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50¢/Free to Deployed Areas

US gave \$17.9B in military aid to Israel

BY ELLEN KNICKMEYER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States has spent a record of at least \$17.9 billion on military aid to Israel since the war in Gaza began and led to escalating conflict around the Middle East, according to a report for Brown University's Costs of War project, released Monday on the anniversary of Hamas' attacks on Israel.

An additional \$4.86 billion has gone into stepped-up U.S. military operations in the region since the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks, researchers said in findings first provided to The Associated Press. That includes the costs of a Navy-led campaign to quell strikes on commercial shipping by Yemen's Houthis, who are carrying them out in solidarity with the fellow Iranian-backed group Hamas.

The report — completed before Israel opened a second front, this one against Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon, in late September — is one of the first tallies of estimated U.S. costs as the Biden administration backs Israel in its conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon and seeks to contain hostilities by Iran-allied armed groups in the region.

The financial toll is on top of the cost in human lives: Hamas militants killed more than 1,200 people in Israel a year ago and took others hostage. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed nearly 42,000 people in Gaza, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count.

At least 1,400 people in Lebanon, including Hezbollah fighters and civilians, have been killed

SEE AID ON PAGE 8



ARIEL SCHALT/AP

People visit the site of the Nova music festival, where hundreds of revelers were killed and abducted by Hamas and taken into Gaza, on the one-year anniversary of the attack, near Kibbutz Reim, southern Israel, on Monday.

Israel marks somber year

Scarred and battling on multiple fronts, residents remember those lost

BY MELANIE LIDMAN
AND TIA GOLDENBERG
Associated Press

RE'IM, Israel — Israelis held somber ceremonies on Monday to mark a year since the deadliest attack in the country's history, a Hamas-led raid that shattered its sense of security and ignited wars on two fronts with no end in sight.

Hamas marked the anniversary of its Oct. 7, 2023, attack by firing a barrage of rockets at Tel Aviv, underscoring its resilience after a

year of war and devastation in Gaza. Lebanon's Hezbollah, which began firing rockets at Israel on Oct. 8 in support of its ally Hamas, vowed to keep up the barrages despite its recent losses.

The surprise cross-border attack one year ago — which caught Israelis unprepared on a major Jewish holiday — shook their faith in their leaders and their military, and its aftershocks are still rippling across the region. Around 100 hostages captured that day have not been returned, a third of whom are believed to be dead, and cease-fire efforts have

ground to a halt.

The war in Gaza rages on and Israel is fighting a new war against Hezbollah. There is also an escalating conflict with Iran — which backs both Hamas and Hezbollah — that threatens to drag the region into an even more dangerous conflagration.

No formal commemorative event is planned in Gaza, where fighting is still underway, huge areas have been completely destroyed and

SEE SOMBER ON PAGE 8

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Paper mill fined \$650,000 after employee is killed

Associated Press

CAMAS, Wash. — Washington state authorities have fined one of the world's leading paper and pulp companies nearly \$650,000 after one of its employees was crushed by a packing machine earlier this year.

The penalty comes after Dakota Cline, 32, was killed on March 8 while working on a machine at Georgia-Pacific's paper mill in Camas, about 20 miles northeast of Portland, Ore., The Columbian reported.

The Washington State Department of Labor & Industries said Wednesday it cited and fined Georgia-Pacific in August for violating fundamental safety rules that directly contributed to Cline's death.

Management and workers told inspectors that permanent safety guards on the machine Cline was working on were taken off in 2017. The safety guards were replaced with a fence around the machine, but the fence didn't stop people from getting too close to danger-

ous parts that could cause serious injury or death.

The Department of Labor and Industries said Georgia-Pacific failed to follow basic procedures to make sure the machinery wouldn't accidentally turn on and failed to ensure that when permanent guards around machines are removed that they are replaced by other guards. The company also didn't ensure procedures were used to protect employees working in isolated areas, according to the state department.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates			
Euro costs (Oct. 8)	\$1.07	Switzerland (Franc)	0.8536
British pound (Oct. 8)	\$1.27	Thailand (Baht)	33.44
Japanese yen (Oct. 8)	143.00	Turkey (NewLira)	34.2524
South Korean won (Oct. 8)	1310.00		
Commercial rates			
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770		
Britain (Pound)	1.3074		
Canada (Dollar)	1.3602		
China (Yuan)	7.0196		
Denmark (Krone)	6.7914		
Egypt (Pound)	48.3992		
Euro	1.0981		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7664		
Hungary (Forint)	366.23		
Israel (Shekel)	3.7853		
Japan (Yen)	147.94		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3064		
Norway (Krone)	10.6305		
Philippines (Peso)	56.86		
Poland (Zloty)	3.94		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7561		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3029		
South Korea (Won)	1344.09		

(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	8.00
Interest Rates Discount rate	5.00
Federal funds market rate	4.83
3-month bill	4.64
30-year bond	4.25

WEATHER OUTLOOK

TUESDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



TUESDAY IN EUROPE



WEDNESDAY 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

Navy hospital in Spain stops delivering babies

Transport time concerns mean referrals for now

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — One of the few U.S. military bases in Europe able to care for pregnant women through birth has stopped delivering babies, instead referring all labor and delivery patients to local hospitals.

U.S. Naval Hospital Rota in Spain began temporarily referring all expectant mothers, including service members, to off-base doctors and hospitals last month.

That action came as Rota medical officials grew concerned about an increased neonatal emergency transport time after the hospital's ambulance provider moved about five hours away, said Whitney Trimble, a spokeswoman for Defense Health Network-Europe.

"Obviously, when we're dealing with any kind of emergency transfer to our most vulnerable patients ... we want to make sure that we get them the care they need as quickly as possible," said Trimble, who characterized the switch as cautious.

The appropriate response time varies depending on the emergency, Trimble said.

But unexpected complications such as prematurity, breathing difficulties and other problems that arise during childbirth require quick transfer to a larger medical facility equipped to offer specialized treatment to newborns and their mothers. The hospital at Na-



U.S. Navy

Lt. Christina Acosta, a labor and delivery nurse on the U.S. Naval Hospital Rota Multiservice Ward, demonstrates newborn resuscitation procedures at the hospital in Spain, in March. The hospital has stopped delivering babies because the local ambulance service provider's response time is insufficient.

val Station Rota doesn't have a neonatal unit.

It wasn't clear how long the hospital, which delivers about 100 babies a year, will divert obstetrics patients elsewhere.

Defense Hospital Network-Europe is working with the Tricare overseas program contractor and Spain to identify alternative neonatal transport options, said Trimble, adding that it isn't uncommon for overseas military bases to refer pregnant women off base for care.

Only three other military hospitals in Europe — Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, the 48th Medical Group in the

U.K. and U.S. Naval Hospital Naples — have in-house obstetrics capabilities. Those facilities aren't diverting pregnant patients for care off base, she said.

Rota's decision comes about a year after the medical clinic at Kadena Air Base on Okinawa abruptly announced that all women expected to deliver their babies between August and December 2023 would have to return to the U.S. or have their child at a Japanese hospital. The clinic cited staffing shortages at U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa in making the announcement.

Two days later, defense health officials reversed course, saying

that the clinic would continue to provide full labor and delivery service for all eligible beneficiaries.

At Rota, most pregnant women eligible for care at the Navy hospital can still receive prenatal care there until they reach their 36th week of pregnancy. The cutoff varies for women whose pregnancies are considered high-risk due to complications such as high blood pressure or diabetes, depending on the advice of their care provider.

The Navy hospital works with pregnant patients to transfer their care to one of two medical facilities, each about 30 minutes from the base. They include translation and

other support services to ensure the comfort and safety of patients, Trimble said.

"Nurse Case Managers check in daily with (obstetrics) patients referred to local hospitals and assist in transitioning the mother and child back to the (Rota hospital) for care after being (delivered)," Trimble said in a statement.

For Tomomi Williams, the unexpected change brought concerns about a language barrier when delivering her third child. Williams, who is Japanese, speaks English but does not speak Spanish.

That worry was quelled with the help of a translator and care she received while in labor last month at a Spanish hospital, said Williams, who is married to an active-duty sailor.

While having her daughter, Williams wanted hospital staff to give her an injection to ease the discomfort of labor pains. The Spanish medical team refused, saying it would be better to offer the treatment after Williams' labor progressed further.

In the end, that determination made having her baby much easier, said Williams, who admitted she was initially annoyed but later happy with the decision.

Overall, Williams rated the care she received as very good but warned other pregnant women to expect some cultural differences when having their babies at a Spanish hospital.

They may share a room with other women in labor until they deliver, and Spanish nurses won't "come to you unless you call them, but that doesn't mean they don't want to help you," Williams said. But when you call them, "they are very helpful."

Rotational Marines tapped for Philippines typhoon relief

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

U.S. Marines were preparing to fly 49 tons of American aid to typhoon victims in the northern Philippines on Monday, according to the commander of Marine Rotational Force — Southeast Asia.

The force's arrival in the islands for a pair of drills coincided with Super Typhoon Krathon, which made landfall Sept. 30 in Cagayan province.

The Marines were ordered to help move supplies and food provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development to typhoon victims at Basco, on the northern island of Batan, rotational force commander Col. Stuart Glenn told Stars and Stripes by phone from Manila.

USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance was responding to the storm, which made landfall in Batanes province with sus-

tained winds of 120 mph and up to 27 inches of rain, according to an agency post Saturday on social platform X.

"We are providing \$500K to humanitarian partners on the ground to provide emergency shelter, water, sanitation & more," the post said.

Philippine government officials the same day reported five deaths, hundreds of people displaced and almost 280,000 otherwise affected by the storm in the country's north.

The rotational force, which deployed for three months last year, is on its third annual and "largest and longest" six-month mission, Glenn said.

The force is augmented by a pair of KC-130J Super Hercules aircraft and 40 members of the Okinawa-based III Marine Expeditionary Force for the disaster-relief effort, he said.

Thirty Marines have loaded

98,000 pounds of items, including shelter materials and food, onto pallets at Villamor Air Base in Manila so the Super Hercules can fly it to Laoag, 220 miles to the north on the Philippines' main island of Luzon, he said.

Ten more Marines and 40 local troops are at Laoag's civilian airport preparing the pallets to fly farther north by MV-22B Osprey, he said.

Meanwhile, the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit from Camp Pendleton, Calif., is steaming toward the Philippines in the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer, Glenn said.

The Boxer will be close enough to the Philippines on Tuesday to launch an Osprey to Laoag, collect the aid and deliver it to Basco, 190 miles to the north, he said. The tiltrotor aircraft was designed to carry a 20,000-pound load several hundred miles, according to Indo-

Pacific Command.

Also on Monday, U.S. and Philippine troops kicked off the annual Sama Sama exercise with a ceremony at Subic Bay, just north of Manila, Glenn said.

The rotational force will send 120 Marines and sailors to Sama Sama — Tagalog for "together" — Capt. Mark McDonough, a spokesman for the force, said by email Monday.

The eighth iteration of the two-week exercise is aimed at honing U.S. and Philippine forces' ability to work together, the U.S. Navy's Singapore-based Destroyer Squadron 7 said in a statement Monday.

The training, which includes participants from Australia, Canada, France and Japan, will focus on anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, anti-air warfare and maritime domain awareness, according to the statement.



AMELIA KANG/U.S. Marine Corps

Sgt. Hunter Clark, an MV-22 tiltrotor crew chief for 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, signals ready for takeoff from the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer for a humanitarian assistance mission in the East China Sea, on Saturday.

The guided-missile destroyer USS Howard and a P-8A Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft will join the drills, the statement said.

PACIFIC

Air Force keeps pace with plan to retire F-15s

More F-16 Fighting Falcons and F-22 Raptors arrive at Okinawa base over the weekend

By **BRIAN MCELHINEY**
Stars and Stripes

KADENA AIR BASE, Okinawa — More F-16 Fighting Falcons and F-22 Raptors arrived at the home of the 18th Wing over the weekend as part of the Air Force's plan to phase out retired F-15 Eagles with rotating squadrons.

Twelve Fighting Falcons from the 77th Fighter Generation Squadron at Shaw Air Force Base, S.C., arrived at Kadena on Friday, 18th Wing spokeswoman Maj. Alli Stormer wrote by email Monday.

They were joined by six Raptors from the 525th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, arriving Saturday and Sunday, she wrote.

"While deployed to Kadena Air Base, the 4th and 5th generation



DALLIN WRYE/U.S. Air Force

An F-16C Fighting Falcon assigned to the 77th Fighter Squadron takes off from North Auxiliary Airfield, S.C.

fighters will work in conjunction with additional heavy, and reconnaissance assets at Kadena to en-

sure continued steady-state fighter capabilities in the region," Stormer said.

Since officially bidding farewell to its legacy F-15s in December 2022, the wing has rotated fighter squadrons of more advanced warplanes through Kadena to guarantee coverage at a base it calls the "keystone of the Pacific."

Okinawa is northeast of Taiwan on the eastern edge of the East China Sea.

Six Raptors arrived in April from the 27th Fighter Squadron at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va. They continue to serve at the base alongside the new arrivals, Stormer wrote.

Squadrons of F-35As from Alaska and Utah, F-16CM Fighting Falcons from Germany, F-15Cs from California and Louisiana and F-15E Strike Eagles from North Carolina and Idaho have also served at the base.

Raptors from the 199th and 19th Fighter Squadrons at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam returned to Hawaii on Sept. 30 after serving for six months at Kadena.

In June, the Air Force announced it will permanently deploy 36 F-15EX Eagles to Okinawa to replace the older F-15s, as part of a broader plan to station more advanced fighter aircraft across Japan over the next several years.

Four F-15C Eagles departed Kadena on Aug. 24. Some were reassigned to other units; others went to the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group in Arizona, the "boneyard," the wing announced on Aug. 26.

No date is set for the final flight of the remaining Eagles out of Kadena, the wing said.

New commander takes helm of Coast Guard's Guam-based fleet

By **JONATHAN SNYDER**
Stars and Stripes

A new commander took the helm for the Coast Guard on Guam last week as it prepares to expand its already busy fleet of cutters.

Capt. Jessica Worst took over responsibility for Coast Guard Forces Micronesia Sector Guam from Capt. Robert Kistner during a ceremony Friday at the Naval Base Guam theater, according to a Coast Guard press release.

Worst comes aboard during a significant U.S. military expansion on the island.

Billions are invested into building a new Marine Corps base, upgrading Andersen Air Force Base and doubling to six the Coast Guard's fleet of Sentinel-class fast-response cutters homeported on the island.

Kistner served as the interim

sector commander since May and will retire from the Coast Guard to rejoin his family in New York, according to the release.

Under his leadership, Guam-based Coast Guard crews responded to 162 search-and-rescue operations, saving and assisting 246 lives and nearly \$30 million in property throughout Micronesia, according to the news release.

"We thank Capt. Kistner for his outstanding service and dedication, and we wish him the best in his well-earned retirement," U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia posted on its Facebook page on Saturday.

Worst, of Ledyard, Conn., previously served as the Current Operations Division chief at U.S. Northern Command, where she led a joint force of 85 personnel focused on homeland defense, civil support and security cooperation fo-

cused on a full spectrum of threats to the United States, according to the release.

"Her operational experience is extensive, with time on multiple cutters, including in Oceania as commanding officer of [U.S. Coast Guard Cutter] Sequoia in Guam," the release said.

Three fast-response cutters have been stationed on Guam since July 2021.

No date is fixed for the arrival of three more, Coast Guard Indo-Pacific commander Vice Adm. Andrew Tiongson told reporters Sept. 27.

Coast Guard Forces Micronesia Sector Guam executes a wide range of missions, from protecting the maritime economy and the environment to defending maritime borders and saving those in peril, the release said.



SARA MUIR/U.S. Coast Guard

Capt. Jessica Worst and Capt. Robert Kistner pose at U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam after their change-of-command ceremony on Oct. 4.

Dining facility breaks Air Force rules by offering bottled water

By **JONATHAN SNYDER**
Stars and Stripes

Misawa Air Base in Japan erred by offering bottled water at the base dining facility, as it has since the COVID-19 pandemic, a spokeswoman said this week.

The base discovered recently that providing bottled water for airmen's meals breached a recently updated Air Force regulation, said Senior Airman Briana Bolfig, spokeswoman for the 35th Fighter Wing.

Military personnel funds are not authorized for the routine purchase of bottled water, according to the Air Force Manual. "This policy is in place to en-

sure that resources are used efficiently and that the military is able to meet its mission requirements," Bolfig said.

She said an oversight resulted in the base continuing to purchase water for the dining facility after the U.S. military response to the pandemic had concluded.

The wing does not have information available on how much water was purchased or its total cost, according to an email from Bolfig on Monday.

The bottled-water error was discovered Sept. 6 by someone at the Air Force Services Center, she said.

Among its responsibilities, the center at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland ensures successful operation of essential food, fitness, child care, lodging and recreation activities for service members and their families, according to its website.

"We are committed to following all relevant regulations and policies to ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively," Bolfig said.

The regulation allows the purchase of bottled water with those funds if the public water supply is unsafe to drink, if the installation's water source suddenly fails or a temporary facility has no

drinking water available nearby.

Misawa's drinking water does not meet those criteria, Bolfig said.

"There are no health concerns to drinking the water on Misawa [Air Base]," she said.

"Our 35th Operational Medical Readiness Squadron Bioenvironmental Flight regularly tests and thoroughly evaluates the drinking water on Misawa Air Base."

The drinking water for the base comes from three separate sources: wells, Lake Anenuma and the city of Misawa, according to Misawa Drinking Water Consumer Confidence Report 2023.

However, the base has had is-

issues with its drinking water in the past.

A base water tower briefly exceeded safe levels of PFAS, a so-called "forever chemical," according to a notice posted in September 2023 on the installation's website.

The synthetic chemical and its components, PFOS and PFOA, were found in firefighting foam, also known as aqueous film forming foam, that is being discontinued on some U.S. military bases.

In April, water quality tests found that the Itsukawametsutsumi reservoir near the base had 14 times more PFAS than Japan's national provisional target value.

PACIFIC

Yokosuka opens for thousands on Friendship Day

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Nearly 53,000 people, including a popular American social media influencer and food critic, traveled to the homeport of the U.S. 7th Fleet for its annual Friendship Day on Sunday.

Now in its 46th year, the festival celebrates the relationship between the U.S. Navy and Japan and routinely draws large crowds. About 52,900 people attended this year, making it the most highly attended Friendship Day since 2016 when 59,000 people joined the festivities, according to base spokesman Justin Keller.

“Friendship Day is an important opportunity for visitors of the base to learn more about the U.S. Navy and Japan partnership,” he said Sunday. “It’s an opportunity for the Fleet Activities Yokosuka and local communities to come together to celebrate our friendship and forge new bonds.”

Among this year’s attendees was food influencer Keith Lee, who boasts more than 16 million TikTok followers. Lee has been

posting videos from Tokyo since Friday.

Lee’s attendance was not planned by the Navy, Keller said. The influencer did not immediately respond to a request for comment via social media on Monday.

Drawing in throngs of Japanese visitors, the festival features exhibitions from various components of the base, including the fire station and the ship-repair facility, as well as food, souvenirs, music and other entertainment.

Dozens of booths serving up American hot dogs, burgers, potato chips and energy drinks are popular each year.

Other events included tours of the guided-missile destroyer USS John Finn, a scavenger hunt, performances by the 7th Fleet band, carnival games, street performers and a fireworks show to close out the festival.

The festival was suspended in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, it drew just over 50,000 people.

“We’re thrilled to see the festival’s popularity remains as strong as ever,” Keller added.



