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STARS AND STRIPES

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SETH LACOUNT/U.S. Army Alaska

Soldiers of the 1st Brigade, 11th Airborne based at Fort Wainwright in Alaska on a training patrol.

Embracing Alaska's extremes

Soldiers at northernmost US base test skills, endurance and train in frigid, dark winters

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

During the darkest and coldest days in Alaska, when the sun peeks from the horizon for less than five hours and icerimmed thermometers dive to readings of -25, some of the 7,000 soldiers at the Army's northernmost base in the world line up for a bone-rattling dunk into "The Hole."

Tethered to a safety team, the volunteers representing their company stand over a water-filled pit in full combat camouflage gear. They step off, splash, bob to the surface, orient themselves and



JOHN PENNELL/U.S. Army

A soldier from Fort Wainwright works his way out of "The Hole," an icy water hole that's part of a competition among soldiers of the 1st Brigade of the 11th Airborne Division, in December.

reverse, then they have 30 seconds to climb out under their own power.

"Chest on the ice, pull yourself out," a sergeant can be heard yelling to a soldier splashing at the lip of the ice in a Fort Wainwright-produced video.

For the soldiers of Fort Wainwright near Fairbanks, it's an embrace of the extreme world where they live, train and could conceivably fight.

Col. Steve Phillips, former commander of the 1st Infantry Brigade, has done "The Hole" and said it serves a real purpose be-

SEE EXTREMES ON PAGE 5

California faces threat of landslides after deluge

BY JOHN ANTCAK,
CHRISTOPHER WEBER
AND JULIE WATSON
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles Fire Chief Kristin Crowley said Tuesday that crews had responded to 307 mudslides and that five buildings had been deemed uninhabitable since an atmospheric river-fueled storm moved into the region over the weekend.

Despite the record-setting rain that has drenched the city and caused widespread flooding, there have been no storm-related deaths reported in Los Angeles, Mayor Karen Bass said at a news conference.

The rain began to ease up Tuesday after bombarding Los Angeles with nearly half of its seasonal rainfall in just two days. Although the rain was tapering off, forecasters warned of the ongoing threat of potentially deadly landslides.

The slow-moving storm that parked itself over the region on Monday and dumped a record amount of rain on sections of the nation's second-largest city could linger into Wednesday, the National Weather Service said. Scattered showers and possible thunderstorms were expected to bring light to moderate rain to the region, but some places could get brief yet fierce downpours that could dump up to an inch of rain in an hour.

Most of Southern California remained under flood watches, and the weather service warned people to remain on high alert, as swollen and fast-moving creeks and rivers increase the risks of

SEE DELUGE ON PAGE 9

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Nintendo reports solid profit amid new Mario game

Associated Press

TOKYO — Nintendo reported healthy sales and profits on the back of the hit “Super Mario Bros. Wonder” game, prompting the Japanese video game maker to raise its full fiscal year forecasts.

Kyoto-based Nintendo Co. said Tuesday that demand for what it called the first completely new Super Mario game in the series remained strong. Sales of the new Zelda game and “Pikmin 4” also surged.

More than 10.7 million units of the latest Super Mario game have been sold around the world since it went on sale in October, according to Nintendo.

It is banking on upcoming games like “Mario Vs. Donkey Kong” and “Princess Peach Showtime” to keep the sales momentum going.

The weak yen also helped Nintendo’s bottom line by boosting the value of its overseas revenue when converted into yen. The U.S. dollar has been trading at

about 148 Japanese yen, up from 140 yen a year ago.

For the first nine months of the fiscal year, Nintendo earned \$2.7 billion, up nearly 18% from \$2.3 billion in the same period the year before. Nine-month sales rose 8% to \$9.4 billion.

Nintendo, which did not break down quarterly numbers, expects a full year profit of \$3 billion, up from an earlier projection for a \$2.8 billion profit. Nintendo recorded nearly \$2.9 billion in profit a year earlier.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates			
Euro costs (Feb. 7)	\$1.05	Switzerland (Franc)	0.8724
British pound (Feb. 7)	\$1.22	Thailand (Baht)	35.59
Japanese yen (Feb. 7)	145.00	Turkey (NewLira)	30.5647
South Korean won (Feb. 7)	1298.00		
Commercial rates			
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769		
Britain (Pound)	1.2575		
Canada (Dollar)	1.3526		
China (Yuan)	7.1062		
Denmark (Krone)	6.9451		
Egypt (Pound)	30.9009		
Euro	0.9209		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8232		
Hungary (Forint)	360.10		
Israel (Shekel)	3.6503		
Japan (Yen)	148.42		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3079		
Norway (Krone)	10.6493		
Philippines (Peso)	56.16		
Poland (Zloty)	4.05		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7501		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3453		
South Korea (Won)	1328.90		

(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	8.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	6.00
Federal funds market rate	5.33
3-month bill	5.38
30-year bond	4.35

WEATHER OUTLOOK

WEDNESDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



WEDNESDAY IN EUROPE



THURSDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

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MILITARY

Transfer to Baumholder on track for 2026

US special operations troops based in Stuttgart will take up residence in southwest Germany

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. special operations troops based in Stuttgart are expected to take up residence at a rural base in southwestern Germany in 2026, adding 1,000 people to a garrison once on the Pentagon's chopping block, Army officials said Tuesday.

About \$500 million in construction projects are underway at the Army garrison in Baumholder for relocation of troops assigned to Special Operations Command Europe, Col. Reid Furman, commander of the service's installations in the German state of Rheinland-Pfalz, said in a statement.

Once the move is complete, the Baumholder military community will tally about 11,000 people, he said.

The timeline for the relocation is likely to be a welcome development for both the Stuttgart area and Baumholder.

For years, Stuttgart residents have complained about gunfire at

the Army's shooting range in Boeblingen, a suburb where Green Berets and Navy SEALs train.

The situation has been a sore spot in community relations over the years.

Meanwhile, the community of Baumholder, which relies heavily on the economic ripple effect of the Army presence there, has long sought more troops.

In the early 2000s, the Army designated Baumholder for closure as part of a post-Cold War drawdown, creating local worry over how the community of 4,500 Germans would adapt to life without the Army.

Over the years, troop numbers steadily declined, with an infantry brigade departing in 2012. But by 2015, the Army was working on plans for revitalizing the base, and money has flowed back into Baumholder.

In late January, Furman escorted Michael Ebling, Rheinland-Pfalz's interior minister, around the Baumholder garrison to show off the latest upgrades.

Furman said that investment in the Baumholder garrison will exceed \$1 billion over the next 10 years.

"This substantial funding will cover various initiatives, including the construction of the special operations forces complex, the relocation of additional forces to Baumholder, investments in Army family housing, as well as the creation of a new Army Lodge," Furman said.

Over the next couple of years, 400 family housing units will be built, he said.

For special operations forces, the shift to Baumholder will offer access to larger ranges for shooting and maneuvers than what is available in the Stuttgart area, a major metropolitan location that hosts U.S. European and Africa Command headquarters.

While the Baumholder move will affect special operators, the two-star-led U.S. Special Operations Command Europe headquarters will stay put in Stuttgart.

In a statement Tuesday,



MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

Special operations forces take part in an international exercise hosted by the U.S. military at Baumholder, Germany, in 2014. U.S. special operations troops based in Stuttgart are expected to take up residence at Baumholder in 2026, Army officials said Tuesday.

SOCEUR didn't specify which units under its command will be making the move.

The estimated 1,000 people involved are a mix of troops, fam-

ilies and support staff, the command said.

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More plaintiffs sue Navy over Hawaii water contamination

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — Another 2,200 individuals filed suit in federal court Monday seeking compensation for illnesses, distress and financial hardship they say stem from exposure to petroleum-tainted Navy tap water in Hawaii.

The complaint was filed in U.S. District Court for Hawaii by Just Well Law in Austin, Texas, and Honolulu-based Hosoda Law Group on behalf of 2,212 plaintiffs. They allege the Navy was negligent and failed to properly address medical concerns in the wake of jet fuel contamination in the Navy's water distribution system at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

The contamination was traced to a spill from the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility a few miles from the joint base.

The World War II-era facility is being emptied and permanently closed.

This lawsuit joins a similar one filed in 2022 by the same attorneys on behalf of 296 residents and former residents of the affected communities who are also seeking compensation.

The first suit is set for trial in April and too far along to add new litigants, Kristina Baehr, an attorney with Just Law, said in a phone interview Monday.

Active-duty service members



MAR'QUEON A.D. TRAMBLE/U.S. Navy

A Navy contractor tests a water sample from the Red Hill well in Honolulu, Hawaii, in April 2022.

are not plaintiffs in those lawsuits. Three soldiers and two sailors, represented by the same law firms, filed a separate suit in Hawaii federal court in November, the first active-duty service members to do so.

The pair of law firms now represents about 7,500 individuals affected by the contamination, Baehr said. Most are still working through an administrative process that is a prerequisite to filing a lawsuit in federal court under the Federal Tort Claims Act, she said.

"Navy Region Hawaii and Navy Closure Task Force-Red Hill do not comment on ongoing litigation," the service said Monday in response to a Stars and Stripes query.

Baby covered in rashes

The lead plaintiffs in the suit

filed Monday are Jaclyn Hughes and her three children, whose home in late 2021 was in the Halsey Terrace military community. She is married to an active-duty service member who is not named in the lawsuit nor is a plaintiff.

Hughes gave birth to their third child just days before residents began complaining of fuel-tainted water in late November 2021.

"Around Thanksgiving, their water had a sheen and smelled of gasoline," the lawsuit states.

"Jaclyn's throat was sore and burned. Her newborn son's body was covered in red rashes."

One of the Hughes daughters was most severely affected, experiencing "rapid behavioral changes" in the weeks after the contamination, the suit states.

"In January 2022, a pediatrician referred her for a psychological assessment," the suit states. "The child, who once adorned her mother with hugs and kisses, became unrecognizable."

"During fits of rage she screamed uncontrollably and became combative. For months she refused to wear clothes due to sensory overwhelm, or safely take car rides, holding the family captive in the home that was poisoning her."

The girl was subsequently diagnosed with a host of conditions, and in July 2022 she was prescribed blood pressure medication "to aid her constant fight or flight response," the suit states.

The family now lives in California.

Leaving Hawaii

Army veteran Scott Delgado, his wife, Monique Delgado, and their twins had been living in the Kapilina Beach Homes Community near the joint base since 2016.

Their normally healthy lives were turned upside down in early December 2021 when symptoms of petroleum exposure kept them from going to work and school, the suit states.

"Monique sought help at an urgent care center for dizziness and loss of balance but was told the staff was not trained to help with poisoning," the suit states. "By

mid-December, the family noticed a sheen and chemical smell in their water.

"For months, they hauled gallons of safe water, and used baby wipes for hygiene on days they could not shower at a relative's home."

"In the new year, skin issues worsened. The family suffered from pus-filled bumps on their eyelids and skin. Scott experienced chemical burns and bleeding on his fingertips. Rashes covered his back, perplexing doctors."

Monique Delgado's health spiraled down, with long-dormant asthma returning, along with swelling, rashes and blackouts, the suit states.

"As a result of the new issues and medications she became pre-diabetic, suffered vision loss, and gained over fifty pounds, something that took over a year to reverse," the lawsuit states.

Her doctor advised Delgado, a Hawaii native, to relocate to the U.S. mainland to obtain better health care. The family reluctantly did so.

"The Delgados had their lives turned upside down as they left behind family, their culture, and the island they hold so dear, a decision they ultimately regretted," the suit states.

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PACIFIC

China steps up Japan threats on disputed islands

By MARI HIGA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Chinese coast guard vessels have been warning Japanese military aircraft to leave airspace over and around the Japanese-administered Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, according to Japanese media.

Kyodo News reported Saturday that Chinese vessels have warned Japan Self-Defense Force aircraft several times since January, saying the Japanese are violating China's territorial airspace.

The two countries square off frequently over the five small, uninhabited islands and three reefs off the northeast tip of Taiwan. Tokyo frequently accuses Beijing's coast guard of harassing Japanese fishing boats there and sends its coast guard to intercede.

The latest warnings call on Japanese aircraft to leave Japanese airspace, going beyond previous warnings to leave the airspace immediately surrounding the island group, Kyodo News reported, citing anonymous government officials.

Tokyo has lodged a protest with Beijing through diplomatic channels, according to Kyodo, but a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' China and Mongolia Division declined to say if they protested or not when reached by phone Tuesday.

"The Japanese government has always lodged a protest whenever China makes its own claims regarding the Senkaku Islands," the spokesman said.

Some Japanese government officials speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

Defense Minister Minoru Kihara also declined to disclose that information at a Tuesday morning press conference. He said it is to protect Japan's surveillance activities and intelligence capabilities.

"The Senkaku Islands are an inherent territory of Japan without

any doubt, both historically and under international law," he said. "Indeed, the Senkaku Islands are effectively under Japan's control. Whenever China makes its own claims regarding the Senkaku Islands, the Japanese government has always protested in an appropriate and strict manner."

The Senkakus, though relative specks in the open sea, are among several sites where China acts aggressively to assert territorial claims that other nations regard as illegal.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping, during a November visit to a Chinese coast guard command in Shanghai, highlighted the necessity to "constantly strengthen" Beijing's claim on the islands, Kyodo reported in January, citing unnamed sources.

During Kihara's October visit to the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin repeated the "iron-clad" U.S. commitment under the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty "to defend all of Japan, including the Senkaku Islands."

U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel in a January post on X, formerly Twitter, said Chinese leadership had announced a plan to keep ships in and around Japan's Senkaku Islands for 365 consecutive days.

Chinese ships have been spotted in the islands' contiguous zone every day so far this year, according to the Japan coast guard's website. Chinese ships were spotted there on 352 days in 2023.

The Senkakus are about 100 miles northeast from Taiwan's northern coastline and about 250 miles west of Okinawa. The islands are strategically situated near key shipping lanes, rich fishing grounds and potentially significant oil and natural gas reserves, according to the CIA World Factbook website.

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CABINET SECRETARIAT OF JAPAN

The Japan-controlled Senkaku Islands, though relative specks in the East China Sea, are among several sites where China acts aggressively to assert territorial claims that other nations regard as illegal.



KELLY AGEE/Stars and Stripes

Elementary school teacher Eris Buritica and daughter Ella sled down a hill at Yokota Air Base on Tuesday.

Tokyo snow means snowmen, school delays, sledding on bases

By KELLY AGEE,
JUAN KING
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The first big snowfall of the season dumped nearly 3 inches of precipitation across Tokyo, including at several U.S. military installations in the area.

Commuter rail lines from the western edge of Tokyo were slowed and expressways closed as the city awoke to piles of snow, slushy streets and light rain. U.S. military bases, including Yokota and Camp Zama, the headquarters of U.S. Army Japan southwest of Tokyo, approved late-report times for most personnel.

None of the bases reported significant problems due to the weather or a major change in their operations.

The snowfall delayed classes at Defense Department schools at Yokota and Yokosuka Naval Base and closed them for the day at Zama and Naval Air Facility Atsugi. The same routine is expected Wednesday in anticipation of icy roads.

Alexandra Cudney dropped her kindergartner off at Yokota West Elementary School for the abbreviated school day.

"The snow doesn't bother me, and the kids really enjoy playing in it," she said outside the school.

Snow started Monday afternoon and continued throughout the night across the Kanto Plain, prompting early release times at U.S. military installations.

By 5 a.m. Tuesday, 2.75 inches had fallen on central Tokyo and 1.2 inches on Yokohama to the south, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency website.

A total of 105 people in Tokyo re-



AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

A child poses with a snowman at the Ikego housing detachment near Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, on Tuesday.

ceived emergency treatment for weather-related injuries as of 9 a.m. Tuesday, according to broadcaster TBS.

The JR Chuo and Ome lines, which link Yokota with central Tokyo, halted service Tuesday morning, according to public broadcaster NHK. Both lines resumed service in the afternoon, though the Chuo experienced some delays, according to the JR website.

Multiple city expressways were closed Monday afternoon as preventive measures, according to NHK, including the expressway that loops around central Tokyo, which remained closed as of Tuesday afternoon.

At Yokota, the 374th Civil Engineer Squadron started early to clear away the snow, base spokesman Capt. Danny Rangel said in an email Tuesday.

"The flightline and major roads are the priority, but crews are making sure we have secondary roads clear as soon as possible," he said. "We are not seeing unusual base traffic and there are no

road closures or gate closures due to the weather."

The leftover slush may freeze late tonight and remain a hazard through Wednesday, according to an email Tuesday from the 374th Operation Support Squadron.

Yokota's schools started classes at 10 a.m. Yokosuka's schools were on staggered late start times.

"My concern isn't for myself, but for families that have situations with bringing their little ones to school; they have to be walked or driven to school because it's snowy and cold outside," Diana Carson, a substitute teacher at Yokota's Joan K. Mendel Elementary School, told Stars and Stripes Tuesday morning.

Eris Buritica, a teacher at Mendel, her husband, Steven Buritica, and their children Ella, 2, and Rome, 1, took advantage of the late start to play in the snow.

"We just decided to go sledding for a little bit to have the kids experience a little bit of fun," Buritica, of Anchorage, Alaska, said at the east side of bandshell park.

Yokosuka city received a mix of rain and light snow with little accumulation; traffic was normal outside the base with no delays, according to the city government website.

At Sagami Family Housing Area for Zama, children released from school spent the morning at playgrounds throwing snowballs and building snowmen.

"I built a llama. I tried to build an alpaca, but the nose fell off," said London Riley, 9. "It's really fun. It's supposed to rain this afternoon, so it's good to do it while you can."

Stars and Stripes reporter Claire Jenq contributed to this report.

MILITARY

Extremes: Training readies troops for possible arctic combat

FROM PAGE 1

yond getting shivering and soaked.

“When you are looking down at that dark water, it takes a degree of personal courage to take the step off,” said Phillips, now a division deputy commander. “You are doing it for yourself and your team.”

The Hole symbolizes fortitude, endurance and confidence that troops can operate in and even dominate an extreme environment, he said.

The bitter cold central Alaska winter will play host Thursday to 10,000 American and Canadian troops participating in the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center-Alaska 24-02 exercises. The war games will test the ability of the units to meld into a combined force that could take on adversaries such as Russia and China who are increasingly active in the polar regions.

“Alaska will kill you,” Phillips said. “People here say that with pride. There is a fundamental difference in what it takes to survive here than in other places soldiers serve.”

A world of extremes

The Hole is primarily a competition for the 1st Brigade of the 11th Airborne Division, the air-assault infantry nicknamed the “Arctic Wolves.”

The Arctic Wolves company with the most successful exits from The Hole gets the honor of carrying the brigade guidon pole topped with a wrought gun-metal head of a growling wolf.

The 11th Airborne Division also includes the parachute-qualified 2nd Infantry Brigade, nicknamed “The Spartans,” which operates from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson near Anchorage.

The 11th Airborne Division, with the two brigade combat teams, and aviation, support, training and reconnaissance units, are the “Arctic Angels.”

While the 1st Brigade is the infantry fighting force, the lesson is front and center for every soldier at Fort Wainwright. A uniform check is not a by-the-book formality. At Fort Wainwright, it ensures soldiers don't freeze their fingers, toes and nose.

The wilderness has grizzly bears, lynxes, wolverines and wolf packs. Finding yourself between a 1,200-pound Moose and her young is unlikely to end well.

Fort Wainwright's soldiers operate in an unforgiving environment, where helicopters flying too low and close in a mountain gap or assault vehicles driving a treacherous icy dirt road to a training ground have led to fatal accidents in the past year. The Army has worked to improve mental health services for soldiers and their families who are far from home



U.S. Army

Col. Mike Arnett, the top medical officer at Fort Wainwright, goes out for some dog mushing near Fairbanks, Alaska.

and can face mental and emotional struggles when there is so little light for so long.

