLER
AND TARA COPP
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Pete Hegseth, Donald Trump's Pentagon pick, was fighting to hold on to his Cabinet nomination amid growing questions Wednesday about his personal conduct as the president-elect's team considers alternatives, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

The Trump transition team was increasingly concerned about Hegseth's path to Senate confirmation and was actively looking at potential replacements, a person familiar with the matter said. Hegseth is under pressure as senators weigh a series of allegations that have surfaced against him.

DeSantis, who competed against Trump for the Republican presidential nomination in 2024, is being discussed as a possible replacement if Hegseth's nomination does not move forward, according to three other people familiar with the matter. They were not authorized to publicly discuss internal deliberations and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Hegseth is the latest nominee-designate to be imperiled by personal baggage after the recent withdrawal of Trump's pick to be attorney general, former Rep. Matt Gaetz, whose vulnerabilities were well-documented. But Hegseth's past, including the revelation that he made a settlement



DeSantis

SEE DOD ON PAGE 9

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Study: Nearly 30% of drugstores closed in a decade

Associated Press

Nearly three out of 10 U.S. drugstores that were open during the previous decade had closed by 2021, new research shows.

Black and Latino neighborhoods were most vulnerable to the retail pharmacy closures, which can chip away at already-limited care options in those communities, researchers said in a study published Tuesday in *Health Affairs*.

The trend has potentially gained momentum since the

study's time frame, because many drugstores are still struggling. In the last three years, the major chains Walgreens and CVS have closed hundreds of additional stores, and Rite Aid shrank as it went through a bankruptcy reorganization.

Drugstores have been dealing with shrinking reimbursement for prescriptions, rising costs and changing customer shopping habits. The chains have been closing money-losing stores and transferring prescription files to more

profitable locations.

The study found that more than 29% of the nearly 89,000 retail U.S. pharmacies that operated between 2010 and 2020 had closed by 2021. That amounts to more than 26,000 stores.

Researchers using data from the National Council for Prescription Drug Programs found that the number of U.S. pharmacies had actually increased from 2010 to 2017 because of store openings, but the pace of closings picked up starting in 2018.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Dec. 5)	0.93
British pound (Dec. 5)	\$1.24
Japanese yen (Dec. 5)	146.00
South Korean won (Dec. 5)	1379.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain(Dinar)	.3769
Britain (Pound)	.7881
Canada (Dollar)	1.4058
China(Yuan)	7.2686
Denmark (Krone)	7.0949
Egypt (Pound)	49.8418
Euro	.9512
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7846
Hungary (Forint)	394.01
Israel (Shekel)	3.6140
Japan (Yen)	150.59
Kuwait(Dinar)	.3075
Norway (Krone)	11.0573
Philippines (Peso)	58.25
Poland (Zloty)	4.08
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7574
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3459
South Korea (Won)	1417.43
Switzerland (Franc)	.8851
Thailand (Baht)	34.28
Turkey (NewLira)	34.7427

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

INTEREST RATES

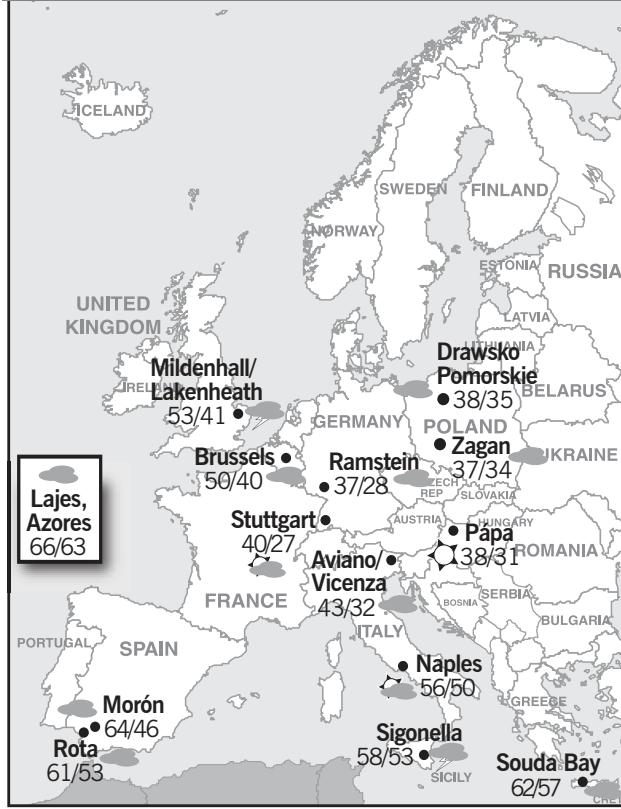
Prime rate	7.75
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.75
Federal funds market rate	4.58
3-month bill	4.47
30-year bond	4.41

WEATHER OUTLOOK

THURSDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



THURSDAY IN EUROPE



FRIDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

TODAY
IN STRIPES

American Roundup	14
Classified	12
Comics	17
Crossword	17
Faces	15
Opinion	16
Sports	18-24

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MILITARY

Rutte: NATO must prep for hybrid warfare

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

Countries in the U.S.-led NATO alliance must find new ways of countering the stepped-up efforts by Russia and China to destabilize Europe with sabotage campaigns, the bloc's top official said Wednesday.

Cybercrime, attacks on infrastructure and the weaponization of energy are among their tactics, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said during a meeting of allied foreign ministers.

"We have to discuss how we will defend ourselves," Rutte said. "And that means that you will look at ways to have better intelligence sharing, but also making sure that we can protect our critical infras-

tructure."

Foreign ministers agreed Wednesday to a set of "proactive measures," including more exercises, Rutte said.

Allies also will get tough on Russia's shadow fleet of oil-exporting ships, said Rutte, who did not offer specifics on the various plans in the works.

Rutte, who hosted the two-day meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels, emphasized that increased cooperation between China and Russia poses challenges on a variety of fronts.

The military and financial support Russia has received from Beijing for Moscow's war effort point to the increasingly global nature of the battle in Ukraine, Rutte

said.

Iran and North Korea's separate contributions to Russia's military campaign also raises broader security risks for the West, he said.

Meanwhile, U.S. and European military officials for months have been alarmed by increasingly brazen acts of sabotage that are believed to have been carried out by Russian agents. China also has been suspected of recent mischief.

"Both Russia and China have tried to destabilize our countries and divide our societies with acts of sabotage, cyberattacks and energy blackmail," he said.

Two weeks ago, Swedish officials launched an investigation in

to a Chinese cargo ship that was navigating in the vicinity of two Baltic Sea communications cables connecting Germany and Finland and Lithuania and Sweden, respectively, that were severed.

The vessel is suspected of having dragged its anchor over the cables, severing them.

In the U.S., corporations were urged to strengthen communication networks following news of a sprawling hacking campaign that authorities say gave China access to private phone conversations of an unknown number of Americans.

Allies also have complained about acts of arson, an assassination attempt on an industrial leader in Germany and instances of

sabotage at various logistics centers.

In June, U.S. military bases in Europe were put on heightened alert in connection with potential threats to installations across the Continent.

While the Pentagon never specified the nature of the threat, CNN reported in July that the move came in response to information that Russia-backed actors were considering sabotage attacks against American military personnel and facilities.

Gen. Darryl Williams, the U.S. Army's top commander in Europe, said during an October meeting in Washington that the risks of broader military escalation are growing.



ANNA DELANGE/Stars and Stripes

First lady Jill Biden visits Naval Air Station Sigonella in Sicily on Wednesday. After speaking to service members and their families, she went to the tiny Sicilian village of Gesso, where her great-grandparents lived before immigrating to the U.S.

First lady stops at Sigonella during final overseas trip

By ALISON BATH

Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Jill Biden began her last overseas trip as first lady this week at a Navy base in Sicily, speaking to military families before visiting the small Sicilian village where her great-grandparents once lived.

Along with her daughter Ashley, the wife of outgoing President Joe Biden arrived at Naval Air Station Sigonella on Wednesday as part of a six-day trip that includes stops in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and France, the White House said in a statement.

Speaking to about 150 military members and their families at NAS Sigonella, Biden highlighted her family's military service. Her father was a Navy signalman in World War II, and her son Maj. Beau Biden served in Iraq with the Delaware Army National Guard in the years before his death from cancer in 2015.

That family history, along with numerous visits to U.S. bases over the years, helped inform Biden administration efforts to support military families, including a June 2023 directive that ordered federal agencies to develop a strategic

plan for hiring and retaining military spouses, Jill Biden said.

Other measures included lowering the cost of child care, bringing universal pre-K to bases and ensuring that military children with disabilities can transfer their individualized education programs to their new school, she said.

"You're the 1% who serves so the 99% can know freedom," the first lady said. "And we have a duty to make sure you can build good lives."

Over the last four years, she has visited more than 25 military installations, including a November 2021 stop at Naval Support Activity Naples in Italy, where she spoke to high school and middle school students.

Those visits were part of her Joining Forces initiative, which is focused on supporting military and veteran families, caregivers and survivors.

A priority has been to respond to decades of frustration expressed by military spouses living overseas with limited job opportunities, she said.

In August 2023, U.S. and Italian officials announced that military

spouses and dependents of service members living in Italy no longer would have to give up protections afforded them through the NATO Status of forces Agreement to continue teleworking for their American employers. In October, military dependents living in Spain received similar assurances.

"I know this life isn't always easy," Biden said, in reference to the lengthy deployments and frequent changes of station that force many military spouses and dependents to leave careers, schools and communities behind. "That's why Joe's administration is making sure we do everything we can to support military families."

Following her visit to NAS Sigonella, Biden traveled to Gesso, about 83 miles north of the base. The tiny community of about 536 residents was the home of her great-grandparents, Gaetano and Conchetta Giacoppa, who immigrated to the U.S. through Ellis Island and settled in New Jersey, the White House said in a statement.

As part of her visit, Biden gave the town of Gesso a European holly tree. It's a relative of the American holly, the state tree of Delaware, the statement said.

Philippines says Chinese ships harassed patrol vessel

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Chinese coast guard vessels backed by navy ships fired powerful water cannons and blocked and sideswiped a Philippine patrol vessel on Wednesday in renewed aggression at a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, Philippine officials said.

Three Philippine coast guard

and bureau of fisheries vessels were on routine patrol to protect Filipino fishermen at Scarborough Shoal when several Chinese coast guard and navy ships approached and staged "aggressive actions" after dawn, the Philippine coast guard said.

There was no immediate comment from Chinese officials. In the past, they have repeatedly cited

ed claims of Chinese sovereignty in the contested offshore region and their determination to defend what they say is their territory despite a 2016 international arbitration decision that invalidated Beijing's historical claims.

The United States condemned China's "unlawful use of water cannons and dangerous maneuvers." U.S. Ambassador to Manila

MaryKay Carlson said on the social media platform X that the Chinese maneuvers disrupted a Philippine maritime operation and "put lives at risk."

China's reported actions in the disputed waters came after a respite of more than a month while back-to-back major storms prevented many Philippine fishing and commercial vessels from

venturing into dangerously rough seas.

Despite the Chinese ships' "reckless" maneuvers, the Philippines coast guard and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resource said they renewed their "commitment to protecting the rights and safety of our fishermen within our maritime jurisdiction."

PACIFIC

US surprised by Yoon's martial law attempt

BY JOSEPH DITZLER

Stars and Stripes

The United States appeared caught off guard by South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's decision to impose emergency martial law on his country Tuesday night, according to government spokesmen in Washington, D.C.

At the Pentagon, spokesman Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said the U.S. military was not apprised by its South Korean counterparts of its role in Yoon's plan for martial law.

"To my knowledge the U.S. was not notified in advance of this announcement," he told reporters.

Ryder said U.S. military leaders have been in contact with South Korean military leaders since events unfolded in Seoul. Yoon acceded to a National Assembly vote demanding he rescind the martial law order soon after he imposed it.

"I'm not going to go into specifics on who and when at this point but again we're in contact and I'll just leave it there," Ryder added.

He said the Defense Department saw no changes in North Korea's defense posture overnight.



DAVID CHO/Stars and Stripes

A man waves a phone displaying "Arrest Yoon Suk Yeol" outside of the National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea, Wednesday.

The U.S. response the following day to Yoon's declaration, and that of Japan's Cabinet, reflected caution but repeated support for the three-party security partnership reached by President Joe Biden at Camp David, Md., in August 2023.

That agreement eased Japan and South Korea into a closer rela-

tionship through its common ally, the U.S., and resulted in several three-way military exercises in the past year.

"We're going to continue to consult with [South Korea] and see how things develop," Ryder said. "Certainly, the advances that have been made in terms of the trilater-

al relationship between [South Korea], Japan and the U.S. is very important and is something that will continue to be important to us."

Vedant Patel, a spokesman for the State Department, and Ryder repeated that the U.S. is continuing its "ironclad commitment" to the U.S.-South Korean alliance despite the events in Seoul. Both said their departments are monitoring the situation and that U.S. troops and citizens, so far, face no changed circumstances on the peninsula.

"What we're focused on right now is continuing to gather the facts, monitor the situations on the ground, and expect this to be fully resolved peacefully and in — consistent with the rule of law," Patel said.

The State Department recommended that Americans in South Korea keep attuned to local news but otherwise the risk level for travelers remained the same, at Level 1, or normal caution, he said.

The 28,500 U.S. troops in Korea were not significantly impacted

by events Tuesday night and Wednesday morning in Seoul, Ryder said.

"In any of these types of situations, you want to make sure that you're paying attention that you're checking in with your unit, making sure that there's accountability, but I'm not aware at this point of any significant impact," he said.

During a televised news conference in Tokyo, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said he knew of no reports of harm or damage to Japanese citizens in South Korea since Tuesday.

"I am not in a position to comment on the domestic affairs of other countries," he said. "However, since the declaration of martial law last night, we have been closely monitoring the situation with particular and grave interest."

"We will continue to take every possible measure to ensure the safety of Japanese nationals in South Korea," he said.

Stars and Stripes reporter Hana Kusumoto contributed to this report.

Retired South Korean general calls attempt at martial law 'bizarre'

BY DAVID CHOI

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea—Soldiers dispatched to South Korea's parliament building to enforce President Yoon Suk Yeol's abrupt martial law decree Tuesday night grew confused as the attempt evaporated in the face of legislative resistance.

Troops reportedly blocked some lawmakers from entering the National Assembly, which eventually voted to demand Yoon rescind the emergency order. Posts on social media showed some lawmakers climbing the compound walls, with protestor's help, to evade soldiers and cast their votes.

The six-hour ordeal was "bizarre and embarrassing," said retired South Korean army Lt. Gen. Chun In-Bum, who served as the director of U.S. affairs at the Ministry of National Defense in 2005.

"It's embarrassing because if you're going to declare martial law, you should do it right," he told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday. "Instead, they do it halfway and during the whole process, we're just blessed that nothing went wrong, and nobody got killed."

Yoon declared emergency martial law through a televised speech Tuesday night, citing a growing number of senior prosecutors being impeached and alleged politi-

cal malfeasance by the opposition Democratic Party, a group he described as "anti-state" forces.

Nearly 300 special forces troops were deployed to the National Assembly following the declaration, some arriving by helicopter and forcibly entering the compound, National Assembly Secretary General Kim Min-ki said at a Wednesday news conference in Seoul.

"Starting today, we will completely ban military officials and police from entering the National Assembly building," he said. "This is an urgent measure to protect the safety of lawmakers and to secure the functions of the National Assembly."

South Korea's Ministry of National Defense did not respond to requests for comment by phone Wednesday.

Under South Korean law, the president is required to lift martial law if at least half of the 300 National Assembly lawmakers vote against the declaration. All 190 lawmakers who were able to enter parliament in time voted against martial law.

Rep. Kim Joon Hyung of the Rebuilding Korea Party was among those who rushed to cast their votes; he described events that night as a complete surprise.

"Regarding martial law, there was a rumor, but nobody believed



South Korean police set up a barricade outside the National Assembly building in Seoul, South Korea, on Wednesday.

it," he told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday. "I drove fast to come into the National Assembly building, but it was already blocked."

The scene at the building's entrance was chaotic, with some lawmakers allowed entry and others blocked by soldiers, Kim said. He overheard conflicting orders over the soldiers' walkie-talkies, with some told to "block them" and another voice saying, "Let them in," he said.

"It wasn't really planned and thoroughly prepared because blocking the gate was not consistent," Kim said. "The soldiers raiding were very scary and fearful, but I don't think they acted fast enough. It seemed like they didn't

do their best or they were not being very aggressive."

Troops deployed to the National Assembly apparently were not adequately briefed on their orders, according to Chun. Such an operation requires "meticulous planning," he said.

"If you're going to tell your troops to do something, your troops need to understand what they're doing," Chun said. "Everything was left to circumstance and on-the-spot decision making. Do you know how dangerous that is?"

Opposition to Yoon appeared to swell Wednesday.

Lawmakers from all six opposition parties filed a motion to impeach Yoon through the National Assembly that afternoon and told

reporters they plan to bring it to a vote as early as Friday. Impeaching a president requires 200 votes, according to South Korea's constitution.

Senior officials, including national security adviser Shin Won-sik and Yoon's chief of staff, Chung Jin-suk, offered their resignations, Yonhap News reported Wednesday.

Yoon may have been "motivated by some kind of anger" and "definitely didn't judge the situation very well," Kim said.

"I think this is the end of Yoon's presidency," he said, "The question is how it ends."

Stars and Stripes reporter Yoo Kyong Chang contributed to this report.

PACIFIC

Yoon: Martial law rejected in 190-0 vote

FROM PAGE 1

would take steps to impeach him.

"President Yoon Suk Yeol's martial law declaration was a clear violation of the constitution. It didn't abide by any requirements to declare it," a party statement said. "His martial law declaration was originally invalid and a grave violation of the constitution. It was a grave act of rebellion and provides perfect grounds for his impeachment."

Impeaching Yoon would require support from 200 of the National Assembly's 300 members. The Democratic Party and other small opposition parties together have 192 seats. But the rejection of Yoon's martial law declaration in a 190-0 vote included the votes of 18 lawmakers from Yoon's ruling People Power Party, according to National Assembly officials. PPP leader Han Dong-hun and Seoul Mayor Oh Se-hoon, also a member, criticized Yoon's martial law declaration.