PHOTOS BY ALEX WILSON/Stars and Stripes

A cosplayer chats with a festivalgoer during Friendship Day at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, on Sunday.



Street performers march through the Friendship Day crowd while playing Japanese and American music.



A performer on a hydroflight board shows off for Friendship Day visitors.



JAMES KIMBER/U.S. Navy

Social media food influencer Keith Lee poses with a sailor.



American snacks were popular items on Friendship Day.

Tokyo nightlife districts ask people to stay away on Halloween

BY HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Leaders of this city’s most popular nightlife districts held a news conference Monday and called on revelers to stay away during Halloween.

Shinjuku Mayor Kenichi Yoshizumi said his ward saw an increase of about 3,000 visitors during Halloween last year after Shibuya strongly discouraged street parties and banned public drinking.

Shibuya became a popular place to spend Halloween night

in the early 2000s.

In recent years, many costumed revelers and those who come to see them have crowded the iconic Shibuya Scramble intersection and narrow streets around Shibuya Station.

So many people were drinking and littering last year in Kabukicho, a popular redlight district in Shinjuku, that ward officials were collecting garbage strewn everywhere the next morning.

“To leave garbage behind after drinking and eating is not what an educated and rational person

would do,” Yoshizumi said during a joint news conference with Shibuya Mayor Ken Hasebe at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan.

Shinjuku will ban public drinking between Shinjuku Station and Kabukicho from 5 p.m. Oct. 31 to 5 a.m. Nov. 1. Ward officials also requested area stores to refrain from selling alcohol and will place about 100 staff and security guards to patrol the area, Yoshizumi said.

Shibuya ward has asked 64 stores near Shibuya Station to al-

so refrain from alcohol sales between 6 p.m. and 5 a.m. Oct. 26 to Nov. 1, according to information provided by the ward. It also plans to field about 130 staff to patrol on Oct. 25-26 and Oct. 30-31, according to the ward.

The ward banned public drinking between 6 p.m. and 5 a.m. near the Shibuya Station starting Oct. 1 to deter littering, according to the ward.

After a call to refrain from Halloween partying and alcohol sales last year, about 15,000 people celebrated Halloween in Shi-

buya, about one-fourth the estimated 60,000 the ward estimates usually turn out, Hasebe said.

Since Shinjuku saw an increased number of visitors during Halloween last year, the mayors said they decided to work on the issue together this year.

After 159 people died in a Halloween crowd crush in South Korea’s Itaewon district in 2022, Hasebe strongly discouraged people from gathering around Shibuya Station last year in fear of a similar incident occurring.

MILITARY

Marine drone 'narco-boat' heads to Okinawa

By BRIAN McELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Marine Corps will soon deploy an unmanned, semisubmersible watercraft designed to move supplies and weapons across large ocean distances in waters surrounding Okinawa.

An Autonomous Low-Profile Vessel will arrive at Naha Port this month and operate "around the coastal waters of Okinawa" for about 11 months, Capt. Pawel Puczko, spokesman for the III Marine Expeditionary Force, said Monday.

The vessel is part of "an ongoing modernization process," he said.

Brig. Gen. Simon Doran, commander of the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory in Quantico, Va., at a conference Sept. 4 described the vessel as "just a narco-boat," similar to low-profile boats used by drug runners in Central and South America.

The vessel is designed to resup-



PATRICK KING/U.S. Marine Corps

A Marine Corps Autonomous Low-Profile Vessel operates off the coast of Naval Base Point Loma, Calif., on June 13.

ply troops on contested islands in the Indo-Pacific, as part of the island-fighting doctrine described in the Marines' Force Design plan.

"The ALPV is an autonomous logistics delivery system that can lighten the Marines' physical load, provide supplies at the critical point of need, and transfer of various classes of supplies across vast distances in the maritime environment," Puczko said. "This is one

potential technology the Marine Corps can use to provide sustainment to Stand-in Forces operating within contested areas."

Various III MEF units will use the vessel during its time on Okinawa, Puczko said.

He declined to identify specifically where the vessel will be used and what cargo it will carry, citing security issues.

The vessel also will be used at

Red Beach in Kin Town, White Beach Naval Facility and the west coast area of Ie Shima Auxiliary Airfield, a spokesman for the Okinawa Defense Bureau, an arm of Japan's Ministry of Defense, said Monday.

There are no plans to use the vessel to transport missiles or ammunition, a spokesman for the prefecture's Military Base Affairs division said Monday.

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

The drone vessel is semisubmersible and can carry resupply payloads of up to 5 tons with a range of 2,000 nautical miles, according to a March news release from the vessel's designer, Leidos. The firm said it delivered two last year to the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab.

The Marines tested the vessel in February and March during the U.S. Army's Project Convergence Capstone experimental exercise at Camp Pendleton, Calif., the release said.

"This is 55-feet long, completely autonomous," Doran said at the Defense News conference in Arlington, Va. "It's able to go hundreds or thousands of miles. It's able to carry weapons systems that we have that are new; it can carry fuel, it can carry food, it can carry pretty much anything you want to put in it."

Trump says he'd revert Fort Liberty's name back to Fort Bragg if elected

Stars and Stripes

Former President Donald Trump said he would change the name of Fort Liberty back to Fort Bragg if he's elected.

Trump made the remarks Friday night during a town hall in Fayetteville, N.C., which is near the military installation.

"I walked in — the first question that I asked — should we change the name from Fort Liberty back to Fort Bragg? First question," he said as the crowd cheered. "Right, so here's what we do — we get elected, I'm doing it. I'm doing it."

The renaming of Fort Bragg was part of a controversial three-year process to strip the names of Confederate leaders who took up arms against the United States in the Civil War from Army installations. It was part of an effort initi-

ated by top Pentagon officials in 2020.

Congress mandated the Naming Commission in a 2021 annual Pentagon policy bill, giving it the task of identifying items in the Defense Department inventory associated with the Confederacy.

Among the items that the commission studied were the names of nine Army installations honoring Confederate generals, including Fort Bragg.

Then-President Trump vetoed the bill, disapproving of the effort to remove Confederate names from the military.

Congress overrode the veto, making the changes law. Fort Bragg was renamed Fort Liberty in 2023. Changing the name of Fort Liberty would require congressional approval.

Veteran unemployment rate in US drops to 2.7% during September

By KELLY AGEE
Stars and Stripes

Military veterans benefited in last month's improving national employment figures, according to the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

A better-than-expected 254,000 jobs were added to the economy in September, and the overall unemployment rate ticked down from 4.2% to 4.1%, said a bureau report released Friday.

For veterans, the jobless rate fell from 3.5% in August to 2.7% in September, according to the report.

"People are finding jobs; 254,000 is way more than economists or market workers were looking for," Nela Richardson, chief economist for Automatic Data Processing, said Friday on Marketplace, a U.S. public radio program that focuses on business and

the economy.

"I think that it's really important because we went through a summer where hiring was pretty lackluster and there seemed to be a sense of uncertainty about the overall economy, about the election, about what the [Federal Reserve] is going to do."

The 2023 unemployment rate for U.S. veterans averaged 2.8%, the lowest since 2000, according to data collected over the past 30 years by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Last year marked the third time in the past 24 years that the yearly average was below 3%.

Breakdowns of Friday's report show that the unemployment rate for women veterans, 7% in August, fell to 4.3% in September, and dropped a full percentage point to 2.5% for the generation of veterans who served after the Sept. 11,

2001, attacks.

Strong trends in hiring continued in food services and drinking places, health care, government, social assistance and construction, according to the jobs report.

"Something happened in September; I think that Fed rate cut might have triggered at least one check mark box off the list of uncertainty items, and it showed that companies were ready and willing to hire all along," Richardson said.

On Sept. 18, the Federal Reserve lowered the federal funds rate by 50 basis points, or 50 percentage points, on the money it loans banks overnight.

Lower borrowing costs generally stimulate business activity. The Fed funds rate is a key economic driver and lowering the rate by that much indicated confidence that inflation, now at 2.5%, is easing.

Kaiserslautern bans cannabis use near city hall and mall

By BRADLEY LATHAM
Stars and Stripes

A new law bans most weekday cannabis use in Kaiserslautern's center for the next year, the city said in a statement.

Starting on Oct. 5, marijuana consumption is prohibited on school days from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., in the vicinity of city hall and the K in Lautern shopping center.

Kaiserslautern is the largest city in an area that includes Ram-

stein Air Base, several Army posts, and tens of thousands of U.S. service members and their families.

The restricted area spans from Meuthstrasse or Humboldtstrasse in the west to Martin-Luther-Strasse in the east, and from Lauterstrasse/Ludwigstrasse in the north to Fruchthallstrasse in the south.

Mayor Manfred Schulz wanted better protection for students trav-

eling to and from the five schools in the designated area, according to a statement Wednesday.

"When it comes to the consumption of cannabis near minors, the regulations and distances defined in the law on the handling of consumer cannabis are unfortunately neither efficient nor effective enough for everyday control," Schulz said in the statement, adding law enforcement authorities "will patrol the area intensively in

the coming months."

The ban will stay in effect until at least Oct. 31, 2025, and offenders could face fines of up to 30,000 euros, according to the city.

A similar ban is planned for the Messeplatz area during the Oktoberkerwe festival later this month.

Possession of up to 25 grams (about an ounce) of marijuana became legal in Germany on April 1. However, legal hurdles remain for sellers and purchasers of the

drug. Use of the drug is still prohibited within about 100 yards of the entrance to a playground or school.

Marijuana use remains illegal for service members under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Defense Department and Europe-based military regulations bar its use by contractors, Defense Department civilians and others in Germany under the Status of Forces Agreement.

VETERANS

Exposed Vietnam-era veterans seek years of back benefits

BY LINDA F. HERSEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Vietnam-era veterans exposed to nerve agents and hallucinogenic drugs in a classified military research program more than 50 years ago are appealing for retroactive disability benefits after a federal court ruling found their constitutional rights were violated.

Now in their 70s and early 80s, the veterans were sworn to silence and restricted from reporting the debilitating health effects from the program, which included paralysis, cancer, depression and psychosis. They were also restricted from obtaining disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs, according to the court.

"I never knew what I was given in those tests," said Frank Rochelle, 76, of North Carolina, a former Army corporal whose service from 1968-70 included a tour in Vietnam. "When I went to file a VA claim, I was told that the tests I took part in had never happened. The records were sealed. I had no way to prove my case."

But a 2023 ruling in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington is enabling Rochelle and other service members for the first time to obtain VA disability compensation retroactive to their date of discharge. An estimated 3,000 to 5,000 veterans who participated as human test subjects in classified studies that

the U.S. Army Chemical Corps conducted at Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland are believed to be alive today.

The facility was established in 1948 primarily as a center for researching chemical warfare agents, but military equipment, protective clothing and pharmaceuticals also were tested at the facility, according to the VA. The Vietnam-era veterans were considered volunteers in classified studies that began in 1956. They signed consent agreements prior to participating in experiments but said later they were not informed of the risks.

About 7,000 military personnel participated in the tests until the Army disbanded the program in 1975, according to the Defense Department. Edgewood Arsenal now functions as the Army's center for research, tests and development in chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense.

The court found the secrecy agreements that the participants signed, which carried the threat of criminal penalty if violated, effectively denied them due process and disability compensation to which they were entitled, said Mark Jones, the attorney for Rochelle and several other veterans.

"This decision importantly opens a pathway for all veterans who are under a secrecy agreement to pursue their claims, whether they are Edgewood Arsenal vets or not," he said.

Rochelle's case is pending a higher review in the U.S. Veterans Court of Appeals, which has already ordered retroactive compensation this year in three other cases involving Edgewood veterans.

Jones said though the VA states it now has a process in place for Edgewood Arsenal veterans to file to receive benefits, the agency continues to delay decisions and deny their claims.

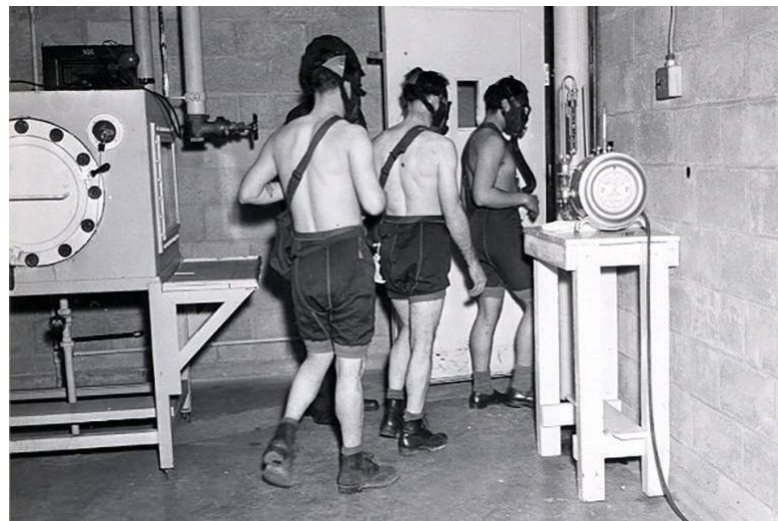
Terrence Hayes, the VA press secretary, said the VA does not have figures on how many Vietnam-era veterans have submitted claims for retroactive payments related to illnesses and injuries from serving as test subjects at the Edgewood Arsenal.

In 2023, Army veteran Bob Taylor of Idaho was the first veteran to receive disability compensation retroactive to his military discharge for illnesses and injuries that he suffered after participating in the classified research project, according to court documents.

Taylor's attorneys first argued in U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans that he was entitled to compensation back to his discharge date of 1971.

But the court denied the claim, which was then appealed in U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington, D.C.

That court ruled the government-imposed secrecy that kept him silent about his medical prob-



U.S. Army

Test subjects in an undated photo enter a chamber where they were exposed to chemical agents as part of military experiments at Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland.

lems entitled him to receive disability compensation dating to the day after he was separated from the military.

"I went to Edgewood, and my whole world fell apart," said Taylor, a 73-year-old former private.

Taylor, who served from 1969-71, has been diagnosed with multiple cancers, depression, insomnia and post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I'm trying to stay alive and see this case to the end," he said. "This is not just about me. I'm fighting for all veterans to get their full benefits. You don't leave your brothers and sisters behind. Anyone who signs a secrecy agreement should be able to get their claims prosecuted."

He and other Edgewood veterans said they thought they had volunteered to test military equipment in the 1960s and 1970s but were directed instead to military research labs for human trials using chemical substances they re-

ceived in gas chambers, by injection and other means.

"The court holds that when a veteran has been determined to be entitled to benefits for one or more disabilities connected to participation in the Edgewood program, the required effective date of such benefits is the date that the veteran would have had in the absence of the challenged government conduct," according to the ruling.

Taylor was exposed to at least three highly poisonous chemical agents during the Edgewood experiments, according to court documents.

"We were lied to about our reasons for going to Edgewood. We thought that the Army was testing equipment to better the forces," said Rochelle, whose medical problems from his experiences at Edgewood made him "unemployable," according to VA records. "This has been ignored for 30 to 50 years."

DOJ: Vet led from prison a fraud scheme that stole from VA patients

BY REBECCA HOLLAND
Stars and Stripes

A man who prosecutors say once served in the military is facing fraud and identity theft charges in a "truly shocking" scheme to steal from veterans in intensive care, according to the Justice Department.

Darryl Lamont Young, 46, was indicted Friday in federal court in Seattle along with 27-year-old Aqeelah Ngiesha Williams, who prosecutors say helped in the scheme. They tried to make 130 fraudulent transactions and took in about \$8,000, a Justice Department statement Friday said.

"While they did not get a huge amount of money with this scheme, the harm they caused to those already suffering a health crisis is deserving of federal prosecution," U.S. Attorney Tessa Gorman said in the statement.

Young and Williams are charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud, six counts of wire fraud and six counts of aggravated identity theft. The scheme ran from December 2021 to April 2023, prosecutors said.

Young was already incarcerated and made calls from various correctional facilities to Department of Veterans Affairs treatment centers, posing as a VA employee providing financial benefits to sick veterans, according to the statement.

"In reality, these two were seeking personal and financial information to defraud the veteran," Gorman said, adding that what the defendants are accused of doing is "truly shocking."

The indictment said Young had served in the military and therefore knew about some of the services offered to veterans. On the

phone calls he made from jail, he disguised his location by asking to be transferred to a given VA facility, according to the statement.

He passed himself off as a VA worker who needed information about patients in the intensive care unit and then called Williams, who in turn would make a three-way call to veterans or their representatives, prosecutors said.

Young and Williams used the information to steal money from the veterans' accounts and transfer it to their own, the Justice Department statement said. The two of them targeted more than 30 medical facilities and more than 60 victims, it added.

Each count of wire fraud and conspiracy carries a maximum 20-year prison sentence, while aggravated identity theft is punishable by a two-year term that would be served consecutively.

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MIDEAST

Somber: Hezbollah vows to keep up attacks until there is a Gaza cease-fire

FROM PAGE 1

most of the population have been driven from their homes.

In Lebanon, meanwhile, an Israeli strike in the country's south killed at least 10 firefighters, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry. It said they were in a municipality building in the town of Baraachit that was hit as they prepared to embark on a rescue mission.

Israelis flocked to ceremonies, cemeteries and memorial sites around the country, remembering the hundreds of victims, the dozens of hostages still in captivity and soldiers killed in battle. Commemorations were also planned across Europe and elsewhere.

Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in the Oct. 7 attack and abducted another 250.

Before dawn, hundreds of families of those killed at the Nova music festival, joined by Israeli President Isaac Herzog, gathered at the site where at least 364 revelers were killed and many others were taken hostage. As the sun rose, organizers played the same trance track that was abruptly halted when the barrage of rockets began.

At 6:29 a.m. — the exact minute Hamas launched its attack — the crowd observed a moment of silence. One woman's piercing wail broke the quiet and booms echoed from the fighting in Gaza, just a few miles away.

"When we are here, we are near our loved ones," said Sigal Bar-On, whose niece, Yuval Bar-On, 25, and her fiancé Moshe Shuva, 34, were killed in the attack two months before they were to be married.

"We can't understand how a year has passed," said Shimon Busika, whose son, Yarden Busika, 25, was killed at the festival. "It's the most natural place to be, to be here for this moment of silence," he said.

At 6:31 a.m., four projectiles were launched from Gaza toward the same communities that came under fierce assault last year, the Israeli military said. The ceremony was not disrupted.

The military said another five rockets were launched from the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis toward central Israel, setting off air raid sirens in Tel Aviv. Two women were lightly wounded, according to first responders, and there was minor damage.

Meanwhile, the families of hostages still held in Gaza gathered near Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Jerusalem residence and stood during a two-minute siren.

"We are here to remind (the hostages) that we haven't forgot-



MAHMOUD ILLEAN/AP

People protest on the one-year anniversary of the Hamas attack on Israel and call for the release of hostages held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, outside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's house, in Jerusalem, on Monday.

ten them," said Shiri Albag, whose daughter Liri is among the captives. Speaking before the crowd and addressing Netanyahu, she said: "We won't let you rest until all of them are back, every last one of them."

Netanyahu released a statement honoring those who were killed or captured, saying "we went through a terrible massacre a year ago and we arose as a nation as lions."

The flags at the Israeli Knesset were lowered to half-staff, and an official state ceremony was set to air Monday evening. The ceremony was prerecorded without an audience — apparently to avoid potential disruptions — in the southern city of Ofakim, which was among several communities and army bases that were attacked a year ago.

Anger at the government's failure to prevent the attack and enduring frustration that it has not returned the remaining hostages prompted the families of those killed and taken captive to hold a separate event in Tel Aviv.

That event had been set to draw tens of thousands of people but was scaled back drastically over prohibitions on large gatherings due to the threat of missile attacks from Iran and Hezbollah.