The challenge of serving in central Alaska is made plain before soldiers ship out to Fort Wainwright.

They qualify for a bonus of up to \$4,000 that serves as a reward and a warning. The “remote and austere conditions assignment incentive pay” is meant to be spent on personal clothes, gear and deep-freeze, winter equipment, such as engine block heaters for the family car.

Single soldiers at Fort Wainwright receive \$2,000, and those bringing dependents receive \$4,000. Soldiers serving at Elmendorf-Richardson in the relatively urbanized Anchorage area receive half the amount.

Top of the world

Phillips said Fort Wainwright's soldiers are stationed so far north because of a strategic need. That can seem odd, even to soldiers arriving for duty at the remote garrison.

“It makes people scratch their heads,” he said. “I'm in Alaska, and this does not compute with the Pacific command being at Fort Shafter, Hawaii.”

Phillips had a simple trick to get people to understand.

He would grab a globe and turn it on its side with the polar region pointed at his audience.

“When you start to view the globe, not with the equator in the center in North and South America in prominence, but focus the North Pole at the center, you start to realize, ‘holy cow,’ this makes sense,” Phillips said.



NOGA AMI-RAV/Stars and Stripes

Russia's closest point is 53 miles from Alaska across the Bering Strait. NATO has an increasing number of regional members including Canada, Norway, and Danish-controlled Greenland now being joined by Finland and Sweden.

China also has declared itself an “arctic adjacent” nation and has held joint naval exercises with Russia in the polar region. With global warming, shipping channels across the top of North America and Europe are becoming a new area of military and commercial competition.

If ground combat were to occur in the Arctic, Fort Wainwright would be the place to learn needed tactics that units trained in warmer climates won't know.

A river in July can force a unit to pivot in another direction in Alaska. The same river in February

can be frozen solid and serve as a highway carrying troops faster to their objective.

Phillips said risk is always a factor. The goal is to master the environment when possible, and knowing when to forge ahead can be dicey.

“We need to dominate this environment in times to come if we get into a conflict,” he said.

Healthier, more lethal

Col. Mike Arnett leads the Fort Wainwright medical team as deputy commander of clinical services.

He said dealing with hypothermia and frostbite and transporting ill or injured patients to trauma-oriented hospitals in Anchorage are all part of the challenge for the doctors, nurses and other staff at Fort Wainwright.

An overriding issue is getting soldiers to take care of them-

selves and others physically and mentally.

While depression from darkness and cold can prey on soldiers and their families, having a sense of being part of a crucial mission can outweigh any seasonal affective disorder that can spread throughout the homes and offices at the base.

“The more that is done to give them a sense of purpose, a tribe they belong to — that will help their health, including behavioral health. From what I can see, the 11th Division is applying more resources, giving people more activities,” Arnett said.

The investment in time, money and attitude to make Fort Wainwright feel more bearable, welcoming and enjoyable make it seem like their home.

Resiliency builds strength, Arnett said, including on the battlefield.

“It also makes them more lethal in this environment,” he said.

It's humbling

Cpl. Sarah Myers transferred from Fort Riley, Kan., to Fort Wainwright in December 2021, right into the shock of the sub-zero winter.

The nearly sunless days and deep-freeze temperatures were unlike any winter back home in Yadkinville, a North Carolina town of roughly 3,000 residents about 30 minutes west of Winston-Salem.

“The first winter was rough,” she said. “I remember losing feeling in my fingertips.”

Serving with a general support aviation battalion at Fort Wainwright, she has worked year-round on and in UH-60 Black Hawks, CH-47 Chinooks and UH-60 Medevac Support helicopters.

Two years later, Myers still isn't ready to say that serving at the Army's base closest to the North Pole is something she wants to make permanent.

“I don't like the 24-hour dark or the 24-hour day in June,” she said. “In winter, I crochet, play guitar, sing and keep close to the people in my company. We get it — it's hard here. We stay hydrated, and we stay connected with people back home.”

Myers endures the winters, explores the summers in her 2012 Jeep Grand Cherokee and is happy that Alaska is a stop in her life.

“It's a place that's humbled me as a person,” she said. “It makes me know I am stronger than I think. I can handle more situations. It's another thing off my to-do list in ‘adulthood.’”

Myers can now wear the experience on her sleeve.

“I now have my Arctic tab,” she said.

MILITARY

GAO: Coast Guard lacking on tracking housing

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

The Coast Guard's failure to survey housing costs since at least 2012 may be forcing service members to make tradeoffs that worsen their quality of life, a government watchdog agency found.

Coast Guard personnel and their spouses battling the rising costs and limited availability of rental properties in desirable locations say their troubles have added up to longer and more expensive commutes, less school choice and limited access to health care, according to a Government Accountability Office report released Monday.

The service's lack of data prevents its leaders from determining whether personnel are receiving sufficient housing allowances to cover the costs of living in remote areas and popular vacation destinations, the report found.

The Defense Department's process for setting basic allowance for housing, or BAH, influences how the Coast Guard manages housing, according to the GAO report, which reviewed data from 2018 to 2023.

It included on-site evaluations and interviews at Coast Guard stations in Kodiak, Alaska; Alameda, Calif.; and Cape Cod, Mass. The assessment began in December 2022 and ended this month.

About 41% of Coast Guard units were in remote areas, places with

many vacation rentals or both, such as Kodiak or Cape Cod, researchers found.

Service members living in Kodiak had to pay high out-of-pocket costs to travel to the mainland to seek specialty health services, especially for dependents, the report said.

The fair market monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Kodiak rose nearly 87% in the last 12 years, from \$971 in 2012 to \$1,812 in 2024, according to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development data.

However, fair market rents often aren't what renters actually pay due to demand and other factors. On Tuesday, the online listing service Zillow showed just one open market, two-bedroom apartment available in the Kodiak area for about \$1,800 per month. Two other listings were priced at \$2,500 per month or more, excluding utilities.

Over the same 12-year period, the DOD's monthly BAH received by an E-5 service member living in Kodiak with family rose about 23%, from \$1,968 in 2012 to \$2,412 in 2024, according to an online calculator. The allowance is expected to cover both rent and the cost of utilities.

About 76% of Coast Guard active-duty service members were living in private housing, researchers found.



TREVOR LILBURN/U.S. Coast Guard

U.S. Coast Guard family housing is seen in Astoria, Ore., in 2019. The Coast Guard can't assess whether its members are receiving sufficient housing allowances in places that are remote or are popular vacation destinations, according to a federal study released Monday.

The service also doesn't have a clear picture of how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the costs and availability of housing, and it can't measure the effect of negligent landlords and other housing-related problems, the GAO said.

"Some service members and spouses told us that despite the efforts of headquarters and field units to collect some housing feedback, those efforts did not directly address key housing challenges, such as private sector housing availability and cost," the report stated.

Coast Guard officials said that the primary focus of the 2012 study "was to create a 'baseline' of the condition of the entire housing inventory." They initially told the GAO that the service had no intention of conducting a new national housing survey.

But after receiving the GAO's findings, they agreed to emulate DOD practices and conduct a new survey by the end of this year.

The Navy, Army, Marines and Air Force do regular wide-ranging surveys of their members seeking

information about several housing-related issues.

Topics include satisfaction with private and government-owned housing facilities and evaluation of housing costs.

Across the military, personnel have long challenged the amounts allocated for housing and related costs.

The allowances don't keep up with inflation or consider rent increases in locations such as San Diego or Hawaii, which have higher numbers of military personnel and vacationers, they say.

In October 2022, the Pentagon heard some of those complaints and temporarily increased off-base housing allowances in 28 regions of the country hit by rising rental costs until new rates took effect in January 2023, Stars and Stripes reported at the time.

The Coast Guard's limited housing-related surveys didn't go far enough, the GAO said in the report, which recommended regular in-depth analysis.

The GAO's recommendations included having the service seek the capability to buy existing homes, as well as to acquire longer-term contracts for utility services to reduce costs. The Coast Guard concurred with the GAO's recommendations.

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Poll: S. Koreans don't think Trump would help on North's nukes

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — Nearly 64% of South Koreans say former President Donald Trump is unlikely to work actively toward curbing North Korea's nuclear ambitions if he is reelected in November, according to a Gallup Korea poll released Monday.

The poll, commissioned by the Seoul-based Chey Institute for Advanced Studies, surveyed 1,043 respondents between Dec. 15 and Jan. 10. It had a margin of error of 3 percentage points.

Of all respondents, 52.2% believe Trump is somewhat unlikely to actively work to resolve the commu-

nist regime's nuclear problem; and 11.5% think it is very unlikely.

Another 30.8% agree Trump is somewhat likely to actively attempt to resolve the problem; only 5.4% said he was very likely to do so.

North Korea is estimated to have enough fissile material for up to 70 nuclear weapons, according to the annual Stockholm International Peace Research Institute yearbook published last year.

President Joe Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol have offered to negotiate with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un without preconditions but simultaneously vowed to answer his weapons tests with a stronger military alliance be-

tween Washington and Seoul.

Pyongyang fired 24 ballistic missiles last year and launched a solid-fueled, intermediate-range ballistic missile on Jan. 14. North Korea routinely claims it has developed nuclear warheads for its ICBMs; it last conducted a nuclear test on Sept. 3, 2017.

North Korea has rejected the U.S. and South Korea's overtures and further distanced itself from the allies.

As president, Trump's diplomatic approach toward North Korea differed from that of his predecessors. After saying he would be open to meet Kim in 2017, the two leaders met for three summits between 2018

and 2019.

During their last summit at the Demilitarized Zone dividing the Korean Peninsula on June 30, 2019, Trump briefly crossed the border with Kim, becoming the first sitting U.S. president to step foot into North Korea.

"I think the relationship that we've developed has meant so much to so many people," Trump said at a joint news conference with Kim at the border. "And it's just an honor to be with you, and it was an honor that you asked me to step over that line."

Trump continued to speak highly of Kim after his tenure. In a June 3 post on his Truth Social app, Trump congratulated Kim after North Ko-

rea secured a seat on the World Health Organization's executive board. Representatives from 34 member countries are selected to serve three-year terms on the board, according to the WHO's website. North Korea was among the 10 countries nominated to serve starting in 2023, including Australia, Barbados, Qatar, Switzerland and Ukraine.

Trump has a 13-delegate lead over Nikki Haley for the Republican Party nomination; Biden leads the Democratic Party with 55 delegates.

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Navy sacks its 2nd commander of Japan-based USS Howard in 6 months

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The commander of the USS Howard, a guided-missile destroyer based in Japan, was fired Tuesday, the Navy announced without providing a specific reason.

Cmdr. Cameron Dennis was dismissed as the ship's skipper by Capt. Justin Harts, the commodore of Yokosuka Naval Base's Destroyer Squadron 15, for "a loss of confi-

dence in his ability to perform his duties," the Navy announced in a brief statement.

Dennis' firing marks the second dismissal of a USS Howard commander since August.

Navy officials on Tuesday declined to provide additional details about Dennis' dismissal beyond the "loss of confidence" statement that military services use in most announcements of fired commanders.

The Navy said Dennis would be reassigned to the 7th Fleet staff, which is also headquartered at Yokosuka Naval Base. Capt. Dave Hulse, who had been serving as the deputy commodore for Destroyer Squadron 15, will take temporary command of the Howard. It was not immediately clear Tuesday when a new, permanent USS Howard skipper would be named.

"There is no impact to the ship's

mission or schedule," the Navy said.

Dennis took command of the Howard on Sept. 1, replacing another temporary commander who took the helm of the ship from Cmdr. Kenji Igawa, who was fired in August for poor performance, Navy officials said at the time.

Igawa's dismissal came just days after the Howard sustained a "soft grounding" just before arriving in port in Indonesia on Aug. 10, 7th

Fleet officials said. A soft grounding is described as the ship bottoming out on soft seabed without major damage to the vessel. No injuries were reported in that August incident.

Dennis previously served as executive officer on the USS Higgins, another guided-missile destroyer.

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MIDEAST

DOD: Strikes in Syria, Iraq had 'good effects'

Officials promise there will be more attacks in retaliatory response

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — U.S. airstrikes in Iraq and Syria on Friday that targeted Iran-backed militants were successful, though Pentagon officials could provide few details three days later, citing ongoing battle-damage assessments.

"We currently assess that we had good effects and that strikes destroyed, or functionally damaged, more than 80 targets at the seven facilities. The number of casualties is still being assessed," Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon's top spokesman, told reporters Monday. "As it relates to actions that we're taking, again, I'm not going to have anything to provide for you beyond what we put out in our statements."

The U.S. military on Friday began retaliatory airstrikes in Iraq and Syria against Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and affiliated militia groups in response to a drone attack Jan. 28 in Jordan that killed three American soldiers.

At least 41 other soldiers — all in the National Guard — were injured in the attack on the U.S. base known as Tower 22 in Jordan.

The injured soldiers are from units based in Arizona, California, Kentucky and New York.

Twenty-seven were able to return to duty, while 14 others continue to be evaluated for follow-up care, including one in stable condition who required medical evacuation.

The U.S. strikes in retaliation hit three facilities in Iraq and four in Syria, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said.

President Joe Biden and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Friday vowed the strikes would continue.

"Our response began today. It will continue at times and places of our choosing," Biden said in a statement issued shortly after the attacks. "The United States does not seek conflict in the Middle East or anywhere else in the world. But let all those who might seek to do us harm know this: If you harm an American, we will respond."

U.S. and British forces on Saturday also conducted strikes against 36 militia targets in Yemen in a continued effort to stop Iran-backed Houthi rebels in that country from their attacks on the shipping lanes in the Red Sea.

Ryder said Pentagon officials



U.S. Central Command

U.S. and U.K. forces on Saturday launched strikes against 36 targets at 13 locations in Yemen controlled by Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

Suspected drones used by Houthis attack 2 ships in Mideast waters

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — Two ships traveling in Middle East waters were attacked by suspected Houthi rebel drones early on Tuesday, authorities said, the latest assaults in the Iranian-backed fighters' campaign of targeting vessels over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The first attack happened in the southern part of the Red Sea, west of the Yemeni port of Ho-

deida, with the projectile causing "slight damage" to the vessel's windows on the bridge, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations said. A small vessel had been nearby the ship before the attack, it added.

The private security firm Ambrey identified the vessel as a Barbados-flagged, United Kingdom-owned cargo ship. No one was hurt onboard the vessel, which suffered "minor dam-

age," the firm said.

A second ship came under attack later Tuesday off Yemen's southern port city of Aden, the UKMTO reported. Ambrey identified it as a Marshall Islands-flagged, Greek-owned vessel coming from the U.S. heading to India.

"The vessel reported an explosion 50 meters off its starboard side," Ambrey announced. "No injuries or damage were reported."

are tracking two attacks in Syria against U.S. troops since the retaliatory strikes on Friday.

There are no reports of U.S. injuries or damages, he said. But at least six members of the Syrian

Democratic Forces were killed in a drone attack Sunday in the vicinity of Mission Support Site Green Village, a compound in northeastern Syria that houses U.S. and allied forces. Ryder said he is not

aware of any U.S. forces who were with Syrian Democratic Forces at the time.

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Qatari PM: Hamas 'generally positive' about Gaza cease-fire proposal

Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — Qatar's prime minister said Tuesday that Hamas' reaction to the latest plan for a cease-fire in Gaza and the release of hostages was "generally positive" as he met with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who was making his latest visit to the Middle East.

Qatar, which has long mediated with Hamas, has been working with the U.S. and Egypt to broker a cease-fire that would involve an extended halt in fighting and the release of the over 100 hostages still held by Hamas after its Oct. 7 cross-border raid that ignited the war.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani did not provide any details on Hamas' response but said the group had "com-

ments." Blinken confirmed that officials had received Hamas' response and said he would brief Israel's leaders when he visits the country on Wednesday.

Hamas said in a statement that it responded in a "positive spirit" to the latest proposal from the U.S. and Mideast mediators. But the militant group said it still seeks "a comprehensive and complete" cease-fire to end "the aggression against our people." Israel has ruled out the kind of permanent cease-fire sought by the militant group.

Blinken met with Egyptian officials earlier in the day and was in Saudi Arabia on Monday.

His visit also comes amid growing concerns in Egypt about Israel's stated intentions to expand the combat in Gaza to areas on the

Egyptian border that are crammed with displaced Palestinians.

Israel's defense minister has said his country's offensive will eventually reach the town of Rafah, on the Egyptian border, where more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million people have sought refuge and are now living in increasingly miserable conditions.

U.N. humanitarian monitors said Tuesday that Israeli evacuation orders now cover two-thirds of Gaza's territory, driving thousands more people every day toward the border areas.

Egypt has warned that an Israeli deployment along the border would threaten the peace treaty the two countries signed over four decades ago. Egypt fears an expansion of combat to the Rafah ar-

ea could push terrified Palestinian civilians across the border, a scenario Egypt has said it is determined to prevent.

Blinken, who met with Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi in Cairo, has said repeatedly that Palestinians must not be forced out of Gaza.

The Palestinian death toll from nearly four months of war has reached 27,585, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory, with 107 bodies brought to hospitals over the past day.

The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count but says most of the dead have been women and children.

The war has leveled vast swaths of the tiny enclave and pushed a quarter of residents to starvation.



HATEM ALI / AP

Palestinians look at a house destroyed in an Israeli strike in Rafah, Gaza Strip, on Monday.

NATION

Senate GOP resists advancing on border bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan Senate deal intended to curb illegal crossings at the U.S. border with Mexico faced almost certain defeat Tuesday as Senate Republicans signaled their opposition, stranding President Joe Biden with no clear way to advance aid for Ukraine through Congress.

The Democratic president has urged lawmakers to embrace a bipartisan deal that pairs border enforcement measures with \$60 billion in wartime aid for Ukraine, as well as tens of billions of dollars more for Israel, other U.S. allies in Asia, the U.S. immigration system and humanitarian aid for civilians in Gaza and Ukraine. But he and the Senate's top Democrat, Sen. Chuck Schumer, and top Republican, Sen. Mitch McConnell, have run into a wall of opposition from conservatives — led by Donald Trump — who rejected the border proposal as insufficient.

Schumer, from New York, cast Tuesday as a “gloomy day here in the United States Senate” during a

floor speech in which he scolded Republicans for backing away from the deal. He offered to delay a key test vote on the package until Thursday, but still dared them to vote against border security — an issue they have long championed.

“After months of good faith negotiations, after months of giving Republicans many of the things they asked for, Leader McConnell and the Republican conference are ready to kill the national security supplemental package even with border provisions they so fervently demand,” Schumer said.

The White House has worked for months with senators on the carefully negotiated compromise in hopes that it would unlock Republican votes for the Ukraine aid in the House — where scores of GOP lawmakers have come out



McConnell

against funding Kyiv's fight against Russia. The impasse threatens a cornerstone of Biden foreign policy: Halting Russian President Vladimir Putin's advance into Europe.

The Pentagon is sending no more arms shipments to Kyiv just as the war reaches a critical juncture. Ukraine is struggling with ammunition and personnel shortages while Russia is on the offensive, mounting relentless attacks.

The lack of a national security deal will loom large over Biden's Friday meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Biden plans to underscore to Scholz that he remains committed to providing Ukraine the funding it needs to continue to repel the nearly two-year-old Russian invasion.

McConnell, from Kentucky, said in a floor speech that it was essential to assert American strength in Europe, the Middle East and Asia, yet also blamed Biden for not responding sooner to threats from rival powers.

“Either we confront challenges

we face with clear strategy and firm resolve or we lose,” McConnell said. He made no mention of the need for border security — a piece of the national security package that he last year insisted on including.