Cho Jinman, a professor at Seoul's Duksung Women's University, said it's highly likely that lawmakers will back Yoon's impeachment motion given that some from the ruling party already voted down his edict.

If Yoon is impeached, he'll be

stripped of his constitutional powers until the Constitutional Court rules. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, the No. 2 position in the South Korean government, would take over his presidential responsibilities. Han issued a public message pleading for patience and calling for Cabinet members to "fulfill your duties even after this moment."

The Constitutional Court has only six incumbent justices following three retirements. That means all six must approve Yoon's possible impeachment motion for it to succeed. They include those appointed after Yoon took office, so the Democratic Party is expected to speed up the process of exercising its rights to recommend two of the three new justices.

Yoon's martial law declaration, the first of its kind in more than 40 years, harkened to South Korea's past military-backed governments when authorities occasionally proclaimed martial law and other decrees that allowed them to station combat soldiers, tanks and armored vehicles on streets or at public places like schools to prevent anti-government demonstrations. Such scenes of military intervention had not been seen since South Korea achieved a democracy in the late 1980s until Tuesday

night.

After Yoon's declaration, troops carrying full battle gear, including assault rifles, tried to keep protesters away from the National Assembly as military helicopters flew overhead and landed nearby.

It wasn't clear how the 190 lawmakers were able to enter a parliamentary hall to vote down Yoon's martial law decree. Opposition leader Lee Jae-myung and National Assembly Speaker Woo Won Shik were seen climbing over walls. As troops and police officers blocked some from entering, they didn't aggressively restrain or use force against others.

No major violence has been reported. The troops and police personnel were later seen leaving the grounds of the National Assembly after the parliamentary vote to lift the martial law.

Under South Korea's constitution, the president can declare martial law during "wartime, war-like situations or other comparable national emergency states" that require the use of military force to restrict the freedom of press, assembly and other rights to maintain order. Many observers question whether South Korea is currently in such a state.

The constitution also states that the president must oblige when



DAVID CHO/Stars and Stripes

Activists and observers gather around a gate leading to the National Assembly building Wednesday in Seoul, South Korea.

the National Assembly demands the lifting of martial law with a majority vote.

A presidential official said that Yoon decided to impose martial law as a way to resolve a political deadlock and did it in the middle of night to minimize its negative impacts on the economy. The official requested anonymity.

Some experts say Yoon clearly violated the constitution in how he imposed martial law. While martial law allows "special measures" to restrict individual freedoms and the authority of agencies and courts, the constitution does not permit the functions of parliament

to be restricted. But in following Yoon's declaration on Tuesday, South Korea's military proclaimed parliamentary activities were suspended and deployed troops to try to block lawmakers from entering the National Assembly.

Park Chan-dae, the Democratic Party's floor leader, called for Yoon to be immediately investigated on charges of rebellion over the way he deployed troops to the parliament. While the president mostly enjoys immunity from prosecution while in office, the protection does not extend to alleged rebellion or treason.

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MILITARY

Navy, Marines out of sync on ship schedules

GAO: Availability of amphibious fleet affects deployments

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Navy's amphibious ship schedules and Marine Corps units that deploy on them are out of sync, and without change, the services will continue to deploy Marines late, according to a federal watchdog agency.

A driving factor is the Navy and Marine Corps are at odds about how many amphibious ships are needed to deploy Marines effectively, the Government Accountability Office wrote in a report released Tuesday. The report outlines recommendations for the services to work together to refine their availability goals for amphibious ships and establish when a joint plan will be implemented to address ship availability concerns. The watchdog also recommended the Navy stop canceling maintenance on ships scheduled to be decommissioned without the required permission from congressional defense committees.

The Navy has 32 operational amphibious ships—just one more than the Congress-mandated minimum of 31 ships. The Navy's amphibious fleet, which includes amphibious assault ships, dock landing ships and amphibious transport docks, transports Marines and their equipment, including vehicles and aircraft, for assault and humanitarian missions.



PHOTOS BY AMELIA KANG/U.S. Marine Corps

A U.S. Navy landing craft transports personnel and equipment to the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer in the Pacific Ocean.

But half the fleet is in poor condition, and some ships have been unavailable for years at a time, the GAO wrote.

"Historically, we have an example where the Navy had one amphibious ship that hadn't deployed in over 12 years because it ran into major challenges in modernization. But that ship is counted toward its number of available ships," said Shelby Oakley, director of contracting and national security acquisitions for the GAO.

On paper, a ship in maintenance was previously considered available. But ships in maintenance cannot always deploy and conduct missions or exercises, making it useless to the Marine Corps, Oakley said.

"Agreeing on that number of how many of these do we need actually [not to be] in major maintenance and ready to conduct operations and training. That's one thing they are working through right now,"

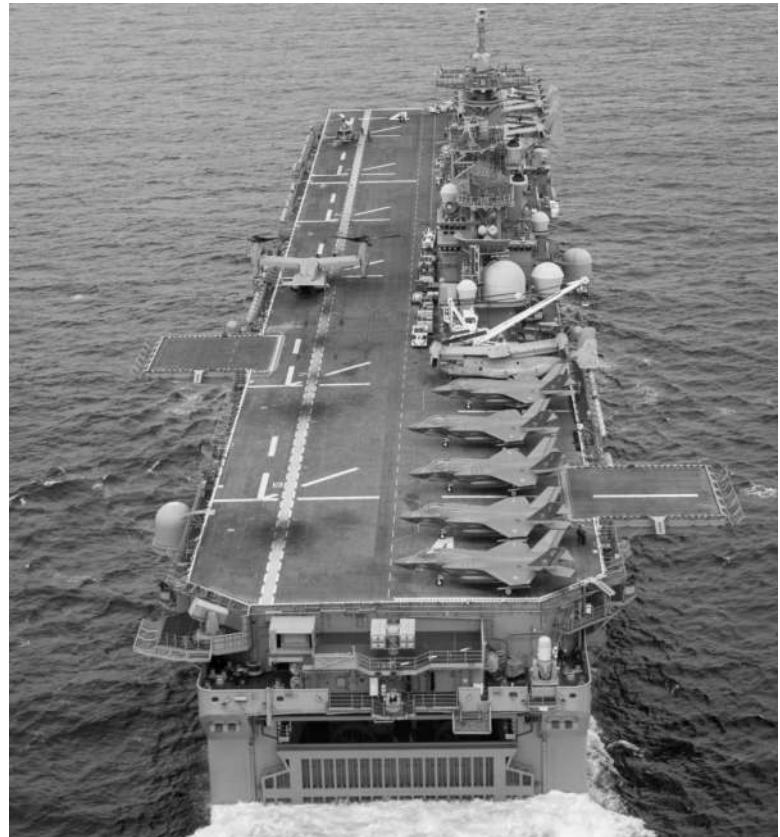
Oakley said of the services.

In June, the Navy and Marine Corps agreed on what constitutes an available ship, specifying a ship in a maintenance phase is unavailable.

But the GAO found the definition failed to address the types of maintenance that would deem a ship to be unavailable.

"The Navy considers a ship undergoing an intermediate maintenance period to be capable of stopping maintenance work and getting underway within four days (96 hours) to perform a mission. However, when we toured the USS Germantown in October 2023, officials told us that the ship could not deploy within 96 hours due to the extensive amount of maintenance in its ongoing intermediate maintenance period," the report read.

The GAO audit spanned April 2023 to December 2024 during which representatives visited six amphibious warships at Naval Sta-



GAO teams visited six amphibious assault warships to see maintenance issues affecting the ships.

tion Norfolk, Va., and Naval Base San Diego, Calif., to see maintenance issues affecting the ships.

The audit was conducted after years of amphibious ships deploying late. Marine Corps documentation shows that between 2011 and 2020 amphibious warfare ships were only available for operational tasking 46% of the time, according to the watchdog report.

In 2024, the USS Boxer and USS America amphibious ready groups and Marine Expeditionary Units experienced operational challenges that resulted in delayed deployments and missed exercises due to lack of available ships. Additionally, ship spotters observed the USS Wasp in March and the USS Iwo Jima in September limping back to port following training exercises off the coast of Virginia. In both instances, Navy officials confirmed the ships had experienced mechanical problems.

Adding to the struggle, 16 de-

grading amphibious ships are on track to fall short of their expected 40-year lifespan.

To keep up with the 31-ship mandate, the Navy will need to keep nearly all its legacy amphibious assault ships in service past their expected service lives while it waits for new ships, the report said. Doing so will cost about \$1 billion per ship.

A Navy deal to pay nearly \$10 billion to build three new amphibious warships will help the service satisfy the congressional demand to have 31 operational amphibious ships, but it will be years before those ships join the fleet.

"Absent establishing time frames for completion of a Navy and Marine Corps agreement on the number of amphibious ships that should be available at a given time, with objective and measurable metrics to guide it, the services will be at continued risk of late or disaggregated Marine deployments," according to the report.

US destroys weapons systems that fired at coalition base in Syria

BY MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — American forces on Tuesday morning attacked and destroyed several weapons including rocket launchers and a tank operating near a U.S.-led coalition base in eastern Syria, the Pentagon said.

The U.S. strikes took place near Military Support Site Euphrates and destroyed three truck-mounted rocket launchers, a T-64 tank and mortars that presented a threat to U.S. and coalition forces, said Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the top Pentagon spokesman.

"The self-defense strike occurred after multiple rocket launchers fired rockets that land-

ed in the vicinity of MSS Euphrates and mortars were fired toward U.S. forces," Ryder told reporters at the Pentagon. "We're still assessing who is operating these weapons but do know that there are Iranian-backed militia groups in the area."

Ryder told reporters Monday that there was a rocket attack against "one of our facilities in Syria," though no U.S. personnel were injured and no infrastructure damage was reported. U.S. forces also conducted a self-defense strike near MSS Euphrates on Nov. 29, taking out a potential threat to the U.S. base, he added. No U.S. injuries or infrastructure damage were reported in that in-

cident.

Last week, the 13-year civil war in Syria reignited with a surprise attack by rebel forces who seized the city of Aleppo.

It was the first opposition attack on Aleppo since 2016, when a Russian air campaign retook the northwestern city for Syrian President Bashar Assad after rebel forces had seized it, The Associated Press reported. Intervention by Russia, Iran and Iranian-allied Hezbollah and other groups has allowed Assad to remain in power in Syria with about 70% of the country under his control.

Rebel forces led by the jihadi group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham launched the attack on Aleppo last

week and moved into the countryside around Idlib. The Syrian military and its foreign allies have rushed reinforcements and launched airstrikes to stall their momentum.

The surge in fighting has raised the prospect of another violent front reopening in the Middle East at a time when U.S.-backed Israel is fighting Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, both Iranian-allied groups.

"Let me be clear that the U.S. is in no way involved in the operations you see playing out in and around Aleppo in northwestern Syria, which as you know are being led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a designated terrorist organiza-

tion," Ryder said.

American forces in Syria are part of a U.S.-led coalition in that country and Iraq working to prevent a resurgence of the Islamic State. About 900 U.S. service members and an undisclosed number of contractors are operating in Syria, where they support local Kurdish forces. An additional 2,500 American troops are in Iraq.

U.S. bases in the region have been prone to attacks since the surprise attack in October 2023 by Hamas militants on Israel. The Pentagon last month said U.S. forces had been attacked 125 times in Syria and 79 times in Iraq since the Hamas attack.

MILITARY



LORETO MORRIS/Stars and Stripes

Alconbury Elementary School Principal Scott Finlay and the school's mascot hold the National Blue Ribbon award plaque during an assembly Tuesday.

DODEA's Alconbury Elementary in England wins National Blue Ribbon

BY LORETO MORRIS
Stars and Stripes

RAF ALCONBURY, England—One of the smallest schools for children of service members overseas earned recognition in a big program that annually names standouts in American education.

Alconbury Elementary School, at RAF Alconbury in England, was among 356 American schools named a National Blue Ribbon School for 2024, officials said at an assembly Tuesday.

It's the second Blue Ribbon award for the Alconbury "Dragons," a Department of Defense Education Activity school with 190 students ranging from pre-kindergarten to fifth grade. The first came in 2018.

Previous winners of the award can reapply after five years.

Founded in 1982, the National Blue Ribbon Schools program covers elementary, middle and high schools.

What sets Alconbury apart is how it consistently raises the bar, Michelle Howard-Braney, DODEA Europe's director for student excellence, said during the announcement ceremony.

The program recognizes schools that showed outstanding academic achievement or notable progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups.

Ashley Herndon, the vice president of the PTA for Alconbury's elementary school, stressed the importance of having organized events with the full backing of the principal.

"It invites community when you're in a foreign country," she

said.

Alconbury was joined by two other DODEA schools in taking home Blue Ribbon honors: West Point Elementary School at the U.S. Military Academy and Robinson Barracks Elementary School in Stuttgart, Germany.

At Tuesday's ceremony, the Alconbury High School cheerleaders performed and the school choir sang. Then, a student from each grade was called up to the stage to talk about what they think makes Alconbury special.

Principal Scott Finlay spoke about rewarding the kids with little green dragons when they embody the school's values.

"On top of high test scores, one thing that sets our school apart is the community that we have," Finlay said.

Bill would boost job program to include surviving spouses

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A job counseling program created for disadvantaged veterans would be expanded to provide free career services to surviving spouses of fallen service members under a Senate bill approved Monday.

The legislation seeks to make the Department of Labor's Disabled Veterans Outreach Program, or DVOP, available to widows or widowers whose spouses died while on active duty or from a service-related disability.

For years, the program has given states funding to hire career specialists to work with veterans who face significant barriers to employment. The specialists assist with job search activities, create individual employment plans and provide other services.

A group of senators, led by Sens. Maggie Hassan, D-N.H., and Bill Cassidy, R-La., introduced a bill in February to open those opportunities to surviving spouses as well.

"We owe it to the families of fallen service members to do all that we can to support them after their devastating loss," Hassan said in a statement Tuesday. "I urge my colleagues in the House to work with us to get this commonsense bill across the finish line."

House lawmakers introduced a matching bill in July, but it remains stuck in the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. The Senate earlier this year included the measure in its version of the 2025 National Defense Authorization Act, but it is unclear if it will make it into the final legislation.

Congress is expected to pass a compromise version of the defense policy bill later this month following negotiations between the House and Senate.

The proposal to expand the DVOP program is unlikely to face resistance from lawmakers. It will not require any new funding, according to a Department of Labor assessment, and any additional participants will be handled by existing specialists.

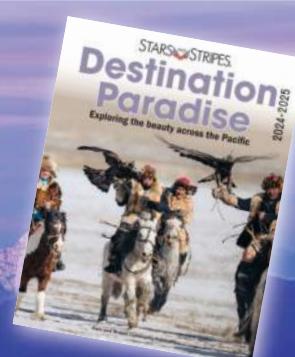
Of the more than 44,000 veterans who received help from the department's Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program between July 2023 and June 2024, 94% received individualized career services from a DVOP specialist. The grant program has an employment rate of about 55%.

Surviving spouses are known to struggle financially after the death of a service member.

A 2012 study by the Rand Corp. think tank found the earnings of spouses decline significantly the first four years after a service member's death. Grief and increased time demands at home can often keep the spouse from participating fully in the work force, according to the study.

Lawmakers in recent years have focused their legislative efforts on combating a stubbornly high unemployment rate among active-duty military spouses but less attention has been devoted to addressing the unique circumstances of surviving spouses.

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MILITARY

US Space Forces Japan activates in Tokyo

BY SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The U.S. Space Force established a new command Wednesday in western Tokyo as the United States and Japan seek space superiority in the region.

A flag featuring the mountain-rocket insignia of U.S. Space Forces Japan unfurled in front of American and Japanese troops and civilian dignitaries during an activation ceremony at the Yokota Officers' Club.

"It's a big day for the U.S. Space Force," the commander of U.S. Forces Japan, Air Force Lt. Gen. Stephen Jost, said at the ceremony.

Brig. Gen. Anthony Mastalir, head of the Hawaii-based U.S. Space Forces Indo-Pacific, passed the new unit's colors to its first commander, Col. Ryan Laughton, before the Yokota guardians saluted and sang the Space Force song.

Laughton, a Wyoming native, taught English in Gunma prefecture, Japan, before joining the Air Force. He has experience in space launch, operations and acquisitions and worked as an engineer, instructor, executive officer, flight commander, satellite manager, operations analyst, branch chief and materiel leader, according to his official biography.

"We are committed to being a force multiplier across the space domain," he said during the inauguration of his unit.

Created in December 2019 under President Donald Trump, the Space Force, the U.S. military's newest service branch, now has more than 14,000 personnel. Its missions include tracking threats

to the U.S. homeland and safeguarding American satellites.

The Yokota-based unit is composed of tens, not hundreds, of guardians, Mastalir told reporters at the air base Tuesday without providing a precise number.

"It's a big day for U.S. Forces Japan and it's a big day for the United States-Japan alliance," Jost told the gathering, which included members of Japan's relatively new Space Operations Group from nearby Fuchu Air base.

"As we officially activate U.S. Space Forces Japan, today marks a new chapter in our commitment to defending the space domain," he said.

Rapid developments in space have driven the need for the new command focused on communications, space resilience, navigation and missile defense, Jost said.

