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General fired for meddling in promotion of subordinate

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Army Secretary Christine Wormuth fired one of the service's top generals after an inspector general investigation concluded he improperly intervened in a subordinate's promotion, the service reported Tuesday.

"Based on the findings of a Department of the Army inspector general investigation, the secretary of the Army has relieved Gen. Charles Hamilton of command," Army spokeswoman Cynthia Smith said in a statement. "The current acting commander of Army Materiel Command, Lt. Gen. Chris Mohan, will continue in this role pending the nomination of a permanent replacement to serve as the commander of Army Materiel Command."

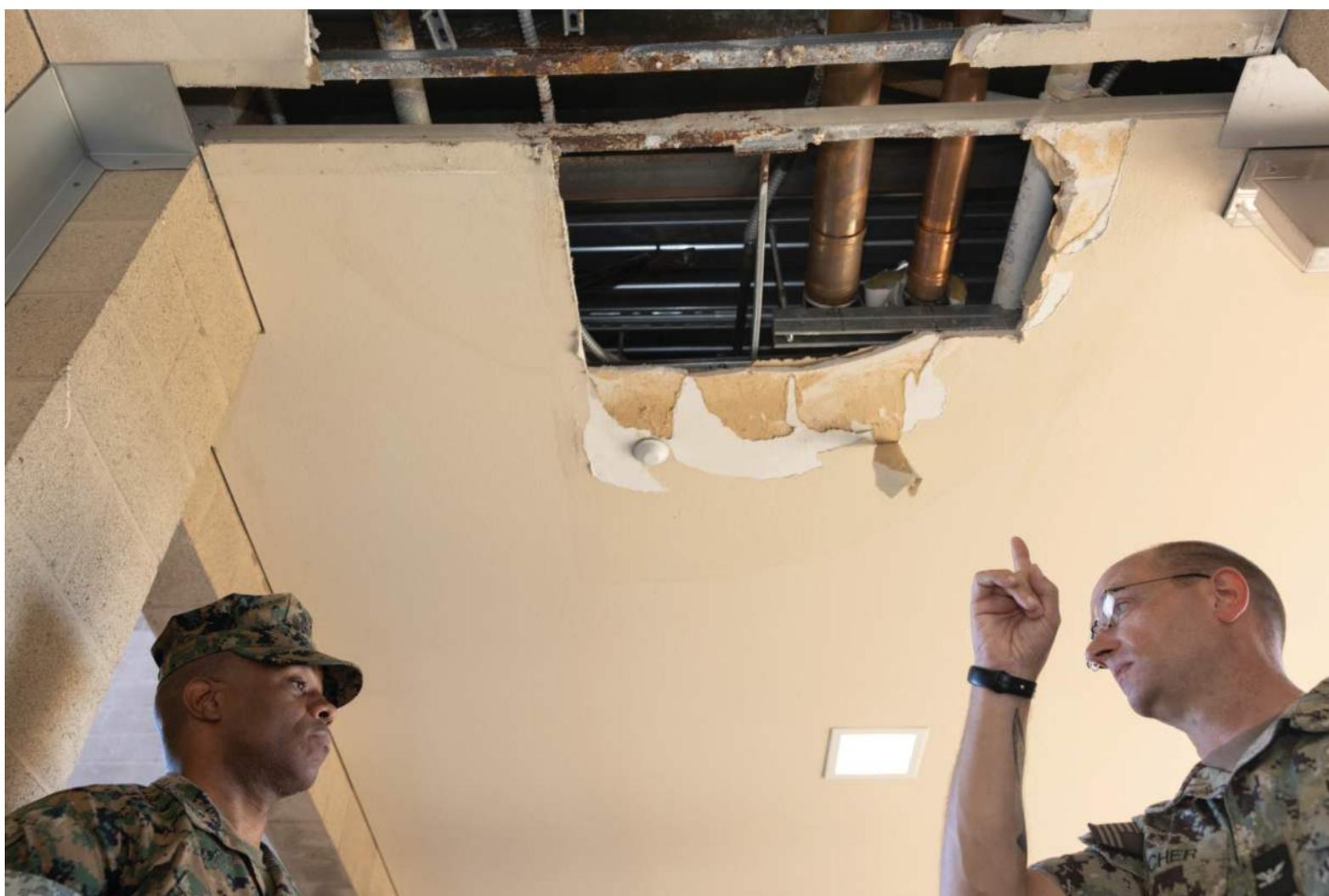


Hamilton was one of 12 four-star generals in the Army.

According to officials and documents, Hamilton inappropriately tried to push an assessment board to approve a command assignment for a female lieutenant colonel, the Associated Press reported. He successfully persuaded the board to give the officer a second interview after a board initially voted 5-0 not to recommend her for command.