Facing the prospect of Republicans voting against the package en masse, McConnell recommended to GOP senators on Monday they vote against the first procedural vote, according to two people familiar with the meeting who were not authorized to talk publicly about it.

The longtime Republican leader has not been able to convince his conference to warm to the compromises on border security after Trump, the likely Republican presidential nominee, excoriated it. Within hours of the bill's release Sunday, House Speaker Mike Johnson said he would not support it, and even GOP senators who had been supportive of the border policies under discussion came out against the bill Tuesday.

The border proposal represents

one of the most conservative and comprehensive proposals in decades to emerge from a bipartisan negotiation in Congress. It would seek to tamp down the historic number of illegal border crossings by making the asylum process tougher and faster. Presidential administrations would also be given authority to deny migrants from claiming asylum at the border if the number of migrants claiming asylum becomes unmanageable for authorities.

“We have a very conservative bipartisan border bill that fixes the problem at the border,” said Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy, who negotiated the bill for Democrats. “And it's time for the country to see where people stand on that.”

But Republicans have largely heeded the wishes of Trump to reject the bill because it would show that Biden could act to address problems at the border, which is seen as one of his largest vulnerabilities in his reelection campaign.

Border bill opposition jeopardizes help for Afghans who aided US

By FARNOUSH AMIRI

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The massive \$118 billion Senate border bill not only contains once-in-a-decade border security legislation and wartime aid to Israel and Ukraine, but also offers a chance for the U.S. to keep its promise to Afghans who worked alongside U.S. soldiers in America's longest war.

Tucked inside the sprawling package is a measure that would provide a long-awaited pathway to residency for tens of thousands of Afghan refugees who arrived in the U.S. on military planes after the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021.

But the measure may fail if members can't agree on the bill's larger, unrelated provisions. Democrats, especially members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, have voiced opposition for what they call the extreme, far-right border policies in the legislation that they say do nothing to help fix the country's broken immigration system.

Conservatives have said the package does not go far enough in limiting the number of daily migrant crossings at the southern border.

If it fails, it will represent yet another disappointment for the more than 76,000 Afghans currently living in the U.S. who remain in im-

migration limbo as a result of years of congressional inaction.

A small group of bipartisan lawmakers and advocacy groups have worked for nearly three years to get a House or Senate vote on a standalone bill, the Afghan Adjustment Act, that would prevent Afghans from becoming stranded without legal residency status when their humanitarian parole expires. But advocates have repeatedly faced strong opposition from some Republican lawmakers to vetting requirements for the refugees who were brought here and their family members still stranded in Kabul.

The bipartisan border deal offered long-awaited breakthrough. Both Republican and Democratic senators and their staff worked to bridge the divide and produce legislative text that both sides could support. The new proposal would couple measures enabling qualified Afghans to eventually apply for U.S. citizenship, as was done for refugees in the past, including those from Cuba, Vietnam and Iraq, with stricter and more expedited vetting processes.

“I think the most gracious thing would be to say there's been a lot of twists and turns, but I'm very happy with the result,” Democratic Sen. Chris Coons of Delaware, one of the lead sponsors of the effort, told The Associated Press on Mon-



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

Members of the Safi family, who were evacuated from Afghanistan and are trying to make a new life in the U.S. while in immigration limbo, celebrate Eid on the National Mall in May 2022 in Washington.

day. “And I'm very glad that it's included because this is an important signal that the United States stands by those who stand by us.”

The U.S. government admitted the refugees on a temporary parole status as part of Operation Allies Welcome, the largest resettlement effort in the country in decades, with the promise of a pathway to life in the U.S. for their service.

“Our position is that Afghans stood by us for 20 years and over the past three years, they've been asked to take a backseat to every other bill,” said Shawn VanDiver,

a Navy veteran and head of #AfghanEvac, a coalition supporting Afghan resettlement efforts. “And so it is really nice to see that they're included in this one.”

But hopes for fulfilling that promise to longtime allies of America's mission in Kabul could be short-lived. Republican leaders in the House have declared the bill a non-starter, and even passage through the Senate, where the deal was negotiated, is an uphill climb.

As proponents of the Afghan provision await the fate of the package, they are trying to remain

cautiously optimistic that their campaign is making headway.

VanDiver, who has worked with the State Department on this issue since the U.S. withdrawal, said that he heard a lot of excitement from Afghan allies and their family members about the inclusion in the package.

“The worst part about it is that it is now on us to manage expectations,” he said. “These folks have already been through so much and it's frankly embarrassing that we can't figure out how to give them the permanency that they've earned.”

NATION

Court: Trump not immune from prosecution

Former president can face trial on charges he plotted to overturn election results

BY ERIC TUCKER AND
ALANNA DURKIN RICHER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal appeals panel ruled Tuesday that Donald Trump can face trial on charges that he plotted to overturn the results of the 2020 election, rejecting the former president's claims that he is immune from prosecution.

The decision marks the second time in as many months that judges have spurned Trump's immunity arguments and held that he can be prosecuted for actions undertaken while in the White House and in the run-up to Jan. 6, 2021, when a mob of his supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol. But it also sets the stage for additional appeals from the Republican ex-president that could reach the U.S. Supreme Court.

The trial was originally set for March, but it was postponed last week and the judge didn't immedi-

ately set a new date.

The trial date carries enormous political ramifications, with the Republican primary front-runner hoping to delay it until after the November election. If Trump defeats President Joe Biden, he could presumably try to use his position as head of the executive branch to order a new attorney general to dismiss the federal cases or he potentially could seek a pardon for himself.

The appeals court took center stage in the immunity dispute after the Supreme Court last month said it was at least temporarily staying out of it, rejecting a request from special counsel Jack Smith to take up the matter quickly and issue a speedy ruling.

The legally untested question before the court was whether former presidents can be prosecuted after they leave office for actions taken in the White House related to their official duties.

The Supreme Court has held that presidents are immune from civil liability for official acts, and Trump's lawyers have for months argued that that protection should be extended to criminal prosecution as well.

They said the actions Trump was accused of in his failed bid to cling to power after he lost the 2020 election to Biden, including badgering his vice president to refuse to certify the results of the election, all fell within the "outer perimeters" of a president's official acts.

But Smith's team has said that no such immunity exists in the U.S. Constitution or in prior cases and that, in any event, Trump's actions weren't part of his official duties.

U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan, who is presiding over the case, rejected Trump's arguments in a Dec. 1 opinion that said the office of the president "does not con-

fer a lifelong 'get-out-of-jail-free' pass."

Trump's lawyers then appealed to the D.C. appeals court, but Smith asked the Supreme Court to weigh in first, in hopes of securing a fast and definitive ruling and preserving the March 4 trial date. The high court declined the request, leaving the matter with the appeals court.

The case was argued before Judges Florence Pan and J. Michelle Childs, appointees of Biden, a Democrat, and Karen LeCraft Henderson, who was named to the bench by President George H.W. Bush, a Republican. The judges made clear their skepticism of Trump's claims during arguments last month, when they peppered his lawyer with tough questions and posed a series of extreme hypotheticals as a way to test his legal theory of immunity — including whether a president who directed Navy commandos to

assassinate a political rival could be prosecuted.

Trump's lawyer, D. John Sauer, answered yes — but only if a president had first been impeached and convicted by Congress. That view was in keeping with the team's position that the Constitution did not permit the prosecution of ex-presidents who had been impeached but then acquitted, like Trump.

The case in Washington is one of four criminal prosecutions Trump faces as he seeks to reclaim the White House this year. He faces federal charges in Florida that he illegally retained classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate, a case that was also brought by Smith and is set for trial in May. He's also charged in state court in Georgia with scheming to subvert that state's 2020 election and in New York in connection with hush money payments made to porn actor Stormy Daniels. He has denied any wrongdoing.

Deluge: Los Angeles receives half of seasonal rainfall in 2 days

FROM PAGE 1

drowning and the need for swift-water rescues.

The storm plowed through Northern California over the weekend, killing three people who were crushed by falling trees before moving south and lingering. It was the second storm fueled by an atmospheric river to hit the state in a matter of days.

On Monday, the storm pounded Los Angeles with rain, sending mud and boulders down hillsides dotted with multimillion-dollar homes while people living in homeless encampments in many parts of the city scrambled for safety.

Near the Hollywood Hills, floodwaters carried mud, rocks and household objects downhill through Studio City, city officials said. Sixteen people were evacuated and several homes were red-tagged.

"It looks like a river that's been here for years," said Keki Mingus, whose neighbors' homes were damaged. "I've never seen anything like it."

Drake Livingston, who lives in the Beverly Crest neighborhood, was watching a movie around midnight when a friend alerted him to flooding.

"We looked outside and there's a foot-and-a-half of running water, and it starts seeping through the doors," said Livingston, whose car was found submerged in mud Monday morning.

Downtown Los Angeles received nearly 7 inches of rain by



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

Residents evacuate past damaged vehicles after storms caused a mudslide Monday in the Beverly Crest area of Los Angeles. A storm unleashed record levels of rain over parts of Los Angeles earlier this week.

Monday night, which was nearly half the yearly average of 14.25 inches. It was already the third-wettest two-day period since recordkeeping began in 1877, the service said.

The danger hadn't passed despite the expected dip in the rainfall, warned Ariel Cohen, a meteorologist in charge of the weather service's Los Angeles-area bureau.

"The ground is extremely saturated — supersaturated," he said at a Monday news conference. "It's not able to hold any additional water before sliding. It's not going to take much rain for additional landslides, mudslides, rockslides

and other debris flows to occur."

Rainfall amounts on Tuesday "are not going to be quite as heavy as they have been, but still with the ongoing flooding, any additional rain is not welcome," National Weather Service forecaster Bob Oravec said early Tuesday.

More showers are possible Wednesday and Thursday, Oravec said. "So it doesn't look like it's going to be totally in the clear probably until Thursday and into Friday," he said.

In the Los Angeles area, an evacuation order remained in place for some residents of a canyon area that was scarred by a 2022 fire. The area was at in-

creased risk of mud and debris flows because the area was burned bare of brush and trees that could hold it back, authorities said.

Fires contributed to a tragic 2018 mudslide in Montecito that destroyed 130 homes and killed 23 people, making it one of the deadliest in California history.

The Los Angeles Fire Department said that during this latest bout of bad weather, firefighters had dealt with more than 300 mudslides in addition to more than 100 reports of flooding and rescues of motorists stranded in vehicles on inundated roadways.

Shelters added beds for the

city's homeless population of nearly 75,000 people. Some described their harrowing ordeals.

Tony Sanz spent the night in a city park before seeking higher ground around dawn Monday as floodwaters rose around his tent.

"Boy did it rain last night," he said Monday afternoon while he hunkered down in a tent layered with tarps on a sidewalk outside a supermarket. He spied the cloudy skies during a break in the downpours and wondered, "Is that it? I hope that's it."

Crews rescued people from swift-moving water in various parts of Southern California, including 16 people and five cats in Los Angeles County alone, authorities said.

About an hour's drive east of Los Angeles, two homeless people were rescued Monday after spending the night on a small island in the Santa Ana River in San Bernardino.

"They were cold and exhausted from a night out stranded on this little patch of dirt that was in the middle of the river," said Capt. Nathan Lopez of the San Bernardino County Fire Department. A dog and two cats were also saved.

Authorities also reported several spills on Monday, including the discharge of about 5 million gallons of raw sewage in the Rancho Dominguez area surrounding Compton. Most of the untreated sewage went into a channel leading to the Pacific Ocean and the city closed a 7-mile stretch of Long Beach to recreational swimming.

NATION

Calif. bill would OK psychedelic mushroom therapy

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — A pair of California lawmakers introduced a bipartisan bill on Tuesday to allow people 21 and older to consume psychedelic mushrooms under professional supervision as part of an agenda to tackle the state's mental health and substance use crises.

It comes after Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom last year vetoed legislation that would have decriminalized the possession and personal use of several plant-based hallucinogens, including psychedelic mushrooms. It was the first time the proposal by Democratic Sen. Scott Wiener made it through the legislature after years of stalling. In his veto message, Newsom, who championed legalizing cannabis in 2016, asked lawmakers to work on therapeutic guidelines and regulations.

Now Wiener has teamed up with Republican Assemblymember Marie Waldron on a proposal to allow participants to consume psilocybin — the hallucinogenic component in what's known as psychedelic mushrooms — under the supervision of a licensed therapist. The bill also would include dimethyltryptamine (DMT), MDMA and mescaline.

Colorado and Oregon have already decriminalized psychedelic mushrooms and established regulated systems for therapeutic use of the substances. In California, San Francisco, Oakland and Santa Cruz have effectively decriminalized possession of psychedelic mushrooms, meaning a person cannot be arrested or prosecuted for possessing limited amounts of plant-based hallucinogens.

"We know that Californians are struggling with mental health and addiction challenges, and we know that psychedelics, particularly when combined with therapeutic support, can be a powerful tool to help people get their health back," Wiener said at a Monday news briefing. "We know that California veterans and first responders have particularly benefited from these substances, and we know that many more people can as well."

Waldron, who introduced a different bill to study the use of psychedelic therapy, said the bipartisan bill aligns with Newsom's vision by providing safeguards around psychedelic therapy. A person would have to go through a comprehensive screening to determine if they're fit to consume hallucinogens for therapy and en-

"We know that psychedelics, particularly when combined with therapeutic support, can be a powerful tool."

Scott Wiener
California Senator

gage in follow-up assessments.

The bill also would shift the state's response to mental health crisis away from criminalization and punishment, Waldron said.

California already has "a massive network" of underground therapists who provide psychedelic therapy, Wiener said. He added the bill would "bring them above ground" through a new state licensing board that regulates the services.

The legislation does not allow for personal possession and use. That means clients can't buy the substance to go. The drugs would still be illegal under federal law. Wiener said he doesn't want to wait on actions from the federal government and that state lawmakers could authorize such regulated psychedelic use, similar to previous efforts to legalize therapeutic use of cannabis to treat cancers or HIV.

Touted as a mind-bending drug in the 1960s, psychedelic mushrooms have been used in religious or spiritual practices in some cultures for centuries and possibly thousands of years. Some researchers believe psilocybin and other drugs show promise in treating depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. The Food and Drug Administration in 2018 designated psilocybin a "breakthrough therapy" and published draft guidance last year for researchers designing clinical trials for psychedelic drugs.

The bill is sponsored by Heroic Hearts Project, a nonprofit working with veterans to overcome trauma. Juliana Mercer, a Marine Corps veteran and a Heroic Hearts Project board member, said she's used psychedelics to manage her PTSD through programs outside of the U.S. Her organization recently sent a group of veterans to Oregon for regulated psilocybin use.



MARK SCOLFORO/AP

Police arrest some of about 200 people taken into custody on Monday in the Rotunda of the State Capitol in Harrisburg, Pa. The arrests shut down a demonstration against the state Treasury Department's investment of about \$56 million in Israel bonds.

Protesters gather at Pa. Capitol after state invests in Israel bonds

By MARK SCOLFORO
Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Police took into custody more than 100 people protesting the Pennsylvania state government's investments in Israel on Monday, shutting down a demonstration on the steps of the Capitol Rotunda in Harrisburg.

A spokesperson for the Department of General Services, which includes the Pennsylvania Capitol Police, said 126 people were taken into custody at what he described as an unpermitted, unauthorized demonstration. They were ordered to disperse before being arrested, issued citations for trespassing and then released, said spokesperson Troy Thompson.

The protesters, many wearing

T-shirts that said "divest from genocide," clapped and chanted during the protest, which organizers said was targeted at the state Treasury Department's investment in Israel bonds.

One large sign said the state should reinvest that tax money in health care, housing, schools and climate. There were chants of "free Palestine" before and after they were arrested.

The event was organized by Jewish Voice for Peace, the Philly Palestine Coalition and the Pennsylvania Council on American-Islamic Relations. It began Monday morning outside the Capitol but moved to the Rotunda by early afternoon.

Lilah Saber, a participant in the protest, said it was solely focused

on the state's investment in Israel bonds.

"We did not plan on being arrested, but we were arrested," Saber said.

Pennsylvania Treasurer Stacy Garrity, a Republican, said state treasurers of both parties have invested in Israel bonds for more than 30 years. The state's share of Israel bonds rose by \$20 million after the Hamas attack that began the war in Gaza and is currently \$56 million, Garrity said in a statement released by her office.

The state also holds about \$8 million in other Israel-based securities. Together with the \$56 million, that amounts to about 0.14% of the funds the Treasury Department actively manages, Garrity said.

Brawl between migrants and police in Times Square touches off backlash

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A video showing a group of migrants brawling with police in Times Square has touched off a political furor and renewed debate over a long-standing New York City policy that limits cooperation between local police and federal immigration authorities.

The surveillance footage, recorded Jan. 27 outside a Manhattan homeless shelter, shows several men kicking officers on a sidewalk and trying to pry them off a man police had taken to the ground. Police have arrested seven people in connection with the attack, though prosecutors dropped charges against one person they say may not have been involved.

Nobody was seriously hurt, but the video of officers being pummeled has prompted waves of public outrage. Some of that fury has been directed at prosecutors and the court system after several of those arrested were freed from jail while awaiting trial.

Increasingly, New York City officials have aimed dire rhetoric at the tens of thousands of asylum seekers the city has put up in shelters and hotels over the past year. Some of the comments have dismayed immigration advocates, who say they are stirring up hatred over the actions of a few bad apples.

"A wave of migrant crime has washed over our city," Police Commissioner Edward Caban

said at a news conference Monday about a Venezuelan man being sought in a series of cellphone robberies. He likened the suspect's accomplices to "ghost criminals," claiming they had come to New York "with no criminal history, no photos, no social media."

The NYPD released a video showing Mayor Eric Adams joining officers as they raided a Bronx apartment building in connection with that investigation Monday morning.

The video included ominous music and an officer warning of "migrants preying on vulnerable New Yorkers," while footage plays of a woman being dragged behind a scooter during a purse-snatching.

NATION

Wind speed drives calls for Category 6 option

Talks of a new level to 50-year scale grow as warmer weather leads to stronger hurricanes

By **SETH BORENSTEIN**
Associated Press

A handful of super powerful tropical storms in the last decade and the prospect of more to come has a couple of experts proposing a new category of whopper hurricanes: Category 6.

Studies have shown that the strongest tropical storms are getting more intense because of climate change. So the traditional five-category Saffir-Simpson scale, developed more than 50 years ago, may not show the true power of the most muscular storms, two climate scientists suggest in a study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. They propose a sixth category for storms with winds that exceed 192 miles per hour.

Currently, storms with winds of 157 mph or higher are Category 5. The study's authors said that open-ended grouping doesn't warn people enough about the higher dangers from monstrous storms that flirt with 200 mph or higher.

Several experts told The Associated Press they don't think another category is necessary. They said it could even give the wrong signal to the public because it's based on wind speed, while water is by far the deadliest killer in hurricanes.

Since 2013, five storms — all in the Pacific — had winds of 192 mph or higher that would have put them in the new category, with two hitting the Philippines. As the



JOHN MICHAEL MAGDASOC/AP

A resident salvages personal belongings after Typhoon Goni destroyed his home in Albay province, central Philippines on Nov. 3, 2020. Winds from that storm reached 195 mph, which would qualify it as a Category 6 storm, if that new category suggestion from some experts becomes reality.

world warms, conditions grow more ripe for such whopper storms, including in the Gulf of Mexico, where many storms that hit the United States get stronger, the study authors said.

"Climate change is making the worst storms worse," said study lead author Michael Wehner, a climate scientist at the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab.

It's not that there are more storms because of climate change. But the strongest are more intense. The proportion of major

hurricanes among all storms is increasing and it's because of warmer oceans, said University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy, who wasn't part of the research.