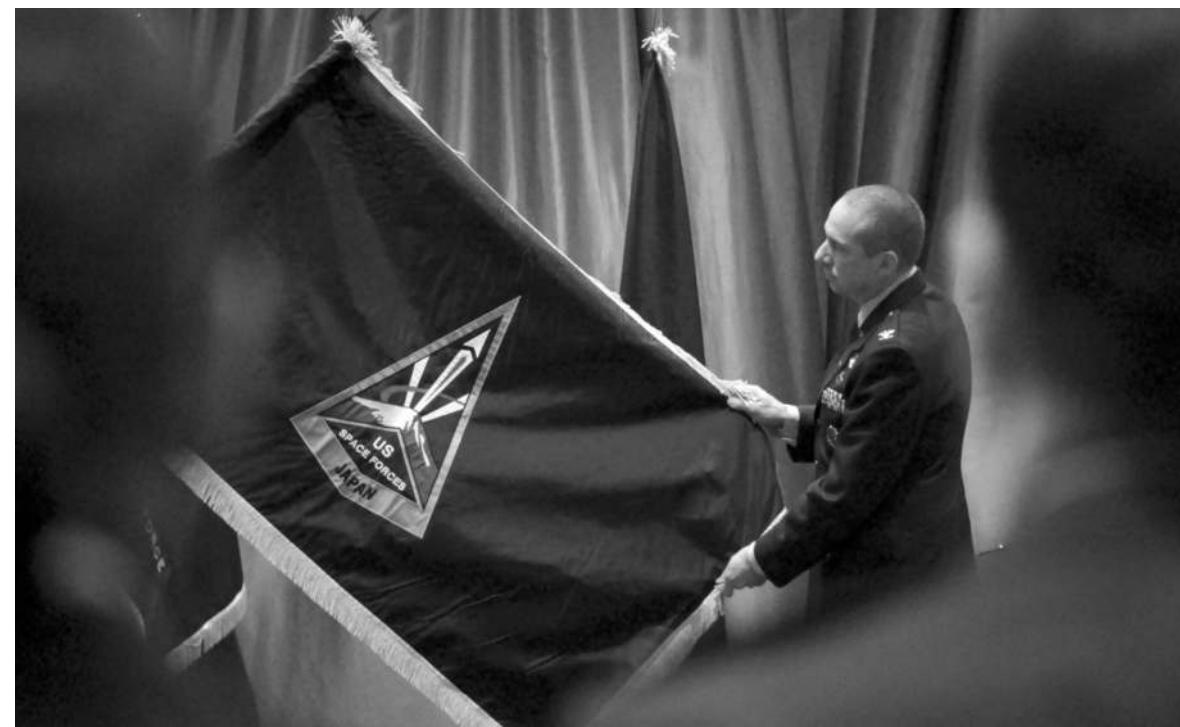
"The challenges we face in the space domain are real," he said, noting that Russia began its ongoing war in Ukraine by launching a cyberattack on the country's satellite operations.

In addition to threats from North Korea and Russia, China continues to engage in illegal, coercive and deceptive tactics that threaten the stability of the Indo-Pacific, Mastalir said at the ceremony.

The new unit is a command-and-control operational headquarters. The joint operations command being established by Japan and a reorganized USFJ will need to integrate space into their operations, he said.

"We are determined to integrate across the joint force with our allies," he said.

The U.S. and Japan are "space-



PHOTOS BY AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

The first commander of U.S. Space Forces Japan, Col. Ryan Laughton, unfurls the unit's flag during an activation ceremony at Yokota Air Base on Wednesday.

faring nations" that have cooperated on civilian space ventures for decades, Mastalir added.

The allies will see increased access to secure, anti-jamming, high-capacity communication from satellite launches. Japan will launch its first space domain awareness satellite in 2026, he said.

"U.S. Space Forces Japan will serve as a focal point for deepening collaboration between the U.S. and Japan in the national security sphere," he said. "These partnership efforts send a message to any potential adversaries that the U.S.-Japan alliance is stronger than ever."



Guardians stand at attention during the activation ceremony of U.S. Space Forces Japan at Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo.

Army charges Fort Irwin soldier in death of fellow soldier

BY GARY WARNER

Stars and Stripes

The Army has charged a soldier in the death last month of a fellow soldier at the Fort Irwin National Training Center in the desert southeast of Los Angeles.

Spc. George Cornejo, 26, is accused of killing Spc. Andrew Patrick Smith, 27, according to the U.S. Army Office of the Special Trial Counsel at Fort Belvoir, Va. Cornejo, who is from Fontana,

Calif., was formerly charged Nov. 20 for the Oct. 28 death of Smith.

Both soldiers were assigned to the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, according to the Army. Cornejo is a construction equipment repairer, while Smith was a utilities equipment repairer.

The Army said military police went to Smith's residence on the base on Oct. 28 and found the injured soldier. He was transported to Weed Army Community Hos-

pital at Fort Irwin, where he was pronounced dead.

Fort Irwin is a major desert combat training facility 70 miles northeast of the town of Victorville in San Bernardino County.

The Army said the exact cause of death remains under investigation. Cornejo was detained the following day as part of the investigation.

Cornejo is being held in pretrial confinement at the Naval Consoli-

dated Brig in Miramar, Calif., according to a report from the Southern California Newspaper Group.

The case remains under investigation by the Army Criminal Investigation Division. A preliminary hearing in the case has not been entered in the Army's judicial docket.

Smith, whose hometown is listed as Rye, N.Y., enlisted in August 2021 and was assigned to du-

ty at Fort Irwin in March 2022, according to the Army.

Fort Irwin posted the news of Smith's death on social media on Oct. 31. At the time, officials reported his death was still under investigation.

"Spc. Smith was loved by many and highly regarded amongst the team," Capt. Kevin Black, commander of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, wrote in a post to the Fort Irwin Facebook page.

Navy fires commanding officer of Reserve center in Cheyenne, Wyo.

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Navy fired the commanding officer of a Reserve center in Wyoming, the service announced Tuesday.

Lt. Cmdr. Christopher Bourque was fired from the Navy Reserve Center Cheyenne due to a loss of

confidence in his ability to command. Naval Reserve Command Cheyenne is a subordinate command of the Navy Reserve Region Readiness and Mobilization Command Everett in Washington state.

The Wyoming-based command trains and manages Reserve sail-

ors, preparing them to mobilize.

The U.S. military routinely cites only a vague "loss of confidence" when removing

commanders and other leaders from authority positions.

"The Navy maintains the highest standards for commanding officers and holds them accountable when those standards are not met," the Navy said in a statement.

Lt. Cmdr. Margaret Nichols has been temporarily assigned as the

commanding officer of the reserve center until a permanent replacement is assigned. Bourque has been temporarily reassigned to Navy Reserve Forces Command.

Bourque assumed command of the Reserve training unit in April 2023.



Bourque

MILITARY



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Pete Hegseth, President-elect Donald Trump's nominee to be defense secretary, is joined by his wife, Jennifer Rauchet, as they arrive at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday.

DOD: Hegseth's behavior questioned

FROM PAGE 1

payment after being accused of sexual assault, was not widely known.

Trump's transition team did not do fulsome screening of potential picks before he announced them, and only on Tuesday was an agreement signed with the Department of Justice to allow for formal background checks of those under consideration.

Beyond DeSantis, there have been discussions about shifting Michael Waltz, who was named by Trump as his national security adviser, to the Defense Department, according to a person familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity about private conversations. The Florida congressman is a retired Army National Guard officer and war veteran.

Trump aides do not want to be caught flat-footed in case Trump's initial picks fall through. Trump, for now, was standing by Hegseth.

Hegseth said he spoke to Trump on Wednesday morning and received a fresh message of support. "He said, 'Keep going, keep fighting. I'm behind you all the way,'" Hegseth told a CBS News reporter as he walked through the Capitol.

The Trump transition team didn't immediately comment. The

Wall Street Journal, on Tuesday night, first reported that Trump was considering DeSantis.

Hegseth shared a series of messages of support from others on social media and a post of his own in which he said he would not "back down."

"I'm doing this for the warfighters, not the warmongers. The Left is afraid of disrupters and change agents," he wrote.

He blamed the pushback on fear of him and Trump and said, "So they smear w/ fake, anonymous sources & BS stories. They don't want truth. Our warriors never back down, & neither will I."

Earlier, Hegseth's mother appeared on Fox News to address multiple allegations that have emerged in the media about Hegseth's alcohol intoxication at work events, sexual misconduct and potential financial mismanagement.

Penelope Hegseth, on "Fox & Friends," discussed her son and a 2018 email she wrote him that was obtained by The New York Times, in which she confronted him about mistreating women after he impregnated his current wife while he was married to his second wife.

That letter followed multiple allegations, reported by the New Yorker this week, of questionable conduct around female staffers. That letter followed multiple allegations, reported by the New Yorker this week, of questionable conduct around female staffers.

Hegseth also was accused of sexual assault in 2017, which Hegseth told California police at the time was a consensual encounter and has denied any wrongdoing.

Hegseth has never held a military or civilian leadership role in the Pentagon, but his mother said his time as a Fox News host and the pressure of that role was a good preparation for leading the Defense Department.

She acknowledged that the allegations against her son have become a distraction and raised concern among some GOP senators.

On Tuesday, Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said some of the reports were "disturbing," telling CBS News that he wants to "make sure that every young woman that joins the military feels respected and welcomed."

Penelope Hegseth implored the lawmakers to listen to her son and give him a chance.

"I think it can be overcome," Penelope Hegseth said.

Hegseth is a former Fox News host and a former Army National Guard major and combat veteran who deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

DeSantis, a former congressman and former Navy officer, would likely face a smoother time than Hegseth in the Senate.

The short-lived policy tied the Forax fuel rations card issued to

U.S. personnel in Italy to the Military Star card, which is administered by the Army and Air Force Exchange Service and was intended to be the only payment method allowed for fuel purchases.

AAFES also operates the U.S. military's global network of base exchanges, convenience stores and gas stations.

Fuel ration cards in overseas

military communities allow service members to pay gas prices that vary but are in line with U.S. national averages.

Without a ration card, a gallon of "super-plus" gas cost the equivalent of \$7.45 at the San Marco station in Aviano on Wednesday, according to fuelflash.eu.

On Tuesday evening, the 31st Fighter Wing posted a statement on the Aviano Community Face-

VA plans to study psychedelic drugs for treating PTSD

By LINDA F. HERSEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs will launch its first clinical study since the 1960s into the effectiveness of psychedelic drugs as a treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, the agency said Tuesday.

The \$1.5 million study will involve veterans as test subjects who will undergo psychedelic-assisted mental health therapy in a supervised setting at VA medical centers in Connecticut and Rhode Island, the VA said.

Veterans must have a dual diagnosis of PTSD and alcohol use disorder to participate, the VA said.

The study will be conducted in five years and examine the potential therapeutic benefits of using MDMA, commonly known as ecstasy, to manage the symptoms of PTSD.

The VA's decision to fund and lead the study could lead to "innovative treatment options" for addressing "complex mental health challenges faced by veterans," said Juliana Mercer, who directs veteran advocacy and public policy at Healing Breakthrough, a non-for-profit group that advocates for MDMA-assisted therapy.

MDMA is a Schedule 1 drug under the Controlled Substances Act, which means that it is illegal under federal law.

The VA has said it is undertaking the research with prior approval from the Food and Drug Administration and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Access to psychedelic-assisted therapy is a treatment pushed by some veterans with PTSD who have turned to treatment at medical clinics outside the U.S., where it is legal.

Navy veteran Brandon Bryan, a

42-year-old retired chief petty officer who lives in Texas, said he welcomes the study after traveling to a clinic in Mexico in 2022 for psychedelic-assisted therapy to ease depression and anxiety related to PTSD and a traumatic brain injury connected to his military service.

Bryan said he found the treatment effective after the medications that his VA doctor prescribed did not help.

"We cannot afford to ignore solutions that work simply because they challenge the status quo," said Bryan, who served from 1999 to 2019, with deployments to Iraq and the United Arab Emirates.

For the VA study, participants will be given MDMA while undergoing talk therapy. A second control group will receive a much lower dose of the hallucinogen, which the VA described as "an active placebo."

VA researchers will lead the clinical study at Provincetown VA Medical Center in Rhode Island and the West VA Medical Center in Connecticut.

The veterans will be constantly supervised to ensure their safety and welfare during the research, the VA said.

Including veterans with an alcohol use disorder is recognition of how common it is for veterans with a mental health condition to struggle with addiction, said Brad Burge, spokesman for Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions, a nonprofit group that supports veterans seeking psychedelic-assisted therapy.

Substance abuse is a standard coping mechanism for veterans, he said.

Bryan said he hopes the research will lead to the legalization of psychedelic-assisted treatment in the U.S., including at VA hospitals and clinics.

AAFES won't require card to get fuel discounts at Aviano

By BRIAN ERICKSON

Stars and Stripes

AVIANO, Italy — A policy that would have required service members at Aviano Air Base to apply for a military-affiliated credit card to be eligible for fuel discounts was shelved just two days after taking effect, Air Force officials said.

The short-lived policy tied the Forax fuel rations card issued to

U.S. personnel in Italy to the Military Star card, which is administered by the Army and Air Force Exchange Service and was intended to be the only payment method allowed for fuel purchases.

Without a ration card, a gallon of "super-plus" gas cost the equivalent of \$7.45 at the San Marco station in Aviano on Wednesday, according to fuelflash.eu.

On Tuesday evening, the 31st Fighter Wing posted a statement on the Aviano Community Face-

book page saying AAFES had canceled the requirement it introduced Sunday.

"The policy change had been recommended after an internal audit examined unpaid debts due to other systems of payment, but it had not been appropriately coordinated before implementation," the post stated. "We apologize for any confusion or concern that this has caused."

AAFES, which is headquartered in Dallas, as of Wednesday evening was working on answering questions that Stars and Stripes asked Monday about the decision.

In Germany, which hosts tens of thousands of American military personnel, the Esso cards used for personal fuel discounts don't require the user to sign up for the Military Star card.

NATION

Senate GOP talks 30-day agenda in call with Trump

BY LISA MASCARO
AND MARY CLARE JALONICK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump dialed in to what was described as a “love fest” Tuesday with Senate Republicans as they begin laying the groundwork for control of government in the new year, and a potential first-30-days agenda.

Trump’s brief call was more celebratory than a prescriptive policy agenda, according to those attending the private GOP retreat, encouraging the senators to confirm his Cabinet nominees as they launch an agenda of tax cuts, deportations and other priorities.

“It was a love fest,” said Sen. Eric Schmitt, R-Mo. “There was a real sense of unity in the room.”

The virtual visit comes as Congress is finishing up the final weeks of what, by most measures, has been among the more chaotic sessions in modern times. With the full sweep of party control, Republicans are eager to do better next year with Trump’s return to the White House.

Republicans want to notch an early accomplishment in the first 30 days after Trump’s inauguration Jan. 20.

Incoming Senate Republican leader John Thune of South Dakota outlined a potential roadmap ahead during the private retreat at the Library of Congress.

Thune detailed a potential two-part strategy that would have senators working on an initial legislative package — energy, border security and defense priorities — that could be approved in the first 30 days of the new administration.

Next, Thune explained that the senators would turn to tax cuts — reviving the expiring tax cuts from Trump’s first term — which is expected to take longer, dragging into the year.

The new Congress convenes Jan. 3, when lawmakers are sworn into office, and the Senate expects to quickly begin holding confirmation hearings for Trump’s top Cabinet nominees — some of whom are already running into resistance.

Trump’s choice of Fox News anchor Pete Hegseth as defense secretary and hard-right FBI critic Kash Patel to lead the Federal Bureau of Investigation face potentially difficult confirmation hearings ahead. Hegseth, who met with senators late into Monday evening, was on Capitol Hill for a second day Tuesday.

“It’s important that we thor-

“We are going to be here a bit more than we have.”

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas

oughly vet the nominees for these very important positions,” said Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine.

House Speaker Mike Johnson also addressed the GOP senators — noting his slim majority in the House, which leaves him little room for party detractors.

Johnson “emphasized the need for unity heading into the first 100 days agenda,” his spokesman Taylor Haulsee said.

Asked later about the details of the legislative package, Johnson said lawmakers would be making those decisions in the next couple days.

“There are different ideas on what to put in the first package and what in the second and we’re trying to build consensus around that,” Johnson said.

Republicans have had difficulty uniting around the details of their agenda, even when they control the levers of government in Washington.

In the House and Senate, Republicans plan to use a process called budget reconciliation that would allow them to approve Trump’s agenda on party-line votes, with a simple majority, in the face of expected opposition from Democrats.

But already fissures are developing over various tax and spending cuts, and broader policies such as Trump’s plans for mass deportations of immigrants.

The Republicans are likely to shift federal funds to pay for building Trump’s proposed border wall between the U.S. and Mexico, and to hire personnel to round up migrants for deportation.

“The goal is not just finish the wall, but to have technology that really gives you eyes and ears on the border,” said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. “Hire the people necessary to start the deportations of the bad guys.”

Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., said debates over border policy could be as thorny as those over taxes.

Congress is expected to work longer weeks, particularly in the Senate, which often is not in session on Fridays.

“We are going to be here a bit more than we have,” said Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas.



MARCY NIGHSWANDER / AP

Female voters who identify as cat owners supported Vice President Kamala Harris, while men who said they only owned cats mostly picked Donald Trump. Bill Clinton's cat Socks, shown in 1994, wouldn't care.

Who did pet owners vote for?

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The lead-up to the 2024 election was all about cat owners. But in the end, the dogs had their day.

President-elect Donald Trump won slightly more than half of voters who own either cats or dogs, with a big assist from dog owners, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 120,000 voters. Dog owners were much more likely to support the Republican over Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris. Cat owners were split between the two candidates.

About two-thirds of voters said they own a dog or cat, but pet owners don’t usually get much attention from politicians. This year, however, past comments by Trump’s running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, about “childless cat ladies” briefly became a campaign issue — and Taylor Swift signed her Instagram endorsement of Harris in September as “Taylor

Swift Childless Cat Lady.”

Harris did end up decisively winning support from women who owned a cat but not a dog. Still, those voters were a relatively small slice of the electorate, and pet owners as a whole did not seem to hold Vance’s remarks against the GOP ticket.

Childless or not, women who only owned a cat were more likely to support Harris than were dog owners, or voters who had a cat and a dog. About 6 in 10 women who owned a cat but not a dog supported Harris, according to AP VoteCast. She did similarly well among women who did not own either kind of pet.

Her success with women who were cat owners didn’t translate to men. Trump narrowly won the backing of men who only owned cats; slightly more than half of these voters supported him.

A simple explanation for the divide is that women who were cat

owners were never very inclined to vote for Trump, even before Vance’s comments resurfaced. According to AP VoteCast, only about 4 in 10 female voters who only owned a cat were Republicans.

Voters who owned a dog, including those who owned a cat as well, were more likely to support Trump, and they made up a bigger share of the electorate. Trump won about 6 in 10 male voters who owned a dog but no cat, and about half of female voters in this group.

While Trump’s campaign did not appeal to pet owners, Trump did falsely claim that immigrants in Ohio were stealing and eating dogs and cats. But, as with the Vance remarks, there is no evidence that Trump’s statements ultimately influenced pet owners’ decisions.

In fact, party loyalty was likely a major factor — about 6 in 10 men who only own dogs identified as Republicans, as did about half of women who are dog owners.