Before the second interview took place, Hamilton contacted senior leaders who could have been on her second panel to discuss their voting parameters and

SEE MEDDLING ON PAGE 6



JESLIANNE TORRES/U.S. Marine Corps

Brig. Gen. Nick I. Brown, left, and Navy Capt. Jeffrey Richer address barracks discrepancies during Operation Clean Sweep at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., in October. Operation Clean Sweep is an initiative to improve living conditions for Marines and sailors.

Navy addresses barracks woe

Service is renovating moldy and pest-riddled housing, overhauling management policies

By CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

The Navy is overhauling moldy and pest-riddled substandard barracks as part of a long-term effort to improve sailor quality of life, the service said Tuesday.

The seaservice said it is focusing on renovating its squalid unaccompanied housing and stepping up maintenance and management of living conditions. The effort is meant to address issues identified

by a 2023 Government Accountability Office report that found poor living conditions across Defense Department-owned housing.

The military services manage nearly 9,000 barracks facilities worldwide, and almost all barracks are government-owned, operated and maintained, the GAO said. In managing barracks, the military services face challenges, including aging infrastructure and competition with other facilities for maintenance and construction

RELATED

USAF families with potential mold in housing get options
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funding. In recent years, there have been reports of barracks being abruptly closed after detection of problems such as mold, pests and broken air conditioning.

"Navy unaccompanied housing hasn't consistently hit the mark in taking care of sailors' needs, but we're making significant strides toward improving barracks facilities and sailors' overall residential experience," said Vice Adm. Scott Gray, commander of Navy Installations Command, which oversees service housing across 70 installations.

The effort, dubbed the "Forge

SEE BARRACKS ON PAGE 7

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Macy's offers mixed outlook for 3rd quarter

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Macy's reported a decline in profits and sales for its third quarter with many customers of the department store chain continuing to divert spending to basics like groceries amid elevated prices.

The company, which also owns upscale Bloomingdale's and the cosmetics chain Bluemercury, raised its annual sales expectations, but lowered profit projections citing the uncertain economic environment.

Shares of Macy's Inc., based in New York City, tumbled 9% before the opening bell.

Macy's quarterly results were delayed after it discovered late last month that an employee intentionally hid as much as \$154 million in expenses over several years.

The company said Wednesday that its independent investigation of the incident is complete and that there is no material impact to the company's finances.

In the rough operating environ-

ment for Macy's, activist investor Barington Capital Group this week asked Macy's to develop an internal real estate subsidiary, reduce capital expenditures, and explore strategic options for Bloomingdale's and Bluemercury chains, among other changes, to boost its slumping stock.

The company said Wednesday it earned \$28 million, or 10 cents per share, for the three-month period ended Nov. 2. That compares with \$41 million, or 15 cents per share in the year-ago period.

EXCHANGE RATES

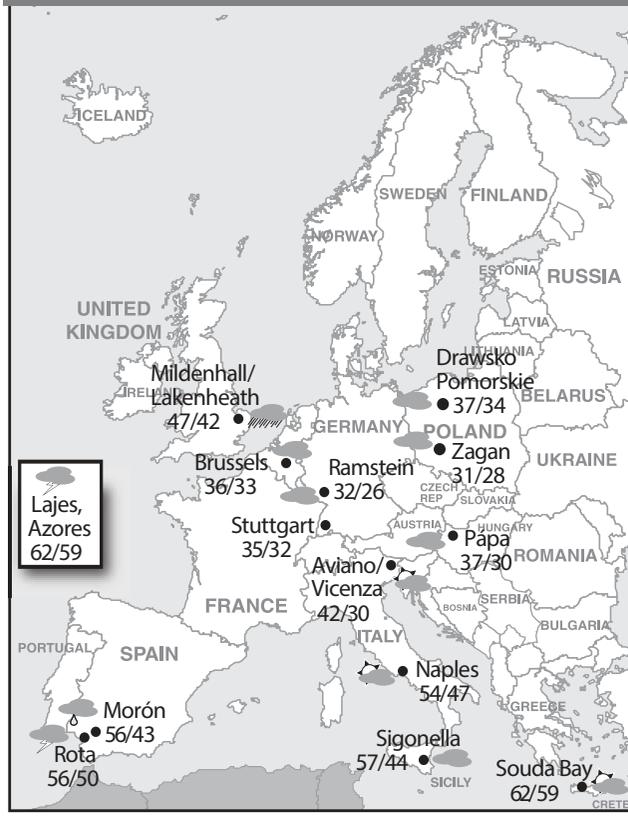
Military rates			
Euro costs (Dec. 12)	0.93	Switzerland (Franc)	0.8834
British pound (Dec. 12)	\$1.24	Thailand (Baht)	33.85
Japanese yen (Dec. 12)	147.00	Turkey (NewLira)	34.8645
South Korean won (Dec. 12)	1393.00		
Commercial rates		(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military 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.)	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3771		
Britain (Pound)	1.2757	INTEREST RATES	
Canada (Dollar)	1.4125	Prime rate	7.75
China (Yuan)	7.2626	Interest Rates Discount rate	4.75
Denmark (Krone)	7.1010	Federal funds market rate	4.58
Egypt (Pound)	50.6406	3-month bill	4.40
Euro	0.9522	30-year bond	4.42
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7758		
Hungary (Forint)	390.55		
Israel (Shekel)	3.5819		
Japan (Yen)	152.16		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3076		
Norway (Krone)	11.1413		
Philippines (Peso)	58.32		
Poland (Zloty)	4.06		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7580		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3432		
South Korea (Won)	1429.59		