The war in Gaza has killed more than 41,000 Palestinians, displaced most of the territory's 2.3 million population and sparked a humanitarian crisis that has led to widespread hunger.

But Hamas remains in control of the territory and its forces have repeatedly regrouped in areas where Israel carried out major operations. On Sunday, Israeli forces encircled the northern town of Jabaliya and launched another major operation there that the military says is aimed at rooting out militants.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah has continued to fire rockets, missiles and drones at Israel even after a wave of Israeli strikes in recent weeks killed most of its top command — including longtime leader Hassan Nasrallah — and pounded large areas of Lebanon. Israel launched what has so far been a limited ground operation across the border last week.

At least 1,400 Lebanese, including civilians, medics and Hezbollah fighters, have been killed and 1.2 million driven from their homes. Israel says it aims to drive the militant group from its border so tens of thousands of Israeli citizens can return home.

Israel has also vowed to respond to a ballistic missile attack last week that Iran said was in response to the killing of Nasrallah, top Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and one of its own Revolutionary Guard generals.

In a statement Monday, Hezbollah vowed to continue its attacks until there is a cease-fire in Gaza, saying Israel "was and will remain a deadly, aggressive, cancerous gland that must be eliminated, no matter how long it takes."

Aid: Administration sought to 'hide the full amounts of aid' to Israel, report says

FROM PAGE 1

since Israel greatly expanded its strikes in that country in late September.

The financial costs were calculated by Linda J. Bilmes, a professor at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, who has assessed the full costs of U.S. wars since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, and fellow researchers William D. Hartung and Stephen Semler.

Here's a look at where some of the U.S. taxpayer money went:

Record aid to Israel

Israel — a protege of the United States since its 1948 founding — is the biggest recipient of U.S. military aid in history, getting \$251.2 billion in inflation-adjusted dollars since 1959, the report says.

Even so, the \$17.9 billion spent since Oct. 7, 2023, in inflation-adjusted dollars, is by far the most military aid sent to Israel in one year.

The U.S. committed to providing billions in military assistance to Israel and Egypt each year when they signed their 1979 U.S.-brokered peace treaty, and an agreement since the Obama administration set the annual amount for Israel at \$3.8 billion through 2028.

The U.S. aid since the Gaza war started includes military financing, arms sales, at least \$4.4 billion in drawdowns from U.S. stockpiles and hand-me-downs of used equipment.

Much of the U.S. weapons delivered in the year were munitions, from artillery shells to 2,000-pound bunker-busters and precision-guided bombs.

Expenditures range from \$4 billion to replenish Israel's Iron Dome and David's Sling missile defense systems to cash for rifles and jet fuel, the study says.

Unlike the publicly documented military aid to Ukraine, it was impossible to get the full details of what the U.S. has shipped Israel since last Oct. 7, so the \$17.9 billion for the year is a partial figure, the researchers said.

They cited Biden administration "efforts to hide the full amounts of aid and types of systems through bureaucratic maneuvering."

Funding for the key U.S. ally during a war that has exacted a heavy toll on civilians has divided Americans during the presidential campaign.

But support for Israel has long carried weight in U.S. politics, and Biden said Friday that "no administration has helped Israel more than I have."

US operations in Mideast

The Biden administration has bolstered its military strength in the region since the war in Gaza started, aiming to deter and respond to any attacks on Israeli and American forces. Those additional operations cost at least \$4.86 billion, the report said, not including beefed-up U.S. military aid to Egypt and other regional partners.

The U.S. had 34,000 forces in the Middle East the day that Hamas broke through Israeli barricades around Gaza to attack. That number rose to about 50,000 in August when two aircraft carriers were in the region, aiming to discourage retaliation after a strike attributed to Israel killed Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran. The total is now around 43,000.

The number of U.S. vessels and aircraft deployed — aircraft carrier strike group, amphibious ready group, fighter squadrons, and air defense batteries — in the Mediterranean, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden has varied during the year. The Pentagon has said another aircraft carrier strike group is headed to Europe very soon and that could increase the troop total again if two carriers are again in the region at the same time.

The fight against Houthis

The U.S. military has deployed since the start of the war to try to counter escalated strikes by the Houthis, an armed faction that controls Yemen's capital and northern areas which has been firing on merchant ships in the Red Sea in solidarity with Gaza. The researchers called the \$4.86 billion cost to the U.S. an "unexpectedly complicated and asymmetrically expensive challenge."

Houthis have kept launching attacks on ships traversing the critical trade route, drawing U.S. strikes on launch sites and other targets. The campaign has become the most intense running sea battle the Navy has faced since World War II.

"The U.S. has deployed multiple aircraft carriers, destroyers, cruisers and expensive multimillion-dollar missiles against cheap Iranian-made Houthi drones that cost \$2,000," the authors said.

Just Friday, the U.S. military struck more than a dozen Houthi targets in Yemen, going after weapons systems, bases and other equipment, officials said.

The researchers' calculations included at least \$55 million in additional combat pay from the intensified operations in the region.

NATION

Hurricane Milton takes aim at Florida

Storm gathers intensity, on path to hit areas still reeling from Helene

Associated Press

Milton rapidly strengthened in the Gulf of Mexico on Monday to become a Category 5 hurricane on a path toward Florida, threatening a dangerous storm surge in Tampa Bay, leading to evacuation orders and lending more urgency to the cleanup from Hurricane Helene, which swamped the same stretch of coastline less than two weeks ago.

A hurricane warning was issued for parts of Mexico's Yucatan state, and much of Florida's west coast was under hurricane and storm surge watches. Florida's Lake Okeechobee, which often floods during intense storms, was also under a hurricane watch.

"This is the real deal here with Milton," Tampa Mayor Jane Castor said at a news conference. "If you want to take on Mother Nature, she wins 100% of the time."

Milton intensified quickly Monday and was expected to become a large hurricane over the eastern Gulf. It had maximum sustained winds of 160 mph, the National Hurricane Center said. The storm's center was about 130 miles west-northwest of Progreso, Mexico, and about 720 miles southwest of Tampa at midday Monday, moving east-southeast at 9 mph.

Its center could come ashore Wednesday in the Tampa Bay area, and it could remain a hurricane as it moves across central Florida toward the Atlantic Ocean. That would largely spare

other states ravaged by Helene, which killed at least 230 people on its path from Florida to the Appalachian Mountains.

Forecasters warned of a possible 8- to 12-foot storm surge in Tampa Bay and said flash and river flooding could result from 5 to 10 inches of rain in mainland Florida and the Keys, with as much as 15 inches in places.

The Tampa Bay area is still rebounding from Helene and its powerful surge. Twelve people died, with the worst damage along a string of barrier islands from St. Petersburg to Clearwater.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said Monday that it was imperative that messes from Helene be cleared ahead of Milton's arrival so they don't become dangerous flying projectiles. More than 300 vehicles picked up debris Sunday but encountered a locked landfill gate when they tried to drop it off. State troopers used a rope tied to a pickup truck and busted it open, DeSantis said.

"We don't have time for bureaucracy and red tape," DeSantis said. "We have to get the job done."

Lifeguards in Pinellas County, on the peninsula that forms Tampa Bay, removed beach chairs and other items that could take flight in strong winds. Elsewhere, stoves, chairs, refrigerators and kitchen tables waited in heaps to be picked up.

Sarah Steslicki, who lives in



JOE CAVARETTA/AP

Nelson Hoyos loads sandbags for his business in Oakland Park, Fla., on Sunday to prepare for wet weather as the storm nears the west coast.

Belleair Beach, said she was frustrated more debris hadn't been collected sooner.

"They've screwed around and haven't picked the debris up, and now they're scrambling to get it picked up," Steslicki said Monday morning. "If this one does hit, it's going to be flying missiles. Stuff's going to be floating and flying in the air."

Hillsborough County, home to Tampa, ordered evacuations for areas adjacent to Tampa Bay and for all mobile and manufactured

homes by Tuesday night.

"Yes, this stinks. We know that, and it comes on the heels of where a lot of us are still recovering from Hurricane Helene," Sheriff Chad Chronister said. "But if you safeguard your families, you will be alive."

Milton's approach stirred memories of 2017's Hurricane Irma, when about 7 million people were urged to evacuate Florida in an exodus that jammed freeways and clogged gas stations. Some people who left vowed never to evacuate

again.

If residents don't evacuate, it could put first responders in jeopardy or make rescues impossible: "If you remain there, you could die and my men and women could die trying to rescue you," Hillsborough Fire Rescue Chief Jason Dougherty said. "Help them by leaving."

The University of Central Florida in Orlando said it would close midweek, but Walt Disney World said it was operating normally for the time being.

Spacecraft sent to probe asteroid slammed by NASA

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — A spacecraft blasted off Monday to investigate the scene of a cosmic crash.

The European Space Agency's Hera spacecraft rocketed away on a two-year journey to the small, harmless asteroid rammed by NASA two years ago in a dress rehearsal for the day a killer space rock threatens Earth.

Launched by SpaceX from Cape Canaveral, it's the second part of a planetary defense test that could one day help save the planet.

The 2022 crash by NASA's Dart spacecraft shortened Dimorphos' orbit around its bigger companion, demonstrating that if a dangerous rock was headed our way, there's a chance it could be knocked off course with enough advance notice.

Scientists are eager to examine

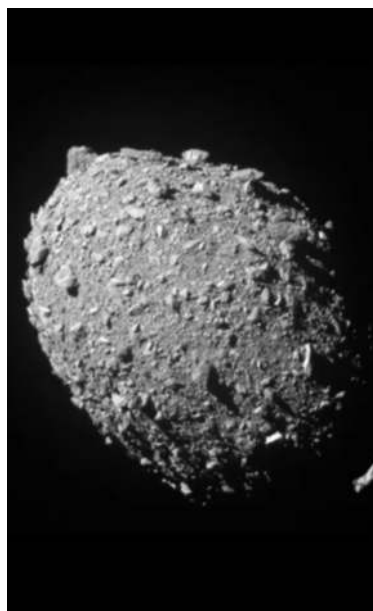
the impact's aftermath up close to know exactly how effective Dart was and what changes might be needed to safeguard Earth in the future.

"The more detail we can glean the better as it may be important for planning a future deflection mission should one be needed," University of Maryland astronomer Derek Richardson said before launch.

Researchers want to know whether Dart — short for Double Asteroid Redirection Test — left a crater or perhaps reshaped the 500-foot asteroid more dramatically.

It looked something like a flying saucer before Dart's blow and may now resemble a kidney bean, said Richardson, who took part in the Dart mission and is helping with Hera.

European officials describe the



NASA via AP

The asteroid Dimorphos is captured by NASA's DART mission just two seconds before the spacecraft struck its surface on Sept. 26, 2022.

\$400 million mission as a "crash scene investigation."

High court lets stand bar on emergency abortions

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Monday let stand a decision barring emergency abortions that violate the law in Texas, which has one of the country's strictest abortion bans.

Without detailing their reasoning, the justices kept in place a lower court order that said hospitals cannot be required to provide pregnancy terminations that would violate Texas law.

The Biden administration had asked the justices to throw out the lower court order, arguing that hospitals have to perform abortions in emergency situations under federal law. The administration pointed to the Supreme Court's action in a similar case from Idaho earlier this year in which the justices narrowly allowed emergency abortions to resume while a lawsuit continues.

The administration also cited a Texas Supreme Court ruling that said doctors do not have to wait until a woman's life is in immediate danger to provide an abortion legally. The administration said it brings Texas in line with federal law and means the lower court ruling is not necessary.

Texas asked the justices to leave the order in place, saying the state Supreme Court ruling meant Texas law, unlike Idaho's, does have an exception for the health of a pregnant patient and there's no conflict between federal and state law.

There has been a spike in complaints that pregnant women in medical distress have been turned away from emergency rooms in Texas and elsewhere as hospitals grapple with whether standard care could violate strict laws against abortion.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Ex-governor, stepson assaulted during stroll

NY NEW YORK — Two boys, ages 12 and 13, were arrested Saturday in connection with an assault on former New York Gov. David Paterson and his stepson, police said.

Paterson, 70, who is legally blind, and his stepson, Anthony Sliwa, 20, were attacked around 8:30 p.m. Friday while they were out for a walk on Manhattan's Upper East Side. They were treated at a hospital for minor injuries.

The two boys were both charged with gang assault. Authorities have said at least five people were involved in the attack. They sought help from the public to learn more about the assault.

Paterson said Saturday that his stepson was walking the family dog when he first encountered some of the assailants, telling them he would summon the police if they did not stop climbing up the fire escape of a building.

Later, Paterson said, he and Sliwa went for a walk, encountered the group and argued with them before two of them attacked Paterson and his stepson.



ALAN WARREN, THE (OWENSBORO, KY.) MESSENGER-INQUIRER/AP

Boss suing after fined for providing free housing

CA SARATOGA — A California vineyard owner is suing Santa Clara County after officials fined him for allowing his longtime employee to live in an RV on his property for years.

Michael Ballard, whose family owns Savannah-Chanelle Vineyards in a town south of San Francisco, alleges he was fined more than \$120,000 after the county said he violated local zoning laws that ban anyone from living in an RV on public or private property, according to The Mercury News.

Marcelino Martinez, manager of the vineyard, said his family lost their lease on a trailer they were living in years ago and had limited options for affordable housing in the area.

The Ballard family agreed to allow them to live in an RV at the vineyards. Martinez, his wife and children have lived there for free since 2013, according to The Mercury News.

Judge gets threats after sentencing election denier

CO GRAND JUNCTION — A rural Colorado county courthouse beefed up security after threats were made against staff and a judge who sentenced former county clerk Tina Peters to nearly nine years behind bars and admonished her for her role in a data breach scheme catalyzed by the lie that the 2020 election was stolen from former President Donald Trump.

Courthouse staff in Grand Junction received multiple threats that were being vetted by law enforcement while extra security was provided, said spokesperson Wen-

Have to look your best

Steve Lucas of Henderson gives his 1923 Ford T-Bucket a good wipe down on Saturday at the 14th annual Kentucky Wesleyan Car, Truck & Jeep Show on the front lawn of the campus in Owensboro, Ky., on Saturday.

dy Likes with the Mesa County Sheriff's Office.

The court received compliments as well as threats for Judge Matthew Barrett's sentencing of Peters, Will Sightler, the court executive of the 21st Judicial District, said in a statement.

Peters, a Republican, was sentenced for allowing access to the county's election system to a man affiliated with My Pillow chief executive Mike Lindell.

State eyes Bibles backed by Trump for schools

OK OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma's top education official is seeking to purchase 55,000 Bibles for public schools and specifying that each copy contain the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution, which are not commonly found in Bibles but are included in one endorsed by former President Donald Trump.

The request is part of Republican State Superintendent Ryan Walters' ongoing efforts to require Bibles in every classroom, which has been met with resistance by some of Oklahoma's largest school districts.

Walters is seeking to spend \$3 million in state funds for Bibles that fit a certain criteria, including that the pages are supplemented with U.S. historical materials.

The Bibles must also be "bound in leather or leather-like material for durability," according to state bidding documents posted.

Asked if the bid was tailored for the Bible backed by Trump, a spokesman for Walters said the proposal was open to any vendor.

Man sentenced to life for helping inmate escape

ID BOISE — An Idaho man who prosecutors said ambushed and shot correctional officers at a Boise hospital in a plot to help a fellow white supremacist gang member escape from prison was sentenced to life behind bars.

Nicholas Umphenour, 29, pleaded guilty earlier this year to several felonies, including aiding and abetting escape and aggravated assault and battery on law enforcement officers in the March 20 attack at Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center.

Umphenour's attorney, Bryan Marx, said Umphenour is also expected to face charges in a separate case tied to the death of man who police said was killed while Umphenour and the escaped inmate, Skylar Meade, were on the run.

Woman eyes lawsuit delay of cop boyfriend's death

MA BOSTON — Karen Read is seeking to delay a wrongful death lawsuit filed by the family of her Boston police officer boyfriend until her criminal trial in connection with his death is done.

The lawsuit blames the death of John O'Keefe on Read, and also on

what it describes as negligence by bars that continued to serve drinks to her despite signs she was drunk. It said the first bar served her seven alcoholic drinks in about 90 minutes the night of Jan. 28, 2022, and that Read carried the last drink into the second bar, where she was served a shot and a mixed alcoholic drink within an hour.

Read is accused of ramming into John O'Keefe with her SUV and leaving him for dead in a January 2022 snowstorm.

But an attorney for O'Keefe's brother, Paul, and other relatives who filed the lawsuit oppose any delays and suggested the reliance on the Fifth Amendment ignored the fact she has spoken publicly about her case several times.

Wounded officer kills man in knife attack

CA SANTA MONICA — A California officer fatally shot a man who wounded him with a knife outside a city police headquarters in what authorities called "an unprovoked attack."

A man in his 30s approached the male officer outside the front doors of the Santa Monica Police Department.

"Without warning, the individual attacked the officer while pulling a knife from his clothing. The suspect slashed and stabbed the officer," the department said in a statement posted on social media.

The officer then shot the man, the department said.

Police and the Santa Monica Fire Department provided medical aid but the man died, police said.

The officer was taken to a hospital with serious wounds but police said he was expected to survive.

Ex-cop guilty of minor charge in fatal shooting

VA FAIRFAX — A jury acquitted a former police officer in Virginia of involuntary manslaughter after he fatally shot a shoplifting suspect outside a busy shopping mall.

But the jury did convict the former police sergeant, Wesley Shifflett, of reckless handling of a firearm in connection with the shooting.

Prosecutors argued that Shifflett, then a sergeant with Fairfax County Police, acted recklessly when he shot and killed an unarmed man, Timothy McCree Johnson, after a short foot chase outside Tysons Corner Center in February 2023.

Shifflett testified in his own defense and claimed self defense. He said he saw Johnson, 37, reaching into his waistband after falling down during the chase, and he was worried that Johnson might be drawing a weapon.

Prosecutor Jenna Sands argued that Shifflett's decision to fire two shots, on the run, in a crowded area, constituted reckless discharge of a firearm.

FACES

Happy enough for a sad role

Saoirse Ronan says she needed to be in a good place to play an addict in 'The Outrun'

By LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

The thing about birthing a lamb on camera is you only get one take. Saoirse Ronan had been getting up at dawn to observe local farmers in Orkney in action, soaking in as much as she could. But soon it was her turn. Not only would she have a life in her hands: She had to look like she'd been doing it her whole life. She was terrified.

It wouldn't be the last time Ronan, 30, would have to step out of her comfort zone to make "The Outrun" (now in theaters), a harrowing and transcendent portrait of addiction and recovery that she produced alongside her husband, actor Jack Lowden. She'd yell and scream and say the meanest things she could think of to her fellow actors. She'd go from euphoric to inconsolable on a dime in a chaotic, drunken haze. And she'd plough the despairing depths of a very sick person about to relapse.

But after 20 years of acting, these were challenges she was ready for. There's a reason her performance, defining and distinctive on a résumé full of memorable characters, has garnered comparisons to Gena Rowlands in "A Woman Under the Influence." It was Lowden who put Amy Liptrot's bestselling memoir in her hands during the pandemic.

"We tend to be drawn towards the same kind of material," Ronan said. "I trust his taste and opinion. I kind of hold it higher than anyone else's."

They were both at a point where they felt like they had more to give to the movies than just performing. They wanted more responsibility, more agency to help shape the material that they loved so much. And so, Ronan and Lowden set off to make "The Outrun" together. Producing, she said, made her fall in love with filmmaking even more.

"It only made the experience as an actor even richer," Ronan said. "I had history with every single decision that had been made. I was a part of it and there was a piece of me in those decisions."