Trump lawyers cite Hunter Biden pardon in bid to toss hush money conviction

Associated Press

NEW YORK — President-elect Donald Trump’s lawyers formally asked a judge Monday to throw out his hush money criminal conviction, arguing that continuing the case would present unconstitutional “disruptions to the institution of the Presidency.”

In a filing made public Tuesday, Trump’s lawyers told Manhattan Judge Juan M. Merchan that anything short of immediate dismissal would undermine the transition of power, as well as the “overwhelming national mandate” granted to Trump by voters last month.

They also cited President Joe Biden’s recent pardon of his son, Hunter Biden, who had been convicted of tax and gun charges.

“President Biden asserted that his son was ‘selectively, and unfairly, prosecuted,’ and ‘treated differently,’” Trump’s legal team wrote. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, they claimed, had engaged in the type of political theater “that President Biden condemned.”

Prosecutors will have until Monday to respond. They have said they will fight any efforts to dismiss the case but have indicated a willingness to delay the sentencing until after Trump’s second term ends in 2029.

Following Trump’s election victory last month, Merchan halted proceedings and indefinitely postponed his sentencing. He also delayed a decision on Trump’s prior bid to dismiss the case on immunity

grounds.

Trump has been fighting for months to reverse his conviction on 34 counts of falsifying business records to conceal a \$130,000 payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels to suppress her claim that they had sex a decade earlier. He says they did not and denies any wrongdoing.

If the verdict stands and the case proceeds to sentencing, Trump’s punishments would range from a fine to probation to up to four years in prison — but it’s unlikely he’d spend any time behind bars for a first-time conviction involving charges in the lowest tier of felonies.

Because it is a state case, Trump would not be able to pardon himself once he returns to office.

NATION

High court hears transgender case

Majority seems reluctant to block state bans

By MARK SHERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Hearing a high-profile culture-war clash, a majority of the Supreme Court seemed reluctant Wednesday to block Tennessee's ban on gender treatments for minors.

The justices' decision, not expected for several months, could affect similar laws enacted by another 25 states and a range of other efforts to regulate the lives of transgender people, including which sports competitions they can join and which bathrooms they can use.

The case is coming before a conservative-dominated court after a presidential election in which Donald Trump and his allies promised to roll back protections for transgender people.

In arguments that passed the two-hour mark Wednesday, five conservative justices voiced varying degrees of skepticism of arguments made by the Biden administration and lawyers for Tennessee families challenging the ban.

Chief Justice John Roberts, who voted in the majority in a 2020 case in favor of transgender rights, questioned whether judges, rather than lawmakers, should be weighing in on a question of regulating medical procedures, an area usually left to the states.

"The Constitution leaves that question to the people's representatives, rather than to nine people, none of whom is a doctor," Roberts said in an exchange with ACLU lawyer Chase Strangio.

The court's three liberal justices seem firmly on the side of the challengers. But it's not clear that any of the court's six conservatives will go along. Justice Neil Gorsuch, who wrote the majority opinion in 2020, has yet to say anything.

There were dueling rallies outside the court in the hours before the arguments.

Speeches and music filled the air on the sidewalk below the court's marble steps. Advocates of the ban bore signs like "Champion God's Design" and "Kids Health Matters," while the other side proclaimed "Fight like a Mother for Trans Rights" and "Freedom to be Ourselves."

Four years ago, the court ruled in favor of Aimee Stephens, who was fired by a Michigan funeral home after she informed its owner that she was a transgender woman. The court held that transgender people, as well as gay and les-



PHOTOS BY JOSE LUIS MAGANA/AP

Demonstrators against gender treatments for minors protest during a rally outside of the Supreme Court on Wednesday.

bian people, are protected by a landmark federal civil rights law that prohibits sex discrimination in the workplace.

The Biden administration and the families and health care providers who challenged the Tennessee law are urging the justices to apply the same sort of analysis that the majority, made up of liberal and conservative justices, embraced in the case four years ago when it found that "sex plays an unmistakable role" in employers' decisions to punish transgender people for traits and behavior they otherwise tolerate.

The issue in the Tennessee case is whether the law violates the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment, which requires the government to treat similarly situated people the same.

Tennessee's law bans puberty blockers and hormone treatments for transgender minors, but not "across the board," lawyers for the families wrote in their Supreme Court brief. The lead lawyer, Strangio, is the first openly transgender person to argue in front of the justices.

The administration argues there is no way to determine whether "treatments must be withheld from any particular minor" without considering the minor's sex.

"That is sex discrimination," Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar wrote in her main court filing.

The state acknowledges that the same treatments that are banned for transgender minors can be prescribed for other reasons. But it rejects the claim that it is discriminating on the basis of sex. Instead, it says lawmakers acted to protect minors from the risks of "life-altering gender-transition



Children supporting gender treatments for minors protest outside the Supreme Court on Wednesday.

procedures."

The law "draws a line between minors seeking drugs for gender transition and minors seeking drugs for other medical purposes. And boys and girls fall on both sides of that line," Tennessee Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti wrote in the state's Supreme Court brief.

While the challengers invoke the 2020 ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County* for support, Tennessee relies on the court's precedent-shattering *Dobbs* decision in 2022 that ended nationwide protections for abortion and returned the issue to the states.

The two sides battled in their legal filings over the appropriate level of scrutiny the court should apply. It's more than an academic exercise.

The lowest level is known as rational basis review and almost every law looked at that way is ultimately upheld. Indeed, the federal appeals court in Cincinnati that allowed the Tennessee law to be enforced held that lawmakers acted rationally to regulate medical procedures, well within their author-

ity.

The appeals court reversed a trial court that employed a higher level of review, heightened scrutiny, that applies in cases of sex discrimination. Under this more searching examination, the state must identify an important objective and show that the law helps accomplish it.

If the justices opt for heightened scrutiny, they could return the case to the appeals court to apply it.

Gender treatments for youth is supported by every major medical organization, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychiatric Association.

But Tennessee is pointing to health authorities in Sweden, Finland, Norway and the United Kingdom that found that the medical treatments "pose significant risks with unproven benefits."

None of those countries has adopted a ban similar to the one in Tennessee and individuals can still obtain treatment, Prelogar wrote in response.

Senators grill airline officials about fees

Associated Press

Members of a Senate subcommittee took aim at airline executives Wednesday for using an expanding menu of fees to charge customers for early boarding, better seats and other comforts that used to be part of the ticket price.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., said he thinks the federal government should review and perhaps fine the airlines for their use of what he called junk fees.

Blumenthal, the chairman of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, said seat fees were pure profit for the airlines because they don't have to create new seats or incur other expenses by allowing customers to pick where to sit.

Some senators expressed frustration during Wednesday's hearing when airline executives could not explain how they set the amount of various fees. They said the vagaries of airline pricing make it hard for consumers to budget for trips.

"We're all captives on your airplanes at a certain point. You just say, 'You want to pick seat? We're just going to charge you some random amount more,'" Sen. Maggie Hassan, D-N.H., said. "It would be good if you guys could be transparent about what you do and why."

The fees don't seem to be discouraging anybody. Americans are flying more than ever.

The Transportation Security Administration reported screening nearly 3.1 million travelers at airports around the country on Sunday, a new single-day record. The 15 busiest days in TSA history have all occurred this year, with traffic at airport checkpoints up 5% over 2023.

Airline executives bristle at the term "junk fees," and argue they are merely giving consumers what they want: choices.

Nocella agreed with critics who say fees should not come as a surprise to passengers but need to be transparent and described clearly during the ticket-buying process.

Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., criticized Frontier Airlines and Spirit Airlines for paying employees \$26 million in bonuses for spotting customers whose carry-on bags were too big, forcing the customers to pay another fee. Spirit charges between \$15 and \$77 for a carry-on bag that won't fit under a seat.

"Your airlines are paying millions of dollars to your employees to harass people who have already paid!" Hawley told the airlines executives Wednesday.

WORLD

Biden in Africa pledges millions more for rail corridor project

Associated Press

LUANDA, Angola — President Joe Biden on his visit to sub-Saharan Africa pledged another \$600 million for a cross-continent rail corridor project Wednesday, telling regional leaders that "Africa has been left behind for much too long. But not anymore. Africa is the future."

Biden used the third and final day of his visit to Angola to showcase the Lobito Corridor railway, where the U.S. and allies are investing heavily to refurbish 800 miles of train lines in Zambia, Congo and Angola.

The project aims to advance the U.S. presence in a region rich in cobalt, copper and other critical minerals used in batteries for electric vehicles, electronic devices and clean energy technologies. By the end of the decade, the rail line could even go a long way toward linking southern Africa's west and east coasts.

"It's a game changer," Biden said, and cited the transformational effect of building the transcontinental railroad in the United States. Cargo that once took 45 days to get to the United States — usually involving



BEN CURTIS/AP

President Joe Biden watches a traditional dance after arriving at Catumbela airport in Angola on Wednesday. Biden used the third and final day of his visit to Angola to showcase the Lobito Corridor railway.

trucks to South Africa — will now take less than 45 hours, he said. He also predicted the project could transform the region from a food importer to exporter.

Altogether, Biden said the U.S. has invested \$4 billion along the Lobito Corridor.

The Biden administration hopes to counter China's growing influence in Africa. His long-awaited

first trip to sub-Saharan Africa as president came in a week where trade tensions between the U.S. and China over rare minerals needed in new technologies went up a notch.

China already has heavy investments in mining and processing African minerals and has used its Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure strategy to promote its economic and political influence.

Syria's insurgency leader tours Aleppo

Associated Press

BEIRUT — The leader of Syria's most powerful insurgent group Wednesday toured the seized city of Aleppo in a surprise visit, for the first time since the group captured large parts of the city last weekend, as fierce fighting intensifies in the government-led counter-offensive in northern Hama.

Abu Mohammed al-Golani, who heads the jihadi group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, greeted crowds of supporters near the city's iconic citadel as he smiled and waved in dark green military garb. Surrounded by masked gunmen in flak jackets, men and boys chanted "God is great" as he walked through the heart of Syria's largest city.

The latest flareup in Syria's long civil war comes after forces opposed to Syrian President Bashar Assad ousted his troops from Aleppo, the country's largest city, as well as seized towns and villages in southern parts of the northwestern Idlib province.

The offensive is being led by HTS as well as an umbrella group of Turkish-backed Syrian militias

called the Syrian National Army. For years, both have entrenched themselves in northwest Idlib province and parts of northern Aleppo, as the battered country reeled from years of political and military stalemates.

The war between Assad and his foreign backers and the array of armed opposition forces seeking his overthrow has killed an estimated half-million people over the past 13 years.

Elsewhere, Syria said its counteroffensive pushed back insurgents attempting to advance to the strategic central city of Hama, while the insurgents said they captured more Syrian troops and Iran-backed militants in fierce battles.

Syrian state media SANA on Wednesday said insurgents retreated some 12 miles from government-held Hama, Syria's fourth largest city, as government troops backed by Russian airpower entrenched themselves in the outskirts. Fierce fighting has raged for days as Damascus fears that the insurgents will make their way into the city as they did over the weekend into Aleppo.

EU condemns reported Taliban move to halt medical education for women

Associated Press

The European Union on Wednesday condemned the Taliban for violating human rights and women's access to education after media reports that the Taliban's leader has ordered private and public institutions to stop providing

ing medical courses for women and girls in Afghanistan.

The Taliban have neither confirmed the order nor responded to the reports. The Public Health Ministry spokesman was unavailable for comment.

In September 2021, a month af-

ter they returned to power, the Taliban stopped schooling for girls after grade six. They banned women from university in December 2022.

The BBC and others reported that five institutions across Afghanistan said the Taliban had in-

structed them to close until further notice, and women training as midwives and nurses were ordered not to return to classes Wednesday. A 22-year-old midwifery student learned Wednesday that the institute was stopping classes for her and her friends.

She had already switched from a law degree after the Taliban halted university for women.

"After an hour, when I calmed down a little, I cried a lot because we had this one way (to study) and it is also closed," she told The Associated Press.

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Coast Guard suspends search for boat crew

AK ANCHORAGE — The search for five people believed to be aboard a fishing vessel that capsized in rough seas in the Gulf of Alaska has been suspended, the Coast Guard said Monday.

The search lasted nearly a day and covered more than 108 square nautical miles.

The Coast Guard began the search after the Wind Walker's crew sent a Mayday call at 12:10 a.m. Sunday that the 50-foot boat was overturning off Point Couverden, southwest of Juneau.

The state ferry Hubbard overheard the broadcast and reached the scene first, followed by a Coast Guard MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter and a response boat, according to a news release. A winter storm warning remained in effect as responders faced heavy snow, winds up to 60 mph and 6-foot seas.

Two Coast Guard cutters — the Healy and the Douglas Denman — joined the search. Responders found seven empty cold-water immersion suits and two strobe lights but no other sign of the boat or its crew. The Healy also used underwater sonar but found no signs of the ship.

Grand jury indicts pair for alleged voucher fraud

AZ PHOENIX — An Arizona grand jury has indicted two out-of-state residents for allegedly applying to the state's private school voucher program as parents to 50 children — 43 of whom did not exist — and receiving more than \$110,000.

The duo collected the money by submitting false, forged or fraudulent documents and spent it on personal living expenses in Colorado, according to an indictment released Monday by Attorney General Kris Mayes.

The grand jury in Maricopa County handed down the indictment Nov. 12, charging Johnny Lee Bowers and Ashley Meredith Hewitt each with 60 felony counts, including conspiracy, fraud and forgery.

According to the indictment, the two received the money by submitting applications for school vouchers between December 2022 and May 2024, using the names of both real and fictitious children, purportedly as parents and by using "ghost" names of parents.

Police: Hawaii woman disappeared voluntarily

CA LOS ANGELES — A Hawaii woman who vanished after landing in Los Angeles three weeks ago disappeared voluntarily as she sought to "step away from modern connectivity" and was last seen crossing into Mexico with her luggage, police said at a news conference where they urged her to contact her distraught family.



RICHARD VOGEL/AP

Prepared to parade

Sgt. Ceasar, who is representing the U.S. Marine Corps as the mascot for 1/5 Vietnam Vets, prepares to walk the red carpet prior to the 92nd Hollywood Christmas Parade in the Hollywood section of Los Angeles on Sunday.

Hannah Kobayashi, 30, appeared unharmed as she walked alone into a tunnel at the San Ysidro crossing around noon on Nov. 12, the day after her family reported her missing, LA police said Monday. Authorities made the discovery after reviewing surveillance video from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection late Sunday.

Los Angeles Police Chief Jim McDonnell said there is no evidence Kobayashi was being trafficked or was otherwise a victim of a crime. Her disappearance is now classified as a "voluntary missing person."

Kobayashi went missing after the budding photographer from Maui didn't make a connecting flight to New York on Nov. 8 to travel for a new job and to visit relatives.

Woman driving drunk who killed bride gets 25 years

SC CHARLESTON — A woman who admitted to drinking and who was driving well over twice the speed limit when she smashed into a golf cart, killing a bride who had just got married at a South Carolina beach, was sentenced Monday to 25 years in prison.

Jamie Lee Komoroski, 27, pleaded guilty at the Charleston County courthouse to reckless homicide, felony DUI causing death and two counts of felony DUI causing great bodily injury before her sentencing.

Also hurt in the 2023 crash was the groom, Aric Hutchinson, who cried in court as he recalled the last moments he spent with Samantha Miller — some of their only moments as husband and wife.

"On the golf cart, she told me she didn't want the night to end and I kissed her on the forehead and then the next thing I remember is waking up in the hospital," Hutchinson said.

Woman gets life sentence for man's suitcase death

FL ORLANDO — A Florida woman was sentenced Monday to life in prison for zipping her boyfriend into a suitcase and leaving him to die of suffocation amid a history of domestic and alcohol abuse.

Circuit Judge Michael Kraynick imposed the sentence in Orlando on Sarah Boone, 47, for the 2020 killing of 42-year-old Jorge Torres.

A jury deliberated only 90 minutes Oct. 25 before convicting Boone of second-degree murder after a 10-day trial. Boone had insisted she was herself a victim of domestic violence at the hands of Torres and had rejected a plea deal offer of a 15-year sentence.

Torres' family members testified at the hearing that his death has torn them apart.

"Sarah deserves to rot in jail," said a sister, Victoria Torres. "Sarah has caused a lifetime of pain."

In her own statement, Boone went through a litany of abuse by Torres she said occurred over

many years, decried the way her trial was handled and covered by the media, yet asked forgiveness for her actions.

"I forgive myself for falling in love with a monster. I tried breaking the spell ... I never stopped loving him," said Boone, who has been in jail for 58 months. "I didn't mean for this to happen. Forgive me, Jorge. Forgive me, Torres family."

Drop reported in cannabis-related ER visits

MD BALTIMORE — Cannabis-related emergency room visits are on a downward trend in Carroll County, according to Maryland Department of Health statistics.

The health department's interactive dashboard, which debuted last week, displays data for cannabis-related emergency room visits since 2019. The data are based on visits when the patient's self-reported reason for being at the emergency department involved cannabis or cannabis use was indicated in a doctor's discharge diagnosis.

The dashboard shows that 13 cannabis-related emergency room visits occurred in Carroll County in October. The county's highest-recorded monthly occurrence in the last five years was 25, which was reached three times — May 2019, and July and October 2023.

As of July 1, 2023, Maryland residents 21 and older have been allowed to legally use, possess and

consume up to 1.5 ounces of cannabis flower, 12 grams of concentrated cannabis, or a total amount of cannabis products that does not exceed 750 mg of THC. This amount is known as the "personal use amount."

The lowest number of cannabis-related visits per month in the county was 10, recorded in December 2021. Though emergency room visits related to cannabis hit a high in July 2023 and three months later in October, the rate of hospital visits has generally been on the decline since then.

Aquarium team helps cold-stunned sea turtles

MA BOSTON — After a rash of stranded turtles on Massachusetts shores in the last week, the New England Aquarium is now treating over 200 cold-stunned sea turtles in critical condition.

"With winds increasing and temperatures dropping, we have started to see more sea turtles enter the hospital in the last week," said Adam Kennedy, aquarium Director of Rescue and Rehabilitation.

The aquarium said in a release Monday they have now treated a total of 257 sea turtles this season: 214 critically endangered Kemp's ridley turtles, 39 green turtles, and four loggerheads.