WEATHER OUTLOOK

THURSDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



THURSDAY IN EUROPE



FRIDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

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MILITARY

Marine Osprey flights resume after pause

By **SETH ROBSON**
AND **HANA KUSUMOTO**
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The U.S. Marine Corps has resumed flying its MV-22B Ospreys days after the U.S. military grounded the entire tiltrotor fleet due to safety concerns, according to a 1st Marine Aircraft Wing spokesman.

“The Deputy Commandant for Aviation has directed the resumption of non-essential MV-22 Osprey flight operations after a thorough fleet review conducted during the operational pause,” Maj. Joseph Butterfield, a spokesman for the Okinawa-based 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, said by email Wednesday.

The Department of Defense grounded its entire tiltrotor fleet Monday while investigating

whether weakened metal components played a role in a recent near-crash. The Marine Ospreys had been grounded since Friday.

An investigative report published last month by The Associated Press found that Osprey parts are wearing out faster than expected and the hybrid aircraft design itself is contributing to many of the accidents.

U.S. Air Force and Japanese tiltrotors remained grounded Wednesday, according to officials from both countries. U.S. Navy spokespeople did not immediately respond to emails requesting the flight status of the service’s Ospreys that day.

The Marines’ MV-22B flight operations are cleared to resume with certain temporary restrictions in place and exemptions for mission requirements, Butterfield

wrote.

“This guidance will be revisited following an interservice review later this week,” he said.

The Air Force Special Operations Command has not resumed CV-22B flight operations, Capt. Richard Caesar, a spokesman for the Okinawa-based 353rd Special Operations Wing, said by email Wednesday.

“We are in close coordination with the V-22 Joint Program Office and aware of their operational pause recommendation,” said a statement attached to his email.

Concurring with the recommendation, AFSOC commander Lt. Gen. Michael Conley has directed a pause for all CV-22 flight training, the statement said.

“A pause in flight training operations allows time and space for us to understand what happened in

the most recent event before we accept risk with unknown variables,” the statement said.

The Japanese military’s 17 Ospreys were grounded Tuesday with exceptions only for mercy flights such as disaster relief, Kimihito Aguin, the spokesman for Japan’s Ministry of Defense, said at a news conference that day.

“Ensuring flight safety is the top priority for Osprey flight operations within Japan,” he said, according to a transcript on the ministry’s website. “We will carry out confirmation work to ensure safety after receiving detailed information from the U.S. side.”

The Ospreys remained grounded Wednesday, according to a Japan Ground Self-Defense spokesman. Some Japanese government officials may speak to the press only on condition of anonymity.

The Japanese Ospreys had resumed flying on Nov. 15. The fleet was grounded in late October after one of the aircraft tilted violently during takeoff and struck the ground in Okinawa prefecture.

The pause to U.S. Osprey flights was recommended last week “out of an abundance of caution” by Vice Adm. Carl Chebi, the head of Naval Air Systems Command, which runs the Osprey program for the military.

A near crash on Nov. 20 at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., had similarities to a crash off the coast of Japan in November of last year that killed eight Air Force Special Operations Command service members. That tragedy led the U.S. military to ground its fleet of about 400 Ospreys between Dec. 6 and March 8 while investigators examined the cause.

Target intercepted in missile defense test

By **WYATT OLSON**
Stars and Stripes

The Missile Defense Agency has carried out its first live intercept from Guam of a ballistic missile target, a “critical milestone” in the effort to create a defensive network to shield the American territory, the agency said.

The medium-range ballistic missile target, which was parachuted out of a Globemaster C-17, was intercepted Tuesday off the coast of Andersen Air Force Base, the agency said in a news release that day.