One of the first decisions that Liptrot, Ronan and German filmmaker Nora Fingscheidt made was to come up with a new name for Amy to create some healthy distance from their real-life subject. They decided on Rona, after

an uninhabited island visible from the Liptrots' real farm.

The production would involve an extensive pre-shoot on the Orkney Islands, on a remote corner of Scotland, to get the full scope of its natural splendor across a year, including lambs being born and birds nesting. The film skips around between her childhood, her downfall in London and her return to Orkney, with sublime asides about the history of the place, the folklore and what's going on in Rona's head. She finishes the odyssey in isolation on the even smaller island of Papay.

"We wanted to create a poetic film where the images and atmosphere stay with you for a long time after watching," wrote director Fingscheidt. "A film that takes you on a journey, not just to Orkney or London, but a spiritual journey into the inner world of a young woman, raised under extreme circumstances, searching for her place in life without alcohol."

In the chaotic London portions, in which Rona's relationship with her boyfriend Daynin (Paapa Essiedu) crumbles under the weight of her addiction, Ronan found herself apologizing often to her screen mates. To capture the extent of Rona's cruelty, Fingscheidt asked Ronan to get mean and personal.

"I've never explored that before with a character," Ronan said. "But you really have to kind of go,

"I was more than ready to give in to not knowing what this character was going to be, what it was going to turn into."

Saoirse Ronan

on her "messy, disconnected" role as Rona

OK, I'm doing this for the sake of authenticity and honoring Amy's life. In a way, it felt more respectful to the people who were affected by Amy's illness. Because the cruelty and the meanness and the ugliness that comes out. ... It's incredibly painful. If we were going to do this story and their experience justice, we needed to show all of that."

Ronan loved it when Lowden, who is Scottish, was on set. They married in private this year.



MATT LICARI, INVISION/AP

Saoirse Ronan, who has been nominated for four Academy Awards but won none, could be up for two more acting nominations soon.

"He's one of those enigmas where, yes, he's a brilliant, brilliant actor and is so incredible on screen, but most of the time would much prefer to watch someone else shine," she said. "He loves being behind the scenes, making sure everyone has what they need and making sure that the set is operating well. He's more naturally

"I'm buzzing that these two films are coming out at once because they couldn't be more different," Ronan said. "It's very exciting for me to stand by the two of them. They feel very personal for different reasons."

They're also already getting her awards buzz. Ronan has been nominated for four acting Oscars, going back to "Atonement," but has yet to win. This year it's possible she could get both a lead and supporting nomination for the two projects. And in "The Outrun," which she's seen from development to release, she is proud of a performance that she's not sure she would have been capable of a few years ago.

"I don't think it's necessarily something that I would have had the strength of character to take on years before," Ronan said. "But because I felt so happy and settled in my own life, and professionally speaking, I felt ready to play someone that was as messy and disconnected as she was. I was more than ready to give in to not knowing what this character was going to be, what it was going to turn into."

Plus, she now knows how to birth a lamb.

"You just got to get in there and do it," she said, laughing.

'Joker' sequel disappoints with \$40M

By LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

"Joker: Folie à Deux" is the No. 1 movie at the box office, but it might not be destined for a happy ending.

In a turn of events that only Arthur Fleck would find funny, the follow-up to Todd Phillips' 2019 origin story about the Batman villain opened in theaters nationwide this weekend to a muted \$40 million, according to studio estimates Sunday, less than half that of its predecessor. The collapse was swift and has many in the industry wondering: How did the highly anticipated sequel to an Oscar-winning, billion-dollar film with the same creative team go wrong?

Just three weeks ago, tracking services pegged the movie for a \$70 million debut, which would still have been down a fair amount from "Joker's" record-breaking \$96.2 million launch in Oct. 2019. Reviews were mixed out of the Venice Film Festival, where it premiered in competition like the first movie and even got a 12-minute standing ovation.

But the homecoming glow was short-lived, and the fragile foundation would crumble in the coming weeks with its Rotten Tomatoes score dropping from 63% at Venice to 33% by its first weekend in theaters. Perhaps even more surprising were the audience reviews: Ticket buyers polled on opening night gave the film a deadly D CinemaScore.

"Joker: Folie à Deux" cost at least twice as much as the first film to produce, though reported figures vary at exactly how pricey it was to make. Phillips told Variety that it was less than the reported \$200 million; Others have it pegged at \$190 million.

Internationally, it's earned \$81.1 million, bringing its total global earnings estimate to \$121.1 million.

Second place went to "The Wild Robot," which added \$18.7 million in its second weekend, bringing its domestic total to nearly \$64 million. Globally, it's made over \$100 million. Warner Bros.' "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" took third place in weekend five, Paramount's "Transformers One" landed in fourth and Universal and Blumhouse's "Speak No Evil" rounded out the top five.

The other big new release of the weekend, Lionsgate's "White Bird," flopped with just \$1.5 million.

The Francis Ford Coppola-directed "Megalopolis" meanwhile, dropped a terminal 74% in its second weekend with just over \$1 million, bringing its total just shy of \$6.5 million against a \$120 million budget.

NATION

Nobel Prize in medicine honors duo for discovering microRNA

Associated Press

STOCKHOLM — The Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine was awarded Monday to Americans Victor Ambros and Gary Ruvkun for their discovery of microRNA, tiny pieces of genetic material that alter how genes work at the cellular level and could lead to new ways of treating cancer.

The Nobel Assembly at the Karolinska Institute, which awarded the prize, said the duo's discovery is "proving to be fundamentally important for how organisms develop and function."

"Their groundbreaking discovery revealed a completely new principle of gene regulation that turned out to be essential for multicellular organisms, including humans," the assembly said in a statement explaining the importance of their work.

Ambros performed the research that led to his prize at Harvard University.

He is currently a professor of natural science at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Ruvkun's research was performed at Massachusetts General Hospital and the Harvard Medical School, where he's

a professor of genetics, said Thomas Perlmann, Secretary-General of the Nobel Committee.

Perlmann said he spoke to Ruvkun by phone shortly before the announcement.

"It took a long time before he came to the phone and sounded very tired, but he quite rapidly was quite excited and happy, when he understood what it was all about," Perlmann said.

Ambros and Ruvkun, the assembly explained, were initially interested in genes that control the timing of different genetic developments, ensuring that cell types develop at the right time.

To do that, they studied two mutant strains of worms commonly used as research models in science.

The two scientists set out to identify the mutated genes responsible in these worms and what their role was.

The mechanism they ultimately identified — the regulation of genes by microRNA — has allowed organisms to evolve for hundreds of millions of years.

The Nobel committee said Ambros and Ruvkun's discovery ultimately "revealed a new dimension to gene regulation, essential for all complex life forms."



This combo of pictures released by Mass General and UMass show American molecular biologist Gary Ruvkun, left, and UMass Chair in Natural Sciences and professor of molecular medicine, Victor Ambros.

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The Daily Guide to Navigating The Military Business Market



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WORLD

Samoa fears a fuel spill after New Zealand navy ship sinks

Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — A fuel spill is “highly probable” after a New Zealand navy ship grounded, caught fire and sank off the coast of Samoa, the Pacific island nation’s acting prime minister said late Sunday.

All 75 people on board the HMNZS Manawanui were taken to safety on lifeboats. The ship, one of only nine in New Zealand’s navy, was the first the country has lost at sea since World War II.

Officials in Samoa are assessing the environmental impact in the area where the ship sank on Sunday morning, acting Prime Minister Tuala Tevaga Iosefo Ponifasio said in a statement.

The vessel’s passengers — in-

cluding civilian scientists and foreign military personnel — evacuated in “challenging conditions” and darkness, New Zealand’s Chief of Navy Rear Adm. Garin Golding told reporters. The vessel was about a mile from shore when it grounded on a reef and began taking on water, and it took five hours for the first survivors to reach land, he said.

One person was treated in hospital for minor injuries and has been discharged, the military said. Up to 17 others sustained lacerations, contusions, or suspected concussions. An Air Force plane carrying 72 of those on board the ship touched down at an air base in Auckland on Monday night.

New Zealand will hold a court of inquiry into the loss of the ship.

Ukraine strikes Russian oil hub as Zelenskyy says war is at key phase

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine’s military said it struck an oil terminal Monday in Crimea that fuels Russia’s war effort as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the war has entered a key phase.

Both sides are facing the issue of how to sustain their costly war of attrition — a conflict that started with Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Ukraine’s General Staff said on social media that the oil terminal in Feodosia, on the south coast of the Russia-occupied Crimea Peninsula, has been supplying the Russian army with fuel and that the strike was

part of an ongoing effort to “undermine the military and economic potential of the Russian Federation.”

Russian-installed authorities in Feodosia on the coast of the Black Sea reported a fire at the terminal on Monday morning but did not say what might have caused it.

Ukraine has increasingly targeted rear areas that are essential for Russia’s onslaught. It has developed long-range drones that have hit oil depots, refineries and armories.

Ukraine’s aim is to impair Russia’s ability to support its front-line units, especially in the eastern Donetsk region where the main Russian battlefield effort is stretching

wearry Ukrainian forces.

Kyiv is still awaiting word from its Western partners on its requests to use the long-range weapons they provide to hit targets on Russian soil.

Developments on that question could come this weekend at Ramstein Air Base in Germany, when defense leaders from the 50-plus partner nations that coordinate military aid to Ukraine are due to meet.

Late on Sunday, Zelenskyy said the war is in “a very important phase” as the Ukrainian army works to hold Russian forces at bay in the east while also holding ground in Russia’s Kursk border region, which it captured two months ago.

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OPINION

The Mideast dominoes have been unleashed

BY ELIZABETH SHACKELFORD

Chicago Tribune

War is unpredictable, but recent developments in the Middle East conflict have precipitously narrowed the options for key players. Contrary to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's claims, it leaves no possible path to peace.

For a year, U.S. officials have implored the warring parties to avoid further escalation and pursue diplomatic solutions. They have specifically warned Israel against escalating its conflict with Hezbollah on the border with Lebanon into a second front in the war. But that is exactly what Netanyahu decided to do last month.

Israel had good cause to try to neutralize Hezbollah, as tens of thousands of Israeli civilians have had to flee the militant group's ongoing attacks over the past year. But that justification doesn't change the fact that more war, not less, is now on the horizon.

Using thousands of pagers and hundreds of walkie-talkies as mini-bombs across Lebanon, followed by dozens of airstrikes, Israel has killed scores of senior figures of the terrorist group, with ample civilian collateral damage. More than 1,000 people are already dead and more than 1 million displaced across Lebanon. It is also the first time in nearly two decades that Israel has struck central Beirut and conducted a ground invasion into the south.

When Iran fired nearly 200 ballistic missiles on Israel on Oct. 1, it was undoubtedly a further escalation. This was only the second time Iran, which has traditionally worked through proxy militias, has ever directly attacked Israel this year. President Joe Biden noted that the attack was "defeated and ineffective," since Israel, with American help, managed to intercept most of the missiles and prevent any Israeli casualties, just as it had in

April when Iran attacked Israel directly for the first time. Even so, this was a more serious and dangerous effort than in April, with more advanced weaponry and no early warning. This time, Iran meant it. But it still failed to land a punch.

From the perspective of the Iranian regime, it had to try. Iran's reach in the region is through its proxy militias, and Israel has taken a hammer to them. Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps said Iran's attack was in retaliation for Israel's assassination of Hezbollah's longtime leader Hassan Nasrallah in a strike in Beirut, and Hamas' leader Ismail Haniyeh in a guesthouse in Tehran in July.

But Israel's assault on Iran's proxies goes far beyond the leadership. Hamas has been cowed by a yearlong scorched-earth assault in Gaza, and Israel's recent actions in Lebanon have pummeled Hezbollah, Iran's strongest and most well-armed nonstate ally.

Iran would have lost all credibility with its "axis of resistance" partners had it failed to respond, but in doing so, Iran revealed its limitations.

So what's next? Unlike after Iran's failed attack in April, no one is telling Netanyahu to "take the win" this time. Both Israel and the United States have promised that Iran will pay.

Iran, meanwhile, is looking at a world where Israel's military and intelligence advantage is proving overwhelming. If neither its proxies nor its own military capacity can still project power and deter attacks, nuclear weapons are probably looking as attractive as ever to the Islamic Republic. And the state is believed to be within reach of producing them.

Neither the United States nor Israel is ready to allow that. This means that the next logical step in this chain of events is likely Israel, probably with U.S. support, striking nuclear

facilities inside Iran, thereby sparking the all-out war that so many have feared for a year.

For Netanyahu, and many hawks in the U.S. foreign policy establishment, this is the moment they've been hoping for. Iran and the groups that act as its muscle in the region are all on the back foot. What better time to strike?

But overwhelming military advantage doesn't necessarily translate to a quick and clean war. The United States learned that lesson in Iraq. It doesn't even guarantee success is preventing Iran from going nuclear. And the civilian harm would surely eclipse the horrific suffering we've already seen in Gaza.

Most importantly, though, this path has no endgame. The conflict undergirding the region's instability would remain intact. At best, it would contain threats for a period of time. More likely, it merely spawns more.

As has been the case for years before this war and every day since, the only path to lasting peace, for Israel and all its neighbors, is political resolution of the Palestinian question. Even if Israel succeeded in toppling Iran's destabilizing regime (an unlikely outcome but likely Netanyahu's ultimate aim), what then? The deep traumas that this region's people have faced will continue to fuel extremism for a population that is offered no better options.

Will anyone have the power and courage to pull either side back from the brink before it's too late? Momentum is narrowing that window. The U.S. electoral timeline seriously diminishes the chance that America will play that role effectively, at least until January.

Does leadership in Iran or Israel realize how fraught the path ahead is? The world can only hope.

Elizabeth Shackelford is senior policy director at Dartmouth College's Dickey Center for International Understanding and a foreign affairs columnist for the Chicago Tribune. She was previously a U.S. diplomat and is the author of "The Dissent Channel: American Diplomacy in a Dishonest Age."

Reversing America's decline is no easy task

BY WILLIAM COOPER

The Fulcrum

A recent Gallup poll shows that just 33% of Americans are satisfied with the nation's position in the world today. This is down from 65% in 2000. It's not hard to understand these sentiments. America is struggling this century in measure after measure, from numerous public policy failures to increasingly dysfunctional politics to an epidemic of mental health issues among young people.

This predicament raises two essential questions: Is America's downturn merely another temporary dip in a long arc of non-linear, yet upward, progress? Or is it the first phase of a steep national decline?

The answer lies with the American people. Like all nations, America is, above all, the hearts and minds of its people. And the trends are moving in the wrong direction: Things are getting worse. Tribalism is intensifying. Social-media platforms are getting smarter at manipulating human cognition. The political system's defects are worsening. And America's public policy failures are deepening.

The remedies are easy to state. We must improve civic education, spend more time with people from other political tribes, regulate the use of social media, rework the political structure to foster more political voices and equal representation, double down on free speech, feverishly guard our elections and support a new Republican champion other than Donald

Trump. Yet in practice these goals have, so far, been impossible to achieve.

Two broad and overlapping global trends will only make reversing the free fall harder as time marches on. First, technology is getting more sophisticated — at a dizzying pace. The positives are huge. The internet democratizes education. Streaming innovations like Netflix enrich entertainment. New products like self-driving cars revolutionize transportation. Highly sophisticated research dramatically improves medicine. Pioneering technologies substantially broaden the distribution of necessities like food and clothing.

But the negatives are unnerving. Online innovations like deep fakes compound the internet's harms. Poor cybersecurity undermines the safety of personal data. Popular applications like Chinese-owned TikTok give rival governments control over Americans' private information. Artificial intelligence jeopardizes humanity in ways neither clear nor certain. Industrial innovations like fracking plunder the environment. Battlefield inventions like drones change the face of warfare.

Second, international affairs are getting more complicated. It took America a full two centuries to achieve global hegemony — and merely two decades to lose it. As former CIA Director and Defense Secretary Robert Gates wrote in a September 2023 Foreign Affairs essay, geopolitical threats to America are multiplying: "The United States finds itself in a uniquely treacherous position: facing aggress-

sive adversaries with a propensity to miscalculate yet incapable of mustering the unity and strength necessary to dissuade them."

These dynamics establish a striking truism that looms over humanity: The world's preeminent democracy is in decline precisely when the challenges faced by the world are mounting and its need for rational leadership has never been more urgent.

Somewhere beneath the thickening surface of tribal bedlam and political fervor, however, is still a core national impulse to confront and overcome big challenges. The question is how strong that impulse remains.

The French political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville visited America in 1831 and 1832. A close observer of human behavior, de Tocqueville traveled across the country taking copious notes on what he saw. His book "Democracy in America" is a classic text in political science. And he's been revered for capturing the true essence of America like few others have, either before or since.

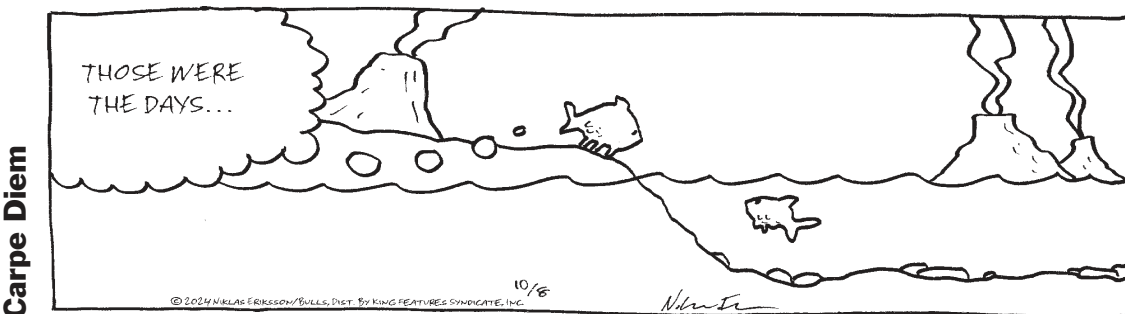
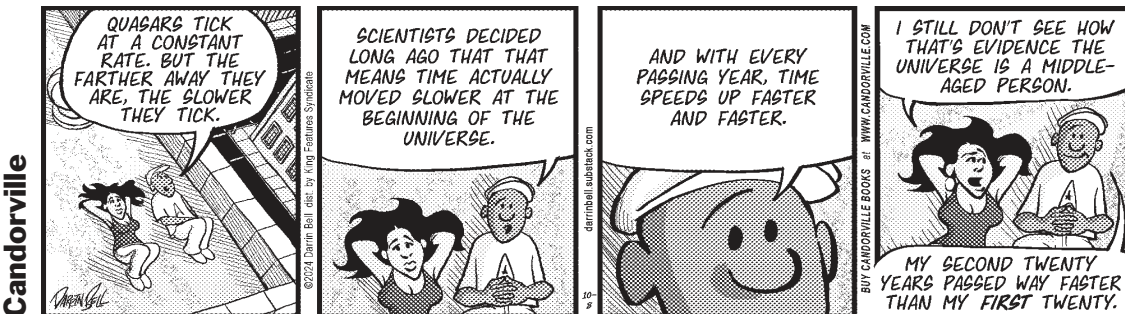
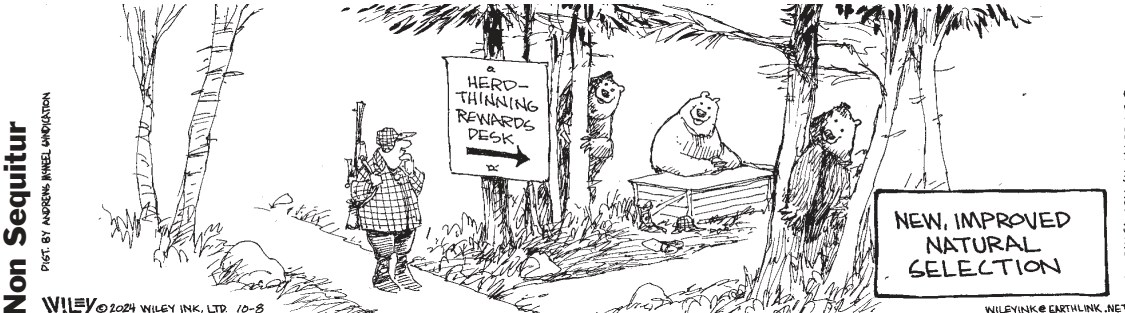
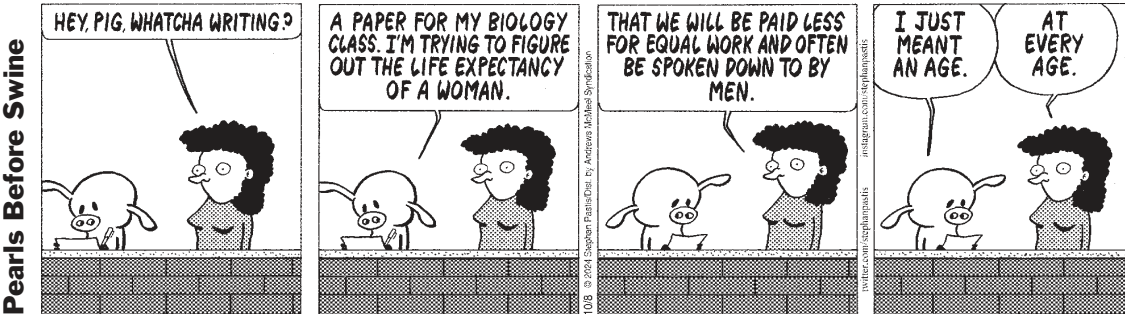
Perhaps de Tocqueville's most profound insight was that the "greatness of America lies not in being more enlightened than any other nation, but rather in her ability to repair her faults." America today is putting this thesis through a searing test. And the world will find out, soon enough, whether de Tocqueville's insight is still true.