In just the last two days, the staff rescued about 100 of those.

From wire reports

FACES



Where the magic happened

Singer Lucinda Williams records album of Beatles songs at famed Abbey Road

By DAVID BAUDER

Associated Press

Lucinda Williams isn't easily intimidated, but it would be hard for any musician not to shudder at the task before her.

The mission? Record an album of Beatles songs — only one of the best-known catalogs in popular music — in the same London studio where most of the originals were made. She and her band had just three days.

The result, "Lucinda Williams sings the Beatles from Abbey Road," becomes public on Friday. It's the seventh in her series of "Lu's Jukebox" projects and the first one that will be made available on streaming services.

The Nashville-based singer-songwriter delivers her take on 12 Beatles songs, most of them from the band's later period. She takes on hits like the Paul McCartney ballads "Let It Be" and "The Long and Winding Road," while also choosing the more obscure "White Album" cuts "Yer Blues" and "I'm So Tired."

"It felt like the Holy Grail," she said. "This is where the Beatles recorded. And we're going to go in there where they made all of these majestic, classic, amazing songs."

Abbey Road was the idea of her manager/husband, Tom Overby, and they blocked out a small amount of time before a British tour earlier this year. Her Beatles fan producer, Ray Kennedy, said he believed Williams was the first major artist to use the London studio to remake the band's work.

And, yes, it was intimidating. Fortunately, it was a modern, working studio and did not feel like working in a museum. One quirk was the control room was on a different floor than where the musicians were, and Williams repeatedly climbed the stairs to hear playbacks. "The engineers all looked at me, like, 'what are you doing here?'" she said.

Stripping down songs for the band to build up again revealed complexities they hadn't anticipated. She particularly enjoyed John Lennon's "Yer Blues." "The

depth and the edginess and the grittiness of it kind of surprised me," she said.

They stuck to the basics of her rock band's sound. The orchestral flourishes of "The Long and Winding Road," for example, are replaced by an organ and pedal-steel guitar.

"My greatest fear was, I didn't want to sound like a cover band doing Beatles songs," she said. "And everyone I've talked to about it said you don't have to worry about that, that you achieved your goal of staying true to the songs while still sounding like you."

During the pandemic, Williams made six "Lu's Jukebox" projects, themed in-studio concerts. They included Tom Petty and Bob Dylan songs, albums of Southern soul, '60s country classics and holiday music. She made a disc of Rolling Stones material days before having a stroke in November 2020.

Sold largely by mail order, they haven't been available to stream, although a spokesperson said they're likely to be made available in that format in the future.

Spotify Wrapped has finally arrived

Associated Press

It's that time of year: Spotify has released its annual Wrapped, personalized recaps of users' listening habits and year in audio.

Spotify has been giving its listeners breakdowns of their data since 2016. And each year, it's become a bigger production — and internet sensation.

So, what does 2024 have in store? Here's a look at what to know.

What exactly is Spotify Wrapped?

It's the streaming service's annual overview of individual listening trends, as well as trends around the world. Users learn their top artists, songs, genres, albums and podcasts, all wrapped into one presentation.

The campaign has become a social media sensation, as people share and compare their Wrapped data online.

Wrapped provides users with all kinds of breakdowns and facts, including whether they're among an artist's top listeners, as well as a personalized playlist of their top 100 songs of that year to save, share and listen to whenever they're feeling nostalgic.

Spotify also creates a series of playlists that reflect national and global listening trends, featuring the top streamed artists and songs. In 2023, Taylor Swift was named Spotify's most streamed artist, unseating Bad Bunny who had held the title for three years in a row. She kept that title this year, followed by The Weeknd, Bad Bunny, Drake and Billie Eilish.

Where is my Spotify Wrapped?

You should make sure your Spotify app is up to date in order to get the full Wrapped experience. Wrapped is available to users with and without Premium subscriptions.

Spotify will prompt users to view their interactive data roundup on their smartphone or desktop app. You can also visit Spotify.com/Wrapped to find a QR code for that takes you straight to your data presentation.

What if I don't have Spotify?

Other major streaming platforms such as Apple Music and YouTube Music have developed their own versions of Wrapped in recent years.

Apple Music's Replay gives its subscribers a year-end digest of their listening habits and monthly summaries as well. It was released on Dec. 3.

YouTube Music has a similar end-of-the-year release for its listeners. It released its annual Recap for users last month.

'The Brutalist' tops New York Film Critics Circle Awards

The Associated Press

Brady Corbet's 3½-hour postwar epic "The Brutalist" won best film from the New York Film Critics Circle on Tuesday, while its lead, Adrien Brody, also won best actor.

The win notches an early awards-season victory for one of the fall's most-talked-about films. "The Brutalist," which A24 will release Dec. 20, stars Brody as László Toth, a visionary Hungarian Jewish architect who flees WWII Budapest for America.

Fresh off winning two awards at Monday evening's Gotham Awards, RaMell Ross' "Nickel Boys" picked up another pair of honors. Ross won for directing and the film's director of photography, Jomo Fray, took best cinematography honors.

"Nickel Boys," which opens next week, is shot largely from a first-person perspective in telling the story, adapted

from Colson Whitehead's novel, of two Black teenagers at an abusive reform school in Jim Crow-era Florida.

The critics group, which last year awarded Martin Scorsese's "Killers of the Flower Moon" best film, will hand out awards in a ceremony on Jan. 8.

Eminem's mother Debbie Nelson dies

Debbie Nelson, the single mother of rapper Eminem whose rocky relationship with her son was known widely through his hit song lyrics, has died. She was 69.

Eminem's longtime representative Dennis Dennehy confirmed Nelson's death in an email on Tuesday. He did not provide a cause of death, although Nelson had battled lung cancer.

Eminem has disparaged his mother in songs such as the 2002 single "Cleaning Out My Closet." Eminem sings: "Wit-

nessin' your mama poppin' prescription pills in the kitchen. ... My whole life I was made to believe I was sick when I wasn't."

In lyrics from his Oscar-winning hit "Lose Yourself" from the movie "8 Mile," his feelings seem to have simmered, referencing his "mom's spaghetti." The song went on to win best rap song at the 2004 Grammy Awards.

Lamar, SZA plan 2025 North American tour

Kendrick Lamar and SZA will hit the road together in 2025. On Tuesday morning, Lamar and SZA announced the Grand National Tour, which will hit 19 stadiums across North America next spring and summer.

The news arrives less than two weeks after Lamar released his latest album, "GNX," which features SZA on two tracks: "Luther" and the closer "Gloria."



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US media and their critics still telling the same lie

BY JONAH GOLDBERG

Tribune Content Agency

The American media has a bootleggers-and-Baptists problem. "Bootleggers and Baptists" is one of the most useful concepts in understanding how economic regulation works in the real world. Coined by economist Bruce Yandle, the term describes how groups that are ostensibly opposed to each other have a shared interest in maintaining the status quo. Baptists favored prohibition, and so did bootleggers who profited by selling illegal alcohol. And politicians benefited by playing both sides.

There's an analogous dynamic with the press today.

Across the ideological spectrum, from the Chomskyite left to the Bannonite right, partisans, politicians and journalists themselves inflate the power, influence and importance of "the media."

Let's stay with the journalists for a moment. Members of all professions have a tendency to hold themselves in high regard. Nearly everyone, from politicians to plumbers, wants to believe that what they do matters. But with the possible exceptions of politicians and actors, journalists probably have the highest estimation of their own importance.

My point isn't that they're wrong — heck, I like to believe what I do matters. It's that they exaggerate not just their power and influence but also their celebrity and personal authority. Heart surgeons are famously arrogant, but there is not an endless stream of conferences, books, editorials, essays and academic courses dedicated to the indispensable role of cardiothoracic medicine. I doubt there is any sanitation or plumbing trade journal that proclaims "Democracy Dies in Sewage" on its front page.

In psychological terms alone, it's in the interests of journalists to encourage the widespread obsession with the Fourth Estate. But the media are a mess in part because they believed their own hype.

I should be clear: I've had my own obsessions over the years, working as a conservative media critic and writing scores of columns about liberal media bias — which is real. But I've grown weary with media criticism, again not because the criticisms are necessarily wrong but because they overestimate the power of the institutions they question. That's the Baptist and Bootlegger problem: The outsize power and influence of the media is a lie that all sides have agreed on.

It's like American journalism is an exhausted prizefighter on the brink of collapse, held up by his opponent to give the crowd a good show.

According to many on the right — who often unwittingly repurpose old left-wing formulations first introduced by progressives, "cultural Marxists" and other lefty bogeymen — "the media" create narratives and manufacture consent (a term coined by Walter Lippmann and adopted by Noam Chomsky) that the rest of us are powerless to overcome.

Consider climate change. The press has invested vast resources to climate coverage and has been hectoring and catastrophizing about it for 20 years. And yet, climate change remains at or near the bottom of every public opinion survey about the "most important issue." If the media can manufacture consensus, why is there so little consensus about climate change?

This is just one example of the media thinking not just that it should — but can — define the interests of the public. The amount of energy and handwringing that has been put into, say, AP Stylebook revisions over terms like

"illegal immigrant" or whether to capitalize "Black" or "white" when discussing race is premised on a grandiose theory of the role of the press as guardians of the American mind or soul. The whole "defund the police" conversation in the press transpired amid near-zero support for the idea among most Americans.

Or consider Donald Trump. I'm no fan, but I look like a MAGA rally front-seater compared to many in the media (and not just among opinion columnists), and yet Trump not only won but improved his standing with nearly every demographic group.

The response from some on the left is a variant of the old "but real socialism has never been tried!" trope. If only the media had really held him accountable — or took climate change, race, etc., more seriously — things would be different.

The response from many in the media is to wrap themselves in the mantle of heroic martyrdom as Trump attacks them.

And on the right, the ineffectiveness of the media to control the narrative is occasionally celebrated but it never diminishes the hysteria about its alleged omnipotence. The media, Michael Shellenberger insisted last summer, "is arguably more powerful than the government itself."

Really? It has a funny way of showing it. The industry has been shrinking for decades. Since 2000, of the 532 industries tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, newspapers saw the single sharpest decline, 77%. Trust in the media is in the gutter.

So here's an idea for the press: Just tell the truth as best you can and stop worrying about narratives. The American people will write their own.

Jonah Goldberg is editor-in-chief of The Dispatch and the host of The Remnant podcast.

Counteract speech you don't like by explaining its flaws

BY WILLIAM COOPER

The Fulcrum

There is an understandable urge among many Americans to cast aside America's essential principles in a frenetic effort to oppose Donald Trump. And there's a logic to this approach: He does it, so why shouldn't we?

Yet doing so would be a big mistake.

For starters, it often backfires. Take the essential principle of respecting the rule of law. Overreaching anti-Trump impeachment efforts, special counsel investigations and criminal cases all boomeranged into Republican rallying cries and helped Trump retake the presidency. It's not always true in politics that the harder you fight the more successful you will be. Exercising judgment matters, too.

A far better approach is to double down on the essential principles of American democracy. They work. In fact, America's founders specifically engineered them to be effective tools against the threat of politicians with autocratic impulses. Among these essential principles: the right to free speech. History reveals that free speech is vital to human freedom. Tyrants don't just concentrate power; they eliminate dissent and monopolize ideas. Violence within and between nations increases when governments stifle communication. And restricting the marketplace of ideas decreases innovations that promote human flourishing.

All too often in the Trump era, however, Americans have sought to suppress speech they didn't like. Hostility to divergent views

has infected many American institutions, from corporations and nonprofits to the media and government agencies. The tactics can get extreme: attacking speakers on social media; running people from their jobs; denying tenure to professors; shouting down speakers with the wrong views; threatening administrators with the wrong rules; boycotting companies affiliated with the wrong people.

More and more Americans are casting aside age-old principles valuing free speech in favor of short-sighted, knee-jerk prohibitions on speakers they don't like.

This is wrong. The way to counteract speech you don't like is to explain why it's wrong. Silencing speech and canceling speakers is deeply counterproductive for three reasons.

First, the censors don't have more wisdom than the censored. They often have less. Censorship can just as easily muzzle important truths as it can silence subversive lies. History is filled with minority views that eventually became gospel (every person should be equal under the law) and popular ideas that eventually became abominations (certain races are inferior to others).

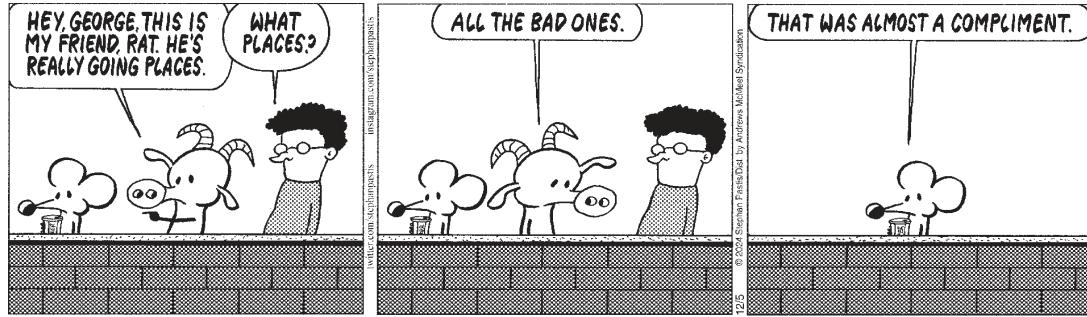
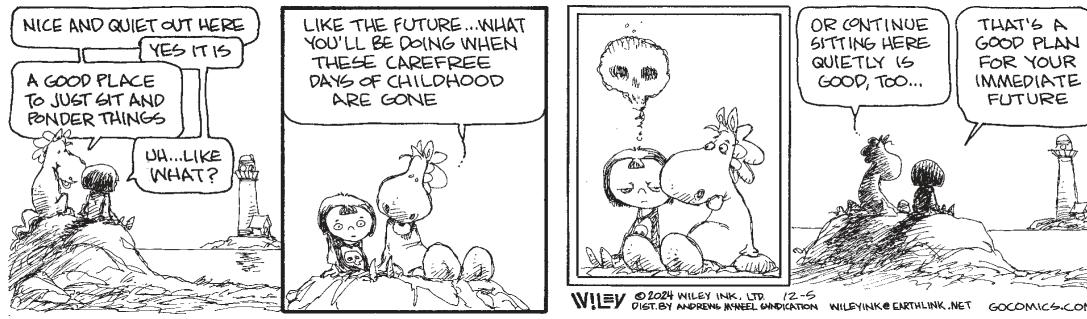
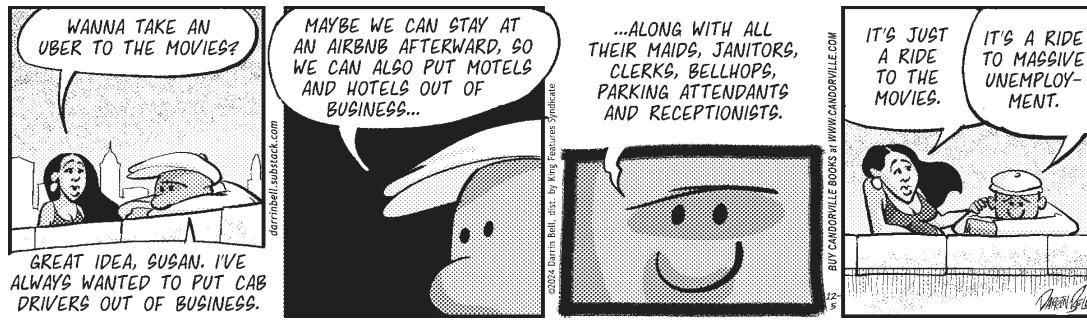
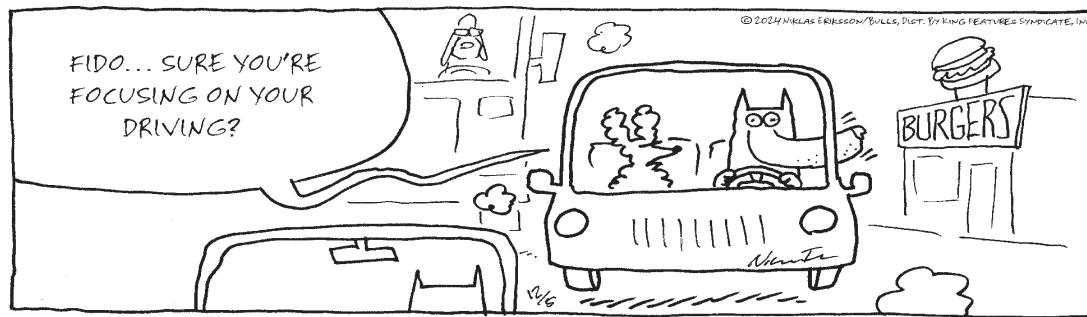
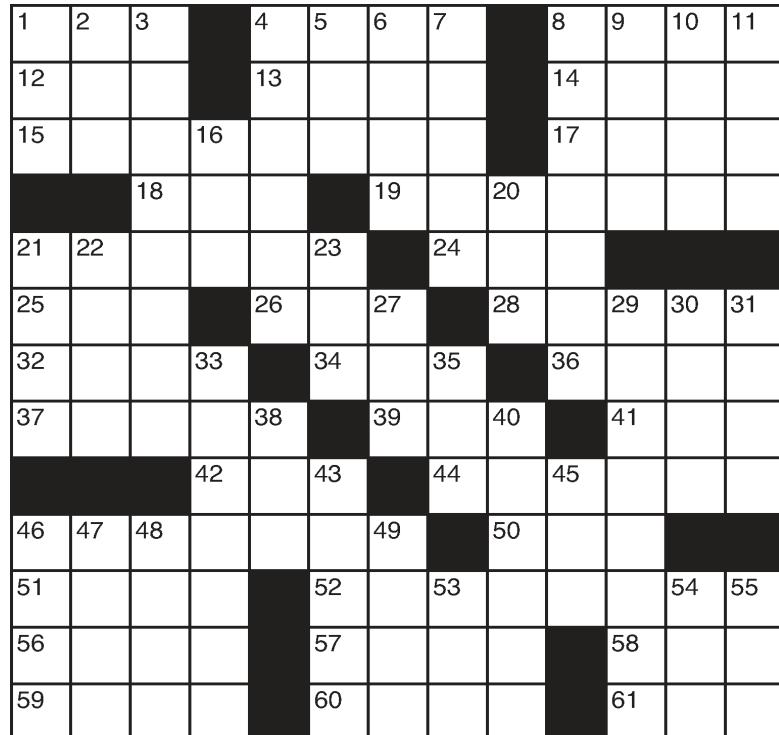
Second, accuracy matters. Silencing speech is often motivated by the desire to preserve cherished narratives that are empirically incorrect. Bad ideas love nothing more than a marketplace hostile to new ones. This is especially dangerous in a representative democracy like America, where the views of constituents inform and even dictate the official acts of their elected representatives.