The Missile Defense Agency said earlier this year that the C-17 would be flying at an altitude greater than 20,000 feet and at least 800 nautical miles east of Guam over the Pacific Ocean.

The live intercept “marks a pivotal step taken in defense of Guam initiatives and partnerships and provides critical support to the overall concept, requirements validation, data-gathering and model maturation for the future Guam Defense System,” the agency said.

Rear Adm. Greg Huffman, commander of Joint Task Force-Micronesia, called the test “a critical milestone in the defense of Guam and the region.”

“It confirmed our ability to detect, track, and engage a target missile in flight, increasing our readiness to defend against evolving adversary threats,” he said in the release.

The missile was intercepted by



Missile Defense Agency

An interceptor moves toward its target after being fired from a vertical launching system on Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, on Tuesday.

Lockheed Martin’s Aegis Guam System, which integrates the AN/TPY-6 radar, a vertical launching system and standard missile, the company said in a separate news release Tuesday.

In an environmental assessment issued this summer, the Missile Defense Agency described Guam’s planned system as “a layered defense consisting of various land-, sea-, and air-based weapons; sensor and communications systems; and command and control platforms that are used to defeat incoming ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic missiles in all

phases of flight.”

The Defense Department plans to conduct two missile tests on Guam each year over the next decade as it completes the full system.

The completion of such a 360-degree, integrated missile-defense system for Guam is a top priority for U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. The island is home to Andersen, Naval Base Guam and Camp Blaz, a massive Marine Corps base still under construction.

The island would serve as a crucial hub in the event of a conflict

with China because it is the westernmost American territory and the closest to the South China Sea, a flashpoint in the region.

It is also vulnerable to missile launches from North Korea.

Future flight tests and tracking exercises will use interceptors from the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, and Patriot systems.

The tests will eventually include the not-yet-fielded Indirect Fire Protection Capability, or IFPC — a mobile, ground-based system used to defeat cruise missiles, drones, rockets and mortars.

2 destroyers thwart Houthi drone attack

By **ALISON BATH**
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Two U.S. Navy destroyers defeated a Houthi militant drone and missile attack earlier this week while escorting merchant ships through the Gulf of Aden, U.S. military officials said.

The multiple one-way drone and single anti-ship cruise missile attack came Monday and Tuesday as USS Stockdale and USS O’Kane were protecting three U.S. flagged, owned and operated ships transiting the gulf, U.S. Central Command said in a statement.

There was no damage to any of the vessels and no one was injured, CENTCOM said Tuesday. The statement didn’t identify the civilian ships under attack.

Last week, USS Stockdale and USS O’Kane shot down three Houthi anti-ship ballistic missiles, one anti-ship cruise missile and three drones while escorting commercial vessels.

There have been at least 111 reported incidents involving ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden since the Iran-backed Houthi militants in Yemen began their campaign in November 2023, according to Joint Maritime Information Center data.

Those attacks have sunk two vessels, left four mariners dead and severely injured two others, according to the center.

The Houthis have said they will continue attacking ships connected to Israel until there is a ceasefire in Gaza. U.S. officials have pointed out that the group has fired indiscriminately on military and civilian ships with no apparent Israeli connection.

MILITARY

NDAAs bid on trans kids care faces scrutiny

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A proposal to ban health care coverage of certain medical treatments for the transgender children of service members has become a point of contention as the House readies this week for a vote on a defense policy bill containing the measure.

Democrats and activists contend the provision in the National Defense Authorization Act, an annual Pentagon policy bill that Congress passes every year, will block some Tricare access for military dependents and hurt military retention.

Tricare is a health care program for uniformed service members and their families.

Rep. Adam Smith of Washing-

ton, the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, estimates there are 6,000 to 7,000 children of service members who are receiving treatment for gender dysphoria.

“It does then put the service member in a terrible position,” he said. “If they have a child who is experiencing gender dysphoria, they know if they stay in the military, it will not be treated. And I think that’s a problem.”

Retention has stayed steady in the military in recent years but recruiting has flagged, leaving the military struggling to fill its ranks.

The provision limits the coverage ban to treatments “that could result in sterilization” for children younger than 18 but opponents say they are concerned that

could also affect procedures such as hormone therapy and puberty blockers.

Smith blamed the inclusion of the provision on House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., who he said stepped into a normally bipartisan bill negotiation process to appease certain members of the Republican caucus.

“To deny what could potentially be life-saving health care to children of service members for any political reason is something I don’t believe we should do,” Smith said.

Johnson and other Republicans have defended the measure, with Johnson calling it a “critical and necessary step” to protect children from “radical gender ideology and experimental drugs.”