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

Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11
12					13					14		
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ACROSS

- 1 Video-streaming brand
- 5 Ella's style
- 9 Sailor
- 12 Viewed
- 13 "That's — ask"
- 14 "Aladdin" monkey
- 15 Lionel products
- 17 Deleted
- 18 Silver salmon
- 19 Cheeky
- 21 Spud
- 24 Chaste
- 25 "Frozen" snowman
- 26 Spying devices
- 30 Chest muscle
- 31 Factions
- 32 Six, in Sicily
- 33 Some November babies
- 35 Terse order
- 36 Comfy-cozy
- 37 Clues
- 38 Allude to
- 40 Peru's capital
- 42 Carte lead-in
- 43 Soccer or basketball
- 48 Brooch
- 49 Austen heroine
- 50 Physical
- 51 Feeling down
- 52 Meander
- 53 Scepters

DOWN

- 1 Letters after Q
- 2 Poetic contraction
- 3 Mauna —
- 4 Relief org. for kids
- 5 Merit badge holder
- 6 Nile queen, familiarly
- 7 PC key
- 8 Sneezer's needs
- 9 Annual form-filing period
- 10 Fortas and Lincoln
- 11 Sean Astin film
- 16 Fish-fowl link
- 20 Museum purchase
- 21 First-rate
- 22 Novelist Waugh

- 23 Mexican food vendor
- 24 Corp. VIP
- 26 Kristen of "Bridesmaids"
- 27 Chapel vow
- 28 Cooped (up)
- 29 Poses
- 31 Worrisome engine sound
- 34 Genetic letters
- 35 Bum wrap?
- 37 "— Pinafore"
- 38 Openings
- 39 Kazan of filmdom
- 40 Dalai —
- 41 Mosque leader
- 44 Punk rock offshoot
- 45 Vegetable peeler brand
- 46 "Awesome!"
- 47 Corp. symbols

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

10-8

CRYPTOQUIP

D X Z B H Z S H P Z J Z G H S B E V S
 G U V F M V U S B G Y C Y Z U B O
 A J F Z P Y Z M G V G, U D S F P E G M C
 V X Z C ' J Z S O J Z - J Z M A V U B O.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A DOWNPOUR CAUSES A HUGE AMOUNT OF PROPERTY DAMAGE, WOULD YOU CALL THAT A RAIN OF TERROR?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals Y

SCOREBOARD

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

AP Top 25

The Top 25 teams in The Associated Press college football poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, records through Oct. 5, total points based on 25 points for a first-place vote through one point for a 25th-place vote, and previous ranking:

Table with 4 columns: Rank, Team, Record, Pts, Prv. Lists top 25 college football teams.

Others receiving votes: Southern Cal 98, Nebraska 51, Navy 43, Army 33, Vanderbilt 26, Arkansas 17, Washington St. 8, Iowa 8, Texas Tech 7, Syracuse 6, Washington 4, Louisville 4, Colorado 3, Kentucky 1.

USA Today Top 25

The US LBM Coaches Poll Top 25 with team's records through Saturday in parentheses, total points based on 25 for first place through one point for 25th, ranking in last week's poll and first-place votes received:

Table with 4 columns: Rank, Team, Pts, Prv, 1st. Lists top 25 college football teams with points and previous rankings.

Dropped out: No. 15 Southern California (3-2); No. 22 Louisville (3-2); No. 23 UNLV (4-1).

Others receiving votes: Southern California (3-2) 102; Nebraska (5-1) 68; Army (5-0) 36; Navy (5-0) 26; Colorado (4-1) 16; Arizona (3-2) 12; Kentucky (3-2) 12; UNLV (4-1) 11; Texas Tech (5-1) 8; Virginia (4-1) 7; Liberty (4-0) 5; Washington (4-2) 5; Vanderbilt (3-2) 4; Arkansas (4-2) 3; Rutgers (4-1) 3; Iowa (3-2) 2; Louisville (3-2) 2; Tulane (4-2) 2; Arizona State (4-1) 1; Syracuse (4-1) 1.

GOLF

Sanderson Farms Championship

PGA Tour Sunday. At Country Club of Jackson, Jackson, Miss. Purse: \$7.6 million. Yardage: 7,461; Par: 72. Final Round. (x-won on second playoff hole)

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA playoffs

(x-if necessary) First Round (Best-of-three) No. 1 New York 2, No. 8 Atlanta 0. No. 2 Minnesota 2, No. 7 Phoenix 0. No. 3 Connecticut 2, No. 6 Indiana 0. No. 4 Las Vegas 2, No. 5 Seattle 0. (Best-of-five) Semifinals No. 1 New York 3, No. 4 Las Vegas 1. No. 2 Minnesota 2, No. 3 Connecticut 2. Sunday: New York 76, Las Vegas 62. Tuesday: at Minnesota

DEALS

Sunday's transactions

HOCKEY National Hockey League BOSTON BRUINS — Signed G Jeremy Swayman to an eight-year contract. Assigned Cs Jaxon Nelson, Georgi Merkulov, Brett Harrison, Riley Duran, RW Fabian Lysell, Gs Kasimir Kaskisuo, Ryan Biachel, Ds Jack Edward and Michael Callahan to Providence (AHL). CAROLINA HURRICANES — Signed D Bryce Montgomery to a three-year contract. Placed LW Josiah Slaviv, C Ryan Suzuki, and D Ty Smith on waivers for the purpose of assignment to Chicago (AHL). Released C Rocco Grimaldi from his professional tryout agreement (PTO). Assigned G Spencer Martin, Ds Scott Morrow, Ronan Seeley and C Skyler Brind'Amour to Chicago. Loaned C Bradly Nadeau to Chicago.

COLORADO AVALANCHE — Acquired D Tucker Poolman and a fourth-round draft pick from Vancouver in exchange for D Erik Brannstrom. Signed F Nikita Prishchepov to a three-year, entry-level contract. COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS — Loaned D Denton Mateychuk to Cleveland (AHL). DETROIT RED WINGS — Assigned Gs Carter Gylander, Sebastian Cossa, C Marco Kasper, LWs Carter Mazur and Elmer Soderblom to Grand Rapids (AHL). EDMONTON OILERS — Loaned C Noah Philp to Bakersfield (AHL). Waived LW Drake Caggliola for purpose of assignment to Bakersfield. Placed G Olivier Rodrigue, D Josh Brown and C Raphael Lavoie on waivers.

LOS ANGELES KINGS — Placed LW Samuel Fagemo, C Jack Studnicka, and G Pheonix Copley on waivers for the purpose of assignment to Ontario (AHL). Placed D Drew Doughty and RW Arthur Kaliyev on injured reserve.

NEW JERSEY DEVILS — Reassigned G Nicolas Daws to Utica (AHL). OTTAWA SENATORS — Placed C Jan Jenik and RW Adam Gaudette on waivers. ST. LOUIS BLUES — Reassigned LWs Mackenzie MacEachern, Hugh McGing and C Aleksanteri Kaskimaki to Springfield (AHL). Returned C Dalibor Dvorsky and D Hunter Skinner to Springfield. Loaned C Mathias Laferriere to Springfield. Assigned D Samuel Johansson to Springfield. Sent C Dylan Peterson and G Vadim Zherenko to Springfield.

SAN JOSE SHARKS — Sent D Jimmy Schuldt to San Jose (AHL). Loaned C Colin White to San Jose. Assigned C Nolan Burke to San Jose.

TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Assigned LW Dylan Duke, Cs Gabriel Szturc, Gage Gougeon and RW Jesse Yionen to Syracuse (AHL).

UTAH HOCKEY CLUB — Signed RW Kailer Yamamoto to a one-year contract. Placed G Matt Villalta on waivers for the purpose of assignment to Tucson (AHL).

VANCOUVER CANUCKS — Signed LW Nils Hoglander to a three-year contract.

SOCCER Major League Soccer AUSTIN FC — Fired head coach Josh Wolff.

AUTO RACING

YellaWood 500

NASCAR Cup Series Sunday At Talladega Superspeedway Talladega, Ala. Lap length: 2.66 miles (Start position in parentheses) 1. (32) Ricky Stenhouse Jr., Chevrolet, 195 laps, 49 points. 2. (13) Brad Keselowski, Ford, 195, 35. 3. (16) William Byron, Chevrolet, 195, 48. 4. (12) Kyle Larson, Chevrolet, 195, 42. 5. (30) Erik Jones, Toyota, 195, 32. 6. (21) Christopher Bell, Toyota, 195, 37. 7. (35) Justin Haley, Chevrolet, 195, 30. 8. (7) Austin Dillon, Chevrolet, 195, 29. 9. (26) Bubba Wallace, Toyota, 195, 32. 10. (8) Denny Hamlin, Toyota, 195, 27. 11. (24) Martin Truex Jr., Toyota, 195, 26. 12. (34) Cody Ware, Ford, 195, 25. 13. (15) Ty Gibbs, Toyota, 195, 24. 14. (37) Carson Hocevar, Chevrolet, 195, 23. 15. (17) Shane Van Gisbergen, Chevrolet, 195, 0. 16. (23) Alex Bowman, Chevrolet, 195, 26. 17. (20) Chris Buescher, Ford, 195, 30. 18. (28) Corey LaJoie, Ford, 195, 19. 19. (4) Kyle Busch, Chevrolet, 195, 26. 20. (14) Tyler Reddick, Toyota, 195, 22. 21. (39) Zane Smith, Chevrolet, 195, 16. 22. (38) BJ McLeod, Chevrolet, 195, 0. 23. (3) Todd Gilliland, Ford, 194, 14. 24. (33) Anthony Alfredo, Chevrolet, 194, 0. 25. (22) Noah Gragson, Ford, 194, 12. 26. (31) Daniel Suarez, Chevrolet, 194, 11. 27. (40) JJ Yeley, Chevrolet, 193, 0. 28. (25) AJ Allmendinger, Chevrolet, 193, 0. 29. (11) Chase Elliott, Chevrolet, 190, 17. 30. (36) Chase Briscoe, Ford, 189, 10. 31. (29) John H. Nemechek, Toyota, 188, 6. 32. (2) Austin Cindric, Ford, accident, 183, 17. 33. (6) Joey Logano, Ford, accident, 183, 4. 34. (9) Harrison Burton, Ford, accident, 183, 3. 35. (18) Ryan Preece, Ford, accident, 183, 2. 36. (19) Josh Berry, Ford, accident, 183, 1. 37. (1) Michael McDowell, Ford, accident, 183, 1. 38. (10) Daniel Hemric, Chevrolet, accident, 183, 1. 39. (5) Ryan Blaney, Ford, accident, 124, 5. 40. (27) Ross Chastain, Chevrolet, accident, 120, 6.

Race statistics Average speed of race winner: 150.775 mph. Time of race: 3 hours, 26 minutes, 25 seconds. Margin of victory: 0.006 seconds. Caution flags: 4 for 24 laps. Lead changes: 66 among 24 drivers. Lap leaders: M.McDowell 0-13; B.McLeod 14; B.Keselowski 15; M.McDowell 16-38; J.Haley 39; R.Chastain 40-41; A.Bowman 42; R.Chastain 43-47; D.Hemric 48; R.Chastain 49-51; K.Larson 52; R.Chastain 53-57; R.Stenhouse 58-59; C.Buescher 60-62; B.Keselowski 63; W.Byron 64; C.Buescher 65-66; T.Reddick 67; C.Buescher 68-73; C.LaJoie 74-78; M.McDowell 79-82; R.Blaney 83-87; S.Van Gisbergen 88-90; R.Chastain 91; S.Van Gisbergen 92; R.Blaney 93; S.Van Gisbergen 94-95; R.Chastain 96; S.Van Gisbergen 97-99; J.Haley 100-102; A.Cindric 103-116; C.Elliott 117; A.Cindric 118-122; T.Reddick 123; K.Busch 124-129; B.Wallace 130; K.Busch 131; B.Wallace 132-133; C.Buescher 134; A.Allmendinger 135; C.Ware 136; J.Logano 137-141; A.Allmendinger 142; J.Logano 143-145; A.Allmendinger 146-150; J.Logano 151; A.Cindric 152; J.Logano 153-157; A.Allmendinger 158; J.Logano 159; A.Cindric 160; J.Logano 161; A.Cindric 162; A.Allmendinger 163; J.Logano 164-166; A.Cindric 167-168; A.Dillon 169; T.Gilliland 170-171; M.McDowell 172-173; A.Cindric 174-175; R.Stenhouse 176-177; A.Cindric 178; R.Stenhouse 179; A.Cindric 180; R.Stenhouse 181-182; A.Cindric 183; R.Stenhouse 184-195

Leaders summary (driver, times led, laps led): M.McDowell, 4 times for 42 laps; A.Cindric, 10 times for 29 laps; R.Stenhouse, 5 times for 19 laps; J.Logano, 7 times for 19 laps; R.Chastain, 6 times for 17 laps; C.Buescher, 4 times for 12 laps; S.Van Gisbergen, 4 times for 9 laps; A.Allmendinger, 5 times for 9 laps; K.Busch, 2 times for 7 laps; R.Blaney, 2 times for 6 laps; C.LaJoie, 1 time for 5 laps; J.Haley, 2 times for 4 laps; B.Wallace, 2 times for 3 laps; B.Keselowski, 2 times for 2 laps; T.Reddick, 2 times for 2 laps; T.Gilliland, 1 time for 2 laps; W.Byron, 1 time for 1 lap; K.Larson, 1 time for 1 lap; A.Dillon, 1 time for 1 lap; C.Ware, 1 time for 1 lap; A.Bowman, 1 time for 1 lap; B.McLeod, 1 time for 1 lap; C.Elliott, 1 time for 1 lap; D.Hemric, 1 time for 1 lap.

Wins: K.Larson, 5; W.Byron, 3; C.Bell, 3; D.Hamlin, 3; R.Blaney, 2; T.Reddick, 2; J.Logano, 2; A.Bowman, 1; C.Elliott, 1; D.Suarez, 1; A.Cindric, 1; C.Briscoe, 1; B.Keselowski, 1; H.Burton, 1; R.Chastain, 1; C.Buescher, 1; R.Stenhouse, 1; A.Dillon, 1.

Top 16 in points: 1. W.Byron, 3122; 2. C.Bell, 3105; 3. K.Larson, 3100; 4. D.Hamlin, 3078; 5. A.Bowman, 3074; 6. R.Blaney, 3073; 7. T.Reddick, 3062; 8. C.Elliott, 3061; 9. J.Logano, 3048; 10. D.Suarez, 3041; 11. A.Cindric, 3032; 12. C.Briscoe, 3029; 13. T.Gibbs, 2144; 14. M.Truex, 2130; 15. B.Keselowski, 2104; 16. H.Burton, 2048.

NASCAR driver rating formula A maximum of 150 points can be attained in a race.

The formula combines the following categories: Wins, Finishes, Top-15 Finishes, Average Running Position While on Lead Lap, Average Speed Under Green, Fastest Lap, Led Most Laps, Lead-Lap Finish.

PRO SOCCER

MLS

Table with 7 columns: Team, W, L, T, Pts, GF, GA. Eastern Conference: Inter Miami CF, Columbus, Cincinnati, Orlando City, NYFC, Charlotte FC, New York, D.C. United, CF Montréal, Toronto FC, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Nashville, New England, Chicago.

Table with 7 columns: Team, W, L, T, Pts, GF, GA. Western Conference: LA Galaxy, LAFC, Seattle, Real Salt Lake, Houston, Colorado, Minnesota, Vancouver, Portland, Austin FC, FC Dallas, St Louis City, Sporting KC, San Jose.

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Wednesday, Oct. 2

CF Montréal 2, Atlanta 1. Charlotte FC 4, Chicago 3. New York City FC 3, Cincinnati 2. Orlando City 3, Philadelphia 1. New York 4, Toronto FC 1. Miami 3, Columbus 2. Houston 2, New England 1. D.C. United 4, Nashville 3. LA Galaxy 3, Colorado 1. Minnesota 0, Real Salt Lake 0, tie. Los Angeles FC 1, St Louis City 0. Austin FC 1, Portland 0. San Jose 3, FC Dallas 2. Seattle 3, Vancouver 0.

Saturday, Oct. 5

Miami 1, Toronto FC 0. Minnesota 1, Vancouver 0. Atlanta 2, New York 1. Charlotte FC 2, CF Montréal 0. Orlando City 3, Cincinnati 1. Columbus 3, Philadelphia 2. D.C. United 2, New England 1. Los Angeles FC 3, Sporting Kansas City 0. St Louis City 3, Houston 0. Seattle 1, Colorado 0. LA Galaxy 2, Austin FC 1. Real Salt Lake 1, San Jose 0.

Sunday's games

New York City FC 3, Nashville 1. FC Dallas 0, Portland 0, tie.

Saturday's games

New England at Columbus.

Sunday, Oct. 13

Los Angeles FC at Vancouver.

NWSL

Table with 7 columns: Team, W, L, T, Pts, GF, GA. Orlando, Washington, Gotham FC, Kansas City, North Carolina, Chicago, Portland, Bay FC, Louisville, San Diego, Angel City, Utah Royals FC, Seattle, Houston.

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Friday, Oct. 4

Chicago 2, Houston 0. Angel City 1, Seattle 0.

Saturday, Oct. 5

North Carolina 2, San Diego 1. Kansas City 2, Louisville 0. Gotham FC 5, Bay FC 1. Utah Royals FC 2, Portland 1.

Sunday's game

Orlando 2, Washington 0.

Friday's game

Orlando at Portland.

Saturday's games

Gotham FC at Chicago. Angel City at North Carolina. Kansas City at Bay FC.