Speaking accurately should be encouraged, even if it upsets people. This doesn't mean speakers should over-emphasize hard truths and controversial ideas. Nor should speakers exaggerate them, fail to show decency when expressing them or assert them at the wrong time, in the wrong place or in the wrong manner. But if speakers navigate all that and merely state objective facts, pose empirically valid questions or offer reasoned conclusions then they should come under no scorn. There must be space in the public square for people to speak accurately, even if it hurts to hear.

Finally, silencing speech is a slippery slope. What starts at the university can eventually go mainstream. And what goes mainstream can eventually infect the highest echelons of government. Once this happens, a straight line to tyranny emerges. President Harry Truman put it plainly in 1950: "Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear."

Free speech is indeed essential to a functioning society. We must fight to preserve it by respecting and promoting it ourselves. Even when the speaker says things we don't want to hear. And even, indeed especially, when Donald Trump is president.

William Cooper is the author of "How America Works ... and Why it Doesn't."

Bizarro**Loose Parts****Frazz****Pearls Before Swine****Non Sequitur****Candorville****Carpe Diem****Beetle Bailey****Eugene Sheffer Crossword****ACROSS**

1 Sound of relief
4 Latvia's capital
8 Boot camp VIPs
12 — -cone
13 Lawyer Clooney
14 Mideast airline
15 Cling
17 "A Doll's House" heroine
18 "— good deed"
19 Shoulder-length do
21 Tea biscuits
24 Floor cover
25 Coffee vessel
26 Actress Taylor
28 Vaults
32 Post-WWII alliance
34 Spill catcher
36 Corporate symbol
37 Portly
39 Cushion
41 Rowing need
42 Corp. symbols
44 Nuanced
46 More interesting, as gossip
50 "Unh-unh"
51 Taj Mahal city
52 Keep back
56 Sorts
57 "Born Free" lioness
58 Horror star Chaney

DOWN

23 Bro, maybe
27 Energy
29 Sturdy place to stand
30 Alike (Fr.)
31 Achy
33 Pariah
35 Some coll. degrees
38 Texter's "Enough!"
40 "Girls" star Lena
43 Waste conduit
45 "Humbug!"
46 Hoosegow
47 Wrinkly fruit
48 Annoys
49 Anger
53 Airport org.
54 Brock of baseball
55 "CSI" evidence

Answer to Previous Puzzle

G	A	B		T	H	A	T	P	L	O	Y
I	R	E		V	I	N	O	L	O	P	E
L	E	A		S	E	A	T	B	E	L	T
T	A	R	T	T		S	I	A			
L	A	R	A			C	S	P	A	N	
S	E	A	C	R	E	S	T	E	R	M	A
E	L	M		S	O	P	H	S	O	O	P
T	I	E	R		S	E	A	H	A	W	K
S	A	X	E	S	R	I	I	S			
S	E	A	S	O	N	I	N	G	E	S	E
A	X	L	E	T	O	O	L		A	A	S
G	O	A	D	L	U	T	E		P	I	T

12-5

CRYPTOQUIP

Q Q D Z V Q T L E X Z E Z K N G R R
 F L E J L L T Z K Z E Z T C Z T
 L Q V X E - Z N D L C K L O X Z P G O G C
 J G Y P C F L Z T G K E G O Y R R.
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ABOUT A SPORT HUGE-BILLED TROPICAL BIRDS COMPETE IN? TOUCAN PLAY THAT GAME.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals O

SCOREBOARD/SOCCER

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Tuesday's men's scores

EAST

Army 103, Le Moyne 100, 3OT
Brown 60, Vermont 53
Buffalo 100, Pitt.-Bradford 65
Dartmouth 69, New Hampshire 65
Delaware 93, Delaware St. 80
Maine 103, Maine-Augusta 51
Northeastern 82, La Salle 68
Princeton 77, Saint Joseph's 69
Providence 83, BYU 64
South Carolina 73, Boston College 51
St. Peter's 62, Duquesne 59
Villanova 68, Cincinnati 60

SOUTH

Appalachian St. 85, Mid-Atlantic Christian 43
Arkansas 76, Miami 73
Charleston Southern 83, UT Martin 68
Clemson 70, Kentucky 66
Coll. of Charleston 94, Tusculum 71
Florida A&M 66, Presbyterian 63
George Mason 74, UNC-Asheville 52
Georgia 69, Notre Dame 48
Grambling St. 82, Arkansas Baptist 56
Hampton 82, NC A&T 71
James Madison 71, ETSU 61
LSU 85, Florida St. 75
Lipscomb 80, Chattanooga 62
Mississippi 86, Louisville 63
Murray St. 63, Evansville 61
Santa Clara 74, McNeese St. 67
South Florida 74, Stetson 72
Tennessee 96, Syracuse 70
The Citadel 94, Toccoa Falls 57
UNC-Greensboro 72, High Point 68
UNC-Wilmington 67, East Carolina 53
VMI 113, Va.-Lynchburg 51
Winthrop 86, Queens (NC) 78

MIDWEST

Akron 86, N. Kentucky 73
Bradley 83, S. Illinois 60
Butler 73, E. Illinois 58
Dayton 77, W. Michigan 69
Indiana 97, Sam Houston St. 71
Iowa 80, Northwestern 79
Loyola Chicago 76, E. Michigan 54
Michigan 67, Wisconsin 64
Missouri 98, California 93
N. Illinois 89, Benedictine (III.) 70

SOUTHWEST

Oklahoma 76, Georgia Tech 61
SMU 101, Alabama St. 72
Tarleton St. 90, Dallas Christian 50
Texas A&M 57, Wake Forest 44

FAR WEST

Arizona St. 90, San Diego 53
Boise St. 87, Utah Tech 64
Grand Canyon 78, Hawaii 72
S. Utah 90, Park University 55
Saint Mary's (Cal.) 82, UTSA 74, OT
Stanford 77, Utah Valley St. 63
UCLA 69, Washington 58

Men's Top 25 schedule

Wednesday's games

No. 1 Kansas (7-0) at Creighton (5-3)
No. 2 Auburn (7-0) at No. 9 Duke (5-2)
No. 5 Marquette (8-0) at No. 6 Iowa St. (5-1)
No. 10 Alabama (6-2) at No. 20 North Carolina (4-3)
No. 12 Oregon (8-0) at Southern Cal (5-3)
No. 13 Florida (8-0) vs. Virginia (5-2)
No. 15 Baylor (5-2) at No. 25 UConn (5-3)
No. 16 Memphis (6-1) vs. La. Tech (7-1)
No. 18 Pittsburgh (7-1) at Mississippi St. (6-1)
No. 24 San Diego St. (4-2) at Fresno St. (3-4)

Thursday's game

No. 8 Purdue (7-1) at Penn St. (7-1)

Friday's game

No. 19 Illinois (6-1) at Northwestern (6-2)

Saturday's games

No. 4 Kentucky (7-0) vs. No. 7 Gonzaga (7-1) at Seattle
No. 5 Marquette (8-0) vs. No. 11 Wisconsin (8-0)
No. 17 Houston (4-3) vs. Butler (6-1)
No. 18 Pittsburgh (7-1) at Virginia Tech (3-4)
No. 20 North Carolina (4-3) vs. Georgia Tech (4-3)
No. 21 Oklahoma (7-0) vs. Alcorn St. (0-9)
No. 23 Mississippi (6-1) vs. Lindenwood (Mo.) (2-5)
No. 24 San Diego St. (4-2) vs. San Diego (3-4)

Tuesday's women's scores

EAST

Coppin St. 63, NJIT 61
Fairfield 94, Staten Island 47
George Mason 87, George Washington 55
Maryland 87, Mount St. Mary's 52
UConn 88, Holy Cross 52

SOUTH

Coll. of Charleston 86, Charleston Southern 45

MIDWEST

Bradley 75, Chicago St. 57
Cincinnati 78, CCSU 49
Iowa St. 92, SC-Upstate 35
Kansas St. 90, E. Illinois 43
La Salle 55, Loyola Chicago 45
Marquette 83, Indiana St. 67
Minnesota 90, North Florida 44
Murray St. 91, Saint Louis 66
Nebraska 69, Lindenwood (Mo.) 48
Ohio 97, Ohio Christian 37

SOUTHWEST

Texas Tech 78, Stephen F. Austin 68
UALR 59, Arkansas St. 49

FAR WEST

Colorado 91, Tennessee Tech 79
Oregon St. 63, Grambling St. 56
Southern Cal 94, Cal Baptist 52

DEALS

Tuesday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Agreed to terms with 2B Michael Stefanic and RHP Kevin Gowdy on minor league contracts.

National League

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Agreed to terms with INF/OF Ryan Vilade on a minor league contract.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association

NEW ORLEANS PELICANS — Waived G Elfrid Payton.
PHILADELPHIA 76ERS — Signed F Pete Nance to a two-way contract. Waived G Lester Quinones.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

NFL — Suspended Houston LB Azeez Al-Shaair three games for repeated violations of player safety rules during a Dec. 1 game at Jacksonville. Suspended Tennessee S Julius Woods six games without pay for violating the performance-enhancing substances policy.

ARIZONA CARDINALS — Waived OLB Ronnie Perkins.

ATLANTA FALCONS — Signed RB Elijah Dotson to the practice squad. Released K Riley Patterson and LB Tyreek Maddox-Williams from the practice squad.

BUFFALO BILLS — Released WR Deon Cain from the practice squad.

CAROLINA PANTHERS — Signed OLB Thomas Inoom, RB Emani Bailey and TE Dominique Dafney to the practice squad. Released DB Alex Cook and WR Sam Pinckney. Placed RB Dillon Johnson and TE Stephen Sullivan on the practice squad injured reserve.

CHICAGO BEARS — Signed RB Demetric Felton to the practice squad. Released OL Austen Pleasants.

CLEVELAND BROWNS — Re-signed QB Bailey Zappe to the active roster.

DENVER BRONCOS — Waived WR Josh Reynolds.

DETROIT LIONS — Re-signed WR Maurice Alexander to the practice squad.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Signed LB Liam Anderson to the practice squad.

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Signed P Matt Haack, LS Tucker Addington and QB John Wolford to the practice squad. Released G Jerome Carvin, DE Joe Gaziano and DB Tyler Hall from the practice squad.

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Elevated RB Sincere McCormick to the active roster. Placed WR DJ Turner on injured reserve.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Signed RB John Kelly to the practice squad.

MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Designated K Will Reichard and LS Andrew DePaola to return to practice. Waived LS Jake McQuaide. Released RB Myles Gaskin from the practice squad.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Released OL Michael Jordan from the practice squad. Signed DE Truman Jones to the practice squad.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Signed DB Millard Bradford and G Sincere Haynesworth to the practice squad. Released RB Jacob Kibodt from the practice squad.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Released WR John Ross from the practice squad. Signed FB Khari Blasingame to a contract.

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Claimed RB Israel Abarikanda off waivers from the New York Jets. Signed WR Ronnie Bell to the practice squad.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Signed DT Quinton Bohanna and C Mike Novitsky to the practice squad. Released TE N'Keal Harry.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Signed S Kaevon Merriweather to the active roster from Detroit's practice squad.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

DALLAS STARS — Reassigned C Justin Hryckowian to Texas (AHL).

DETROIT RED WINGS — Placed RW Patrick Kane on injured reserve. Promoted D William Lagesson from Grand Rapids (AHL).

LOS ANGELES KINGS — Recalled D Jacob Moverare, C Samuel Helenius and LW Andre Lee from Ontario (AHL).

MINNESOTA WILD — Recalled F Liam Ohran and G Jesper Wallstedt from Iowa (AHL). Placed C Jakub Lauko, RW Mats Zuccarello and D Jonas Brodin on injured reserve.

NEW JERSEY DEVILS — Reassigned F Mike Hardman to Utica (AHL).

NEW YORK RANGERS — Reassigned Chad Ruhwedel to Hartford (AHL).

OTTAWA SENATORS — Promoted D Nikolas Matinpaloo from Belleville (AHL).

PITTSBURGH PENGUINS — Reassigned Jack St. Ivany to Wilkes-Barre/Scranton (AHL).

WINNIPEG JETS — Placed LW Nikolaj Ehlers on injured reserve. Recalled C Brad Lambert from Manitoba (AHL).

SOCCER
Major League Soccer

MINNESOTA UNITED — Signed F Tani Oluwaseyi to a contract extension.

NEW ENGLAND REVOLUTION — Signed D Mamadou Fofana to a three-year contract.

COLLEGE

MICHIGAN — Fired offensive coordinator Kirk Campbell.

PRO FOOTBALL

NFL

American Conference
East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-Buffalo	10	2	0	.833	355	224
Miami	5	7	0	.417	232	266
N.Y. Jets	3	9	0	.250	225	268
e-New England	3	10	0	.231	221	307

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Houston	8	5	0	.615	308	288
Indianapolis	6	7	0	.462	267	298
Tennessee	3	9	0	.250	221	332
e-Jacksonville	2	10	0	.167	228	339

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Pittsburgh	9	3	0	.750	296	224
Baltimore	8	5	0	.615	383	318
Cincinnati	4	8	0	.333	335	340
Cleveland	3	9	0	.250	218	308

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
x-Kansas City	11	1	0	.917	289	235
L.A. Chargers	8	4	0	.667	260	188
Denver	8	5	0	.615	305	234
e-Las Vegas	2	10	0	.167	223	333

National Conference
East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Philadelphia	10	2	0	.833	320	218
Washington	8	5	0	.615	376	296
Dallas	5	7	0	.417	248	339
e-N.Y. Giants	2	10	0	.167	183	

NHL

Scoreboard

ROUNDUP

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Toronto	24	15	7	2	32	74	61
Florida	26	15	9	2	32	96	85
Boston	27	13	11	3	29	67	82
Tampa Bay	23	12	9	2	26	86	73
Buffalo	25	11	12	2	24	76	78
Detroit	25	10	11	4	24	65	79
Ottawa	24	10	12	2	22	75	80
Montreal	25	9	13	3	21	70	94

Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	25	17	6	2	36	102	71
New Jersey	28	17	9	2	36	99	76
Carolina	25	16	8	1	33	93	74
N.Y. Rangers	24	13	10	1	27	76	70
Philadelphia	25	12	10	3	27	73	83
Pittsburgh	27	11	12	4	26	77	104
Columbus	24	11	10	3	25	84	84
N.Y. Islanders	26	9	10	7	25	67	77

Western Conference

Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Minnesota	25	17	4	4	38	80	60
Winnipeg	26	18	8	0	36	95	67
Dallas	24	16	8	0	32	82	61
Colorado	26	14	12	0	28	86	97
St. Louis	26	12	12	2	26	67	80
Utah	25	10	11	4	24	70	75
Nashville	25	7	12	6	20	58	79
Chicago	25	8	15	2	18	62	78

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	26	16	7	3	35	92	79
Los Angeles	25	14	8	3	31	76	68
Vancouver	24	13	7	4	30	78	77
Calgary	26	13	9	4	30	69	74
Edmonton	25	13	10	2	28	72	74
Seattle	26	12	13	1	25	75	78
San Jose	28	10	13	5	25	80	97
Anaheim	23	10	10	3	23	60	67

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

Monday's games

New Jersey 5, N.Y. Rangers 1
Toronto 4, Chicago 1
Dallas 2, Utah 1

Tuesday's games

Montreal 2, N.Y. Islanders 1, OT
Seattle 4, Carolina 2
Colorado 5, Buffalo 4
San Jose 2, Washington 1, OT
Pittsburgh 5, Florida 4, OT
Boston 3, Detroit 2, OT
Minnesota 3, Vancouver 2, OT
St. Louis 4, Winnipeg 1
Calgary 3, Columbus 0
Vegas 1, Edmonton 0

Wednesday's games

Boston at Chicago
Nashville at Toronto
Dallas at Los Angeles
Vegas at Anaheim

Thursday's games

Colorado at Carolina
Detroit at Ottawa
Florida at Philadelphia
Nashville at Montreal
San Jose at Tampa Bay
Winnipeg at Buffalo
Seattle at N.Y. Islanders
Columbus at Edmonton
St. Louis at Calgary

Friday's games

Seattle at New Jersey
Washington at Toronto
Pittsburgh at N.Y. Rangers
Columbus at Vancouver
Dallas at Vegas
Minnesota at Anaheim

Saturday's games

Philadelphia at Boston
Utah at Buffalo
Winnipeg at Chicago
Carolina at N.Y. Islanders
San Jose at Florida
Washington at Montreal
Nashville at Ottawa
Colorado at Detroit
Toronto at Pittsburgh
Minnesota at Los Angeles
St. Louis at Edmonton

Sunday's games

Seattle at N.Y. Rangers
Tampa Bay at Vancouver
N.Y. Islanders at Ottawa
Columbus at Winnipeg
Colorado at New Jersey
Utah at Philadelphia
Calgary at Dallas

Avs score 5 straight to edge Sabres

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y.—Artturi Lehkonen scored with 4:22 left, and the Colorado Avalanche overcame a four-goal deficit in a 5-4 victory over the Buffalo Sabres on Tuesday night.

Nathan MacKinnon scored twice and added an assist as the Avalanche scored four third-period goals. Joel Kiviranta and Logan O'Connor also scored. Backup goalie Scott Wedgewood stopped all 22 shots he faced taking over after starter Alexander Georgiev allowed four goals on eight shots in the first 11:49.

It was Wedgewood's debut for Colorado after being acquired in a trade of backup goalies with the Nashville Predators last weekend.

The Avalanche overcame a four-or-more goal deficit for the fourth time in team history, and first since rallying from four goals in a 5-4 OT win over Pittsburgh in March.