Rep. Nancy Mace, R-S.C., said

taxpayers should not be funding “gender-affirming abuse or sterilization of minors.”

“Thankfully, the FY ’25 NDAA includes a ban to put an end to this insanity,” she wrote on X.

Democrats have argued Congress should stay out of a medical debate that most lawmakers are not qualified to weigh in on.

“What Republicans are doing is interfering with a parent’s ability to get health care for their children,” Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez, D-N.M., said Tuesday. “Why do Republicans keep interfering in personal health care decisions? We have Republican politicians sitting on the examination table when a parent is trying to get their children care.”

The nonprofit National Women’s Law Center on Monday

urged lawmakers to vote against the defense authorization bill if the transgender care provision is not scrubbed from the legislation.

“Congress should focus on protecting our health, rights and freedoms rather than enacting laws intended to control, dehumanize and erase transgender people,” the organization said in a statement. “Everyone, including military service members and their loved ones, deserves access to the health care they need.”

The House is scheduled to vote on the legislation later this week. Smith on Monday said he hoped Democrats would vote against advancing the bill in hopes of forcing Republicans to remove the transgender section, but the legislation advanced Tuesday with a 211-207 vote.

Group sues to return the name of Confederate officer to monument

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

ATLANTA — A foundation suing to have a Confederate officer’s name reinstated to the Army’s Ranger Hall of Fame and memorial at Fort Moore, Ga., will get the chance to make their case to a federal judge on Thursday.

The hearing in Columbus, which is just outside of the Army base, will examine the merits of the National Ranger Memorial Foundation’s lawsuit, which seeks to reinstate the name of Col. John S. Mosby on the installation’s Ranger Memorial and as a member of the Ranger Hall of Fame.

The foundation argues in the suit, which was initially filed in September 2023, that Fort Moore officials overreached in removing Mosby’s name from the memorial last year as part of a sweeping, yearslong effort to strip Defense Department assets of names linked to the Confederacy.

Barry Todd, the foundation’s president, said base leaders overstepped their authority in removing Mosby’s name. The Ranger Hall of Fame and the Ranger Memorial, he said Tuesday, are managed and overseen by private entities, including his group, which built and maintains them through private donations.

“The memorial was built and paid for by the Ranger community, all through donations,” Todd said. “The Army ... in 1992 and 1993 said they would accept it as a conditional gift, on the condition that they don’t have to pay for [it]. So, there’s no taxpayer money at all toward the Ranger memorial.”

He said the overarching view in the Ranger community is Mosby’s name should remain.

Fort Moore officials have said they were simply following orders from the Pentagon when they removed Mosby’s name. Justice Department lawyers, representing the Pentagon in the case, have moved to have the lawsuit dismissed, arguing Army officials acted lawfully and under the orders of Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to remove all names and items associated with the Confederacy from the installation.



Mosby

The decision to remove Mosby’s name from the Ranger memorial — alongside three other Confederate-linked names — grew from congressional efforts to strip names and items honoring Confederates from Defense Department installations and inventory. That mandate was included in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, the annual law that sets Pentagon policy and spending priorities. That law established the so-called Naming Commission, which spent more than a year studying the issue and eventually called for the removal of thousands of items and the renaming of nine Army installations, including Fort Moore, which was previously named Fort Benning in honor of Confederate Brig. Gen. Henry Benning.

In the commission’s September 2022 report, the group identified the four names to be removed from the Ranger Memorial, among hundreds of other names and items to be removed at other locations at the former Fort Benning. Austin later ordered all enti-

ties within the Defense Department to implement the changes recommended by the commission by the end of 2023.

Leaders at Fort Moore, which is home to the Army’s Ranger School, the 75th Ranger Regiment’s headquarters, its 3rd Battalion and the annual Best Ranger Competition, said they worked for months to scrub the installation of items identified by the Naming Commission, including the references to Mosby.

But Todd said the Defense Department did not consider the Naming Commission’s full criteria in removing Mosby’s name, which the foundation has argued was supposed to include an examination of a person’s merits before and after the Civil War to determine whether items associated with their name should be removed.

Todd argued Mosby was “an honorable man,” which was part of the reason that he is the only Confederate ever inducted into the Ranger Hall of Fame.

Mosby was a lawyer who became a Confederate cavalry commander known as the “Gray Ghost” for leading daring raids on Union forces. Mosby joined the Confederate army in 1861 out of loyalty to his family and his native state of Virginia even after opposing secession and slavery, he claimed in his memoirs.

After the Civil War, he reconciled with the U.S. government, endorsed President Ulysses S. Grant and went on to serve as an assistant U.S. attorney general and Grant’s U.S. consul to Hong Kong.