PRO HOCKEY

NHL

EASTERN CONFERENCE Atlantic Division

Table with 7 columns: Team, GP, W, L, OT, Pts, GF, GA. Tampa Bay, Toronto, Boston, Detroit, Florida, Montreal, Ottawa, Buffalo.

Metropolitan Division

Table with 7 columns: Team, GP, W, L, OT, Pts, GF, GA. New Jersey, Carolina, Columbus, N.Y. Islanders, N.Y. Rangers, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Washington.

WESTERN CONFERENCE Central Division

Table with 7 columns: Team, GP, W, L, OT, Pts, GF, GA. Chicago, Colorado, Dallas, Minnesota, Nashville, St. Louis, Utah, Winnipeg.

Pacific Division

Table with 7 columns: Team, GP, W, L, OT, Pts, GF, GA. Anaheim, Calgary, Edmonton, Los Angeles, San Jose, Seattle, Vancouver, Vegas.

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.

Saturday's game

New Jersey 3, Buffalo 1.

Sunday's games

No games scheduled.

Monday's game

No games scheduled.

Tuesday's games

St. Louis at Seattle. Boston at Florida. Chicago at Utah.

Wednesday's games

Toronto at Montreal. N.Y. Rangers at Pittsburgh. Calgary at Vancouver. Colorado at Vegas. Winnipeg at Edmonton.

Thursday's games

Montreal at Boston. Los Angeles at Buffalo. Florida at Ottawa. Pittsburgh at Detroit. Toronto at New Jersey. Utah at New York. Dallas at Nashville. Columbus at Minnesota. St. Louis at San Jose.

TENNIS

Shanghai Masters

Sunday At Qizhong Forest Sports City Arena Shanghai. Purse: \$8,995,555. Surface: Hardcourt outdoor. Men's Singles Round of 32. Daniil Medvedev (5), Russia, def. Matteo Arnaldi (29), Italy, 5-7, 6-4, 6-4. Jannik Sinner (1), Italy, def. Tomas Martin Etcheverry (31), Argentina, 6-7 (3), 6-4, 6-2. Carlos Alcaraz (3), Spain, def. Yibing Wu, China, 7-6 (5), 6-3. Tommy Paul (11), United States, def. Alejandro Tabilo (19), Chile, 6-7 (2), 7-6 (6), 6-2.

China Open

Sunday At National Tennis Center Beijing. Purse: \$8,955,610. Surface: Hardcourt outdoor. Women's Singles Championship. Coco Gauff (4), United States, def. Karolina Muchova, Czechia, 6-1, 6-3. Women's Doubles Championship. Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini (5), Italy, def. Hao-Ching Chan, Taiwan, and Veronika Kudermetova (7), Russia, 6-4, 6-4.

AUTO RACING/NFL

Stenhouse win, big crash scramble playoff picture

By JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

TALLADEGA, Ala. — A 27-car crash that involved eight of NASCAR's 12 title contenders. A chaotic cleanup that infuriated competitors. And a surprise winner.

Just a regular race at Talladega Superspeedway.

Ricky Stenhouse Jr. snapped a 65-race losing streak by winning in overtime at Talladega on Sunday after a late crash collected more than half the field. Stenhouse is not in the playoffs and his victory marked the second consecutive week a driver not competing for the Cup Series title has won.

"It's so tough to win these races. It's so tough to miss the wrecks," Stenhouse said. "These races are just chaos when it comes down to the end."

The victory was the first for Stenhouse and his JTG Daugherty Racing team since he won the season-opening Daytona 500 to start 2023. He's the 18th different Cup Series winner this year.

"It felt really good. This team has put a lot of hard work in, obviously we haven't won since the 500 in '23. It's been an up-and-down season," Stenhouse said. "We knew that this track is one of ours to come get."

Stenhouse's first career victory came at Talladega in 2017 and his four career Cup Series victories have come at either the Alabama superspeedway or Daytona International Speedway.

Stenhouse won in a three-wide finish between Brad Keselowski and William Byron, who with his third-place finish became the only driver locked into the third round of the playoffs.

Four drivers will be eliminated from the playoffs next Sunday on the hybrid road course/oval at Charlotte. Joey Logano, Daniel Suarez, Austin Cindric and Chase Briscoe are all below the cutline.

Cindric was the leader with five laps remaining in regulation when Logano, two rows back, gave Keselowski a hard shove directly into Cindric. It caused Cindric to spin and 27 of the 40 cars in the field suffered some sort of damage in the melee.

Even Stenhouse had a chunk of sheet metal missing from the driver side door area when he drove his car into victory lane. In the chaos of the cleanup, with teams fuming post-race over how NASCAR navigated the crash scene, some argued that Stenhouse's door was missing some safety foam and he should have been forced to pit for repairs.

"I bet they did. I didn't see any missing foam," said winning crew chief Mike Kelly, who suspects NASCAR will review how it handled the chaotic cleanup in which some cars were towed back to pit road and repairs began for them as others were still stranded on the track. "They were put in a tough situation with that many cars involved in the wreck, and that many (tow trucks). It's a tough situation."

Stenhouse later acknowledged there indeed was foam hanging out of the gaping hole.

The race was red-flagged for nearly nine minutes of cleanup, and 22 cars remained on the lead lap for the two-lap overtime sprint to the finish. Many of those 22 cars were damaged.

Keselowski finished second in a Ford for RFK Racing and was followed by Byron in a Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet. Byron is the points leader headed into Charlotte and his cushion is large enough to earn him an automatic spot into the round of eight.

Kyle Larson of Hendrick was fourth and followed



BUTCH DILL/AP

Driver Ricky Stenhouse Jr. leads Brad Keselowski, bottom, and William Byron on the way to the finish line in the NASCAR Cup Series race at Talladega Superspeedway on Sunday.

by Erik Jones of Legacy Motor Club in a Toyota. Christopher Bell of Joe Gibbs Racing was sixth in a Toyota and followed by Justin Haley of Spire Motorsports. Austin Dillon of Richard Childress Racing finished eighth, Bubba Wallace was ninth with 23XI Racing co-owner Michael Jordan in attendance, and Denny Hamlin, the other co-owner of the team, rounded out the top 10.

Only four drivers still active in the playoffs finished inside the top 10.

Late crash salvages Blaney's day

Ryan Blaney, who used his win at Talladega a year ago to spark his run to his first Cup Series title, was involved in a crash racing for points on the final lap of the second stage.

Blaney was pushed too hard from behind by fellow playoff driver Alex Bowman and the shove forced Blaney's Ford to take a sharp left and then bounce up the track into the wall and Ross Chastain.

Blaney tried to keep his battered car out on track but the engine eventually failed, ending his race. He was second in the playoff standings entering the race and feared his career-high seventh DNF of the season would drop him to the verge of elimination.

Because so many drivers wrecked late, Blaney only dropped to sixth in the playoff standings.

Suarez struggles all day

Daniel Suarez was already trying to work his way above the elimination zone when his race was derailed as it started.

NASCAR penalized Trackhouse Racing for making a modification to the No. 99 after inspection so Suarez had to serve a pass-thru penalty at the start of the race that dropped him off the lead lap. When the pack came upon him to put him a second lap down on lap 11, Suarez tried to preserve position and ended up running into another car.

It caused him to spin into the grass and the Chevrolet had to pit for repairs. He tried the entire race to get back on the lead lap, couldn't make it, and then was one of the drivers in the late crash.

He finished 26th, somehow, and gained one spot in the standings to 10th. Suarez is only 20 points below the elimination cutline.

"These races are just chaos when it comes down to the end."

Ricky Stenhouse
race winner



NICK WASS/AP

Washington Commanders quarterback Jayden Daniels runs past Cleveland Browns defensive end Ogbo Okoronkwo on Sunday.

Commanders roll to 4th straight win

By STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

LANDOVER, Md. — Jayden Daniels shook off throwing an early interception at the goal line like it was his 50th NFL game, not his fifth.

"Stay the course," he said. "Don't get too high, get too low. Everything's going to work out."

It worked out well enough to give Daniels and the Washington Commanders a fourth consecutive victory, a 34-13 rout of the Cleveland Browns on Sunday. The rookie quarterback had nearly as many incompletions as the previous three games combined but overcame that with 82 yards rushing and the longest touchdown pass of his young career.

"I just missed some throws," said Daniels, who was 14-for-25 for 328 yards passing. "That's it. Some throws I wish I had back, but we were able to capitalize on some plays."

Washington is 4-1 for the first time since 2008. Cleveland has lost three in a row to drop to 1-4.

"Nobody likes where we are," Browns coach Kevin Stefanski said. "I don't feel good about 1-4. It eats at you."

Daniels, Brian Robinson Jr., Austin Ekeler and Jeremy McNichols ran all over the Browns, combining for 211 yards on 31 carries. Robinson ran for two TDs, and McNichols had one in a game so lopsided that fans were doing the wave with four minutes left in the third quarter.

The Commanders defense had a ton to do with that, forcing Deshaun Watson to fumble, sacking him seven times and allowing a to-

tal of 212 yards. After Washington entered with the worst third-down defense in the league, Cleveland went 1-for-13 in a sloppy, disjointed effort, with its only touchdown coming in garbage time.

"We held it on our shoulders as a defense like this is the game for us to step forward," said linebacker Frankie Luvu, who led the team with 2½ sacks. "There's always room for improvement, and us as a defense, we're just getting started."

Watson was 15-for-28 for 125 yards and the late TD toss to tight end Jordan Akins. He has yet to throw for 200 yards in a game this season, but Stefanski said after lifting Watson for Jameis Winston in the final minutes the Browns are "not changing quarterbacks."

"We need to play better," Stefanski said. "This is not a one-person issue on offense."

Daniels, the No. 2 pick who quickly became the favorite for offensive rookie of the year, did not come close to completing 82.5% of passes like in his first four professional games. But he did make highlight-reel throws of 66 yards to Terry McLaurin and 41 for a TD to Dyami Brown, the latter of which after he asked offensive coordinator Kliff Kingsbury for the chance to go deep.

"He called the play, and we did it," said Daniels, who gave way to backup Marcus Mariota with 12:50 left and the outcome already determined.

McLaurin made four catches for a season-high 125 yards. Ekeler had a 57-yard run that was Washington's longest since Derrius Guice went for 60 in 2019.

NFL

ROUNDUP

59-yard FG lifts Texans over Bills

Associated Press

HOUSTON — All week, Stefon Diggs downplayed how big it would be when he faced the Buffalo Bills for the first time since a blockbuster trade brought him to Houston.

On Sunday, after the Texans used a last-second field goal to eke out a 23-20 victory, the star receiver finally admitted how important this game was to him.

“I’m not going to sit here and act like it was just regular,” he said. “It meant a lot to me and it was reassuring that the guys around me knew that it meant a lot to me, even if I didn’t say it. I just try to just keep it poised and treat every week like it’s the same ... but I’d be lying if I said it didn’t mean a lot.”

C.J. Stroud threw for 331 yards and a touchdown and Ka’imi Fairbairn’s tiebreaking 59-yard field goal as time expired lifted Houston to the victory.

Diggs led the Texans with six receptions for 82 yards and said that Sunday was an emotional day for him after spending the past four seasons in Buffalo.

“I was just trying to take advantage and get a win for my team, but obviously, it’s emotional,” he said. “I play with a lot of emotions.”

The Texans (4-1) led 20-3 after a field goal early in third quarter before the Bills scored 17 straight points to tie it with about 3½ minutes to go.

Stroud was called for intentional grounding to bring up fourth-and-15 and take the Texans out of field-goal range with less than a minute left.

A punt backed the Bills up to their 3 and they punted after three straight incomplete passes to give Houston one last chance.

“Overall, that’s on me,” Buffalo coach Sean McDermott said. “We’ve just got to do a better job. I have to do a better job in that situation.”

Dare Ogunbowale had a 5-yard run to set up Fairbairn’s game winner.

“It wasn’t all pretty,” coach DeMeco Ryans said. “But it’s the way you finish at the end and I’m proud of the way our guys finished.”

Dolphins 15, Patriots 10: Alec Ingold scored the go-ahead touchdown on a 3-yard run with four minutes left, and Jason Sanders kicked three field goals to make up for three botched kicks by special teams as visiting Miami beat New England.

In a game between two of the NFL’s worst teams that was pocked with penalties, missed kicks and clock management mistakes, each team managed just one touchdown, with Miami (2-3) taking the lead when Ingold plunged into the end zone on his only carry



ERIC GAY/AP

Texans place kicker Ka’imi Fairbairn celebrates with teammates after kicking a 59-yard field goal on the last play against the Buffalo Bills on Sunday in Houston. The Texans won 23-20.

of the game.

The Patriots (1-4) still had two more chances to take the lead after the 2-point attempt failed, but the first ended after a replay review overturned a catch that was ruled a touchdown on the field, and the second fizzled at the Miami 11 when Jacoby Brissett hit Hunter Henry for 25 yards with 4 seconds left—but in the middle of the field, with no opportunity to stop the clock.

Broncos 34, Raiders 18: Pat Surtain II picked off a pair of passes and his 100-yard interception return for a touchdown powered host Denver past injury-riddled Las Vegas, snapping an eight-game losing streak in the storied AFC West series.

Rookie Bo Nix had a breakout day with a pair of touchdown passes after coming into the game with just one. He also ran for a score as Denver scored 34 unanswered points after falling behind 10-0 in the first quarter.

Completing passes to a franchise-record 11 players, Nix finished 19-for-27 for 206 yards, two TDs and no interceptions as the Broncos (3-2) secured their first win over the Raiders (2-3) since Dec. 29, 2019, a confounding dry spell given how evenly matched the teams have been over the last several seasons.

Giants 29, Seahawks 20: Daniel Jones threw for 257 yards and two touchdowns, Bryce Ford-Wheaton returned a blocked field-goal attempt 60 yards for a touchdown with 55 seconds left and short-handed New York stunned host Seattle.

Playing without two of its best offensive players, New York (2-3) put together a masterful game plan that built a 23-13 lead midway through the fourth quarter. The Giants then came up with one big special teams play with Seattle on the verge of potentially forcing overtime.

Seattle’s Jason Myers lined up for a 47-yard field-goal attempt with 1:05 left that could have pulled even at 23-23. New York’s Isaiah Simmons cleanly jumped over the gap between the guard and long snapper in the offensive line and swatted the kick, which bounced into the arms of Ford-Wheaton for a clinching score that sent the home fans to the exits.

Bears 36, Panthers 10: Caleb Williams threw for 304 yards and two touchdowns in his best performance to date and DJ Moore caught both scoring passes and had 105 yards receiving against his former team as host Chicago beat Carolina.

The Bears (3-2) won their second straight after dropping two in a row, with the two key pieces they acquired as a result of a blockbuster trade with Carolina in 2023 leading the way.

Chicago also got a big performance for the second straight week from D’Andre Swift. He had 120 yards from scrimmage and a TD.

Cardinals 24, 49ers 23: Kyler Murray had a long touchdown run in the first quarter and rallied visiting Arizona with two fourth-quarter scoring drives in its victory over San Francisco.

Murray threw a 2-yard touch-

down pass to Elijah Higgins early in the fourth quarter that cut the deficit to 23-21 and then set up Chad Ryland’s 35-yard field goal with 1:37 to play to give the Cardinals (2-3) the lead.

San Francisco’s Brock Purdy then threw his second interception of the game when he was hit by Jalen Thompson, and Kyzir White came up with the floater.

Jaguars 37, Colts 34: Trevor Lawrence threw for 371 yards and two touchdowns on his 25th birthday and put his team in position for a 49-yard field goal with 17 seconds left that gave host Jacksonville its first win of the season over short-handed Indianapolis.

Tank Bigsby ran for 101 yards and two scores for Jacksonville (1-4), which won for the first time since December and extended its home streak against division rival Indianapolis (2-3) to double digits. The Jaguars did so while wearing throwback uniforms on a day the franchise inducted retired coach Tom Coughlin into their ring of honor.

Packers 24, Rams 19: Jordan Love bounced back from the first pick-6 of his career to throw a pair of touchdown passes to Tucker Kraft in the second half as visiting Green Bay rallied for a victory over Los Angeles.

The Packers trailed 13-7 late in the second quarter after Jaylen McCollough intercepted Love’s off-balance attempt to throw the ball away and ran it in from 4 yards. But Green Bay (3-2) scored on its next three drives to beat the Rams (1-4) for the ninth time in their last 10 regular-season meetings.

Scoreboard

American Conference

	East					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Buffalo	3	2	0	.600	142	106
Miami	2	3	0	.400	60	113
N.Y. Jets	2	3	0	.400	93	85
New England	1	4	0	.200	62	102

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Houston	4	1	0	.800	102	114
Indianapolis	2	3	0	.400	119	122
Tennessee	1	3	0	.250	79	90
Jacksonville	1	4	0	.200	97	143

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Baltimore	3	2	0	.600	147	126
Pittsburgh	3	2	0	.600	92	73
Cincinnati	1	4	0	.200	140	145
Cleveland	1	4	0	.200	79	121

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Kansas City	4	0	0	1.000	92	72
Denver	3	2	0	.600	96	73
L.A. Chargers	2	2	0	.500	68	50
Las Vegas	2	3	0	.400	96	131

National Conference

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Washington	4	1	0	.800	155	115
Dallas	3	2	0	.600	117	121
Philadelphia	2	2	0	.500	86	96
N.Y. Giants	2	3	0	.400	89	104

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Atlanta	3	2	0	.600	111	115
Tampa Bay	3	2	0	.600	127	114
New Orleans	2	2	0	.500	127	70
Carolina	1	4	0	.200	83	165

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Minnesota	5	0	0	1.000	139	76
Detroit	3	1	0	.750	104	82
Chicago	3	2	0	.600	113	85
Green Bay	3	2	0	.600	128	108

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Seattle	3	2	0	.600	122	114
Arizona	2	3	0	.400	120	129
San Francisco	2	3	0	.400	126	106
L.A. Rams	1	4	0	.200	94	139

Thursday’s game

Atlanta 36, Tampa Bay 30, OT
Sunday’s games
 Minnesota 23, N.Y. Jets 17
 Baltimore 41, Cincinnati 38, OT
 Dallas 20, Pittsburgh 17
 Houston 23, Buffalo 20
 Miami 15, New England 10
 Denver 34, Las Vegas 18
 N.Y. Giants 29, Seattle 20
 Chicago 36, Carolina 10
 Arizona 24, San Francisco 23
 Jacksonville 37, Indianapolis 34
 Green Bay 24, L.A. Rams 19
Open: L.A. Chargers, Tennessee, Detroit, Philadelphia

Monday’s game

New Orleans at Kansas City
Thursday, Oct. 10
 San Francisco at Seattle
Sunday, Oct. 13
 Jacksonville vs Chicago at London
 Arizona at Green Bay
 Cleveland at Philadelphia
 Houston at New England
 Indianapolis at Tennessee
 Tampa Bay at New Orleans
 Washington at Baltimore
 L.A. Chargers at Denver
 Pittsburgh at Las Vegas
 Atlanta at Carolina
 Detroit at Dallas
 Cincinnati at N.Y. Giants
Open: Kansas City, Miami, L.A. Rams, Minnesota

Monday, Oct. 14

Buffalo at N.Y. Jets
Thursday, Oct. 17
 Denver at New Orleans
Sunday, Oct. 20
 New England vs. Jacksonville at London
 Philadelphia at N.Y. Giants
 Seattle at Atlanta
 Tennessee at Buffalo
 Cincinnati at Cleveland
 Houston at Green Bay
 Miami at Indianapolis
 Detroit at Minnesota
 Las Vegas at L.A. Rams
 Carolina at Washington
 Kansas City at San Francisco
 N.Y. Jets at Pittsburgh

NFL

Tucker's FG lifts Ravens to wild OT win

By MITCH STACY
Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Lamar Jackson and Joe Burrow traded touchdown throws all afternoon. It took a big run and a chip-shot kick in overtime to settle a wild game between the Baltimore Ravens and Cincinnati Bengals.