From time to time, experts have proposed a Category 6, especially since Typhoon Haiyan reached 195 mph wind speeds over the open Pacific. But Haiyan "does not appear to be an isolated case," the study said.

Storms of sufficient wind speed are called hurricanes if they form

east of the international dateline, and typhoons if they form to the west of the line. They're known as cyclones in the Indian Ocean and Australia.

The five storms that hit 192 mph winds or more are:

- 2013's Haiyan, which killed more than 6,300 people in the Philippines.

- 2015's Hurricane Patricia, which hit 215 mph before weakening and hitting Jalisco, Mexico.

- 2016's Typhoon Meranti, which reached 195 mph before

skirting the Philippines and Taiwan and making landfall in China.

- 2020's Typhoon Goni, which reached 195 mph before killing dozens in the Philippines as a weaker storm.

- 2021's Typhoon Surigae, which also reached 195 mph before weakening and skirting several parts of Asia and Russia.

If the world sticks with just five storm categories "as these storms get stronger and stronger it will more and more underestimate the potential risk," said study co-author Jim Kossin, a former NOAA climate and hurricane researcher now with First Street Foundation.

Pacific storms are stronger because there's less land to weaken them and more room for storms to grow more intense, unlike the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean, Kossin said.

So far no Atlantic storm has reached the 192 mph potential threshold, but as the world warms more the environment for such a storm grows more conducive, Kossin and Wehner said.

Wehner said that as temperatures rise, the number of days with conditions ripe for potential Category 6 storms in the Gulf of Mexico will grow. Now it's about 10 days a year where the environment could be right for a Category 6, but that could go up to a month if the globe heats to 5.4 degrees Fahrenheit above pre-industrial levels.

That would make an Atlantic Category 6 much more likely.

S. Carolina wants to start executions with firing squad, electric chair

By **JEFFREY COLLINS**
Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Lawyers for four death row inmates who have run out of appeals are expected to argue to the South Carolina Supreme Court that the state's old electric chair and new firing squad are cruel and unusual punishments.

Attorneys for the inmates also planned to argue Tuesday that a 2023 law meant to allow lethal injections to restart keeps secret too many details about the new drug and protocol used to kill prisoners.

In the balance are the death sentences of 33 inmates who are on South Carolina's death row. While there hasn't been a formal moratorium, the state hasn't performed an execution in nearly 13 years after the drugs it used for lethal injection expired and companies refused to sell more to prison officials unless they could hide their identities from the public.

South Carolina says all three methods fit existing protocols.

"Courts have never held the death has to be instantaneous or painless," wrote Grayson Lambert, a lawyer for Gov. Henry McMaster's office.

If the Supreme Court justices allow executions to restart and any additional appeals are unsuccessful, South Carolina's death chamber, unused since May 2011, could suddenly get quite busy.

Four inmates are suing, but four more have also run out of appeals, although two of them face a competency hearing before they could be executed, according to Justice 360, a group that describes itself as fighting for the inmates and for fairness and transparency in death penalty and other major criminal cases.

The state asked the Supreme Court to toss out a lower court ruling after a 2022 trial that the electric chair and the firing squad are cruel and unusual punishments. The justices added questions about last year's shield law to the appeal and Tuesday's arguments.

Circuit Judge Jocelyn Newman sided with the inmates whose experts testified prisoners would feel terrible pain whether their bodies were "cooking" by 2,000 volts of electricity in the chair, built in 1912, or if their hearts were stopped by bullets — assuming the three shooters were on target — from the yet-to-be used firing squad. South Carolina's current execution law requires inmates to be sent to the electric chair unless they choose a different method.

Lawmakers allowed a firing squad to be added in 2021. No legislation has been proposed in South Carolina to add nitrogen gas, which was used for the first time to kill an inmate last month in Alabama.

On the shield law, attorneys for the inmates argue South Carolina's law is more secretive than any other state. They said prison officials should not be allowed to hide the identities of drug companies, the names of anyone helping with an execution and the exact



AP

This photo provided by the South Carolina Department of Corrections shows the state's death chamber in Columbia, S.C., including the electric chair, right, and a firing squad chair, left.

procedure followed.

In September, prison officials announced they now have the sedative pentobarbital and changed the method of lethal injection execution from using three drugs to just one. They released few other details other than saying South Carolina's method is similar to the protocol followed by the federal government and six other states.

The inmates argue pentobarbi-

tal, compounded and mixed, has a shelf life of about 45 days. They want to know if there is a regular supplier for the drug and what guidelines are in place to make sure the potency is right.

Too weak, and inmates may suffer without dying. Too strong, and the drug molecules can form tiny clumps that would cause intense pain when injected, according to court papers.

WORLD

Sunak: King Charles' cancer was caught early

By JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

LONDON — King Charles III's cancer was caught early and the whole country is hoping for a speedy recovery, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said Tuesday, as Prince Harry flew in from California for a rare visit with his father.

Royal officials announced Monday that the 75-year-old king has been diagnosed with an undisclosed form of cancer and is receiving treatment as an outpatient.

Less than 18 months into the reign that he'd famously waited decades to begin, Charles suspended public engagements but will continue with state business — including weekly meetings with Sunak — and won't be handing over his constitutional roles as head of state.

On Tuesday afternoon, Harry

could seen arriving at the king's Clarence House residence in a black SUV after an overnight flight.

The two have a troubled relationship, and Harry has seen his father infrequently since the prince quit royal duties in 2020 and moved to Los Angeles with his wife, Meghan, citing what they said was the unbearable intrusions and racist attitudes of the British media.

About an hour after Harry arrived, Charles and Queen Camilla were driven from their residence to nearby Buckingham Palace in a royal Bentley.

The couple waved to tourists and well-wishers gathered outside the palace gates.

They then traveled by helicopter to Sandringham, the monarch's rural residence in eastern England.

Buckingham Palace said the

king's cancer was found during Charles' recent hospital treatment for an enlarged prostate but is a "separate issue" and not prostate cancer.

"Thankfully, this has been caught early," Sunak told BBC radio, adding: "We'll crack on with everything."

The palace said Charles, who has generally enjoyed good health, "remains wholly positive about his treatment and looks forward to returning to full public duty as soon as possible."

Charles became king in September 2022 when his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, died at age 96 after 70 years on the throne.

News of the king's diagnosis comes as his daughter-in-law Kate, Princess of Wales, recovers from abdominal surgery that saw her hospitalized for about two weeks.

Kate is taking a break from roy-

al duties as she recovers. Her husband, Prince William, who is heir to the throne, also took time off to help look after her and the couple's three children, but is due to preside over a ceremony at Windsor Castle and a charity dinner on Wednesday.



King Charles III

Charles departed from royal tradition with his openness about his prostate condition. For centuries Britain's royal family remained tight-lipped about health matters.

Disclosing information about his cancer diagnosis — albeit in a limited way — is another break with tradition.

When U.K. monarchs had real power, news of illness was withheld for fear it might weaken their

authority. The habit of secrecy lingered after royals became constitutional figureheads.

The British public wasn't told that Charles' grandfather, King George VI, had lung cancer before his death in February 1952 at age 56, and some historians have claimed that the king himself wasn't told he was terminally ill.

In the final years of Elizabeth's life, the public was told only that the queen was suffering from "mobility issues" when she began to miss public appearances toward the end of her life.

The cause of her death was listed on the death certificate simply as "old age."

Buckingham Palace said that the king "has chosen to share his diagnosis to prevent speculation and in the hope it may assist public understanding for all those around the world who are affected by cancer."

Ukrainian-born Miss Japan gives up title after article reveals affair

By MARI YAMAGUCHI
Associated Press

TOKYO — The Ukrainian-born winner of this year's Miss Japan beauty pageant and the contest's organizers say she has renounced her title after a magazine published an article about her affair with a married man.

Karolina Shiino was crowned Miss Japan on Jan. 22, setting off renewed public debate over what it means to be Japanese in a country where homogeneity and conformity are still valued.

In a message posted on Instagram on Monday, Shiino said that after the article came out, she offered to give up her crown and resign from her modeling agency. She said her offers were accepted.

The Weekly Bunshun magazine reported last week that Shiino had been in a relationship with a doctor who is married. Initially, she appeared to confirm the relationship but said she did not know he was married. Later, she said her earlier explanation "was not true" and that she was aware of his married status and that he had a family. She apologized and said she was in a



KAZUYA FURAKU, MISS NIPPON ASSOCIATION/AP

Contestants including Karolina Shiino, center, who was crowned Miss Japan, pose for a photo after the contest in Tokyo last month. Ukrainian-born Shiino has renounced her title after a magazine published an article about her affair with a married man.

state of shock and fear over the report and panicked, which is why she was not able to tell the truth.

The office of the Miss Japan organizers on Tuesday said Shiino's renunciation of the title was accepted and the slot for the 2024 winner would remain empty.

The man who was involved, Takuma Maeda, an influencer known as "muscle doctor," acknowledged

on Instagram that he had no intention of divorcing his wife and apologized for causing trouble to Shiino and others.

Shiino has lived in Japan since moving to the country at age 5. Fluent in Japanese, she became a naturalized citizen in 2022. She said she has as strong a sense of Japanese identity as anyone else, despite her Caucasian look.

US upping aid to Guyana amid Venezuela's threats

Associated Press

GEORGETOWN, Guyana — The U.S. government is increasing its urgent military assistance to Guyana, officials said Monday, as neighboring Venezuela threatens to seize a large part of the country's territory it has long claimed.

The U.S. is pledging to help Guyana buy new aircraft, helicopters, a fleet of military drones and, for the first time, radar technology. The details were not immediately clear, and Guyanese officials declined to say how much they expect to pay.

Confirmation of the plan came a day after the U.S. deputy national security adviser, Jon Finan, and Western Hemisphere senior director Juan González met with authorities in Guyana about improving defense capabilities.

Their visit was the latest engagement by top defense and administration officials, including Secretary of State Antony Blinken, on improving Guyana's ability to defend itself from external threats.

"That cooperation is fundamentally defensive in nature and grounded in our desire for Guyana to be able to defend its territorial

integrity against any possible threats," Finan told reporters late Sunday.

He added that "we do not think that it is appropriate for countries to make threats or to contemplate publicly the use of force against another country." It was a veiled reference to Venezuela, which amassed a small number of troops along its eastern border late last year and threatened to annex Guyana's mineral-rich Essequibo region after holding a referendum to approve the annexation.

Tensions between the countries have cooled following talks mediated by Brazil and Caribbean leaders in December. A second round of talks involving foreign ministers was held in Brazil in late January to prepare for an upcoming summit between Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and Guyanese President Irfaan Ali.

At the height of tensions, the U.S. military assisted Guyana with overflight surveillance flights, and military advisers were present to help the Guyanese military, which is poorly equipped and has fewer than 5,000 troops for a country of some 800,000 people.

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WAR IN UKRAINE

Germany plans to double its troop commitment to KFOR

Associated Press

PRISTINA, Kosovo — Germany will double its contribution of about 100 troops to the NATO-led peacekeepers in Kosovo in a demonstration of its commitment to regional security, German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said Monday.

Pistorius, who was on a regional tour to Kosovo and neighboring Serbia, said Germany will add another company of soldiers to the 99 troops it already has in the nearly 4,500-strong peacekeeping force by spring. It is also prepared to add more if necessary, he said.

“I believe the signal is strong and expresses our perspective on the stability of this region,” Pistorius said at a news conference with Kosovar President Vjosa Osmani.

NATO has been ramping up the level of the Kosovo Force, or KFOR, from about 3,800, following two violent incidents last year.

In May, Serb demonstrators in northern Kosovo clashed with NATO peacekeeping troops. In

September about 30 Serb gunmen clashed with Kosovo police in a deadly gunbattle, leaving a Kosovar officer and three Serb gunmen dead.

The KFOR force originally was established in 1999 following a NATO bombing campaign on Serb positions to halt a crackdown on separatist ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and end their 1998-99 war.

Kosovo-Serbia relations remain tense, and European Union-facilitated talks on normalizing their ties are at a stalemate. Brussels has made it clear that such an agreement is a prerequisite to Kosovo and Serbia joining the bloc.

Kosovo unilaterally broke away from Serbia and declared independence in 2008, a move that Belgrade has refused to recognize.

The 1998-99 war between Serbia and Kosovo killed about 13,000 people, mostly Kosovo Albanians. It ended after a 78-day NATO bombing campaign that compelled Serbian forces to withdraw from Kosovo.

IAEA: Security still fragile at Russian-occupied nuke plant

By SAMYA KULLAB
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Security at Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant remains fragile amid worrying recent staff cuts enacted by Russian authorities occupying the facility, which is one of the 10 biggest atomic power plants in the world, the United Nations nuclear watchdog chief said Tuesday.

International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi, who is in Kyiv, told The Associated Press that his upcoming visit to the plant as the war approaches its two-year milestone will aim to assess the impact of recent personnel reductions after Russia denied access to employees of Ukraine’s Energoatom.

“This huge facility used to have around 12,000 staff. Now, this has been reduced to between 2,000 and 3,000, which is quite a steep reduction in the number of people working there,” Grossi said. “To

man, to operate these very sophisticated big installations you need a certain number of people performing different specific functions.”

“So far the situation is stable, but it is a very, very delicate equilibrium,” he said. “So this is why I need to see for myself what is the situation, what are the prospects in terms of staffing, medium-term and long-term as well.”

Grossi’s visit coincided with the arrival in the Ukrainian capital of the European Union’s top diplomat, Josep Borrell, who said he was there to discuss military aid and financial support as well as Ukraine’s ambition of joining the bloc.

The 27 EU countries agreed last week to provide Ukraine with 50

billion euros (\$54 billion) in support for its ailing economy. But the EU’s military backing is falling short, leaving Ukraine’s forces grappling with ammunition shortages while Russia uses its economic muscle to keep up the pressure with probing ground and air attacks.

The IAEA has repeatedly expressed alarm about the Zaporizhzhia facility amid fears of a potential nuclear catastrophe. The plant has repeatedly been caught in the crossfire since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, and seized the facility shortly after.

The plant’s six reactors have been shut down for months, but it still needs power and qualified staff to operate crucial cooling systems and other safety features.

The plant suffered yet another blackout last month, highlighting continuing nuclear safety concerns as battles rage nearby.



Grossi

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Jordan's championship sneakers sold for \$8M

NY NEW YORK — A collection of sneakers that superstar Michael Jordan wore as he and the Chicago Bulls won six NBA championships has fetched \$8 million at auction, setting a new record for game-worn sneakers, Sotheby's said.

The six Air Jordan shoes — one apiece from the last games of the 1991, 1992, 1993, 1996, 1997 and 1998 championship series — sold Friday. Sotheby's dubbed it the "Dynasty Collection."

Sotheby's didn't identify the buyer and described the seller only as "a private American collector" who obtained them from a longtime Bulls executive.

Jordan first gave a sneaker to the executive after the championship-winning game in 1991 and continued the tradition afterward, according to Sotheby's. The auction lot included photos of Jordan wearing a single shoe as he celebrated the 1992, 1993, 1996 and 1998 wins.

Goose found in medical helicopter that crashed

OK OKLAHOMA CITY — A dead goose was found in part of the flight control system of a medical helicopter that crashed in western Oklahoma, killing all three people on board, according to a preliminary report by the National Transportation Safety Board.

The report does not cite a suspected cause of the crash, but noted one goose was found in the helicopter's flight control system and others were found in the debris field.

A report on the probable cause could take up to two years to complete, according to the NTSB.

The helicopter crashed Jan. 20 in a pasture near Hydro, about 60 miles west of Oklahoma City, as it was returning to Weatherford after taking a patient to an Oklahoma City hospital.

Bill passed to legalize online sports betting

MS JACKSON — The Mississippi House passed a bill Thursday that would legalize online sports betting, bringing the state one step closer to joining 29 other states that already allow the practice.

The Mississippi Mobile Sports Wagering Act, which would legalize mobile sports betting while requiring gambling companies to contract with brick-and-mortar gambling establishments, passed 97-14 after a brief debate on the House floor. Sports wagering has been legal in the state for years, but online betting has remained illegal amid fears the move could harm the bottom line of the state's casinos.

Republican Rep. Casey Eure of Saucier, the bill's prime sponsor, said the state could bring in \$25-



NAM Y. HUH/AP

Angling for ballet scholarship

Angeliese Ribbe performs Sunday during the Youth America Grand Prix ballet scholarship auditions in River Forest, Ill. Youth America Grand Prix is a nonprofit international youth ballet and contemporary dance competition and scholarship program established in 1999. More than 12,000 young dancers audition annually, and alumni are now dancing with 80 professional companies around the world.

35 million a year in tax revenue, based on state Gaming Commission estimates. Mississippi is missing out on that money as it houses one of the nation's most active black markets.

Across the United States each year, illegal betting sites see about \$64 billion in wagers, Eure said. Mississippi makes up 5% of that market, which is about \$3 billion in illegal bets.

Man dies days after being mauled by dogs

MI DETROIT — A Detroit man mauled by three dogs has died, his wife said.

Harold Phillips, a father of six, died Friday evening, four days after he was attacked by the dogs as he walked home from a bus stop, Shauntaye Phillips said.

The three dogs that attacked Phillips have been euthanized, and their owner, Roy Goodman,

has been fined \$5,000, WWJ-TV reported.

Lawmaker reverses on plan, will seek reelection

IN NOBLESVILLE — Republican U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz announced Monday that she intends to seek reelection for Indiana's 5th Congressional District, reversing an announcement a year ago that she would forgo another run.

Last February, Spartz said she wanted to spend more time with her family and would not be running in 2024. But the two-term congresswoman now says she doesn't want her work in the Capitol to end in January.

Ukrainian-born Spartz faced a tight and expensive race when she first won in 2020, but secured the suburban seat in 2022 with 61% of the vote following a Republican redistricting plan.

The move shakes up the congressional race in which at least nine Republicans have already filed with the Secretary of State to run for Spartz's seat. As of Monday, no Democrats have filed, according to public postings from the Secretary of State's office.

Disney wants trade secrets kept confidential

FL ORLANDO — Disney wants to keep confidential any proprietary information or trade secrets that come out of its state court fight with Gov. Ron DeSantis' appointees over who controls the governing district at Walt Disney World.

The entertainment giant asked a state court judge on Friday for a protective order allowing it to designate documents and depositions as confidential and requiring parties handling them to sign a nondisclosure agreement.

The litigation is likely going to involve the disclosure of trade secrets, as well as technical, financial and personal information, which could result in "significant harm" if they are made public, Disney said in its request. The request was unopposed by the DeSantis appointees.

Disney supporters had run the district, which provides municipal services such as firefighting, planning and mosquito control, for more than five decades after the Legislature created it in 1967. But legislation passed by the Republican-controlled Legislature and signed by DeSantis transferred control of the district's board from Disney supporters to DeSantis appointees last year.

Judge rejects challenge to pot licensing program

NY ALBANY — A federal judge has rejected a challenge to New York state's licensing program for selling legal marijuana, a system two California applicants have said unconstitutionally discriminates against out-of-state residents.

The ruling Friday by Albany Judge Anne M. Nardacci may spur New York into issuing hundreds of licenses in a state where most marijuana is sold by unlicensed businesses.

Nardacci said the public interest in letting properly licensed businesses take over the market in New York outweighed concerns raised in the lawsuit.

She said the main purpose of the dormant Commerce Clause plaintiffs argued should allow them to access New York's market doesn't apply to the federally illegal cannabis trade. The clause is supposed to stop states from creating protectionist measures to restrict interstate commerce in the absence of rules from Congress.

Skydiver dies, 2nd fatal incident within month

AZ ELOY — Authorities are investigating the death of a 73-year-old skydiver in Arizona, the second deadly incident involving skydiving in Eloy in less than a month.