In Mosby’s post-war writings, he described slavery as “a monstrous thing” and wrote he had no animosity toward the northern



NATIONAL RANGER FOUNDATION/Facebook

The Defense Department is being sued by the National Ranger Memorial Foundation to reinstate the name of Confederate Col. John S. Mosby to Fort Moore’s Ranger Memorial and as a member of the Ranger Hall of Fame.

states.

Mosby was one of the initial members enshrined in the Ranger Hall of Fame when it was formed in 1992. He was inducted alongside Ranger legends such as Vietnam War Medal of Honor recipient Spc. 4 Robert Law, World War II heroes Maj. Gen. Frank D. Merrill and Brig. Gen. William O. Darby, and Gen. Creighton Abrams, who as Army chief of staff permanently established the 1st and 2nd Ranger battalions in 1974.

Mosby was selected for the initial Ranger Hall of Fame class because of his “outstanding service

to the Confederate Army as a Ranger-type leader,” according to his Ranger Hall of Fame citation. His tactics in guerilla warfare are still studied in military academies and by troops today, Todd said.

Blair Brown, the National Ranger Memorial Foundation’s vice president and executive director, said he expects a large turnout in support of the foundation’s lawsuit in court on Thursday.

“Mosby was a unanimous selection into the Ranger Hall of Fame by the Ranger community,” he said. “This is non-biased, non-political. This is a fight for a Ranger we believed was wronged.”

PACIFIC

US, allies send message to Beijing over aggression

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO—Diplomats and representatives from the militaries and coast guards of the United States, Japan and the Philippines agreed this week they prefer a peaceful settlement of ongoing Chinese aggression in the South China Sea.

The trilateral maritime dialogue took place Tuesday against a backdrop of clashes involving Philippine and Chinese vessels in disputed territory.

In a joint statement after the Tokyo meeting, the U.S. and Japan expressed support for the Philip-

pines' efforts toward a peaceful settlement of the disputes. They reiterated their expectation that Beijing comply with a 2016 international court ruling against its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea.

The three-nation partnership benefits from consensus on Capitol Hill about "the challenges we face and the need to work closely with our partners as we address that," Mira Rapp-Hooper, director for East Asia and Oceania at the U.S. National Security Council, said at the meeting.

The U.S. is "concerned about

China's aggressive and unlawful behavior in the South China Sea which undermines international law, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight," she said.

The three nations were eager for an in-depth discussion about the South China Sea, Ryo Nakamura, director of the southeast and southwest Asian affairs department at Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said at the start of the meeting.

Last week, a Chinese coast guard ship fired a water cannon at a Philippine fisheries patrol vessel in the disputed waterway, the state-run

Philippine News Agency reported Tuesday. It's the latest in a series of similar incidents in the past two years.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ruled out sending a navy ship to the area, noting that his country is not at war and would not escalate tensions.

Marcos, according to the news agency, told reporters in Pampanaga that the government would continue protecting fishermen and the country's territory.

"We don't need navy warships," Marcos said. "All we are doing is resupplying our fishermen, pro-

tecting our territorial rights."

China will continue to safeguard its sovereignty, rights and interests, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said Tuesday in remarks reported by the Reuters news agency.

"The recent maritime incidents between China and the Philippines are entirely caused by the Philippines' persistent infringement and provocation," spokesperson Mao Ning told a regular news conference.

The Philippines has proposed to host a second maritime dialogue involving the three nations next year.

Taiwan demands that China end its ongoing 'military intimidation'

Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan — Taiwan demanded Wednesday that China end its ongoing military activity in nearby waters, which it said is unilaterally undermining peace and stability and disrupting international shipping and trade.

Taiwan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement on its website that it was responding in part to the activities of a "large number" of Chinese ships in the first-island chain,

the Pacific archipelago off the Asian continental mainland that includes Japan, Taiwan and part of the Philippines.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs solemnly demands that the Beijing authorities immediately stop military intimidation and all irrational activities that endanger regional peace and stability," the statement said.

Taiwan's military has detected Chinese ships since Monday, both

off Taiwan and farther out along the first-island chain, Defense Ministry officials said this week. They described the formations as two walls designed to demonstrate that the waters belong to China. Taiwanese media, citing an unnamed national security official, have said that 90 ships — 60 from the navy and 30 from the coast guard — are involved overall.

An analyst said the participation of the coast guard, which also

took part in drills in May and October, is new this year and part of a blockade scenario in which the coast guard would block Taiwan's ports while the navy would form an outer barrier out at sea.