Colorado became the first team this season to overcome such a deficit, while marking the 90th time that's happened in league history.

Tage Thompson scored twice for Buffalo, which is 0-3-1 in its past four.

Lehkonen's winner came after Luukkonen stopped Calvin de Haan's shot from the left point. Parked in front, Lehkonen scored the rebound through the goalie's legs.

Sharks 2, Capitals 1 (OT): William Eklund scored 39 seconds into overtime, Mackenzie Blackwood made 27 saves and San Jose ended host Washington's winning streak at four.

The Capitals fell to 4-2-1 since captain and leading goal-scorer Alex Ovechkin was sidelined by a broken left fibula. They fell behind early and failed to make it five comeback wins in a row, despite Logan Thompson making 29 saves and Nic Dowd scoring his seventh goal of the season.

Rookie Macklin Celebriani picked up the secondary assist on Eklund's OT winner to extend his point streak to five games. The top pick in the draft has four goals and four assists during this stretch.

Canadiens 2, Islanders 1 (OT): Patrik Laine scored in his highly anticipated debut, Nick Suzuki scored in overtime, and Montreal beat visiting New York.

Laine, playing his first regular-season game in nearly a year, opened the scoring on the power play 7:23 into the second period.

Suzuki scored at 2:39 of overtime, following up his own rebound. Sam Montembeault stopped 30 shots.

Anders Lee scored for New York, which lost for the fourth time in its past five games. Ilya Sorokin made 25 saves.

Laine missed the first 24 games of the regular season after sustaining a left knee sprain during preseason play against the Toronto Maple Leafs on Sept. 28.

Laine, who the Canadiens acquired before the season, hadn't played since last Dec. 14 with the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Kraken 4, Hurricanes 2: Yanni Gourde and Jaden Schwartz had a goal and an assist each and visiting Seattle snapped a three-game skid.

Gourde's wrist shot at 10:48 in the third period broke a 2-2 tie. Brandon Taney and Eeli Tolvanen also scored for Seattle and Matty Beniers added two assists. Joey Daccord stopped 15 shots.

Eric Robinson and Martin Necas scored for Carolina, which lost its third straight. Necas added an assist to improve his team-leading point total to 39. The Hurricanes finished with a season-low 16 shots. Pyotr Kochetkov made



ADRIAN KRAUS/AP

Colorado left wing Artturi Lehkonen celebrates his goal with 4:22 left against the Sabres on Tuesday night in Buffalo, N.Y. The Avalanche scored four third-period goals in a 5-4 victory.

24 saves in his first start after missing four games with a concussion.

Penguins 5, Panthers 4 (OT): Bryan Rust scored 1:31 into overtime and host Pittsburgh avoided another late collapse.

The Penguins let a three-goal third-period lead evaporate when Florida's Sam Bennett, Adam Boqvist and Matthew Tkachuk scored in a 4:32 span to pull the Panthers even at 4.

Rust, however, extended Pittsburgh's winning streak to four by flipping a wrist shot from the right by Spencer Knight for his eighth goal of the season.

Tkachuk scored twice for Florida, but the Panthers saw their three-game winning streak snapped as Knight stopped just 11 of the 16 shots he faced.

Bruins 3, Red Wings 2 (OT): Pavel Zacha scored 2:15 into overtime and Boston rallied to beat visiting Detroit.

Zacha one-timed a pass from David Pastrnak past Ville Husso for the winner. Justin Brazeau and Nikita Zadorov also scored for the Bruins, and Joonas Korpisalo finished with 25 saves.

Lucas Raymond scored twice for Detroit and surpassed 200 career points. Simon Edvinsson had two assists and Husso stopped 32 shots as the Red Wings lost their third straight.

Blues 4, Jets 1: Jordan Kyrou scored twice and Dylan Holloway had a goal and assist to help lift St. Louis over host Winnipeg.

Robert Thomas had an empty-net goal for the Blues, who are on a four-game point streak.

Holloway extended his point streak to four games (four goals and three assists).

Joel Hofer made 22 saves for St. Louis, and Connor Hellebuyck stopped 28 of the 31 shots he faced for the Jets.

Mark Scheifele scored for the Jets, who have lost four consecutive games and are 1-5-0 in their past six.

Wild 3, Canucks 2 (OT): Kirill Kaprizov scored with 23.4 seconds left in overtime and

Minnesota rallied to beat visiting Vancouver for its sixth victory in eight games.

Frederick Gaudreau and Jake Middleton also scored for Minnesota, and Filip Gustavsson made 30 saves. The Wild improved to 17-4-4, giving them an NHL-best 38 points.

Brock Boeser nearly won it for Vancouver on a two-on-one break, but his shot hit the right post. A lively bounce went out to Marco Rossi, who carried the puck into the Canucks zone and fed Kaprizov for a one-timer at the end of a lengthy shift. His 16th goal of the season was his ninth career OT winner.

Quinn Hughes and Jake DeBrusk scored for Vancouver.

Flames 3, Blue Jackets 0: Rasmus Andersson and Kevin Bahl scored power-play goals and host Calgary beat Columbus after they honored the late Johnny Gaudreau with a pre-game tribute.

Dan Vladar had a 16-save shutout, Yegor Sharangovich scored into an empty net and Michael Backlund had two assists for Calgary.

Johnny and Matthew Gaudreau were honored before the game with the Gaudreau family in attendance. Players on both teams had the name Gaudreau and Johnny's No. 13 on their pregame jerseys.

The brothers were struck by a vehicle and killed while cycling Aug. 29 in New Jersey.

Johnny Gaudreau played eight seasons with the Flames before playing two seasons with Columbus.

Golden Knights 1, Oilers 0: Ivan Barbashev scored on a rush midway through the second period and Adin Hill made 28 saves as Vegas shut out visiting Edmonton.

Hill recorded his second shutout this season and the ninth of his career. The Golden Knights are 5-0-1 in their past six games, and Hill has started all of them.

Stuart Skinner stopped 15 shots for the Oilers, who were shut out for the fourth time this season.

NBA

ROUNDUP

Knicks go 4-0 in NBA Cup group play

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Karl-Anthony Towns had 23 points and 15 rebounds, Jalen Brunson scored 21 points and the New York Knicks beat the Orlando Magic 121-106 on Tuesday to reach the quarterfinals of the NBA Cup.

New York went 4-0 in East Group A and will host Atlanta on Dec. 11. Orlando (3-1) advanced as the East wild card and will travel to Milwaukee.

Mikal Bridges had 19 points and Josh Hart added 11 points and 10 rebounds for the Knicks, who have won their last three games and eight of their last 10.

Franz Wagner finished with 30 points while Moritz Wagner had 20 off the bench for the Magic, who had their six-game winning streak snapped.

The Magic needed only to lose by no more than 37 points to advance via tiebreaker.

Bucks 128, Pistons 107: Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 28 points and Damian Lillard had 27, lifting surging Milwaukee to a win over host Detroit and into the NBA Cup quarterfinals.

The Bucks, who won East Group B with a 4-0 record, have won seven straight and nine of 10.

Detroit was eliminated, dropping to 3-1 in the tournament. Cade Cunningham scored 23 points, Tobias Harris had 16, Tim Hardaway scored 15 and Jalen Duren added 11 for the Pistons.

Antetokounmpo rested in the fourth quarter, after making 10 of 11 shots in 28 minutes. He also had eight assists and seven rebounds after having a triple-double in three of his previous six games.

Mavericks 121, Dallas 116: Luka Doncic had 37 points and 12 rebounds, Spencer Dinwiddie and P.J. Washington Jr. hit clutch 3-pointers in the final two minutes, as host Dallas overcame a 15-point deficit to beat Memphis and earn the West wild-card spot in the NBA Cup quarterfinals.

Dallas trailed 111-103 with 3:34 to play and went on a 16-3 run capped by two 3-pointers from Dinwiddie and one from Washington.

Ja Morant scored a season-high 31 points, 15 in the fourth quarter, for the Grizzlies. They had a season-high six-game winning streak snapped and were eliminated from the Cup race.

Nuggets 119, Warriors 115: Nikola Jokic had 38 points, 10 rebounds and five steals to rally Denver to a victory over visiting Golden State.

Jokic fell four assists shy of his NBA-leading ninth triple-double of the season. The reigning league MVP remained tied with Magic Johnson for the third-most triple-



JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON/AP

Knicks guard Jalen Brunson (11) drives into Orlando Magic guard Anthony Black on Tuesday night in New York. Brunson scored 21 points in the Knicks' 121-106 victory.

doubles in NBA history with 138.

Michael Porter Jr. added 22 points and Aaron Gordon had 15 and nine rebounds for Denver.

The loss was the fifth in a row for Golden State following a 12-3 start and means the Warriors will travel to Houston next week for the NBA Cup quarterfinals.

Steph Curry had 24 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds for the Warriors. Jonathan Kuminga added 19 points.

Golden State was without defensive anchor Draymond Green, who was sidelined with left calf tightness.

Kings 120, Rockets 111: Domantas Sabonis scored 27 points and host Sacramento made 15 consecutive shots from the field to deny Houston the top seed in the NBA Cup quarterfinals.

The shooting spree by the Kings turned an eight-point deficit late in the second quarter into a 12-point lead midway through the

third to give the Kings their only win in four NBA Cup games.

De'Aaron Fox added 22 points, Malik Monk had 17 and a career-high 12 assists, and DeMar DeRozan scored 16.

Jalen Green scored 28 to lead Houston and Alperen Sengun added 24.

Cavaliers 118, Wizards 87: Donovan Mitchell scored 19 points and Evan Mobley had 19 points and 10 rebounds as host Cleveland beat Washington, extending its losing streak to 15.

Sam Merrill and Georges Niang each scored 14 off the bench for Cleveland, which has the best record in the NBA at 19-3 and is 12-1 at home. The 31-point win was the Cavaliers' largest of the season.

Washington's Jonas Valanciunas, Jordan Poole and Bub Carrington each scored 13 points. Valanciunas grabbed 11 rebounds.

76ers 110, Hornets 104: Paul George scored 29 points, Tyrese

NBA Cup quarterfinals

Dec. 10: Orlando at Milwaukee, Dallas at Oklahoma City.

Dec. 11: Atlanta at New York, Golden State at Houston.

Regular-season schedule updates
Games were added to the regular-season schedules for the 22 teams that did not make the quarterfinals.

Dec. 12: Detroit at Boston, Toronto at Miami, Sacramento at New Orleans.

Dec. 13: Washington at Cleveland, Indiana at Philadelphia, L.A. Lakers at Minnesota, Brooklyn at Memphis, Charlotte at Chicago, L.A. Clippers at Denver, Phoenix at Utah, San Antonio at Portland.

Dec. 15: New Orleans at Indiana, Boston at Washington, Minnesota at San Antonio, Portland at Phoenix, Memphis at L.A. Lakers.

Dec. 16: Philadelphia at Charlotte, Miami at Detroit, Chicago at Toronto, Cleveland at Brooklyn, Denver at Sacramento, Utah at L.A. Clippers.

(Quarterfinal game losers will face another quarterfinal loser in a regular-season contest on Dec. 15 or 16.)

Associated Press

Maxey had eight of his 21 points in the final 30 seconds and Philadelphia won back-to-back games for the first time this season with a victory over host Charlotte.

Brandon Miller had 34 points, and Nick Richards had a strong outing in his second game back from injury with 22 points and 14 rebounds. Charlotte (6-15) finished its homestand 0-5.

Raptors 122, Pacers 111: Scottie Barnes scored a career-high 35 points, RJ Barrett added 29 and Toronto extended Indiana's road losing streak to seven.

Tyrese Haliburton scored 30 points for the Pacers. Benedict Mathurin had 17 points, Myles Turner scored 16 and Obi Toppin added 15.

Thunder 133, Jazz 106: Jalen Williams scored 28 points, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 26 points, seven assists and six rebounds, and Oklahoma City beat visiting Utah.

Collin Sexton scored 17 points while Walker Kessler and John Collins added 15 apiece for the Jazz, who fell to 4-17.

Suns 104, Spurs 93: Devin Booker scored 29 points and host Phoenix weathered the loss of Kevin Durant to an ankle injury to beat San Antonio.

Devin Vassell led the Spurs with 25 points off the bench.

Clippers 127, Trail Blazers 105: Norman Powell scored 30 points, James Harden had 23 and Los Angeles beat visiting Portland.

DeAndre Ayton scored 16 points and Shaedon Sharpe and Deni Avdija each had 15 for the Trail Blazers.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	17	4	.810	—
New York	13	8	.619	4
Brooklyn	9	13	.409	8½
Toronto	7	15	.318	10½
Philadelphia	5	14	.263	11

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	15	8	.652	—
Atlanta	11	11	.500	3½
Miami	9	10	.474	4
Charlotte	6	15	.286	8
Washington	2	17	.105	11

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	19	3	.864	—
Milwaukee	11	9	.550	7
Chicago	9	13	.409	10
Indiana	9	13	.409	10
Detroit	9	14	.391	10½

Western Conference

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	15	7	.682	—
Dallas	14	8	.636	1
Memphis	14	8	.636	1
San Antonio	11	10	.524	3½
New Orleans	4	18	.182	12

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	16	5	.762	—
Denver	11	8	.579	4
Minnesota	10	10	.500	5½
Portland	8	14	.364	8½
Utah	4	17	.190	12

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Clippers	14	9	.609	—
Phoenix	12	8	.600	½
Golden State	12	8	.600	½
L.A. Lakers	12	9	.571	1
Sacramento	10	12	.455	3½

Monday's games

Boston 108, Miami 89
Atlanta 124, New Orleans 112
Minnesota 109, L.A. Lakers 80
Chicago 128, Brooklyn 102

Tuesday's games

Cleveland 118, Washington 87
Milwaukee 128, Detroit 107
Philadelphia 110, Charlotte 104
Toronto 122, Indiana 111
New York 121, Orlando 106
Oklahoma City 133, Utah 106
Dallas 121, Memphis 116
Phoenix 104, San Antonio 93
Denver 119, Golden State 115
L.A. Clippers 127, Portland 105
Sacramento 120, Houston 111

Wednesday's games

Detroit at Boston
Indiana at Brooklyn
L.A. Lakers at Miami
Orlando at Philadelphia
Atlanta at Milwaukee
Minnesota at L.A. Clippers

Thursday's games

Dallas at Washington
Denver at Cleveland
Charlotte at New York
Oklahoma City at Toronto
Chicago at San Antonio
Phoenix at New Orleans
Sacramento at Memphis
Houston at Golden State

Friday's games

Orlando at Philadelphia
L.A. Lakers at Atlanta
Milwaukee at Boston
Indiana at Chicago
Sacramento at San Antonio
Minnesota at Golden State
Utah at Portland

Saturday's games

Cleveland at Charlotte
Denver at Washington
Oklahoma City at New Orleans
Detroit at New York
Dallas at Toronto
Phoenix at Miami
Memphis at Boston

Sunday's games

Philadelphia at Chicago
Milwaukee at Brooklyn
Charlotte at Indiana
Cleveland at Miami
Denver at Atlanta
Phoenix at Orlando
New Orleans at San Antonio
Memphis at Washington
Minnesota at Golden State
Houston at L.A. Clippers
Utah at Sacramento
Portland at L.A. Lakers

COLLEGE BASKETBALL



Michigan center Vlad Goldin grabs a rebound against Wisconsin on Tuesday. Goldin is half of Area 50-1 nicknamed by the Wolverines.

Dynamic debut earns Michigan's transfer 7-footers a nickname

BY STEVE MEGARTEE

Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — Michigan has a nickname for its pair of 7-foot newcomers: Area 50-1.

The tag was unveiled by the school on social media Tuesday night after Vladislav Goldin and Danny Wolf produced otherworldly numbers in a 67-64 victory at No. 11 Wisconsin to open the Big Ten schedule.

Goldin wears uniform No. 50, and Wolf wears No. 1. Both transferred to Michigan this season.

"We've got some ALIENS in our front court," the Wolverines posted on X, formerly Twitter. "Do not enter the paint."

Their performance served notice that Michigan (7-1) seems intent on bouncing back from an 8-24 season and returning to Big Ten contention under new coach Dusty May.

"I feel like we're a fairly new team, but I feel like we made huge steps forward in playing together and learning each other," said Goldin, who joined May in coming to Michigan from Florida Atlantic.

Goldin, a 7-foot-1 center who was part of FAU's 2023 Final Four team, had a career-high 24 points against Wisconsin. He made three straight baskets to score the final six points of the game.

Wolf, a 7-footer from Yale, had 20 points to go along with seven rebounds, five assists, a career-high five blocks and three steals.

"He really is a guard in a 7-footer's body — the way he dribbles, the way he shoots it, the way he can create space," May said following his team's sixth straight win.

These two big men needed time to learn how to thrive together, though.

Goldin scored 15.7 points per game during his final season at Florida Atlantic, but reached double figures just once in his first six games at Michigan. Wolf had a three-game stretch in which he totaled 19 points.

"I think it always goes back to our coaches' trust in us," Wolf said. "We definitely had a few rough games collectively, and other guys stepped up for us to help us win. Through all of that, Coach has stuck with us."

The breakthrough came last week.

In a 78-53 blowout of then-No. 22 Xavier on Wednesday, Wolf had 20 points and 14 rebounds while Goldin added 18 points. That game showcased the matchup problems they can cause as two 7-footers with complementary skills.

Wisconsin is the rare team that also starts two 7-footers in Steven Crowl and Nolan Winter, but they were no match for the Goldin-Wolf duo.

Goldin and Wolf combined for 44 of Michigan's 67 points against the Badgers, with Wolf often finding Goldin for easy baskets down the stretch. Crowl had two points and four rebounds in less than 22 minutes before fouling out, while Winter had eight points and five rebounds.

"They're both vets," Winter said. "They've been around doing this a while. Their games really complement each other well. Them being in that kind of 5-4 ball screen caused some issues for our defense, and they executed really well."

Well enough to earn themselves a catchy nickname one game into their Big Ten careers.

TOP 25 ROUNDUP

Wiggins, Clemson defense knock off No. 4 Kentucky

Associated Press

CLEMSON, S.C. — Chauncey Wiggins scored 12 points and Ian Schieffelin had 11 points and a career-high 20 rebounds as Clemson shut down No. 4 Kentucky for a 70-66 victory Tuesday night in the SEC/ACC Challenge.