Terry Gardner and three fellow experienced skydivers were making their third jump of the day around noon Wednesday, and the group planned a formation jump from about 14,000 feet, police said. Gardner's main parachute never fully deployed to slow his descent, police in Eloy said.

The other three skydivers landed safely, but Gardner was rushed to a hospital where he later died.

Federal Aviation Administration officials said the agency will investigate how the parachute was packed as well as flight rules for the pilot and aircraft.

FACES

Singer-songwriter Toby Keith dies at 62 after cancer battle

Pro-military country artist performed often for troops serving overseas

By KRISTIN M. HALL
Associated Press

“Beer For My Horses” singer-songwriter Toby Keith has died. He was 62.

Keith, who had stomach cancer, died peacefully on Monday surrounded by his family, according to a statement posted on the country singer’s website. “He fought his fight with grace and courage,” the statement said. He was diagnosed in 2022.

Sometimes a polarizing figure, the 6-foot-4 singer broke out in the country boom of the 1990s, crafting an identity around his macho, pro-American swagger and writing songs that fans loved to hear. He publicly clashed with other celebrities and journalists and often pushed back against record executives who wanted to smooth his rough edges.

He was known for his overt patriotism on post-9/11 songs like “Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue,” and boisterous barroom tunes like “I Love This Bar” and “Red Solo Cup.” He had a powerful booming voice, a tongue-in-cheek sense of humor and range that carried love songs as well as drinking songs.

His pro-military stance wasn’t just fodder for songs. He went on 11 USO tours to visit and play for troops serving overseas. Keith helped to raise millions for char-

ity, including building a home in Oklahoma City for kids and their families who are battling cancer.

Among his 20 No. 1 Billboard hits were “How Do You Like Me Now?!” “Should’ve Been a Cowboy,” “As Good As I Once Was,” “My List” and “Beer for My Horses,” a duet with Willie Nelson.

Throughout the cancer treatments, Keith continued to perform, most recently playing in Las Vegas in December.

Keith worked as a roughneck in the oil fields of Oklahoma as a young man, then played semi-pro football before launching his career as a singer.

Eventually his path took him to Nashville, where he attracted the interest of Mercury Records head Harold Shedd, who was best known as a producer for the hit group Alabama. Shedd brought him to Mercury, where he released his platinum debut record “Toby Keith,” in 1993.

“Should’ve Been a Cowboy,” his breakout hit, was played 3 million times on radio stations, making it the most played country song of the 1990s.

Keith often wore his politics on his sleeve, especially after the terrorist attacks on U.S. soil in 2001, and early on he said was a conservative Democrat, but later claimed he was an independent. He performed at events for Presi-

dents George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump, the latter giving him a National Medal of the Arts in 2021. His songs and his blunt opinions sometimes invited controversy, which he seemed to court.

His 2002 song, “Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)” included a threat—“We’ll put a boot in your ass — It’s the American way” — to anyone who dared to mess with America.

That song got pulled from an ABC Fourth of July special after producers deemed it too angry for the show. Singer-songwriter Steve Earle called Keith’s song “pandering to people’s worst instincts at a time they are hurt and scared.”

Then there was the feud between Keith and The Chicks (formerly called the Dixie Chicks), who became a target of Keith’s ire when singer Natalie Maines told a crowd that they were ashamed of then-President George W. Bush. Maines had also previously called Keith’s song “ignorant.”

Keith, who had previously claimed that he supported any artist’s freedom to voice their opinion about politics, used a doctored photo of Maines with an image of Saddam Hussein at his concerts, further ramping up angry fans.

Maines responded by wearing a shirt with the letters “FUTK” on-stage at the 2003 ACM Awards,



MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

Toby Keith performs at Wiesbaden Army Airfield, Germany, in 2007. Keith, who was known for his overt patriotism, went on 11 USO tours to play for troops stationed overseas.

which many people believed was a vulgar message to Keith.

He also publicly called out actor Ethan Hawke, who in 2009 wrote a story in Rolling Stone magazine that described an argument between Kris Kristofferson and an unnamed country star that sound-

ed a lot like Keith.

Keith was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2015. He was honored by the performance rights organization BMI in November 2022 with the BMI Icon award, a few months after announcing his cancer diagnosis.

New this week: Usher, ‘Abbott Elementary’ and ‘Tracker’

Associated Press

Here’s a collection curated by The Associated Press’ entertainment journalists of what’s arriving on TV, streaming services and music platforms this week.

Music

■ It may very well be Usher’s world, and we’re just living in it. From an incredibly successful Las Vegas residency to scoring the 2024 Super Bowl halftime show, the “Confessions” singer is experiencing a well-deserved influx of attention — from a new and curious audience as well as those filled with nostalgia for his smooth ’00s R&B. There’s more great news: on Friday, just two days before he appears at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas for Sin City’s inaugural Super Bowl, Usher will release “Coming Home,” his first new solo album in eight years. He hasn’t missed a beat — “Good Good,” the single with Summer Walker and 21 Savage — is silky summertime R&B with some Atlanta bounce, a winning combination. Elsewhere

on the album, Usher joins forces with Burna Boy, Latto, The-Dream, H.E.R., BTS member Jungkook and Pheez. “Stacked” is the word.

■ Swedish pop singer Zara Larsson will release her fourth studio album, “Venus,” on Friday — an album full of shimmery synth-pop and Euro dance-pop that burns bright, hot and fast like a Saturday night. “On My Love” with EDM giant David Guetta proves it, but Larsson’s commitment to feel-good club bangers exists throughout: like on the strings of “End of Time,” which she said was inspired by Rihanna and AB-BA in equal parts. Now that’s a combination.

— AP Music Writer
Maria Sherman

Television

■ “Abbott Elementary” aired its season two finale last April and there are lingering questions that need answers. Can Janine and Gregory (series creator Quinta Brunson and Tyler James Wil-

liams) remain platonic after almost stepping outside the friend zone on the field trip to the science museum? Did a summer at Harvard prompt Ava (Janelle James) to finally take her job as principal seriously? And will Mrs. Howard (Sheryl Lee Ralph) finally learn that Brian Tyree Henry’s name is not Brian Austin Green? Answers could be revealed Wednesday when school is back in session and Season 3 debuts on ABC. Episodes also stream on Hulu.

■ There’s a four-legged alternative to Super Bowl Sunday: Puppy Bowl XX. This year marks the Bowl’s 20th year, and 131 adoptable pups have been drafted from shelters and rescues across the U.S. to compete. Teams Ruff and Fluff square off for the coveted “Lombarky” trophy while also encouraging people to adopt and not shop for pets. Puppy Bowl XX, which will air on AFN-Family, will simulcast on Animal Planet, Discovery Channel, Discovery+, TBS, TRUTV and MAX before the big human game on Sunday.

■ Justin Hartley, of “This Is Us,” debuts his new CBS series “Tracker” in the prime spot after Super Bowl LVIII. Based on the book “The Never Game” by Jeffery Deaver, Hartley plays Colter Shaw, a guy with a skill for tracking down the missing. All he asks for in return is reward money.

— Alicia Rancilio

Movies

■ Celine Song’s “Past Lives” is an achingly tender film about making peace with the choices that shape our lives. Song’s directorial debut, which is nominated for best picture and best screenplay at the Academy Awards, is about a woman named Nora (Greta Lee) who, while married and living in New York, reconnects with a childhood friend (Teo Yoo) from Seoul. Although modest in scale, “Past Lives” gently reckons with existential quandaries that stretch across time and continents. Now streaming on Paramount+ with Showtime.

■ The mind of Charlie Kauf-

man has produced some of the most memorable films (“Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind,” “Synecdoche, New York”) of the past few decades. Even when Kaufman last scripted an animated film (“Anomalisa”), you wouldn’t call the results child-friendly. But in “Orion and the Dark,” Kaufman adapts Emma Yarlett’s illustrated children’s book about a fifth-grader (voiced by Jacob Tremblay) who’s afraid of the dark, among other things. He’s forced to confront his fears when visited by the actual Dark (voiced by Paul Walter Hauser). Now streaming on Netflix.

■ Laura Chinn’s directorial debut “Suncoast,” which recently premiered at Sundance, draws from Chinn’s experience growing up in Florida and caring for her ill brother. With a cast including Laura Linney and Woody Harrelson, newcomer Nico Parker stars as the high-schooler Doris in this coming-of-age drama. “Suncoast” streams Friday on Hulu.

— AP Film Writer Jake Coyle

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OPINION

It's not antisemitic to criticize the war in Gaza

BY STEPHEN J. LYONS
 Chicago Tribune

I have a question. Can I criticize Israel's war in Gaza without being called antisemitic? Am I allowed to point out that so often the historically oppressed becomes the oppressor du jour?

Will I be dismissed as a pearl-clutching peacenik when I point out that, in 2022, 99.7% of the staggering \$3.3 billion in U.S. foreign aid we gift to Israel went directly to its military, and that since World War II, that tiny country with some 9 million people has received more U.S. foreign aid than any other nation?

Who will be the next university president forced to resign or be fired because of a pro-Palestinian campus protest or because of a linguistic trap set by anti-intellectual members of Congress who demand fealty of all students and faculty in support of Israel's aggressive bombing of Gaza? Are universities becoming islands of repression in a sea of democracy?

Can we at least agree that all the news from Gaza is bad? Images of the skeletal husks of bombed-out buildings evoke scenes from Europe in the 1940s. More than 27,000 people in Gaza have been killed by Israeli bombs, many of them women and children. For those who are wounded, medical care is almost nonexistent. Starvation is rampant. United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food Michael Fakhri posted on X that for 2.2 million Gazans, "Famine is now inevitable."

These are facts, not opinions. And facts should still matter, whether they are deemed politically incorrect, even here in the United States during this country's greatest test of its fragile democracy.

Also a fact: Hamas is a terrorist group that butchered more than 1,100 innocent Israelis on Oct. 7 and is still holding more than 100 hostages in no doubt deplorable conditions. The attack by Hamas was horrific, and the group has

no place in a civilized world.

But can we rationally discuss whether Israel's response to this attack was proportional? Has the seemingly scorched-earth response disguised another fact: that the fabled Israeli intelligence arm did not detect Hamas' evil plans and that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu failed to protect his citizens and, thus, a protracted war is an asset to his political survival? Does he even want to rebuild Gaza or, instead, use the territory for more Jewish settlements?

Consider this additional fact that is getting scant attention: On Jan. 28 a conference was held in Jerusalem involving, according to The Guardian, "11 cabinet ministers and 15 members of the Knesset, some of them members of the prime minister's Likud party." The rather smugly titled "Victory of Israel Conference: Settlement Brings Security" event laid out plans by Netanyahu's coalition to repopulate Gaza with Israeli settlements through the use of "voluntary migration" for Palestinians. Thousands of cheering and dancing supporters at the conference in Jerusalem welcomed the plans.

Minister of National Security of Israel Itamar Ben-Gvir explained: "We must encourage voluntary migration. Let them leave. Part of correcting the mistake of the sin of the pre-conception that brought us to 7 October is to return home to Gush Katif (southern Gaza) and to northern Samaria. We have to return home, because that is the Torah, that is morality, that is historic justice, that is logic and that is the right thing." The Times of Israel reported that "Ben Gvir, together with six coalition (members of the Knesset), signed what was dubbed the 'Covenant of Victory and Renewal of Settlement,' which pledged that the signatories would 'grow Jewish settlements full of life' in the Gaza Strip."

Netanyahu, who could have denounced the

remarks by his far-right supporters, instead said they were "entitled to their opinions." So, free speech is fine when it supports Israel's aggression, but not when it condemns it.

Those of us on the outside looking at this travesty of a war are also entitled to our opinions, and we would be negligent to turn away from the horrors of the Israeli military campaign even if we are accused of being antisemitic or written off somehow as cohorts of anti-Israeli foes such as Iran.

In the 1927 ruling in *Whitney v. California*, Justice Louis D. Brandeis wrote his concurring opinion in what would be called the "counterspeech doctrine." He wrote, "If there be time to expose through discussion, the falsehoods and fallacies, to avert the evil by the processes of education, the remedy to be applied is more speech, not enforced silence."

Simply stated, the remedy to speech you don't like is not less speech, but more speech. But apparently, this doctrine does not apply to the current war in Gaza. Recently the House, taking a rare break from attacking Hunter Biden, passed Resolution 894, "strongly condemning and denouncing the drastic rise of antisemitism in the United States and around the world." The resolution says the House of Representatives "clearly and firmly states that anti-Zionism is antisemitism."

In response, Palestinian American U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib said, "Opposing the policies of the government of Israel and Netanyahu's extremism is not antisemitic. Speaking up for human rights and a cease-fire to save lives should never be condemned."

Meanwhile, the systematic obliteration of Gaza continues unabated and, along with it, our own right to protest its destruction.

Stephen J. Lyons is the author of six books of reportage and essays, most recently "Searching for Home: Misadventures with Misanthropes."

Look who moved in Nextdoor: A paranoid snoop

BY RICK REILLY
 The Washington Post

Are you bummed you weren't around when the Stasi ruled? Do you wish you could've been one of Mao Zedong's millions of neighborhood snitches? Maybe watch the Red Guards drag off your least favorite aunt?

Not to worry, the bad old days are back — thanks to Nextdoor.com.

On Nextdoor all you have to do is sign up, log in and start profiling everyone on your block. Teenager in a hoodie walking on your street? Lock your doors. Black guy with a backpack standing on the corner? Call the cops.

Just last week on Nextdoor, someone in the Hamptons posted a front-door video of a teenage girl and wrote, "Does anyone recognize this young woman?" Yes, her mom did: "She is selling cookies to raise money to go on a high school trip. Shame on you. ... Not everyone is a thief, or a bad person."

You'd never know it on Nextdoor. The hilarious podcast "I've Had It" found this one the other day: "I've seen a suspicious person now numerous times," someone posted. "Aged mid-50s and white ... Drives a luxury car but never seems to go to work. ... Not sure how this person affords to do this ... Hence, I've reported him to the IRS ... Stay vigilant!"

And it's not just Nextdoor. Aspiring vigilantes can also gather on Facebook and WhatsApp neighborhood groups and start whispering campaigns. You want to take America's

temperature? Lurk around on a few of them to see how petty and judgmental we can be.

There's a Nextdoor user criticizing the paltry size of some of the Halloween candy being handed out "in a town with the fine reputation of Rancho Cucamonga." There's the vegan couple complaining about the smell of their neighbor's barbecue invading their "meat-free radius." (Is there a kale-free radius?)

One time, a homeowner was alarmed that someone spilled baked beans in her mailbox: "Is this a gang thing?"

Yes, the deadly Van Camp's Vipers.

Occasionally, I try to swim against the madness. A woman who lives near me posted that "some guy just stopped his car, rolled down the window and took a picture of my house. Probably casing it for a robbery. I'm calling the police." I replied, "Or ... maybe he just liked your house? Or he's in real estate? Or he likes your rhododendrons?" She told me to butt out.

Oh, no, there's no butting out on Nextdoor, only butting in. Somebody posted the other day about the "slow moving vehicle following the school bus every morning." Alarming! Turned out it was the newspaper delivery guy.

It isn't all terrible. Nextdoor is great for reporting lost pets, finding a good plumber and issuing alerts about doorbell-ringing, nap-ruining Jehovah's Witnesses. But it's gotten way out of hand. The opportunity to play Paul Blart mall cop brings out the worst in people, and their worst can make the perfectly innocent

feel persecuted, unwelcome and angry.

And way too often, those are people of color. In Oakland a couple of years ago, a guy posted a doorbell picture of a "suspicious" Black man and someone commented, "He looks like he is capable of anything."

This is where the lunacy stops being entertaining. Revved up by neighbors, people are far more likely to call 911, to call the police, to "take action." That's the kind of "action" that got a Skittles-bearing kid named Trayvon Martin killed by a neighborhood watch captain. In a country with more guns than people, you can get shot for pulling into the wrong driveway. Snoop sites can be petri dishes for paranoia and paranoia can become panic.

"Nextdoor taught me that my neighbors are bad people," said one former subscriber online. "I really would have preferred not to know that." It's not entirely the fault of the people who run Nextdoor. They've got all kinds of reminders to be kind, to not be racist, to not overreact. But its very existence fosters exactly that. It's like owning a roadside bar and telling people not to drink and drive.

Nextdoor says it's used in 315,000 neighborhoods in 11 countries around the world, and in 1 in 3 of U.S. households. From following it, I've learned one thing. The person on your block you should fear the most is not the guy in the hoodie, it's the guy at the keyboard.

Rick Reilly, a Washington Post contributing columnist, is a sportswriter, screenwriter, author and speaker.

Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

Grid for Eugene Sheffer Crossword with numbered squares.

ACROSS

- 1 "Her" actress Rooney
5 Director Lee
8 Some GIs
12 Earth sci.
13 Extinct bird
14 Asian nation
15 Warning to a speeder
17 "Baseball Tonight" channel
18 Mortal
19 Vent covers
21 Candied veggies
24 PC port
25 Barks
28 Unpaid
30 Fireplace residue
33 Alias abbr.
34 Fire sign?
35 NASA moon craft
36 "Help!"
37 Aesopian also-ran
38 Slender
39 Eastern "way"
41 Noble Italian family
43 Not as loud
46 Desert haven
50 "Peek- —!"
51 Far right, on a highway
54 Weaver's device
55 Neckline shape

- 56 Diminutive suffix
57 Sneakers brand
58 Cushion
59 Antique cars

- 25 Remote batteries, often
26 "Top Hat" studio
27 Wendy's offering
29 Stretches (out)
31 Six, in Milan
32 "Let me think ..."
34 Monopoly token
38 Paint basecoat
40 Molecule parts
42 AAA job
43 Polio vaccine pioneer
44 Reed instrument
45 Invitation notation
47 Appease
48 Division word
49 Beholds
52 Tony winner Salonga
53 British ref. work

DOWN

- 1 Screen material
2 Rights gp.
3 Leeway
4 Nonstop
5 "I love," to Livy
6 Promptly
7 Jets or Sharks
8 Entreaties
9 Pitcher's tactic
10 Deal (with)
11 Taxpayer IDs
16 "CSI" find
20 Uncivil
22 NYC gallery
23 Took an oath

Answer to Previous Puzzle

Answer grid for the previous crossword puzzle.