After Derrick Henry rumbled for 51 yards to put the Ravens at the Bengals 6, Justin Tucker kicked a 24-yard field goal to lift Baltimore to a 41-38 win Sunday.

Tucker kicked a 56-yarder with 1:35 left in regulation to tie a game that featured more than 700 yards passing and nine touchdown passes.

"It was a shootout, a flat-out shootout in the second half," Baltimore coach John Harbaugh said. "That's a great win against a team that was playing at a high level."

Tucker's winning field goal came after Evan McPherson missed a 53-yard attempt for Cincinnati after a fumbled snap. That gave Baltimore the ball at its own 43. And on the next play, Henry had his big run for the Ravens (3-2).

The Bengals (1-4) led by 10 points three times in the second half, but Jackson brought the Ravens back each time.

Burrow's screen pass to Ja'Marr Chase turned into a 70-yard touchdown romp that gave the



CAROLYN KASTER/AP

Ravens kicker Justin Tucker, left, reacts with holder Jordan Stout after connecting on the game-winning field goal in overtime on Sunday against the Bengals in Cincinnati. Baltimore won 41-38.

Bengals a 38-28 lead with 8:54 left.

The Ravens answered with an 11-play, 70-yard drive capped by an improbable 6-yard TD pass to Isaiah Lively by Jackson, who dropped and picked up the shotgun snap before scrambling and stiff-arming Bengals defensive end Sam Hubbard before letting

go with the pass.

"He was ready, no panic," Henry said of Jackson.

Burrow was intercepted on the next drive and the Bengals stalled on their last possession of regulation.

After Jackson lost a fumble in overtime, McPherson seemed

poised to win it for the Bengals in OT. But holder Ryan Rehkow fumbled the snap and McPherson pulled his kick wide left.

"Whether he drops it or it's perfect, I feel like I should make every kick," McPherson said.

Jackson was 26-for-42 for 348 yards and four touchdowns and

rushed for another 55 yards. He threw TD passes of 1 yard and 6 yards to Lively.

Burrow finished 30-for-39 for 392 yards and a career-high five touchdowns, including two each to Chase and Tee Higgins. Chase led the Bengals with 10 catches for 193 yards, and Higgins had nine grabs for 83 yards.

"Perfect is what was needed, and that's not what we did," Burrow said.

"This one — sickening. For real," Bengals running back Chase Brown said. "That's my final thought on what happened out there."

Henry gets his moment

Henry, who has been terrific in his first season with the Ravens, was all but neutralized by the Bengals defense, at least until the penultimate play of the game.

He had 14 carries for 41 yards and was stopped in the end zone for a safety in the second quarter. Then he broke away for the 51-yard run in overtime to set up the winning field goal.

"Green grass," said Henry when asked what he saw after the handoff. "Green grass and trying to get as close to the end zone as possible."

He finished with a respectable 92 yards and a first-quarter touchdown.

Prescott hits last-minute TD to lift Cowboys past Steelers

By WILL GRAVES
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Dak Prescott drifted to his left, then drifted some more. On a seemingly endless night, what was another couple of seconds going to hurt?

With a flick of the wrist as T.J. Watt and the rest of the Pittsburgh defense closed in, the NFL's highest-paid player delivered a money throw to Jalen Tolbert with 20 seconds to go that lifted the Dallas Cowboys to a 20-17 victory early Monday.

Prescott had spent the previous three-plus hours mixing brilliant plays and baffling ones in equal measure, throwing a pair of picks and fumbling once to almost single-handedly keep the sluggish Steelers in the game.

Yet when Dallas (3-2) got the ball back down four with 4:56 remaining, Prescott calmly led the Cowboys 70 yards in 15 plays, even alertly pouncing on a fumble by teammate Rico Dowdle when the ball came squirting free as Dowdle tried to leap into the end zone. The heads-up play gave Dallas two more shots, and after an incompletion, Prescott finished off his 352-yard performance by lifting the injury-ravaged Cowboys to a second straight victory.



MATT DURISKO/AP

Dallas Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott, center, celebrates with teammates after throwing the go-ahead touchdown against the Steelers on Sunday in Pittsburgh. The Cowboys won 20-17.

"We talk about it, staying neutral, being resilient, understanding there's going to be ups and downs, ebbs and flows," Prescott said. "We just know who we are. (If) we just stay with it, we can come out with a win. This was a great example."

Pittsburgh (3-2) dropped its second consecutive game following a 3-0 start, this one a lethargic performance — particularly on of-

fense — on a night the opening kickoff was delayed nearly 90 minutes due to severe weather.

The Steelers spent much of the night in a fog, particularly on offense, managing just 226 yards against a defense missing injured stars Micah Parsons and DeMarcus Lawrence.

"I think the reoccurring thing is just shooting ourselves in the foot," Steelers quarterback Justin

Fields said. "Penalties, false starts, it's just coming down to execution."

Pittsburgh got the ball back after Tolbert's go-ahead score, but a lateral-fest went nowhere and the Cowboys poured onto the field in victory in a game that finished a minute shy of 1 a.m.

Dowdle provided the league's worst rushing attack with a boost by running for 87 yards. He also added a sliding 22-yard touchdown reception on the third play of the fourth quarter to cap a 16-play, 90-yard drive that put Dallas up 13-10.

It looked like that might be enough until Prescott heaved a deep ball into double coverage looking for the knockout blow with about 10 minutes to play. Instead, it ended up in the arms of Pittsburgh's Joey Porter Jr. and the Steelers slogged their way 63 yards in 12 plays, the last a 6-yard shovel pass from Fields to tight end Pat Freiermuth that gave the Steelers the lead.

Fields threw for 131 yards with two scores and added 27 yards rushing but struggled with his accuracy, completing just 15 of 27 passes. With the calf that's sidelined veteran Russell Wilson for five weeks finally healing, Fields'

uneven performance gave head coach Mike Tomlin some wiggle room to consider putting Wilson — who won the starting job during training camp — back into the lineup next week in Las Vegas.

"We just missed shots and shot ourselves in the foot again," Fields said.

The Cowboys let multiple chances to create some early breathing room slip away thanks to miscues by Prescott, who fumbled while getting sacked by T.J. Watt and Nick Herbig to end one drive deep in Pittsburgh territory in the first quarter. The half-sack boosted Watt's career total to 100, making the All-Pro the second-fastest player to reach that plateau in NFL history (109 games).

Behind a battered offensive line on a night Dallas' defense more than held its own without its two cornerstones, Prescott provided a reminder of why he's such an important part of the team's foundation, buying enough time to nudge his team's season in the right direction.

"We have a play call that we love, we're very confident in, regardless of the defense," Prescott said. "Offensive line did a great job, Tolbert came open to the left, just had to make the throw."

NHL



REBECCA BLACKWELL/AP

Florida Panthers head coach Paul Maurice will have to again contend with a stacked Atlantic Division before potentially getting a chance to defend the Panthers' first Stanley Cup title.

Defending champ Panthers lead strong Atlantic Division

BY JOHN WAWROW
Associated Press

Spending the summer celebrating a Stanley Cup championship wasn't enough to distract Panthers captain Aleksander Barkov from paying attention to what Florida's Atlantic Division rivals were up to this offseason.

Three teams — Buffalo (Lindy Ruff), Ottawa (Travis Green) and Toronto (Craig Berube) — changed coaches.

And while free agency led to Steven Stamkos' departure in Tampa Bay, the Lightning landed Jake Guentzel. Others made moves leading to the likes of Vladimir Tarasenko (Detroit), Nikita Zadorov (Boston), Elias Lindholm (Boston), Patrick Laine (Montreal), David Perron (Ottawa) and Ryan McLeod (Buffalo) joining the division.

"I feel like every team in our division got a little better, if not a lot better," Barkov said. "I guess it's a really good challenge for us. We like playing those hard games where you can test yourself."

The Cup is back in the Atlantic, only a little further south in Florida, after the Lightning won it in 2020 and '21.

The familiar question entering this season remains whether Buffalo, Detroit, Montreal and Ottawa can crack the stranglehold Boston, Florida, Tampa Bay and Toronto have held atop the division since 2019-20. The Bruins, Lightning and Maple Leafs have each qualified for the playoffs since 2017-18.

The disparity has made mea-

suring the Red Wings' progress a difficult one for general manager Steve Yzerman. Though Detroit has taken gradual steps in improvement, jumping from 32 wins and 74 points three seasons ago to 41 wins and 91 points last year, the Red Wings haven't made a dent in what, at eight years, now stands as the franchise's longest playoff drought.

"As long as we're moving in the right direction, I think it's a positive," Yzerman said. "Obviously, making the playoffs would be another positive step. So I'll worry about that as the season goes along."

Though Montreal qualified for playoffs in both the COVID-19 pandemic-altered formats in 2020 and '21, they and the Senators' last appearance in a traditional format was in 2017. The Red Wings haven't made it since 2016, and Buffalo is in the midst of an NHL-record 13-season playoff drought, dating to when it was a member of the Northeast Division.

"I don't spend a ton of time in terms of thinking about other teams," Sabres GM Kevyn Adams said. "I look at where we are and the opportunity and some of the talent and now identity that we're starting to have ... and I believe we can be right there with that group."

On the rise

There's optimism in Montreal, where GM Kent Hughes expects his team to be competitive enough to be in the playoff race.

"I can't predict whether that means until the last game. I can't

predict whether we'll make the playoffs," Hughes said. "At the end of the day, for us to progress, the players need to gain experience as a team in games that matter."

The Canadiens' trajectory is pointed up with a young core emerging around Nick Suzuki, Cole Caufield and Juraj Slafkovsky, but it's too early to expect the Habs to contend.

In Toronto, where advancing in the playoffs — rather than qualifying — has been the issue, the Maple Leafs changed coaches by firing Sheldon Keefe and hiring Berube, who led the St. Louis Blues to the Cup in 2019.

"That stuff's in the past," Berube said of a team that won one of six playoff series under Keefe. "There's great opportunity to build a team that can move forward and become something, not better, but get over the hump."

On the decline

Lightning defenseman Erik Cernak placed faith in GM Julien BriesBois as Tampa Bay continues to transition from the core of its Cup-winning teams. Aside from Stamkos' departure, the Lightning traded defenseman Mikhail Sergachev to Utah in a move that landed defenseman J.J. Moser and prospect Conor Geekie.

"He's never done anything bad, so obviously everybody's just one person and everybody can make a mistake," Cernak said. "But so far if something went wrong he kind of covers it with a different thing. He's amazing at his job."

Metropolitan Division stays in flux beyond Rangers, Hurricanes

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

A second loss in the Eastern Conference finals in three years still stings for the New York Rangers, months after getting eliminated by eventual Stanley Cup champion Florida.

"It hurts," center Vincent Trocheck said, "so, the itch to get back is heightened a little bit more."

The Carolina Hurricanes know the feeling, having suffered the same fate in 2023 and have it even worse after falling to the Rangers last spring. But now the Metropolitan Division's top two teams get another chance to slug it out for the chance to get through the East with plenty of unknowns behind them in the standings.

"The Rangers played just a little bit better," said Hurricanes forward Martin Necas, who re-signed for two more years. "I guess we've got to figure out a way to change it up a little bit and be better because we've done it for five years and we haven't won. But I'm sure that this team can still do it."

Carolina lost a handful of important players from its run of six consecutive playoff appearances under coach Rod Brind'Amour, but still has title aspirations.

Rangers captain Jacob Trouba expects this to be the last crack at doing so for his team's core, especially given questions moving forward about goaltender Igor Shesterkin, who is unsigned beyond this season. New Jersey is a chic pick to finish first after acquiring goaltender Jacob Markstrom from Calgary, but nothing is guaranteed.

"The Rangers are coming off a really good year," Devils center Jack Hughes said. "Carolina is Carolina. I know Washington had a really good offseason. Philadelphia made moves. And then Pittsburgh's Pittsburgh. Definitely a lot more excitement going into this year, and I think probably a hungry

group wanting to get back to where we were."

On the rise

The Devils missed the playoffs after what captain Nico Hischier said was a season full of turbulence, as well as injuries. The biggest difference should be in net with Markstrom after their 3.43 goals-against average and .896 save percentage were sixth-worst in the league.

"Goaltending is definitely an important, big thing," Hischier said. "You can see throughout other teams what great goaltending can bring. For us, having Markstrom we're obviously excited for that."

The Flyers fell just short of the postseason ahead of their rebuilding schedule and got top prospect Matvei Michkov to come over to North America from Russia ahead of what they expected. Being in the race should only help Philadelphia take another step.

"We did a lot of good things last year, but it's a new year now and we've got to get back to what we did well but also we have to get better," goalie Samuel Ersson said.

On the decline

Back-to-back playoff misses did not change the Penguins' organizational goal to double down on their aging core. Sidney Crosby got a team-friendly, two-year extension, and Pittsburgh is banking on its captain, Evgeni Malkin, Kris Letang and Erik Karlsson to stave off father time.

The Islanders have made it in consecutive seasons and five times in the past six years and yet still keep getting overlooked.

"We're on the right track, and I think we have something good coming," forward Pierre Engvall said. "I think if keep doing what we did last year, I think we might be more dangerous than people or teams expect."



KARL B DEBLAKER/AP

The Carolina Hurricanes' Martin Necas shoots against New York Rangers goaltender Igor Shesterkin during the second period in Game 6 of their Stanley Cup second-round playoff series in Raleigh, N.C., on May 16.

NHL



GEORGE WALKER IV/AP

After spending his entire NHL career in Tampa, Steven Stamkos left the Lightning to sign with Nashville.

Loaded Central Division has 7 playoff contenders

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**
Associated Press

Nino Niederreiter has taken a bit of a tour around the NHL's Central Division, from Minnesota to Nashville to Winnipeg, so few know better just how deep it is.

Dallas is coming off a trip to the Western Conference finals, Colorado could get captain Gabriel Landeskog back after a two-year absence, Nashville loaded up by signing Steven Stamkos and others, St. Louis is back in the mix and Utah should be much-improved after relocating from Arizona. A maximum of five can make the playoffs.

"I feel like it's back to a powerhouse," Niederreiter said of the Central. "You have four or five teams that are going to play for the playoff spots, and I think it's going to be very difficult."

The Stars go in as the slight favorite after reaching the third round and pushing eventual West champion Edmonton to six games. Outside of the Oilers in the Pacific, Dallas is among the likeliest teams to get out of the conference and reach the Final next spring, especially after making a long run.

"We learned just how hard it is to win," young forward Wyatt Johnston said. "It's not easy to win even one playoff game, and you've got to win 16 of them to win the Stanley Cup."

The Avalanche won the Cup three years ago, and hoisting it was the last thing Landeskog did on the ice in the NHL. Add him

back to a group led by reigning MVP Nathan MacKinnon and elite defenseman Cale Makar, and Colorado looks poised to be among the league's best once again.

Then there are the Predators, who added Stamkos, Jonathan Marchessault and Brady Skjei in free agency and signed goaltender Juuse Saros to a long-term extension. Saros and his teammates know it is time to make it count.

On the rise

The Blues pulled off the biggest surprise of the summer, signing Dylan Holloway and Philip Broberg of the Oilers to offer sheets that Edmonton opted not to match. Five years since winning the first title in franchise history and after going through a bit of a reset on the fly, St. Louis is back as a clear contender.

"(General manager Doug Armstrong has) been pretty open and honest with everyone about our team the last couple years and being in a retool," forward Robert Thomas said. "We're in a time to push right now. The retool's over, we're ready to go and I'm excited to kind of show everyone what we've built in St. Louis."

The Utah Hockey Club also made some splashes, acquiring two-time Cup-winning defenseman Mikhail Sergachev from Tampa Bay at the draft among a series of moves by GM Bill Armstrong. There is also the excitement of the team formerly known as the Coyotes getting a fresh start in Salt Lake City, much like an expansion team but with tons of

young talent already in place.

"It's a great experience to be part of something brand new, a new team, because that doesn't happen often," goaltender Karel Vejmelka said. "It's kind of unique, and I'm pretty excited about it."

On the decline

Someone has to miss the playoffs other than Connor Bedard and the Chicago Blackhawks, who are likely at least a couple of years away from making that leap.

Minnesota might be on the wrong end of that in the final year of salary cap calamity. Buyouts of the albatross contracts of Zach Parise and Ryan Suter in 2021 will help the Wild immensely down the road, but they combine to count almost \$15 million this season, which will hamstring GM Bill Guerin in what's expected to be the final season for well-respected veteran goalie Marc-Andre Fleury.

On the hot seat

If Utah does not make a marked improvement, Andre Tourigny could be among the first coaches fired. Tourigny was brought in a few years ago to teach a young team good habits, and he has done that well, but an experienced hand at the wheel might be needed to take the next step for a franchise eager for a good start for their new fans.

AP sports writer Mark Anderson and AP freelance writer W.G. Ramirez in Las Vegas contributed.

Canucks, Oilers battle for Pacific

By **JOHN WAWROW**
Associated Press

Playoff MVP Connor McDavid can't shake the memory of what now-former Edmonton GM Ken Holland told the team after falling one win short of winning the Stanley Cup.

The Game 7 loss to Florida in June caused Holland to reflect on the disappointment he still felt from his time in Detroit in 2009, when the Red Wings failed to defend their title in losing Game 7 to Pittsburgh.

"I'm not sure it's something that you ever get over, really, and time just kind of moves on," McDavid recalled.

However much the Oilers' playoff run was regarded as a breakthrough for McDavid in finally leading them to their first Cup Final in his nine seasons in Edmonton, it's back to square one as the season arrives. The Pacific Division features a mix of contenders and teams in various stages of rebuilding.

Joining the Oilers at the top are the Vancouver Canucks, who surged during coach Rick Tocchet's first full season in making a 26-point jump to win their first division title since 2013.

Then there are the Vegas Golden Knights, who have missed the playoffs just once — in 2022 — in their seven-year history, and are two years removed from winning the Cup. The Golden Knights lost Jonathan Marchessault, Chandler Stephenson and goalie Logan Thompson, but they return a strong core, and got better with last season's late addition of forward Tomas Hertl.

The question marks are where the division's other five teams fit in the equation.

The Los Angeles Kings have finished third in the division in each of the past three seasons, and feature a mix of veterans and youth, led by Quinton Byfield. The Kings have already been dealt a blow

with Doughty out indefinitely after breaking his ankle.

The Seattle Kraken underwent a shakeup with Dan Bylsma replacing Dave Hakstol as coach after the team regressed in winning just 34 games a year after making the playoffs. Seattle also upgraded its lineup with the additions of Stephenson and defenseman Brandon Montour.

Calgary, Anaheim and San Jose round out the bottom.

On the rise

Tocchet has the Canucks finally playing up to their potential, and GM Patrik Allvin has a talented prospect pool to draw from, and added power forward Jake DeBrusk, defenseman Vincent Desharnais and two way forward Kiefer Sherwood this offseason.

On the decline

In Calgary, the Flames appear to be starting over in shedding established talent after trading goalie Jacob Markström to New Jersey and Andrew Mangiapane to Washington.

The Flames have been shedding talent since losing the late Johnny Gaudreau in free agency and trading Matthew Tkachuk to Florida in the summer of 2022. They also parted ways with Chris Tanev, Noah Hanifin, Nikita Zadorov and Elias Lindholm.