"They were practicing to seal off Taiwan," Kuo Yu-jen, an Asia-Pacific security expert at the National Sun Yat-Sen University in Taiwan, said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Taiwan's military had been ex-

pecting drills following stops by its president, Lai Ching-te, in Hawaii and the U.S. territory of Guam during an overseas trip last week. China claims self-governing Taiwan as its territory and opposes any official contact with America and other foreign governments.

China restricted airspace off its southeast coast from Monday to Wednesday, an indication that it was planning to hold drills over those three days.

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MILITARY



EVGENIY MALOLETKA/AP

Fragments of a Russian hypersonic missile that struck a factory in Dnipro, Ukraine, on Nov. 21 are put on display.

US: Russia may be ready to use new missile again

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A U.S. intelligence assessment has concluded that Russia may use its lethal new intermediate-range ballistic missile against Ukraine again in “coming days,” a U.S. official said Wednesday.

The experimental Oreshnik missile is seen by U.S. officials more as an attempt at intimidation than a game-changer on the battlefield in Ukraine, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive information.

The threat comes as both sides work to gain a battlefield advantage in the nearly 3-year war that President-elect Donald Trump has vowed to end, and just days after the U.S. promised close to \$1 billion in new security aid to Ukraine. Other Western allies have suggested negotiations to end the war could begin this winter.

According to the official, Russia has only a handful of the Oreshnik missiles and that they carry a smaller warhead than other missiles that Russia has regularly launched at Ukraine.

Russia first fired the weapon in a Nov. 21 missile attack against the Ukrainian city of Dnipro.

Surveillance camera video of the strike showed huge fireballs piercing the darkness and

slammed into the ground at astonishing speed.

Within hours of the attack on the military facility, Russian President Vladimir Putin took the rare step of speaking on national TV to boast about the new, hypersonic missile. He warned the West that its next use could be against Ukraine’s NATO allies who allowed Kyiv to use their longer-range missiles to strike inside Russia.

The attack came two days after Putin signed a revised version of Russia’s nuclear doctrine that lowered the threshold for using nuclear weapons. The doctrine allows for a potential nuclear response by Moscow even to a conventional attack on Russia by any nation that is supported by a nuclear power.

That strike also came soon after President Joe Biden agreed to loosen restrictions on Ukraine’s use of American made longer-range weapons to strike deeper into Russian territory, and just one day after the U.S. said it was giving Ukraine antipersonnel mines to help it slow Russia’s battlefield advances.

“We believe that we have the right to use our weapons against military facilities of the countries that allow to use their weapons against our facilities,” Putin said at the time.

Ex-battalion leader on trial in sexual harassment case

West says court-martial stems from racial bias

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash. — Lewd jokes, unwanted touches and partial undressing were a methodical campaign of sexual harassment by a former battalion commander at this base shared by the Army and Air Force, prosecutors said Tuesday during the first day of Lt. Col. Bernard West III’s court-martial.

“Step by step, he pushed the boundaries,” Maj. Ryan Keeter, the lead prosecutor, said as he laid out a series of accusations that included West demanding a subordinate to do her physical training only with him, barged into the women’s room when female officers were covered only with towels, and twice partially disrobed in front of the women while on duty.

Yet Jason Wareham, a former military lawyer representing West, said the career officer, a Black man, is the target of “selective prosecution” because of his race and gender.

“I am convinced that the only reason my client faces general court-martial is because he is a Black man,” Wareham said outside the courtroom.

West, 43, was removed in October from command of the 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery Regiment, 17th Field Artillery Brigade at Lewis-McChord, which is about 40 miles south of Seattle. He had taken command the previous June.

The officer faces charges of sexual harassment, abusing his command authority by “cruel maltreatment” of a subordinate, conduct unbecoming an officer, and dereliction of duty. The charges stem from accusations from three female junior officers with I

Corps, the main command at Lewis-McChord.

West has pleaded not guilty to the charges that carry combined penalties of more than 10 years in confinement. He spoke only briefly Tuesday in court when he requested a trial with only a judge, no jury.



West

Wareham had made an earlier motion to the judge — Lt. Col. Robert Murdough — asking the court-martial to be set aside because West was being targeted as a Black, male officer. He said he made the request after learning a white female officer and an Asian male officer had been accused in similar incidents and were allowed to receive non-judicial punishment.

Defense attorneys, which include Army Capt. Caitlin Quvus, also cited a 2022 Government Accountability Office report showing racial bias in courts-martial.

“The impact of race in this case is undeniable,” Wareham said.

Murdough denied the motion and allowed the trial to proceed Tuesday.

The first witness was a female officer who testified that while serving as a key aide to West, she was subjected to unwanted touching of her hair and ear, questions about her personal dating life, lewd jokes and innuendos, and demands that led her to be alone with her boss more than she was comfortable.