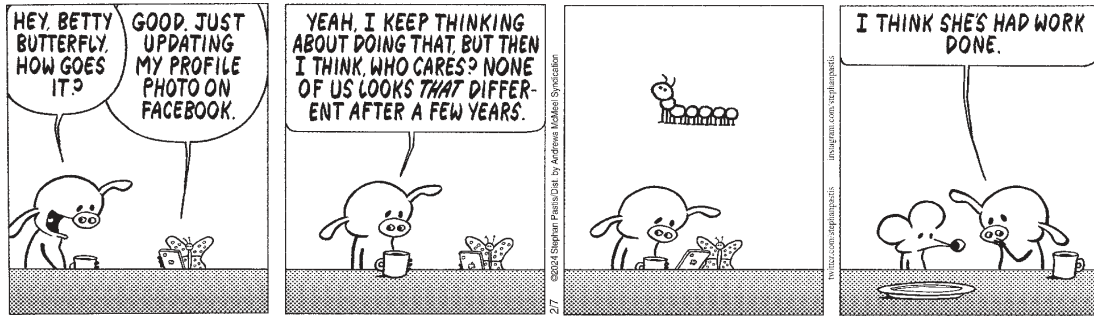
CRYPTOQUIP

H P M Q H X I R J H F H L V X
B H S V U R Z E R S E R L E R K V I R J
H B Q U V J R N P H G R X Q X S R G X
H B J E R L R F K V R J, "N M V, Z V V!"
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: COLLECTIVE NAME OF SYNDICATES THAT DEVELOP NEW IDEAS FOR AMERICAN MOVIES: PLAN-IT HOLLYWOOD.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: V equals I

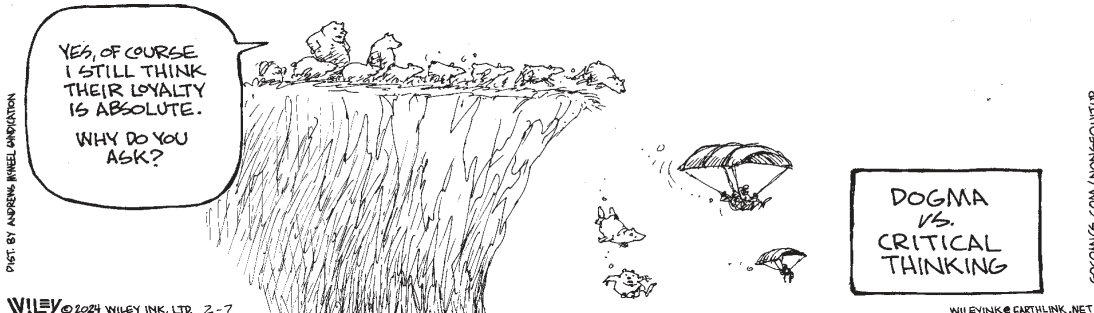
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



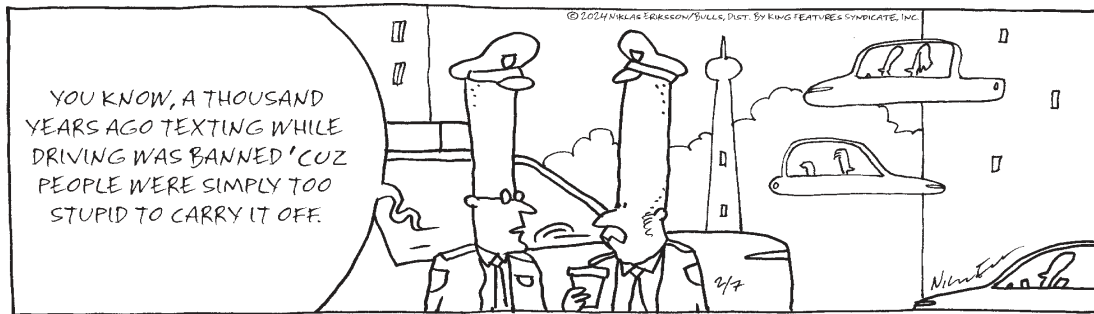
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



SCOREBOARD/MLB

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Men's AP Top 25

The top 25 teams in The Associated Press' college basketball poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, and total points based on 25 points for a first-place vote through one point for a 25th-place vote and previous ranking:

	Record	Pts	Prv
1. UConn (45)	20-2	1509	1
2. Purdue (16)	21-2	1479	2
3. North Carolina	18-4	1352	3
4. Kansas	18-4	1322	8
5. Houston	19-3	1273	4
6. Tennessee	16-5	1211	5
7. Marquette	17-5	1173	9
8. Arizona	17-5	1077	11
9. Duke	16-5	924	7
10. Illinois	17-5	893	14
11. Wisconsin	16-6	838	6
12. Auburn	18-4	818	16
13. Baylor	16-5	730	18
14. Iowa St.	16-5	700	12
15. South Carolina	19-3	564	—
16. Alabama	16-6	520	24
17. Kentucky	15-6	513	10
18. Dayton	18-3	493	21
19. Creighton	16-6	484	13
20. FAU	18-4	431	20
21. BYU	16-5	425	22
22. Utah St.	19-3	286	17
23. Texas Tech	16-5	156	15
24. San Diego St.	17-5	141	—
25. New Mexico	18-4	123	19

Others receiving votes: Saint Mary's 73, TCU 72, Indiana St 53, Boise St. 49, Colorado St. 43, Virginia 32, Texas 22, Oklahoma 17, Mississippi 10, Washington St 6, Memphis 5, Appalachian St 4, Gonzaga 2, Grand Canyon 1, Michigan St. 1.

Men's USA Today Top 25

The USA Today Sports Top 25 men's basketball poll, with first-place votes received in parenthesis, team's records, total points based on 25 for first place through one point for 25th and ranking in last week's final poll:

	Record	Pts	Pvs
1. Connecticut (25)	20-2	793	1
2. Purdue (7)	21-2	775	2
3. North Carolina	18-4	710	3
4. Kansas	18-4	683	9
5. Houston	19-3	662	4
6. Tennessee	16-5	647	5
7. Marquette	17-5	573	10
8. Arizona	17-5	525	12
9. Wisconsin	16-6	505	6
10. Duke	16-5	469	7
11. Auburn	18-4	450	16
12. Illinois	17-5	430	14
13. Baylor	16-5	394	18
14. Iowa State	16-5	387	11
15. Kentucky	15-6	297	8
16. Alabama	16-6	285	22
17. Dayton	18-3	265	19
18. Creighton	16-6	261	13
19. Brigham Young	16-5	234	21
20. South Carolina	19-3	221	—
21. Utah State	19-3	167	17
22. Florida Atlantic	18-4	161	23
23. Texas Tech	16-5	133	15
24. San Diego State	17-5	68	—
25. New Mexico	18-4	60	20

Dropped out: No. 24 Oklahoma (16-6); No. 25 TCU (16-6).

Others receiving votes: Saint Mary's (18-6) 57; Indiana State (20-3) 45; TCU (16-6) 36; Colorado State (17-5) 32; Virginia (17-5) 17; Grand Canyon (21-2) 12; Oklahoma (16-6) 12; Northwestern (15-7) 8; Boise State (16-6) 7; Gonzaga (16-6) 6; Texas (15-7) 5; Michigan State (14-8) 4; Appalachian State (19-4) 2, Mississippi (18-4) 2.

Monday's men's scores

EAST
Howard 75, Delaware St. 71
Md.-Eastern Shore 69, Norfolk St. 60
SOUTH
Alabama A&M 72, Bethune-Cookman 68
Alabama St. 62, Florida A&M 53
Grambling St. 78, Alcorn St. 67
McNeese St. 77, Texas A&M Commerce 51
Morgan St. 79, NC Central 72, OT
New Orleans 84, Houston Christian 58
Nicholls 73, Northwestern St. 66
SC State 77, Coppin St. 65
SE Louisiana 76, Incarnate Word 64
Southern U. 72, Jackson St. 63
Virginia 60, Miami 38
MIDWEST
Kansas St. 75, Kansas 70, OT
SOUTHWEST
Prairie View 75, Ark.-Pine Bluff 74
FAR WEST
E. Washington 90, Portland St. 77
Idaho 61, Sacramento St. 45

Men's AP Top 25 schedule

Wednesday's games
No. 6 Tennessee (16-5) vs. LSU (12-9)
No. 9 Duke (16-5) vs. Notre Dame (7-15)
No. 11 Wisconsin (16-6) at Michigan (7-

15)
No. 12 Auburn (18-4) vs. No. 16 Alabama (16-6)
No. 19 Creighton (16-6) at Providence (14-8)

Thursday's games

No. 8 Arizona (17-5) at Utah (15-7)
No. 20 FAU (18-4) at UAB (14-8)

Friday's games

No. 18 Dayton (18-3) at VCU (14-8)
No. 24 San Diego St. (17-5) at Nevada (17-5)

Saturday's games

No. 1 UConn (20-2) at Georgetown (8-13)
No. 2 Purdue (21-2) vs. Indiana (13-9)
No. 3 North Carolina (18-4) at Miami (15-7)
No. 4 Kansas (18-4) vs. No. 13 Baylor (16-5)
No. 5 Houston (19-3) at Cincinnati (15-7)
No. 6 Tennessee (16-5) at Texas A&M (13-8)
No. 7 Marquette (17-5) vs. St. John's (13-9)
No. 8 Arizona (17-5) at Colorado (15-7)
No. 9 Duke (16-5) vs. Boston College (13-8)
No. 10 Illinois (17-5) at Michigan St. (14-8)
No. 11 Wisconsin (16-6) at Rutgers (11-10)
No. 12 Auburn (18-4) at Florida (15-7)
No. 14 Iowa St. (16-5) vs. TCU (16-6)
No. 15 South Carolina (19-3) vs. Vanderbilt (6-15)
No. 16 Alabama (16-6) at LSU (12-9)
No. 17 Kentucky (15-6) vs. Gonzaga (16-6)
No. 19 Creighton (16-6) at Xavier (12-10)
No. 21 BYU (16-5) vs. Kansas St. (14-8)
No. 22 Utah St. (19-3) vs. Boise St. (16-6)
No. 23 Texas Tech (16-5) vs. UCF (13-8)
No. 25 New Mexico (18-4) vs. UNLV (12-9)

Women's AP Top 25

The top 25 teams in The Associated Press' women's college basketball poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, and total points based on 25 points for a first-place vote through one point for a 25th-place vote and previous ranking:

	Record	Pts	Prv
1. South Carolina (35)	21-0	875	1
2. Iowa	21-2	836	3
3. NC State	19-2	802	5
4. Colorado	19-3	743	6
5. Ohio St.	19-3	694	8
6. Stanford	20-3	691	4
7. Texas	21-3	628	12
8. Kansas St	20-3	593	2
9. UCLA	17-4	546	7
10. Southern Cal	16-4	543	15
11. UConn	19-4	522	11
12. Notre Dame	17-4	455	14
13. LSU	19-4	450	9
14. Indiana	18-3	398	10
15. Louisville	19-3	394	16
16. Virginia Tech	18-4	379	17
17. Oregon St.	17-3	322	18
18. Baylor	17-4	317	13
19. Gonzaga	22-2	292	19
20. Utah	17-6	267	20
21. Creighton	18-3	169	22
22. West Virginia	19-2	139	23
23. Syracuse	18-4	106	21
24. Oklahoma	15-6	69	—
25. Princeton	17-3	44	25

Others receiving votes: UNLV 32, North Carolina 22, Fairfield 21, Mississippi St. 19, Tennessee 3, Florida St. 2, Michigan St. 1, Duke 1.

Monday's women's scores

EAST
Howard 69, Delaware St. 57
LIU Brooklyn 80, Chicago St. 71
Norfolk St. 80, Md.-Eastern Shore 59
SOUTH
Alabama 74, Vanderbilt 66
Alabama A&M 76, Bethune-Cookman 72, OT
Coppin St. 63, SC State 39
Florida A&M 49, Alabama St. 40
Grambling St. 72, Alcorn St. 55
Jackson St. 63, Southern U. 58
NC Central 66, Morgan St. 65
NC State 77, Louisville 67
MIDWEST
Michigan St. 76, Minnesota 65
Purdue 77, Illinois 72, OT
SOUTHWEST
Ark.-Pine Bluff 77, Prairie View 48
FAR WEST
E. Washington 63, Portland St. 39
Idaho 70, Sacramento St. 64

Women's AP Top 25 schedule

Wednesday's games
No. 11 UConn (19-4) vs. Seton Hall (13-9)
No. 18 Baylor (17-4) at BYU (12-11)
No. 24 Oklahoma (15-6) vs. TCU (15-6)

Thursday's games
No. 1 South Carolina (21-0) vs. Missouri (11-11)
No. 2 Iowa (21-2) vs. Penn St. (16-6)
No. 3 NC State (19-2) vs. No. 16 Virginia Tech (18-4)
No. 5 Ohio St. (19-3) at Minnesota (14-7)
No. 12 Notre Dame (17-4) at No. 15 Louisville (19-3)
No. 13 LSU (19-4) at Vanderbilt (17-5)
No. 14 Indiana (18-3) vs. Michigan St. (16-5)
No. 19 Gonzaga (22-2) vs. Pepperdine (5-17)
No. 23 Syracuse (18-4) vs. Georgia Tech (14-9)

TENNIS

Dallas Open

Monday
At Stylinger/Altet Tennis Complex
Dallas
Purse: \$756,020
Surface: Hardcourt indoor
Men's Singles
Qualification

Steve Johnson (8), United States, def. Terence Atmane (1), France, 6-3, 6-7 (4), 6-4.
Tennys Sandgren, United States, def. Ilya Marchenko (6), Ukraine, 7-5, 7-6 (5).
Nicolas Moreno de Alboran (3), United States, def. Denis Kudla (5), United States, 6-4, 6-7 (4), 6-4.
Emilio Nava (2), United States, def. Marco Trungelli (7), Argentina, 6-3, 4-6, 6-4.
Round of 32
Taro Daniel, Japan, def. Constant Lesienne, France, 4-6, 6-4, 5-0, ret.
Max Purcell (6), Australia, def. Mitchell Krueger, United States, 6-2, 4-6, 7-6 (3).

Cordoba Open

Monday
At Estadio Mario Alberto Kempee
Cordoba, Argentina
Purse: \$562,345
Surface: Red clay
Men's Singles
Qualification

Jaume Munar, Spain, def. Daniel Elahi Galan, Colombia, 6-2, 6-4.
Facundo Bagnis, Argentina, def. Juan Manuel Cerundolo, Argentina, 6-4, 6-2.
Hugo Dellien, Bolivia, def. Thiago Seyboth Wild, Brazil, 6-4, 2-6, 6-3.
Albert Ramos-Vinolas, Spain, def. Pedro Cachin, Argentina, 6-4, 3-6, 6-1.
Facundo Diaz Acosta, Argentina, def. Federico Agustín Gomez, Argentina, 6-1, 6-4.

Provece 13

Monday
At Palais des Sports
Marseille, France
Purse: Euro 724,015
Surface: Hardcourt indoor
Men's Singles
Qualification

Maxime Cressy (3), United States, def. Martin Damm Jr, United States, 6-4, 6-4.
Hugo Gaston (1), France, def. Pierre-Hugues Herbert, France, 3-6, 6-2, 6-3.
Hugo Grenier (6), France, def. Giulio Zepieri (2), Italy, 3-6, 7-5, 6-3.
David Goffin (4), Belgium, def. Lucas Pouille, France, 7-5, 6-3.
Round of 32
Lorenzo Musetti (6), Italy, def. Maximilian Marterer, Germany, 6-4, 6-2.
Roberto Bautista Agut, Spain, def. Richard Gasquet, France, 6-3, 7-5.
Alexander Shevchenko, Russia, def. Benjamin Bonzi, France, 7-6 (4), 6-4.

Transylvania Open

Monday
At Andriene BNR
Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Purse: \$267,082
Surface: Hardcourt indoor
Women's Singles
Qualification

Camila Osorio, Colombia, def. Viktoriya Tomova (7), Bulgaria, 6-2, 6-4.
Nuria Parrizas Diaz, Spain, def. Laura Siegemund, Germany, 6-4, 6-4.
Clara Tauson, Denmark, def. Nadia Podoroska (9), Argentina, 6-3, 6-1.
Anna Blinkova (3), Russia, def. Simona Waltert, Switzerland, 6-3, 6-0.
Ana Bogdan (8), Romania, def. Alycia Parks, United States, 7-5, 7-5.
Arantxa Rus (1), Netherlands, def. Greet Minnen, Belgium, 7-5, 6-1.

PRO HOCKEY

PWHL

	W	L	OW	OL	Pts	GF	GA
Montreal	3	1	3	1	17	22	19
Minnesota	3	2	2	2	15	21	19
Boston	2	2	2	1	11	17	18
Toronto	3	5	0	0	11	18	24
New York	2	4	2	1	11	22	21
Ottawa	2	1	0	4	10	18	17

Teams awarded three (3) points for a regulation win, two (2) points for an overtime or shootout win, one (1) point for an overtime or shootout loss, and zero (0) points for a regulation time loss.

Saturday, Feb. 3

Toronto 4, Minnesota 1
Minnesota 4, Boston 1
New York 4, Ottawa 3, OT
Montreal 2, Boston 1, OT
Wednesday's games
Toronto at Boston
Ottawa at Minnesota
Friday's games
Montreal at Toronto
Saturday's games
Minnesota at Ottawa
New York at Boston

AP SPORTLIGHT

Feb. 7

1976 — Darryl Sittler of the Toronto Maple Leafs sets an NHL record for points in a game with six goals and four assists in an 11-4 victory over the Boston Bruins.
2015 — Philadelphia University coach Herb Magee becomes the second NCAA men's basketball coach to win 1,000 games. Magee, who won 1,000 games over 48 seasons at the school, hits the milestone with the Rams' 80-60 win over Post.

DEALS

Monday's transactions

BASEBALL

Major League Baseball
American League
KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Agreed to terms with SS Bobby Witt Jr. on an 11-year contract.

TEXAS RANGERS — signed LHPs Danny Duffy and Chasen Shreve and C Jose Godoy to minor league contracts with invitations to Major League Spring Training camp.

National League

CHICAGO CUBS — Named Matt Hinckley pitching coordinator for the Arizona Complex League (ACL), Greg Brown hitting coordinator/special assistant to the general manager/president and Dr. Samantha Kurkjian team sports psychologist. Named Lance Rymel manager of Tennessee (SL), Nick Lovullo manager of South Bend (ML) and Corey Ray manager of the Arizona Complex League (ACL).
LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Traded LHP Caleb Ferguson to the New York Yankees in exchange for LHP Matt Gage and RHP Christian Zazueta.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Claimed SS Diego Castillo off waivers from the New York Yankees. Named Manager Anthony Contreras, pitching coaches Ryan Buchter and Tyler Higgins, hitting coach Joe Thurston, bench coach Chris Adamson, athletic trainer Andrew Dodgson, assistant athletic trainer Makenna Behrens, and strength & conditioning coach Mike Lidge to Lehigh Valley (AAA). Named manager Al Pedrique, pitching coaches Phil Cundari and Riley McCauley, hitting coach Brock Stassi, development coach Karl Ellison, athletic trainer Meag Flaherty and strength & conditioning coach to Reading (AA). Named manager Greg Brodzinski, pitching coaches Brad Bergesen and Matt Ellmyer, hitting coach Adam Lind, position coach Orlando Munoz, development coach Beth Greenwood, athletic trainer Keita Isaji and strength & conditioning coach John Sweeney to Jersey Shore (A). Named manager Marty Malloy, pitching coaches Tim Collins and Gustavo Armas, hitting coach Chris Heintz, bench coach Mycal Jones, player development instructor John Ryan Murphy, athletic trainer Samantha Myers and strength & conditioning coach Joseph Mirandos to Clearwater (A). Named manager Shawn Williams, pitching coach Jarrod Parker, hitting coaches Rafael De Lima and Jake Palomaki, position coach/base running coordinator, player development instructors Roly de Armas and Sean Rodriguez, athletic trainers Raul Perez and Troy Hoffert, strength & conditioning coaches Blaine Taylor and Carlos Montegudo to Florida Complex League Phillies (R). Named manager Waner Santana, pitching coach Lester Straker, hitting coach Manny Martinez, position coach Felix Castillo, athletic trainer Jose Betancourt, physical therapist Carley McQuain, strength & conditioning coach to Dominican Summer League Phillies White (R). Named manager Nerluis Martinez, bench coach Samuel Hiciano, pitching coach Alex Concepcion, assistant pitching coach Carlos Hernandez, hitting development coach Uziel Viloria, athletic trainers Argelis Perez and Marissa VanHassel, strength & conditioning coaches Noel Almonte and Andres Ibarra to Dominican Summer League Phillies Red (R).

FOOTBALL

National Football League

CLEVELAND BROWNS — Named Ken Dorsey offensive coordinator, Tommy Rees tight ends/pass game specialist, Jacques Cesaire defensive line coach and Duce Stanley running backs coach.