The Tigers (8-1) held the Wildcats (7-1) to 30 points fewer than their average of 96.7 per game coming in, which led the country.

Clemson took the lead for good, 53-52, with 10:08 remaining on Del Jones' layup that started a 10-2 run. Kentucky got to 68-66 on Lamont Butler's 3-pointer with 2.4 seconds left, but Chase Hunter followed with two foul shots to seal it.

Ortega Oweh had 17 points to lead Kentucky. Amari Williams added nine points and 10 rebounds.

Clemson used a big win at No. 23 Alabama in last year's SEC/ACC Challenge to springboard a run to the Elite Eight.

"It just shows we can still do it," said Chase Hunter, a sixth-year guard who led the Tigers in scoring during their NCAA run, which included wins over Baylor and Arizona before missing the Final Four with a loss to the Crimson Tide.

"I think maybe people kind of downed us this year, we didn't have this or that," Hunter said. "But we're a team that fights, and we showed that today. We can compete with anybody."

No. 3 Tennessee 96, Syracuse 70: Chaz Lanier scored 26 points to lead the Volunteers to a victory in the SEC/ACC Challenge.

Tennessee (8-0) got a double-double from Igor Milicic with 11 points and 10 rebounds, and Zakai Zeigler had 14 points and eight assists.

Tennessee finished with a 39-26 rebounding advantage.

Elijah Moore paced the Orange (4-3) with 24 points off the bench. Chris Bell added 12 and Donnie Freeman had 10.

Michigan 67, No. 11 Wisconsin 64: Vladislav Goldin scored a career-high 24 points — including three straight baskets inside down the stretch — and the visiting Wolverines defeated the Badgers in the Big Ten opener for both teams.

Michigan (7-1, 1-0) won its sixth straight and handed Wisconsin (8-1, 0-1) its first loss of the season.

Goldin, a 7-foot-1 graduate student who followed new Michigan coach Dusty May from Florida Atlantic, scored 17 points after half-time and put the Wolverines ahead for good on a layup with 1:35 re-



ARTIE WALKER JR./AP

Clemson's Chauncey Wiggins goes to the basket against Kentucky's Andrew Carr on Tuesday. Wiggins had 12 points in the upset victory.

maining.

Danny Wolf added 21 points, seven rebounds, five assists, five blocks and three steals for Michigan. John Tonje scored 18 and John Blackwell 16 for Wisconsin.

Villanova 68, No. 14 Cincinnati 60: Eric Dixon scored 31 points, Wooga Poplar had 12 points and 10 rebounds and the host Wildcats handed the Bearcats their first loss of the season.

Villanova (5-4) got a needed win for third-year coach Kyle Neptune, who has yet to lead the program to the NCAA Tournament in his first two seasons.

Jizzle James scored 19 points for Cincinnati (6-1).

No. 21 Oklahoma 76, Georgia Tech 61: Jeremiah Fears scored 18 points to lead the host Sooners in the SEC/ACC Challenge.

Jalon Moore had 15 points and 11 rebounds for Oklahoma (8-0), and Kobe Elvis scored 12.

Jaeden Mustaf scored 16 points, Lance Terry had 14 and Duncan Powell added 11 points and 12 rebounds for Georgia Tech (4-4). Baye Ndongo, the No. 2 scorer and top rebounder for the Yellow Jackets this season, finished with four points and four rebounds in only 14 minutes because of foul

trouble.

No. 22 Texas A&M 57, Wake Forest 44: Wade Taylor IV scored 15 points and Pharrel Payne and Henry Coleman III each added 10 as the host Aggies beat the Demon Deacons.

Hunter Sallis led Wake Forest with a game-high 19 points, and Davin Cosby added 11 points.

Texas A&M (7-2) shot 39% from the floor (19-for-49) and Wake Forest (7-3) shot 28% (17-for-60) from the floor.

No. 23 Ole Miss 86, Louisville 63: Dre Davis scored 20 points, Sean Pedulla added 16 and the visiting Rebels shot 63% in the second half to beat the short-handed Cardinals in the SEC/ACC Challenge.

Hot shooting jump-started Mississippi (7-1) in both halves, especially during a second-half spurt in which the Rebels made seven consecutive baskets to build a 58-41 cushion that later grew to 27.

Davis, who played his first two seasons for Louisville, finished 8-for-11 from the field and scored 13 first-half points.

Chucky Hepburn scored 19 points for Louisville (5-3), which has lost forward Kasean Pryor and guard Koren Johnson to season-ending injuries.



Weekly statistics

AFC individual leaders

Quarterbacks

	Att	Com	Yds	TD	Int
Burrow, Cin	446	302	3337	30	5
L.Jackson, Bal	379	254	3290	29	3
Stroud, Hou	430	272	3117	15	9
Mahomes, KC	427	292	2979	19	11
Nix, Den	434	277	2842	17	8
Allen, Buf	356	230	2691	20	5
Rodgers, NYJ	419	262	2627	19	8
Herbert, LAC	336	213	2551	13	1
Tagovailoa, Mia	278	207	2125	15	4
Lawrence, Jac	284	172	2045	11	7

Rushers

	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Henry, Bal	240	1407	5.9	87t	13
Mixon, Hou	205	887	4.3	59	11
Pollard, Ten	192	835	4.3	41	4
Harris, Pit	207	824	4.0	36t	4
Taylor, Ind	186	804	4.3	58	5
Dobbins, LAC	158	766	4.8	61	8
Cook, Buf	151	703	4.7	65t	11
Hall, NYJ	164	692	4.2	42	4
L.Jackson, Bal	111	678	6.1	39	3
C.Brown, Cin	152	677	4.5	40	6

Receivers

	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Chase, Cin	79	1142	14.5	70t	13
Bowers, Las	84	884	10.5	57t	4
Jeudy, Cle	54	880	16.3	89t	3
Flowers, Bal	60	863	14.4	53t	4
Pickens, Pit	55	850	15.5	44	3
Sutton, Den	63	846	13.4	37	5
Collins, Hou	49	832	17.0	67t	4
McConkey, LAC	58	815	14.1	60t	4
B.Thomas, Jac	46	765	16.6	85t	6
Wilson, NYJ	74	763	10.3	35	5

Punters

	No	Yds	Lg	Avg
Cole, Las	44	2305	70	52.4
Cooke, Jac	48	2462	73	51.3

Scoring Touchdowns

	TD Rush	Rec	Ret	Pts
Henry, Bal	15	13	2	0
Chase, Cin	13	0	13	0
Cook, Buf	12	11	1	0
Mixon, Hou	12	11	1	0

Kicking

	PAT	FG	LG	Pts
Boswell, Pit	26-26	34-37	57	128
Fairbairn, Hou	29-29	31-37	59	122

AFC team statistics

AVERAGE PER GAME OFFENSE

	Yards	Rush	Pass
Baltimore	422.5	179.1	243.4
Cincinnati	356.0	91.7	264.3
Buffalo	347.5	127.6	219.9
Pittsburgh	344.0	133.1	210.9
Kansas City	341.6	111.8	229.8
Houston	335.2	114.1	221.2
Miami	328.2	110.3	217.8
Denver	320.2	111.2	209.0
Cleveland	314.1	87.2	226.8
Indianapolis	311.5	118.8	192.7
L.A. Chargers	311.3	112.9	198.4
Las Vegas	304.4	78.1	226.3
Jacksonville	297.7	101.2	196.4
Tennessee	297.3	111.4	185.9
N.Y. Jets	291.3	87.3	204.0
New England	291.1	119.5	171.5

DEFENSE

	Yards	Rush	Pass
Tennessee	291.9	120.1	171.8
N.Y. Jets	301.2	126.2	174.9
Houston	308.5	109.7	198.8
Pittsburgh	311.0	90.5	220.5
Miami	311.4	107.5	203.9
Kansas City	311.9	87.8	224.1
Denver	315.7	94.7	221.0
Buffalo	321.6	121.9	199.7
L.A. Chargers	325.8	119.4	206.4
Las Vegas	327.7	114.8	212.9
New England	340.2	124.7	215.5
Baltimore	347.6	82.7	264.9
Cleveland	349.6	128.6	221.0
Cincinnati	369.2	128.2	241.0
Indianapolis	379.4	147.0	232.4
Jacksonville	406.4	133.2	273.2

NFC individual leaders

Quarterbacks

	Att	Com	Yds	TD	Int
Smith, Sea	436	300	3241	13	12
Cousins, Atl	399	269	3052	17	13
Mayfield, TB	407	288	3034	25	11
Stafford, LAR	409	270	2983	17	7
Goff, Det	340	244	2982	22	9
Darnold, Min	358	242	2952	23	10
Daniels, Was	362	252	2819	15	6
Purdy, SF	324	213	2707	13	8
Ca.Williams, Chi	411	253	2612	14	5
Murray, Ari	358	246	2603	13	6

Rushers

	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Barkley, Phi	246	1499	6.1	72t	11
Jacobs, GB	221	987	4.5	38t	8
Gibbs, Det	163	973	6.0	70t	10
K.Williams, LAR	222	926	4.2	30	10
Hubbard, Car	189	919	4.9	38t	7
Kamara, NO	206	894	4.3	24	6
Robinson, Atl	193	885	4.6	37t	7
A.Jones, Min	184	820	4.5	41	3
Mason, SF	153	789	5.2	38	3
Conner, Ari	183	773	4.2	22	5

Receivers

	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Jefferson, Min	68	1038	15.3	97t	5
Mc					

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



BUTCH DILL/AP

Auburn running back Jarquez Hunter loses the ball after a hit by Alabama defensive back Malachi Moore (13) on Nov. 30 in Tuscaloosa, Ala. Alabama won 28-14 and moved up two spots in the CFP rankings.

Miami's CFP hopes fade, Alabama rises in rankings

BY EDDIE PELLS

Associated Press

Miami's playoff hopes took an all-but-final nosedive while Alabama's got a boost Tuesday night in the last rankings before the 12-team College Football Playoff bracket is set next weekend.

The Hurricanes (10-2) dropped six spots to No. 12—the first team out of the projected bracket after suffering their second loss. They are one spot behind the Crimson Tide (9-3), who won last week and moved up two spots to No. 11, where they are projected as the last team in and the fourth from the Southeastern Conference.

To make things worse for the Miami, selection committee chair and Michigan athletic director Warde Manuel said there was no way for them to leapfrog Alabama since neither team plays next weekend. The odds of them moving up based on lopsided results in the weekend's conference title games are virtually zero.

The Miami-Alabama sorting was the strongest indication yet that the selection committee is looking at more than mere wins and losses, but also at strength of schedule and other factors that appear to give the SEC an edge.

"We still think Miami is a very strong team," Manuel said. "It came down to a difference in their body of work ... not just wins, not just losses but the totality of the season and how those teams performed."

He mentioned three data points:

College Football Playoff rankings

Dec. 3

1. Oregon	12-0
2. Texas	11-1
3. Penn State	11-1
4. Notre Dame	11-1
5. Georgia	10-2
6. Ohio State	10-2
7. Tennessee	10-2
8. SMU	11-1
9. Indiana	11-1
10. Boise State	11-1
11. Alabama	9-3
12. Miami	10-2
13. Mississippi	9-3
14. South Carolina	9-3
15. Arizona State	10-2
16. Iowa State	10-2
17. Clemson	9-3
18. BYU	10-2
19. Missouri	9-3
20. UNLV	10-2
21. Illinois	9-3
22. Syracuse	9-3
23. Colorado	9-3
24. Army	10-1
25. Memphis	10-2

The four highest-ranked conference champions will be seeded Nos. 1-4 and receive a first-round bye. Seeds 5-12 will play each other in the first round. The higher-seeded teams will play host in their first round games.

Alabama was 3-1 against current Top 25 teams and Miami is 0-1; Alabama is 6-1 against winning teams while Miami is 4-2; and Miami has lost two of its last three games.

Oregon stayed at No. 1 for the fifth straight week and will head into Saturday's Big Ten title game against Penn State as the only undefeated team in big-time college football.

The pairings for college football's first 12-team playoff will be

set Sunday, the day after the conference title games. The playoffs start Dec. 20, with the title game set for Jan. 20 in Atlanta.

Ohio State moved down four spots to No. 6 after its loss to Michigan. That bumped Texas up a spot to No. 2, Penn State to No. 3, Notre Dame to No. 4 and Georgia to No. 5.

The selection committee all but designated the Big 12 as a one-bid league, moving Arizona State and Iowa State up only one spot each to Nos. 15 and 16.

The top five ranked conference champions are guaranteed bids, which means the winner of the Big 12 title game is in even if it doesn't reach the top 12—another factor in Miami's likely ouster.

SMU, on a nine-game winning streak, moved up a notch to No. 8 and is the Atlantic Coast Conference's highest-ranked team, but is potentially vulnerable if it loses the title game to No. 17 Clemson.

Projected first-round

First-round games will take place on the campus of the better-seeded team Dec. 20-21. Here's what the matchups would look like based on this week's rankings (teams are listed by seed, not ranking):

No. 12 Arizona State at No. 5 Penn State

No. 9 Tennessee at No. 8 Ohio State

No. 11 Alabama at No. 6 Notre Dame

No. 10 Indiana at No. 7 Georgia

Gabriel: Oregon QB leads NCAA in career touchdowns

FROM PAGE 24

lieve it," Gabriel said.

Gabriel has led the top-ranked Ducks (12-0, 9-0 Big Ten) through an undefeated season and on to the Big Ten title game on Saturday against No. 4 Penn State (11-1, 8-1) in Indianapolis.

Gabriel—who played his first three years at Central Florida before joining the Sooners—became the NCAA leader for total career touchdowns along the way and now has 183, including 149 via pass, 33 via rush and one reception. He's tied with former Oregon quarterback Bo Nix—now with the Denver Broncos—with an FBS-record 61 career starts.

Ever humble, Gabriel is thoughtful about the arc of his career.

"I think we're in an interesting time that's all about results. And so many people talk about the process but aren't patient enough. I think if you look at my body of work, I'm a guy who's eager and wants to get better but has had that time to develop and work in that way. I think you see it over time," Gabriel said.

As a Duck, Gabriel has thrown for 3,277 yards and 24 TDs in 12 games. He's rushed for seven more scores.

Mariota spent his three-year college career at Oregon, throwing for 104 touchdowns and running for 29 more. He was the Ducks' quarterback in the 2014 season, the last time Oregon advanced to the national championship game.

"I mean, everybody would love to run out there with the experience that we have at quarterback right now," Oregon coach Dan Lanning said. "And I think that ex-

perience shows up consistently every Saturday for us. More than anything, just the ability for Dillon to be calm within the chaos that exists in a football game, and being a great decision-maker and understanding the scheme."

The only other time Oregon finished the regular season 12-0 was in 2010, when the Ducks played for the BCS national championship.

Among the team's victories this season was a 32-31 win at home over Ohio State and a 38-17 victory over Michigan at the Big House.

The Ducks capped the season with a 49-21 victory over rival Washington, finishing 9-0 in their first Big Ten year. Gabriel threw for a pair of touchdowns and ran for another in that game.

The Nittany Lions advanced to the conference title game with a 44-7 victory over Maryland on Saturday. They were helped by Ohio State's 13-10 loss to Michigan in Columbus.

Oregon has played the Nittany Lions just one other time, in the 1995 Rose Bowl. Penn State, led by Joe Paterno, won that one, 38-20.

The winner in Indianapolis this weekend can secure a first-round bye in the expanded 12-team playoffs. Both teams are assured of a playoff berth even with a loss.

On Tuesday, Gabriel added another honor when he was named Big Ten offensive player of the year.

"He's earned the trust and the admiration of all his teammates and the coaches around him," Lanning said. "This guy prepares extremely hard. He is the calmest dude you've ever been around on the field, which is impressive, but I'm really proud of him and what he's been able to do for this team."

Arizona State's top receiver to miss Big 12 championship

Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — Arizona State's leading receiver, Jordyn Tyson, will not play in Saturday's Big 12 championship against No. 16 Iowa State due to an unspecified injury.

Sun Devils coach Kenny Dillingham said Monday that Tyson is out indefinitely after being injured in the second half of No. 12 Arizona State's 49-7 victory over Arizona last Saturday.

"I don't want to give a complete three-, four-month out timetable but he's going to be out indefinitely," Dillingham said.

Tyson was injured in the third quarter after landing hard on his left side while being tackled. He left the stadium wearing a sling on his left arm.

Tyson saw limited playing time last season while recovering from



Sun Devils WR Jordyn Tyson has 75 catches for 1,101 yards and 10 TDs this season.

a knee injury suffered while he was playing for Colorado the year before. This season, he led the Sun Devils with 75 catches for 1,101 yards and 10 touchdowns. Tyson had eight catches for 143 yards and a touchdown against Arizona before the injury.

SPORTS



Gearing up for ground battle

Packers' improving run defense faces test against Lions » **NFL, Page 22**

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



SPIRITUAL SUCCESSOR

Dillon Gabriel's run at Oregon harkens back to the days of another Hawaii-born QB: Marcus Mariota

BY ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

Dillon Gabriel was faced with a quandary when he arrived at Oregon this year.

Gabriel had worn No. 8 at Oklahoma before transferring for his sixth season of eligibility. But in Eugene, that number had special significance because it had been worn by Heisman Trophy winner Marcus Mariota.

There were many similarities between the two: They were both dual-threat quarterbacks who had

Oregon quarterback Dillon Gabriel has thrown for 3,277 yards and 24 touchdowns in 12 games with the Ducks. He has rushed for seven more scores.

LYDIA ELY/AP

INSIDE

Hurricanes' hopes nosedive, 'Bama rises in CFP rankings

Page 23

piled up accolades along with yards and touchdowns. Both hailed from Hawaii and were shaped by the island spirit.

Mariota chose the No. 8 initially because of the

number of Hawaiian islands. His helmet's facemask was formed in an 808, Hawaii's area code.

So Gabriel took a leap of faith and texted Mariota to ask his permission. Mariota, now with the NFL's Washington Commanders, said yes.

"You know, when you're growing up and you have that kind of direct example, a guy from Hawaii, playing at a high level, at the DI level, and then you see him go to the NFL, it's like you can see it, you can be-

SEE GABRIEL ON PAGE 23

Avs rally from 4 goals down to beat Sabres » **NHL, Page 19**