The Sharks are starting from scratch with a youth movement headed by Will Smith, the No. 4 pick in the 2023 draft, and this year's No. 1 draft selection, Macklin Celebrini.

On the hot seat

The Kings have been treading water under GM Rob Blake, and haven't advanced past the first round of the playoffs since winning the Cup in 2014.

AP hockey writer Stephen Whyno and AP sports writers Greg Beacham, Josh Dubow and Mark Anderson, AP freelance writer W.G. Ramirez, and The Canadian Press contributed to this report.



AMBER BRACKEN, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Connor McDavid, left, and the Edmonton Oilers came up one victory short of winning the Stanley Cup last season.

NHL

Golden Knights prefer winning to loyalty

BY MARK ANDERSON
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — An original Golden Knight, Jonathan Marchessault wanted to stay in Las Vegas, but he also understood as well as anyone that this organization will do what it believes will put the team in the best position to win in the near and long term.

Even if that means allowing one of the most popular players in the franchise's short history to leave, which is what happened when Marchessault signed with the Nashville Predators on July 1.

"There's definitely no loyalty but, at the same time, you're there to win," Marchessault said about the Golden Knights on the The Cam and Strick Podcast. "I don't mind that mindset, personally."

That's the dichotomy for those in the Golden Knights organization. Management will provide whatever tools are needed to compete for the Stanley Cup, but that also comes with the understanding that the leash can be short.

And that applies to players and coaches.

Marchessault won the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP in 2023, and last season he scored 42 goals, just one off the club record. But with an eye on the future, the Golden Knights also knew Marchessault turns 34 this December.



TONY GUTIERREZ/AP

Fan favorite Jonathan Marchessault wanted to stay in Vegas, but the Golden Knights were unwilling to match or surpass Nashville's offer.

There's a disagreement on the terms from each side, but general manager Kelly McCrimmon told

The Associated Press that the Golden Knights wanted to keep Marchessault. As for providing a more

detailed explanation, McCrimmon referred to earlier comments he made on SiriusXM NHL Network Radio that Nashville offered Marchessault a deal that was a year longer than what Vegas put on the table.

As unpopular a move as it was to let Marchessault go, that pales in comparison to when the Golden Knights chose Robin Lehner over Vegas favorite Marc-Andre Fleury in 2021 when they traded the Vezina Trophy winner to the Chicago Blackhawks. Fleury, now with Minnesota, still receives warm welcomes when he returns, and fans even chanted his name when the Wild visited April 12.

Lehner's time with the Golden Knights just ended after, according to Daily Faceoff on Thursday, a settlement was reached in which his \$5 million salary will not count against the salary cap this season. He also likely will be paid \$4.5 million in the final year of his deal, the report said. Lehner has been on long-term injured reserve the past two seasons after undergoing hip surgery.

The Golden Knights also aggressively pursue players, landing notable names such as Mark Stone, Alex Pietrangolo and Max Pacioretty over the years.

They also traded for Jack Eichel, embroiled at the time in a dispute

with the Buffalo Sabres over a procedure never performed on an NHL player. Eichel wouldn't budge off his stance, and the Golden Knights not only orchestrated the deal in November 2021 but allowed him to undergo disk-replacement surgery.

"I kind of went from one polar opposite to the other," Eichel said. "In Buffalo, they were always working toward the future. It was never about right now. I understand that situation. It was about getting draft picks, developing them and working toward, OK, what can we be like in a year, two years or whatever it might be for now."

"To be able to play in place where the goal and the standard every season is to be the last team, it's the best. It's what you want as a player. We have the utmost confidence in management and ownership to make our team as good as it possibly can every year to try to win the ultimate goal."

The Golden Knights' way has been an unqualified success.

They reached the Stanley Cup Final in their first year in 2018 and have made the playoffs every season except one. Vegas fulfilled owner Bill Foley's vision of winning the Cup in its sixth year.

Freelance writer W.G. Ramirez contributed to this report.

Sequel: Panthers want to duplicate success of cross-state rivals

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in a great place, and you can feel the excitement."

Panthers claw for more

Florida has won the Eastern Conference each of the past two years, losing to Vegas and then beating Edmonton for the first title in franchise history. The Panthers are trying to follow the cross-state rival Lightning, who were East champs from 2020-22, and also go back to back.

"You put all that work in your whole life, I don't think it's something you're ever going to forget or not think about," Panthers forward Sam Reinhart said. "Pretty quick after, you flip the switch in terms of getting ready to next year to try and do it all over again."

The Panthers are about to defend the Cup for the first time. Coach Paul Maurice can't wait to find out what that is like.

"I'm very aware of all the challenges that come with it, how few repeats there are, how hard it is just to get there in any year, let alone the potential to get to the final for three years in a row," Maurice said. "But then there's also an excitement for this year to start. Let's go, right? Every guy that's walked in, it's not euphoria anymore. There's just a little smile that you share. But, oh, it's great."

Florida will have to contend with some other beasts in the East, including Carolina and the New York Rangers, along with Toronto featuring an accomplished new coach behind the bench. Still, the Panthers are

among the Cup favorites, 9-1 at BetMGM Sportsbook — and oddsmakers have just one team ahead of them.

Oilers time?

Edmonton goes into the season, which started over the weekend with a pair of games between Buffalo and New Jersey in Prague, as the championship favorite. The hockey-mad city has an arena full of banners from the glory days when the Oilers won the Cup in 1984, '85, '87, '88 and '90 but is starved to add another for a core group of players headlined by McDavid.

Draisaitl signed a lucrative extension that keeps him under contract through 2033, McDavid is likely to do the same next summer, and two of the best in the game are determined to finish the job sooner rather than later.

"We're all itching to start back up again and start playing again and competing and just chip away at what we all want as an organization and that's to hoist the Stanley Cup," Draisaitl said.

How the West is won

The Oilers will not have an easy run through the West, not with rivals like Dallas, Colorado and Vegas standing in the way. The Stars have big aspirations after their deep run last spring.

"It's fun playing on a great team, and I know we all have a lot of confidence and belief in the group that we have that we'll be able to win a Stanley Cup," 32 goal-scorer Wyatt Johnston said. "The margin for error

is so small come playoff time that you need to make sure that you're doing all the right things and putting your best foot forward every single night."

The Avalanche won't have valuable forward Valeri Nichushkin until at least mid-November because of a suspension, though they hope to get captain Gabriel Landeskog back at some point after missing the past two seasons with a chronic knee injury that has since been surgically repaired.

What's good

Ovechkin, now 39 and in his 20th season with Washington, is 42 goals away from breaking Gretzky's NHL career record that was once considered untouchable. Matthews is on pace to become the fifth-fastest player in league history to reach 400, behind just Gretzky, Mike Bossy, Mario Lemieux and Brett Hull and ahead of Jarri Kurri and Ovechkin.

Patrick Kane is back for a second season in Detroit, trying to end the Red Wings' lengthy playoff drought. Sidney Crosby has at least four years left with Pittsburgh after signing another extension. Ovechkin has one year left on his contract after this one.

Connor Bedard and the Chicago Blackhawks are back in the Winter Classic, hosting St. Louis at Wrigley Field. The most recent No. 1 pick, Macklin Celebrini, will team with Will Smith to jump-start the San Jose Sharks' rebuild.

Players across the league realize it's a unique era with all these generations overlapping.

"We only have a few more years left of the Crosbys, Ovechkins, Kaners," New Jersey center Jack Hughes said. "Those are guys I grew up on. McDavid, Matthews, MacKinnon, they're in their prime. And obviously a lot of good young players."

What's new

The Utah Hockey Club, formerly the Arizona Coyotes before relocating to Salt Lake City earlier this year, is here under new ownership and with an energized new fan base.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," said forward Josh Doan, the son of former Coyotes captain Shane Doan. "A lot of people are really excited for hockey and you get that kind of sense and vibe that it's going to be a hockey city and a market that's going to do really well."

No All-Star Weekend this season. Instead, the league takes a break in February for the first 4 Nations Face-off between the U.S., Canada, Sweden and Finland exactly one year before NHL players return to the Winter Olympics in Milan.

It's yet another chance to build interest and buzz around hockey and showcase what the sport has to offer.

"Ultimately, people come out to see the players," NHLPA executive director Marty Walsh said. "We have to continue to build momentum, continue to market the game and show people how great the game is."

AP sports writer Tim Reynolds and AP freelance writer W.G. Ramirez contributed.

MLB PLAYOFFS



MATT SLOCUM/AP

Phillies right fielder Nick Castellanos celebrates with teammates after his walk-off single against New York Mets pitcher Tyler Megill during the ninth inning in Game 2 of an NL Division Series on Sunday in Philadelphia.

Phillies walk off Mets to cap thrilling slugfest

By DAN GELSTON
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Nick Castellanos sometimes amazes himself with intuition he can win a game on the final swing.

As he approached the plate with two outs in the ninth inning, with two runners on and the score tied, Castellanos had a hunch he could win Game 2 of the NL Division Series for the Philadelphia Phillies.

Even in the face of an 1-2 slider against Mets reliever Tyler Megill.

“I did like that pitch when I saw it,” Castellanos said.

As Phillies fans unleashed a roar that echoed outside Citizens Bank Park, it was clear they liked that pitch, too.

Castellanos ripped a winning single that scored Trea Turner and sent the Phillies to a dizzying 7-6 win over New York on Sunday and evened the NLDS at one game apiece.

“I said to the guys, Rocky would be proud,” postseason star Bryce Harper said. “Never-die mentality. Just a great game.”

This win meant more than any fictional tale.

Castellanos, who led the major leagues this season with four walk-off hits, tossed his helmet and was mobbed by teammates on the infield as a game that seemed to slip away one inning earlier turned into one more comeback for the NL East champions.

He ran over to his son, Liam, a steady presence at the ballpark during his tenure, and the two exchanged a big “Let’s Go!”

Scoreboard

Playoffs

x-if necessary
DIVISION SERIES
(Best-of-five)
American League

New York 1, Kansas City 0

New York 6, Kansas City 5

Monday: at New York

Wednesday: at Kansas City

x-Thurs: at Kansas City

x-Saturday, Oct. 12: at New York

Cleveland 1, Detroit 0

Cleveland 7, Detroit 0

Monday: at Cleveland

Wednesday: at Detroit

x-Thurs: at Detroit

x-Saturday, Oct. 12: at Cleveland

National League

Los Angeles 1, San Diego 1

Los Angeles 7, San Diego 5

Sunday: San Diego 10, Los Angeles 2

Tuesday: Los Angeles (Buehler 1-6) at San Diego (King 13-9). **AFN-Sports 3 a.m.**

Wednesday CET, 10 a.m. Wednesday JKT

Wednesday: at San Diego

x-Friday: at Los Angeles

New York 1, Philadelphia 1

New York 6, Philadelphia 2

Sunday: Philadelphia 7, New York 6

Tuesday: Philadelphia (Nola 14-8) at New York (Manaea 12-6). **AFN-Sports 11 p.m. Tuesday CET, 6 a.m. Wednesday JKT**

Wednesday: at New York

x-Friday: at Philadelphia

ahead 6-4 in a three-run eighth.

“He came up big for us a lot this year,” Stott said. “It feels like every walk-off hit is Nick, and that’s who he is. And his heart rate doesn’t get up, stays the same. And gets the swing off.”

Megill retired the first two batters of the ninth and walked Turner and Harper, who also homered and scored twice. Castellanos followed with the Phillies’ fifth career postseason walk-off hit.

“Just made a bad pitch, backed up on me,” Megill said.

Game 3 is Tuesday in New York, the Mets’ first home game since Sept. 22.

“No excuses. It’s been hard, but here we are,” Mets manager Carlos Mendoza said. “I’m just looking forward to get back to Citi Field.”

In just the second postseason game between the NL East rivals, the Mets and Phillies were pushed from pillar to post over the final four innings, each game-changing swing topped by one even more emotional.

Mark Vientos hit a pair of two-run homers for the Mets, who got solo shots from Pete Alonso and Brandon Nimmo.

“I think we put on quite a show for everybody in attendance and everybody watching on TV,” Nimmo said.

Harper’s two-run homer and Castellanos’ solo drive in a three-pitch span from Luis Severino sparked the Phillies’ comeback from a 3-0, sixth-inning deficit.

“Missed my location and paid for it,” Severino said.

Padres rout Dodgers in game delayed by LA fans littering field

By BETH HARRIS
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Fans threw baseballs in the direction of San Diego left fielder Jurickson Profar and then tossed trash that caused a lengthy delay before the Padres beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 10-2 on Sunday night to even their NL Division Series at a game apiece.

Yu Darvish limited the powerful Los Angeles offense to one run and three hits in seven innings and Fernando Tatis Jr. went deep twice as the Padres tied the postseason record of six homers.

David Peralta and Jackson Merrill each hit two-run homers, and a hobbled Xander Bogaerts and Kyle Higashioka had solo shots. At 21, Merrill became the youngest Padre to hit a postseason homer.

“Six of them is a special treat for us,” Merrill said.

The delay in the middle of the seventh inning led to a 12-minute gap between pitches and occurred as two balls were thrown from the stands in the direction of Profar. He chased after one of them but a security officer got to it first. Trash was strewn on the warning track in right near the Padres bullpen.

“I feel like when it went over the line, when they started throwing stuff onto the field,” Tatis said. “I felt like that should not be happening in a big league game.”

There was continuous booing by the sellout crowd of 54,119 — the largest at Dodger Stadium this season.

“The bear’s been poked for a while. It’s been poked previous years, decades,” Merrill said. “We just finally got the firepower, we finally got the team to take it to them. They’re a good team. I love the way they play. They give us a battle every time. They don’t stop.”

Security rushed onto the field as Padres manager Mike Shildt and his team huddled in shallow left. They were joined by the umpiring

crew. Security appeared to be trying to identify potential perpetrators in the crowd.

“We were looking for a higher security presence out in the left-field corner to ensure that that behavior didn’t continue,” crew chief Dan Bellino told a pool reporter, “and to make sure that if anybody did throw anything out on the field they would be identified immediately and removed from the stadium.”

Los Angeles has lost four straight Game 2s and seven of its last eight playoff games.

The best-of-five series shifts to San Diego on Tuesday.

Dodgers starter Jack Flaherty hit Tatis with a pitch in the sixth inning, and Profar exchanged words with Los Angeles catcher Will Smith.

“There’s too much of an important series just to be throwing at guys,” Tatis said. “When he hit me, he just gave me more energy. My boys gave me more energy.”

The Dodgers thought they’d tied it in the bottom of the first. Mookie Betts hit a deep fly to the corner and left field umpire Adrian Johnson circled his arm signaling a home run.

But Profar battled the outstretched arms of fans, reeling in the ball on the webbing of his glove. He barely reacted to his spectacular grab, hopping away backward as he stared at the astonished fans.

“That was hilarious,” Merrill said of Profar trolling the fans. “He’s having fun. He was playing like a little kid and I love that.”

Later, there were verbal exchanges between fans and Profar.

Los Angeles lost first baseman Freddie Freeman, who left after five innings with discomfort in his sprained right ankle. He struck out and flied out in two at-bats.

Shohei Ohtani finished 0-for-4, and Mookie Betts was hitless for a sixth consecutive playoff game.



MARK J. TERRILL/AP

San Diego Padres left fielder Jurickson Profar, foreground, looks toward fans after items were thrown at him in the outfield in Game 2 of an NL Division Series against the Dodgers on Sunday in Los Angeles.

SPORTS



Phillies even NLDS
Castellanos' single wins Game 2 against Mets » **MLB playoffs, Page 23**

NHL PREVIEW

South Florida sequel?



JOE CAVARETTA, SOUTH FLORIDA SUN-SENTINEL/AP

Florida left wing Matthew Tkachuk takes the Stanley Cup into the Atlantic Ocean on June 25 in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. The Panthers are trying to add to the franchise's first title.

Panthers try to repeat as Ovechkin chases Gretzky

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

Aleksander Barkov lifted the Stanley Cup over his head, passed it around to his Panthers teammates and hockey's holy grail got a new home in South Florida. The next morning, Matthew Tkachuk gave it a saltwater bath in the Atlantic Ocean.

Commissioner Gary Bettman woke up after what former player-turned-analyst Paul Bissonnette called the greatest season in NHL history and said to himself: "Wow, that was great. Now we've got to do it again."

It will be a tough act to follow.

The Panthers will be looking for a third consecutive trip to the Final, the Edmonton Oilers will be eager to avenge their Game 7 loss to Florida and the league is out to keep the momentum going after setting an attendance record, hitting a new high-water mark in revenue and getting more eyeballs on the sport in North America and beyond than perhaps ever before.

"You've got to do it again, and you've got to do it better," Bettman said on the eve of training camps. "If you take anything for granted,

INSIDE

Breaking down the four divisions
Pages 20-21

if you're satisfied with the status quo, no matter how good it is, you will slide backwards, so we've got to keep pushing."

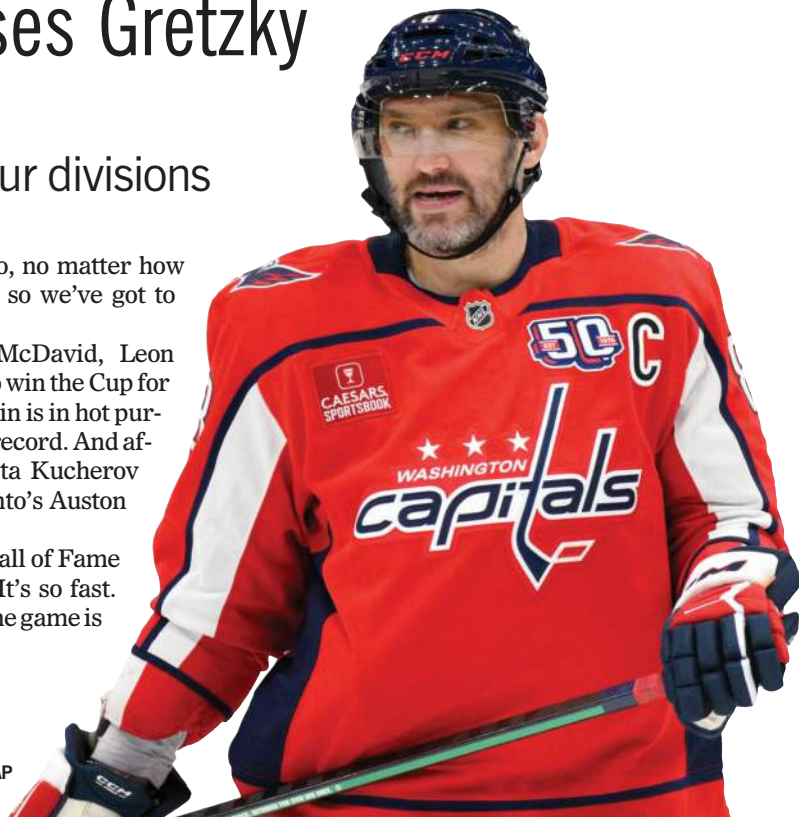
Reigning playoff MVP Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl and the Oilers are pushing to win the Cup for the first time since 1990. Alex Ovechkin is in hot pursuit of Wayne Gretzky's career goals record. And after McDavid and Tampa Bay's Nikita Kucherov each racked up 100 assists, can Toronto's Auston Matthews score 60 goals again?

"There's so many good players," Hall of Fame goaltender Henrik Lundqvist said. "It's so fast. The players are so skilled, creative. The game is

SEE SEQUEL ON PAGE 22

Washington left wing Alex Ovechkin, 39, needs 42 goals to eclipse Wayne Gretzky's career mark of 894.

Nick Wass/AP



Stenhouse wins after late 27-car crash » Auto racing, Page 17



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