HOUSTON TEXANS — Announced the retirement of RB Rex Burkhead.
SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Named Jay Harbaugh special teams coordinator.
TENNESSEE TITANS — Named Dennard Wilson as Defensive Coordinator and Nick Holz as Offensive Coordinator.

HOCKEY

National Hockey League

BUFFALO SABRES — Activated D Erik Johnson from injured reserve.
EDMONTON OILERS — Recalled LW Dylan Holloway from Bakersfield (AHL).
MINNESOTA WILD — Recalled F Jake Lucchini and Adam Beckman from Iowa (AHL). Placed F Pat Maroon on injured reserve.
TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Recalled F Mitchell Chaffee from Syracuse (AHL).
TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Activated C Bobby McMann from injured reserve.
VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS — Recalled LW Brendan Brisson and RW Sheldon Rempal from Henderson (AHL).
WASHINGTON CAPITALS — Recalled C Michael Sgarbossa from Hershey (AHL).

SOCCER

Major League Soccer

FC AUSTIN — Signed F Diego Rubio to a one-year contract.
HOUSTON DYNAMO FC — Signed M Jan Gregusto to a one-year contract.
NEW YORK CITY FC — Signed D Strahinja Tanasijevic from FK Spartak Subotica (Serbian side) to a contract through 2025, pending receipt of his international transfer certificate (ITC) and P-1 visa.

PORTLAND TIMBERS — Named Dave van den Bergh and Shannon Murray assistant coaches, Paul Lombardo head athletic trainer, Nacho Lebllic director of scouting and Connor Ceballos head video analyst.
SPORTING KC — Signed G Ryan Schwewe to a one-year contract.
VANCOUVER WHITECAPS FC — Signed D Belal Halbouni to a contract through 2025, pending receipt of his international transfer certificate (ITC) and P-1 visa.

Witt inks big deal with KC

By DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Kansas City Royals agreed with shortstop Bobby Witt Jr. on an 11-year deal worth more than \$288.7 million guaranteed, two people familiar with the contract told The Associated Press on Monday, locking up one of baseball's young stars as the club tries to turn around its fortunes and persuade a weary fanbase to invest in a new stadium.

The deal includes a three-year, \$89 million team option that would drive the value to more than \$377 million and keep Witt in Kansas City through the 2037 season, according to the people, who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the financial terms were not disclosed. Witt's guaranteed salary makes it the 16th-largest current deal in Major League Baseball and second-biggest pre-arbitration agreement behind the 14-year, \$340 million contract the Padres gave Fernando Tatis Jr. last April.

The Royals planned a Tuesday news conference to discuss the longest and richest deal in club history. It includes a signing bonus riffing off Witt's lucky jersey No. 7 of \$7,777,777, payable in seven installments, with the first due within 60 days of the contract's approval by the commissioner's office. Witt will receive \$2 million this year, then in the three years he would have been eligible for arbitration: \$7 million in 2025, \$13 million in 2026 and \$19 million in 2027. Witt will earn \$30 million in 2028, the first year after he would have been eligible for free agency, and \$35 million each in 2029 and '30. He has four player options at \$35 million annually from 2031-34, then the Royals have their three-year team option that would pay \$33 million in 2035 and \$28 million each in 2036 and '37.

If all the options are included, Witt would be 37 by the time the contract expires. "From the moment I was drafted in 2019, the entire Royals organization and fans have treated me and my family like their own," Witt said in a statement.

AP baseball writer Ronald Blum contributed to this report.



NBA

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference				
Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	38	12	.760	—
New York	32	18	.640	6
Philadelphia	30	19	.612	7½
Brooklyn	20	29	.408	17½
Toronto	17	33	.340	21
Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	27	23	.540	—
Miami	26	24	.520	1
Atlanta	22	28	.440	5
Charlotte	10	39	.204	16½
Washington	9	40	.184	17½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	32	16	.667	—
Milwaukee	33	17	.660	—
Indiana	28	23	.549	5½
Chicago	23	27	.460	10
Detroit	6	43	.122	26½

Western Conference				
Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New Orleans	29	21	.580	—
Dallas	27	23	.540	2
Houston	23	26	.469	5½
Memphis	18	32	.360	11
San Antonio	10	40	.200	19
Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	35	15	.700	—
Minnesota	35	15	.700	—
Denver	35	16	.686	½
Utah	25	26	.490	10½
Portland	15	35	.300	20
Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Clippers	34	15	.694	—
Sacramento	29	20	.592	5
Phoenix	29	21	.580	5½
L.A. Lakers	27	25	.519	8½
Golden State	22	25	.468	11

Sunday's games
 Orlando 111, Detroit 99
 Phoenix 140, Washington 112
 Boston 131, Memphis 91
 Indiana 115, Charlotte 99
 L.A. Clippers 103, Miami 95
 Minnesota 111, Houston 90
 Oklahoma City 135, Toronto 127, 20T
 Utah 123, Milwaukee 108
 Denver 112, Portland 103

Monday's games
 L.A. Lakers 124, Charlotte 118
 Cleveland 136, Sacramento 110
 Dallas 118, Philadelphia 102
 Golden State 109, Brooklyn 98
 L.A. Clippers 149, Atlanta 144
 New Orleans 138, Toronto 100

Tuesday's games
 Houston at Indiana
 Dallas at Brooklyn
 Memphis at New York
 Orlando at Miami
 Minnesota at Chicago
 Oklahoma City at Utah
 Milwaukee at Phoenix

Wednesday's games
 Cleveland at Washington
 Toronto at Charlotte
 Atlanta at Boston
 Golden State at Philadelphia
 San Antonio at Miami
 Detroit at Sacramento
 New Orleans at L.A. Clippers

Thursday's games
 Golden State at Indiana
 San Antonio at Orlando
 Cleveland at Brooklyn
 Dallas at New York
 Chicago at Memphis
 Minnesota at Milwaukee
 Utah at Phoenix
 Denver at L.A. Lakers
 Detroit at Portland

Scoring leaders					
Through Monday					
	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Doncic, DAL	42	488	308	1447	34.5
Antetokoun., MIL	48	561	358	1502	31.3
Gil.-Alex., OKC	49	534	399	1526	31.1
Durant, PHO	43	437	243	1217	28.3
Mitchell, CLE	39	388	198	1101	28.2
Curry, GS	44	402	221	1238	28.1
Booker, PHO	41	400	247	1141	27.8
Fox, SAC	43	417	209	1172	27.3
Brunson, NY	48	465	248	1308	27.3
Young, ATL	45	383	307	1227	27.3

ROUNDUP

Mitchell, Cavs top Kings to stay hot

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Donovan Mitchell was stuck in the foul lane after picking up his dribble, so he tossed the ball off the backboard to himself and dunked.

“I’ve never thrown it left-handed,” Cleveland’s All-Star guard said with a laugh. “Sometimes you just make (stuff) up.”

The Cavaliers can do no wrong right now.

Mitchell scored 29 points, Max Strus added 22 and Cleveland beat the Sacramento Kings 136-110 on Monday night for its sixth straight win and 14th in 15 games.

Cleveland is a league-best 19-4 since Dec. 16 — when starters Darius Garland and Evan Mobley went down indefinitely with injuries — and the Cavs have climbed to No. 2 overall (by percentage points over Milwaukee) in the Eastern Conference.

“It’s good, but it’s February,” Mitchell said. “We’re just going to try to continue to play the way we’ve been playing. We’re being cohesive as a group. We’re playing great, but the biggest thing is: How do we keep going?”

At the moment, it doesn’t matter who the Cavs are facing. They’re clicking on all cylinders offensively and are healthy after being without Garland (broken jaw) and Mobley (knee surgery) for six weeks.

Sacramento’s Domantas Sabonis had 12 points, 19 rebounds and 15 assists for his 15th triple-double this season, tying him with Denver’s Nikola Jokic for the league lead.

Lakers 124, Hornets 118: Anthony Davis had 26 points, 15 rebounds and 11 assists for his third career triple-double, and visiting Los Angeles beat short-handed Charlotte.

D’Angelo Russell scored 28 points and LeBron James had 26 for the Lakers, who won their



SUE OGOROCKI/AP

Cleveland Cavaliers guard Donovan Mitchell goes up for a dunk in the second half of against the Sacramento Kings on Monday in Cleveland. Mitchell had 29 points in the Cavaliers’ 136-110 victory.

third straight and concluded a 4-2 trip.

Miles Bridges scored a career-high 41 points and rookie Brandon Miller added 33 points for the Hornets, who lost their eighth straight since trading Terry Rozier to Miami.

Mavericks 118, 76ers 102: Kyrie Irving had 23 points and eight assists and Luka Doncic scored 19 points as visiting Dallas beat Philadelphia.

Irving and Doncic played together for just the 23rd time in the Mavericks’ 50 games. Josh Green scored 20 points for Dallas.

Kelly Oubre Jr. scored 19 points, Tobias Harris had 17 and Tyrese Maxey had 15 for the Sixers, who fell to 4-11 without injured MVP Joel Embiid, who’s set for knee surgery this week.

Warriors 109, Nets 98: Stephen Curry scored 29 points, Jonathan Kuminga added 28 points and 10 rebounds, and visiting Golden State shook off a poor start to beat Brooklyn.

The Warriors outscored the Nets 66-49 in the second half, even while going just 4-for-22 from behind the arc in the game — with all the makes by Curry.

Cam Thomas scored 18 points but shot 4-for-21 for the Nets, who had won three of four. Nic Claxton added 15 points and a career-high seven blocked shots before being ejected in the fourth quarter for a flagrant foul against Brandin Podziemski, who had 15 points and 11 rebounds.

Pelicans 138, Raptors 100: Brandon Ingram made a career-high eight 3-pointers and scored

41 points, and host New Orleans routed Toronto.

Ingram hit 16 of 21 shots and also dished out nine assists in 30 minutes. He capped his performance by hitting five straight 3s at the end of the third.

CJ McCollum scored 20 points for the Pelicans, who won their third straight and sent the Raptors to their eighth loss in nine games.

Clippers 149, Hawks 144: Kawhi Leonard scored 36 points, including 11 in the fourth quarter, and visiting Los Angeles beat Atlanta to conclude a 6-1 road swing.

James Harden had 30 points and 10 assists, and Paul George scored 18 for Los Angeles.

De’Andre Hunter matched a season high with 27 points for the Hawks. Trae Young added 25 points.

Lakers’ Russell dismisses trade rumors

By STEVE REED

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Yes, Los Angeles Lakers veteran point guard D’Angelo Russell is aware that he’s been the subject of rampant trade rumors.

No, he doesn’t care.

It’s not that Russell doesn’t want to be with the Lakers, it’s just that he refuses to spend much time worrying about things that are out of his control.

“My approach is just a little different,” Russell said after scoring a team-high 28 points in the Lakers’ 124-118 win over the Charlotte Hornets on Monday night. “I really just genuinely, humbly don’t care because I know I can’t control it for one, and two, I just won’t allow my mind to go there. Focus on basketball and not comments



Russell

and what’s trending on social media.”

He signed a \$36 million, two-year contract with Los Angeles in 2023 that includes a player option worth \$18.6 million next season, per Spotrac. When he signed that deal, he reportedly waived the no-trade clause.

“I can’t control that my contract makes sense to be traded,” Russell said. “So I mean, I just play. I can’t control that. Once again, I don’t care at all.”

The NBA trade deadline is Thursday afternoon, just a few hours before the Lakers host the defending NBA champion Denver Nuggets in their next game.

The 27-year-old Russell knows a deal is possi-

ble, if not inevitable.

His approach over the next 48 hours is simple: “Show up and work,” he said.

“Obviously, I’ve been here before, I played for the Lakers before so I know what the requirements are to be successful here are,” said Russell, who was dealt by the Lakers to the Brooklyn Nets following his second season in the league in 2017. “If you are success here, you will be a part of the future. If not, you will get traded.”

Russell’s numbers this year are nearly identical to last season, averaging 17.4 points and 6.2 assists while shooting 41.6% from 3-point range after a slow start.

But since re-entering the starting lineup on Jan. 13, Russell was averaging 23.7 points and 6.6 assists and is shooting 47.1% on 3s before the Charlotte game.

NHL

ROUNDUP

Lafreniere, Rangers beat Avs in OT

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Alexis Lafreniere scored 1:53 into overtime and the New York Rangers rallied to beat the Colorado Avalanche 2-1 on Monday night.

Artemi Panarin also scored and Jonathan Quick stopped 31 shots to help the Rangers get their second straight win and their 15th comeback win this season.

Nathan MacKinnon scored for the Avalanche, who had won three straight. Alexandar Georgiev finished with 27 saves against his former team.

In the extra period, Mika Zibanejad dropped the puck to Lafreniere, who then whipped a shot past Georgiev for his 13th goal of the season and third overtime winner of his career.

“Luckily it went in, so that was good,” Lafreniere said. “That was big win against a really good team. We wanted to play better defense, and I think we did a really good job.”

The Central Division-leading Avalanche, starting a season-high six-game trip, are 11-3-1 in their last 15 games and 5-2-1 in their last eight on the road.

MacKinnon got his team-leading 32nd goal with 1:48 left in the opening period, firing the puck past Quick to give the Avalanche a 1-0 lead.

Cale Makar and Josh Manson had assists on the play, giving Colorado a league-best 155 points from its defensemen. Makar has 305 points in 283 career games, two shy of tying Tyson Barrie as highest-scoring defenseman in franchise history.

MacKinnon has points in 14



MARY ALTAFFER/AP

Rangers left wing Alexis Lafreniere, right, celebrates with center Vincent Trocheck and defenseman Erik Gustafsson after scoring in overtime Monday against the Colorado Avalanche in New York.

straight games and in 33 of his last 34 games overall. The 28-year-old forward is tied with Tampa Bay's Nikita Kucherov with an NHL-leading 85 points.

After Georgiev frustrated the Rangers for more than 50 minutes, Panarin scored his team-leading 31st at 11:17 of the third to tie it. The Rangers outshot the Avalanche 12-6 in the third period.

“I think they had more jump as

the game went on,” Avalanche coach Jared Bednar said. “We just didn't do enough to secure the win.”

Islanders 3, Maple Leafs 2: Forward Pierre Engvall returned to face his former team and scored late to help visiting New York halt Toronto's three-game winning streak.

Kyle MacLean and Mathew Barzal also scored for the Islanders. Goalie Ilya Sorokin made

35 saves.

The win evened new Islanders head coach Patrick Roy's record at 2-2-1.

Toronto captain John Tavares tied the game on the power play with 4:48 left in the third period, redirecting a Morgan Rielly shot from the slot. Mitch Marner also scored for Toronto.

Ilya Samsonov made 26 saves in his fourth consecutive start as Toronto outshot the visitors 37-29.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division						
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF GA
Boston	49	31	9	9	71	173 128
Florida	49	31	14	4	66	158 127
Tampa Bay	50	27	18	5	59	175 164
Toronto	48	25	15	8	58	168 153
Detroit	50	26	18	6	58	176 161
Buffalo	49	22	23	4	48	146 155
Montreal	49	20	21	8	48	136 175
Ottawa	47	20	25	2	42	158 170

Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF GA
N.Y. Rangers	50	31	16	3	65	163 143
Carolina	48	28	15	5	61	163 144
Philadelphia	50	25	19	6	56	147 148
N.Y. Islanders	50	21	17	12	54	146 168
Pittsburgh	46	22	17	7	51	138 126
New Jersey	47	24	20	3	51	161 168
Washington	47	22	18	7	51	115 146
Columbus	50	16	24	10	42	148 184

Western Conference

Central Division						
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF GA
Colorado	50	32	14	4	68	191 155
Dallas	49	30	13	6	66	183 151
Winnipeg	47	30	12	5	65	148 109
St. Louis	49	26	21	2	54	141 153
Nashville	51	26	23	2	54	153 160
Arizona	48	23	22	3	49	143 147
Minnesota	49	21	23	5	47	149 166
Chicago	50	14	34	2	30	105 177

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF GA
Vancouver	49	33	11	5	71	186 127
Vegas	50	29	15	6	64	163 138
Edmonton	45	29	15	1	59	160 124
Los Angeles	48	23	15	10	56	152 132
Seattle	50	21	19	10	52	140 147
Calgary	49	22	22	5	49	149 155
Anaheim	50	18	30	2	38	129 170
San Jose	51	14	32	5	33	107 199

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

N.Y. Rangers 2, Colorado 1, OT
N.Y. Islanders 3, Toronto 2

Tuesday's games

Calgary at Boston
Dallas at Buffalo
Montreal at Washington
Philadelphia at Florida
Vancouver at Carolina
Winnipeg at Pittsburgh
Colorado at New Jersey
Edmonton at Vegas

Wednesday's games

Dallas at Toronto
Tampa Bay at N.Y. Rangers
Minnesota at Chicago

Kings GM Blake hoping Hiller can turn season around

By JOE REEDY

Associated Press

EL SEGUNDO, Calif. — Rob Blake hopes a new voice and approach behind the bench turns around the Los Angeles Kings' season.

When it comes to what else Blake is looking for after firing Todd McLellan as coach and naming Jim Hiller the interim for the rest of the season, the general manager was vague.

“Jim will have a much different approach in all aspects,” Blake said Monday in his first availability since making the coaching change on Friday. “I don't know if I'm going to get into the systems and structure. Part of the timing here, it does give Jim some days here with our group before our next game.”

Los Angeles' next game isn't until Saturday when it hosts the Edmonton Oilers, who had won



ALEX GALLARDO/AP

Los Angeles Kings goaltender Cam Talbot is 14-13-5 this season with a 2.59 goals against average and a .911 save percentage.

16 straight and had a chance to tie the NHL record for consecutive victories at Las Vegas on

Tuesday. Hiller's first practice as head coach will be Thursday when the Kings return from the

All-Star break and their bye week.

The Kings (23-15-10) hold the first wild-card spot in the Western Conference with 56 points, but are only four points from falling out. They trail the Oilers by three points for third place in the Pacific Division, but Edmonton has three games in hand.

It has been a season of extremes for Los Angeles. It had 44 points after 31 games, tied for the most in team history. Since Dec. 28, however, it has gone 3-8-6. The three wins are tied for the fewest in the league in that span and the 12 points are tied for the fifth-worst.

The disappointing stretch, which included five one-goal losses in regulation or overtime, cost McLellan his job after four-plus seasons behind the Kings' bench.

Blake said the team's 2-4-2

stretch going into the break — including a shootout loss to San Jose and blowing a two-goal lead to Buffalo, both at home — was a determining factor.

“This was done in an effort to correct the way we played of late. Our offense, our defense, our overall game. Individuals and the team have not been up to a level of our desired needs,” Blake said. “Our team has played disconnected, I think. I don't think that last little while we were going in the same type of connection we had earlier in the season.”

Blake also said it was his decision to fire McLellan, and he understands this puts his status even more on the hot seat.

“We have 34 games left. The team was built and assembled to get in the playoffs, and that's what we need to do. So that will be judged on wins and losses,” Blake said.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

No pulling rank on the road this year

Top-10 teams under .500 playing at unranked foes

By JOHN MARSHALL
Associated Press

PHOENIX — North Carolina rode a wave of momentum into Georgia Tech's McCamish Pavilion, winner of 10 straight, up to No. 3 in the AP Top 25 and comfortably atop the ACC standings.

The Yellow Jackets and their rowdy fans brought the Tar Heels' good vibes to a screeching halt, winning 74-73 last week on Naithan George's layup with 7.7 seconds left.

"They're not easy games to win," North Carolina guard RJ Davis said.

Road games, particularly in conference play, have always been difficult to win. The home team players are in a comfortable place, have their fans cheering wildly on their side and have the incentive of not wanting to lose on their own court.

Kansas is the most recent team to experience a rough road, falling at Kansas State in overtime on Monday.

Winning on the road has become more difficult this season — with an assist from COVID-19 and the transfer portal.

Through Monday's game, AP Top 25 teams were 71-67 against unranked road opponents, the lowest winning percentage (.514) since at least the 2009-10 season. The previous low was .567 last season, according to Sportradar.

Top-10 teams have had the worst of it on the road, going 27-30 against unranked road opponents for a winning percentage of .473. The previous lowest in the past 15 years was

.623 in 2020-21.

The worst of the top-10 carnage came in early January, when then-top-ranked Purdue, No. 2 Houston, No. 3 Kansas, No. 5 Tennessee and No. 9 Oklahoma all lost to unranked opponents on the road in a span of a few days.

"It's hard to win on the road in college basketball. It's something you don't ever take for granted," No. 8 Arizona coach Tommy Lloyd said. "A lot of these power conference teams, you can really tilt your schedule to play a lot of home games or maybe a select

neutral or two, and when you go on the road it's going to be a lot more difficult."

"You just play at a higher level at home than you do on the road," San Diego State coach Brian Dutcher said after beating then-No. 17 Utah State on Saturday. "This was a critical game. If we'd have lost we would have been three back in the standings and we'd be going on the road for two. Then we'd be sitting there going, 'Man, we cannot lose three or four in a row.'"

Early season underdog wins have had a snowball effect on teams across the country.

The intimidation factor of facing a highly ranked team no longer holds the sway it once did, teams seeing another program beat a ranked team and think: why not us?

"Right now, I think everybody in the country feels any game they play, they can win because those kinds of games have happened through the whole season," No. 9 Duke coach Jon Scheyer said. "So it creates a belief, it creates togetherness. It doesn't



TRAVIS HEYING/AP

Kansas State players and fans celebrate after beating rival Kansas on Monday.



ALEX SLITZ/AP

North Carolina guard RJ Davis eyes the basket against Georgia Tech on Jan. 30 in Atlanta. The Tar Heels had won 10 straight and were ranked No. 3, but lost that game.

matter what happens the game before, because there's that belief that they can still win."

The transfer portal has made it easier by leveling the hardwood, at least to a certain degree.

With players able to move freely about without having to sit out a season, teams can stock up on talented players who can have an immediate impact. The top teams often get the most sought-after transfers, but there's plenty to go around — from players from high-major teams going to smaller programs to get more playing time to mid-major players wanting to play on a bigger stage.

"With the transfer portal and kids being instantly eligible or transfer twice and get to be eligible when that originally was not the plan, teams now have more experience, have more depth, have more talent across the board," Lloyd said. "And there's been a trickle-down effect to some of the other programs that maybe wasn't there pre-COVID."

COVID's biggest impact — at least from a

positive standpoint — has been an increase of veteran players across the country. Because the NCAA gave student-athletes an extra year of eligibility following the pandemic, rosters across college basketball are dotted with more mature players who've had the opportunity to gain more experience and become further entrenched in their coaches' systems.

Four years after the start of the pandemic, the sport is filled with players who have been in college basketball five, six, even more years. DeJuan Clayton, a 26-year-old guard at Manhattan, is still hoping to get cleared for an eighth year of eligibility in a career plagued by injuries and the pandemic.

"I think it's safe to say there's, with the transfer portal and with the COVID year, there's probably more parity overall," Scheyer said. "There's not as big of a gap in terms of talent and when you think about talent, also experience plays a factor in that."

The combination has made it even more difficult to win on the road this season.

Perry lifts Kansas State past No. 4 Kansas in OT

By DAVID SMALE
Associated Press

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Tylor Perry scored eight of his 26 points in overtime and Kansas State beat No. 4 Kansas 75-70 on Monday night in the 300th matchup of their heated rivalry.

"It was a fun environment to be in," Perry said. "Our fans did a very good job of packing it in and setting the mood for the game. Kansas is obviously a very good basketball team. Everybody was excited to play. I feel that we went out there, we did what we had to do in order to get the win."

Perry's 3-pointer with 1:54 left gave the Wildcats a 70-66 lead. Hunter Dickinson's basket trimmed it to 70-68, but Perry's two free throws extended the

margin back to four.

Dajuan Harris Jr. cut it to 72-70 with two free throws before Kevin McCullar Jr. missed the front end of a 1-and-1 for Kansas with 22 seconds remaining. Arthur Kaluma sank a pair of foul shots and Perry added another one to seal it, ending Kansas State's four-game losing streak.

"I thought that they were the more athletic and explosive team," Kansas coach Bill Self said. "I thought we showed stretches where we were, as well. But the bottom line is it comes down to making free throws."

Kansas State is 6-0 in overtime this season, and 11-0 in coach Jerome Tang's two seasons in Manhattan.

"In overtime, it's about players



TRAVIS HEYING, THE WICHITA EAGLE/AP

Kansas State's Tylor Perry celebrates a 3-pointer on Monday against Kansas.

making plays," Tang said. "They don't feel the pressure. We work on it every day in practice, but I

don't know that that's necessarily the reason. I think guys just make plays and their confidence level grows."

Cam Carter had 19 points and 11 rebounds for K-State (15-8, 5-5 Big 12).

Dickinson had 21 points and 12 rebounds to pace Kansas (18-5, 6-4). Harris and McCullar each added 15 points, and KJ Adams Jr. scored 13.

Kansas scored the first nine points of the second half to open its largest lead at 41-30. But the Wildcats scored the next 11, capped by a three-point play from Carter.

"I thought our guys did a great job," Tang said of his team's response. "TP (Perry) had an 8-0 run on his own. But the guys

locked back in. The fact that we were able to make it a ballgame again and put some score pressure on them helped us."

Perry hit three free throws with 4:49 left in regulation to give K-State a three-point lead. Dickinson scored inside, but Carter answered from long range to give the Wildcats a 58-54 lead.

Harris hit a layup to tie it with 2:14 left, and the teams started trading baskets, with Adams' bucket with 14.2 seconds left sending the game to overtime.

"I thought we had it," Harris said. "I remember two years ago when we came back in overtime. I've been there, Coach has been there before. I just thought we had the game, but they can compete, too, you know."

SUPER BOWL

It's happening in Vegas, baby

No longer shunned by the NFL, Sin City ready to host its most important game

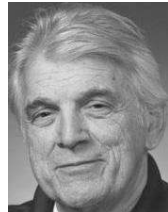
BY MARK ANDERSON
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — A meeting scheduled in the 1980s between the NFL and sportsbook directors sparked hope in Las Vegas that their relationship would soon take a much more positive turn after decades during which the league kept the city at arm's length.

When all it turned out to be was a league official telling the casinos they would each be charged \$25,000 a year to televise NFL games, longtime sportsbook director Jimmy Vaccaro knew the relationship would remain frosty for the foreseeable future.

"In the long run, we thought there's no sense fighting these people because they can turn off the switch and there are no football games on," Vaccaro said. "So you just have to eat it and go from there."

Now the NFL can't get enough of Las Vegas. The Raiders have been playing near the Strip at Allegiant Stadium since 2020, and on Sunday the stadium will host the Kansas City Chiefs and the San Francisco 49ers in the Super Bowl, the most visible sign that the league has come to embrace both the city and the growing gambling industry. The city has also hosted



Vaccaro

the NFL Draft and two Pro Bowls. "The relationship developed very quickly," said Jay Kornegay, vice president of race and sports operations at Westgate Las Vegas. "To us, it felt like it was a 180-degree turn. For decades, it was a precarious type of relationship. We talked to each other a number of times over the decades, but it was very clear their stance on sports gambling, and we certainly respected that."

Las Vegas bookmakers, business executives and government officials largely took a pragmatic view when it came to how they worked with the NFL, a key reason the transition to a much warmer relationship has been smooth. They could've

taken the NFL's snubs much more personally, and in fact the league made two decisions that especially didn't sit well.

One was in 2003 when the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority asked to run a TV commercial during the Super Bowl touting the city. The NFL refused to air the ad, even though it didn't mention gambling.

Authority CEO and President Steve Hill wasn't in charge of the agency at the time, but in speaking with several people about the ad



Hill



MATT YORK/AP

Workers prepare the field outside Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas last week ahead of Super Bowl 58.

being nixed, he learned some were genuinely surprised and insulted.

But Hill added, chuckling: "I also think there was a fair amount of feigned surprise. It just plays wrong. Hey, this is going to draw free attention to us, which it did. And we played it up. It's not the end-of-the-world kind of thing, so let's play hurt and get some free media."

The famous Las Vegas slogan "What happens here, stays here" was in the rejected commercial. It debuted that year, and Hill said the Super Bowl ad controversy was especially fortuitous in driving home the idea for tourists craving a place with relaxed rules and no judgment.

Then in 2015, then-Dallas Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo was scheduled to headline a fantasy football convention at the Venetian that the NFL put the kibosh on because it was on casino property. Romo, who as CBS's No. 1 game

analyst will be calling this Super Bowl, unsuccessfully sued the league.

Las Vegas bookmakers, in the meantime, forged ahead and even worked with the NFL and other leagues when they discovered suspicious bets or line changes.

"They liked it when we told them what we thought when they wanted to question something, but that meant nothing after that," Vaccaro said.

Two events swung the pendulum the other way.

NFL owners in 2017 approved the Raiders' plans to relocate from Oakland, Calif., to Las Vegas. A year later, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act, opening the door to legalized sports betting beyond Nevada.

Suddenly, the NFL had a much different relationship with Las Vegas.

"It's a totally new world," UNLV history professor Michael

Green said. "It's a complete flip-flop."

Getting the Raiders was the key to the improved ties between the league and city. A secretive 2015 meeting that included Bo Bernhard, then the UNLV International Gaming Institute executive director, and Raiders owner Mark Davis planted the seed. Bernhard ended up producing a white paper that Davis took to the league to show Las Vegas would be a valuable host city.

"I was just there at the beginning, like the coin toss in football," Bernhard said. "A lot of really powerful people got it to the goal line."

One of those was Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, who made the case to his peers to open the Las Vegas market. "He felt pretty strongly that this was going to be a success," Hill said.

The owners approved the move by a 31-1 vote. Only Miami's Stephen Ross voted against it.

Price: There are few running backs as versatile as McCaffrey

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He's added four more touchdowns and 260 yards from scrimmage in two playoff wins.

"He's why our pass game and our play-action pass and all that kind of stuff opened up because he sort of sets the standard with the run game and then when we do pass the ball, he's there in our play," quarterback Brock Purdy said.

"He catches the ball, he makes guys miss, he can go up against safeties and linebackers and make them miss and stuff in the pass game. And then he scores touchdowns. His stats are crazy. So, he's definitely a valued player and I think the most valued player."

There are few backs as versatile as McCaffrey. He can run inside or outside. He excels at picking up blitzes as well as running pass patterns out of the backfield. Or he can line up in the slot or out wide and



Shanahan

run pass patterns as well as many receivers.

That versatility can sometimes be a curse with some coaches viewing him more as a scat back than a traditional three-down back who can pound it between the tackles for positive yards play after play such as the old-school backs from the 1970s and '80s.

That's why McCaffrey made sure Shanahan knew as soon as he arrived that he could handle the heavy load of a three-down back who was physical enough to gain the tough yards when needed.

"It's probably part of my insecurities and competitiveness. I want to be a complete back," he said. "I think this dates back to when I was in middle school and high school. ... I had coaches in the NFL who didn't think I could run in between the tack-

les. So I think, for me, it'll always be in the back of my head and something that I take a lot of pride in, just being a complete back."

McCaffrey is meticulous about how he takes care of his body starting in the offseason and how hard he works during the season.

That helped McCaffrey play the fourth-most snaps of any running back in the league this season as he rarely takes a play off and gives so much effort even when his number isn't called that Shanahan called him the best player he has ever seen without the ball.

"The guy is insane in how hard he prepares, not just in the season, but I saw him like a week after the season last year and he had a drink with me and he actually had a second one," Shanahan said. "He is like, 'Well, only got like four more days left, so I'm going to have a couple for the next four days.' I'm like, 'Dude we just finished like

five days ago.' He gives himself like 12 days off and he is right back to preparing."

McCaffrey made his debut for the 49ers last season against the Chiefs two days after arriving. He barely knew his teammates' names and didn't know the playbook at all, so other offensive players just pointed him in the right direction after the play was called in the huddle.

McCaffrey managed to rush for 38 yards on four carries and catch two passes for 24 yards in that game but took off the following week when he had a TD run, catch and pass in a win against the Rams. He has scored 38 TDs in his 31 starts in the regular season and playoffs.

"Thank God we got them then and not after they had him for two or three weeks," Chiefs defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo said. "It's scary to watch all the weapons they have. He's one piece of it. A big piece of it."

SUPER BOWL

Opening night festivities relatively tame

By ROB MAADDI
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Brock Purdy went overtime on Super Bowl opening night.

The San Francisco 49ers' second-year quarterback began by saying he's ready to spoil Taylor Swift's trip to Las Vegas and finished by remaining at the microphone to answer questions for several minutes after Monday's media extravaganza concluded.

With rowdy Niners fans chanting his name and wildness surrounding him in Sin City's first time hosting the NFL's biggest week, Purdy demonstrated the same poise he displays under pressure in the pocket.

He gave thoughtful answers, posed for pictures and even signed an autograph while taking questions for about 65 minutes.

With Patrick Mahomes standing next to him on stage after the defending Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs wrapped up their media session, Purdy fielded this question from NFL Network host Scott Hanson: "It's late in the fourth quarter, are you prepared to disappoint Taylor Swift?"

Purdy smiled and responded: "Yes. I'll leave it at that."

No surprise Swift was a hot topic as her romance with Chiefs star tight end Travis Kelce has dominated headlines throughout the season. Even NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell was asked a few times about Swift during his 53-minute news conference.

Purdy, a finalist for NFL MVP, has already led the 49ers to two comeback wins in the playoffs. He's gone from being picked last in the 2022 draft to one win away from joining Pro Football Hall of Famers Joe Montana and Steve Young in San Francisco's championship history.

Asked if he knew all the names of the 16 quarterbacks picked ahead him in his draft class, Purdy said: "I'm a believer that God has a plan for everybody and I fell last for a reason. I'm blessed to be part of the 49ers."

Kelce, of course, answered plenty of questions about his girlfriend. Swift earned her



MATT YORK/AP

San Francisco 49ers quarterback Brock Purdy, left, and Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes shake hands during Super Bowl 58 opening night Monday in Las Vegas. Mahomes is set to play in his third Super Bowl while Purdy will be playing in his first.

fourth career Grammy for album of the year on Sunday, and Kelce said he also has to "bring home some hardware."

Super Bowl opening night evolved into a circus-like spectacle long before Las Vegas had a chance to host the NFL's championship game.

But there wasn't as much of the outrageous behavior at Allegiant Stadium, a surprise consider the host city is known for being over the top.

Comedian Carrot Top asked Chiefs coach Andy Reid a question. A reporter from a Mexican television station asked players

what their Lucha Libre wrestling names would be and gave them masks. Members of the Blue Man Group entertained the audience and stuck around for interviews and pictures.

Overall, it was tame compared to media nights of the past.

This is where a female reporter once showed up in a wedding dress and veil and proposed to Tom Brady. Back then, it was called media day and took place Tuesday.

Now, it's shown live on national television in prime time.

More than 6,000 media members from 26

countries were accredited to cover the first Super Bowl in Las Vegas and related events in the gambling capital of America.

Players can be overwhelmed if it's their first time. The Chiefs are aiming to win back-to-back Super Bowls and are making their fourth appearance in five years. They're used to this atmosphere.

"It's exciting. It's all exciting stuff," Kelce said. "It builds and sets the tone for the whole week. It's the biggest stage in the world. ... At this point, I just love it, it's an exciting time. It's a once-in-a-lifetime type of thing that I've been able to enjoy a few times."

Kelce looking for more hardware after Swift's big win at Grammys

By W.G. RAMIREZ
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — One night after Taylor Swift earned her fourth career Grammy for album of the year, her boyfriend was feeling pressure to secure his own triumph in the Super Bowl.

"She's unbelievable, she's re-writing the history books herself," Travis Kelce said Monday night at Allegiant Stadium, where the Kansas City Chiefs will meet the San Francisco 49ers on Sunday. "I told her I'll have to hold up my end of the bargain and bring home some hardware, too."

The romance between Swift and Kelce, which NFL commissioner Roger Goodell said he "couldn't have scripted," has been the talk of the league this season, with her appearances at Chiefs games generating intense interest from her legion of Swifties.

"She's definitely brought a lot of new faces to the game and it's been fun to experience that," the Chiefs tight end said. "She seems to be enjoying the games and she's a part of Chiefs Kingdom right now. It's fun seeing her enjoy the game of football knowing that it's kind of new to her life."

Kelce wasn't the only one fielding questions about Swift. Chiefs coach Andy Reid said the pop star "has been great. She's a good girl and humble."

And while she has focused much of her attention on her boyfriend and the offense, Kansas City linebacker Nick Bolton said the defense has also begun feeling the love from Swift and her fans. "I think she's been great for Chiefs Kingdom and also just the sport of football," Bolton said.

Front Office Sports reported Swift has generated a "brand val-

ue" of \$331.5 million for the Chiefs and the NFL, citing data from Apex Marketing Group.

According to the report, the figure that was calculated on Jan. 22 accounts for print, digital, radio, TV, highlights and social media mentioning Swift dating to the first game she attended Sept. 24, then calculating the equivalent dollar value for each instance based on reach and impact.

"Taylor has an unbelievable fan base that follows her and supports her throughout her life," Kelce said. "It's been fun to kind of gather the Swifties into Chiefs Kingdom and open them up to the football world and the sports world. It's been cool to just experience all that."

Kelce also said he's gotten to listen to parts of Swift's upcoming album — "Tortured Poets Department," due out April 19 — but



CHARLIE RIEDEL/AP

Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce speaks to the media during Super Bowl 58 opening night Monday in Las Vegas.

wouldn't reveal any details.

"I have heard some of it, yes, and it is unbelievable," Kelce

said. "I can't wait for her to shake up the world when it finally drops."

SPORTS



Big payday

Witt signs 11-year, \$288 million-plus deal with Kansas City » **MLB, Page 18**



SUPER BOWL

Worth the high price

49ers get impressive return on investment in McCaffrey

By JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

As San Francisco 49ers CEO Jed York tells the story, coach Kyle Shanahan took some convincing before deciding it was worth dealing a boatload of draft picks before last season's trade deadline for Christian McCaffrey.

With most teams around the NFL downgrading the value of running backs, the Niners ultimately decided the cost of four draft picks was worth it to acquire McCaffrey from Carolina if they wanted to have a team worthy of winning a championship.

That move was a big step in lifting the 49ers from a good offense to perhaps the most efficient in the NFL and is a major reason why San Francisco is preparing to play the Kansas City Chiefs in the Super Bowl on Sunday.

"That's the time that you want to push your chips in the middle," York said. "I feel like that's where we were with Christian. We did give up a lot. But I think we have one of the best, if not the best player in the National Football League on our team."

McCaffrey has proven to be as valuable as anyone on the 49ers after leading the NFL in yards from scrimmage (2,023), tying for the lead in touchdowns (21) and generating the most first downs (114) in the regular season.

That earned McCaffrey a unanimous spot as the All-Pro running back and made him a finalist for both the MVP and Offensive Player of the Year awards that will be handed out this week.

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INSIDE

Purdy goes into OT on opening night
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Running back Christian McCaffrey has scored 38 touchdowns in his 31 starts for the 49ers in the regular season and playoffs.

MARK J. TERRILL/AP

Kansas State knocks off No. 4 Kansas » College basketball, Page 21