“I was on high alert,” the female officer said.

She testified West once barged into the women’s restroom and showers at Lewis-McChord’s bat-

alion building while she was wearing only a towel and sandals after a shower. Another undressed female officer was in a nearby stall. The female officer said West loudly banged the door against the wall and shouted in a “playfully stern” voice that she and another female officer should stop laughing so loudly.

“He’s a battalion commander and a lieutenant colonel — he should not be flinging open the door of the women’s bathroom,” the female officer said.

Prior to command of the artillery battalion, West served as the deputy commander of the 2nd Infantry Division’s 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team.

West comes from a military family that is politically prominent in the South. His father, Bernard West Jr., is a former Marine and Atlanta police officer who ran unsuccessfully for Congress from Georgia in 2018 and 2024.

An uncle, Allen B. West, was an Army colonel who served in Operation Desert Storm and the post-9/11 invasion of Iraq. He was relieved of command and accepted retirement at the reduced rank of lieutenant colonel after accusations he abused an Iraqi prisoner in 2003. West said at the time that he believed the man had information about terrorist plans to assassinate him and other military personnel.

After leaving the Army, Allen West became a conservative activist and author and was elected to Congress from Florida. After one term, he moved to Texas, where he was the state GOP chairman in 2020-21. He is now chairman of the Dallas County Republican Party in Texas.

The trial is scheduled to last until Friday.

Meddling: Investigators found ‘overly familiar relationship’ with officer

FROM PAGE 1

the candidates. The second panel also deemed her not certified for command, according to the AP.

The Army Inspector General Office’s investigation came after it received an anonymous complaint in December 2023 that Hamilton and the lieutenant colonel were having an “inappropriate, fraternizing, and likely sexual relationship,” the investigation said. Investigators subsequently found that though Hamilton and the lieutenant colonel had an “overly familiar relationship,” there was

no “definitive evidence” that the two had a sexual relationship.

At first, the matter was referred to the Defense Department Inspector General’s Office, which closed the case in January after finding “insufficient evidence in the complaint to warrant further investigation.”

But the day after a news report in March that Hamilton pressured Army officials to select the lieutenant colonel for command, the Defense Department Inspector General’s Office referred the matter to the Army Inspector

General’s Office for investigation.

Wormuth suspended Hamilton on March 22 and removed the lieutenant colonel’s name from the command selection list, according to the investigation.

Hamilton, who is Black as is the female officer who sought a promotion, wrote a letter to Wormuth in August asking to be reinstated as commander of Army Materiel Command, and he laid out his case in the lieutenant colonel’s promotion and his view on the Command Assessment Program, or CAP.

In the letter, he implored Wormuth to investigate why CAP deems few minority officers as ready to command and the barriers that exist that make qualified Black officers unwilling to subject themselves to the process.

“Although the investigation found that the Command Assessment Program withstood an attempt to interfere with its process, Secretary Wormuth will be issuing a directive that formally establishes CAP as an enduring Army program in order to reinforce the integrity of CAP and in-

crease transparency,” Smith said.

The last Army four-star general fired for misconduct was Gen. Kevin Byrnes, who in 2005 as commander of the service’s Training and Doctrine Command, was dismissed over an extramarital affair.

Gen. Stanley McChrystal resigned in 2010 after a Rolling Stone story published comments from McChrystal and senior aides that were critical of then-Vice President Joe Biden and other officials in former President Barack Obama’s administration.

MILITARY

Air Force families living with potential mold given options

By BRIAN McELHINEY
Stars and Stripes

KADENA AIR BASE, Okinawa — Families who must move from 27 recently renovated homes due to potential mold buildup have two options for new housing on the installation, residents said after a forum Tuesday.

Families living in Seville Manor duplex units 5300 to 5354 received a memo last week recommending they relocate by Feb. 28 to address potential health risks, the residents said after the meeting at Rocker Enlisted Club.

Brig. Gen. Nicholas Evans hosted the forum alongside deputy commander Col. Joshua Lundebly, Chief Master Sgt. Brandon Wolfgang, civil engineers and medical experts with the 18th Medical Group. Residents packed the room, and some could be seen standing in the doorway.

Stars and Stripes was barred from covering the forum by 18th Wing spokeswoman Maj. Alli Stormer, who said by email on

Dec. 6 that it was “specifically open to the families in the affected units.”

On March 27, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Japanese contractors completed renovations at Seville Manor on 50 duplexes, or 100 housing units, for junior enlisted airmen. Move-ins began in July and 27 homes are occupied. The renovation project took three years and cost \$53 million.

A flaw in the units’ air conditioning systems that causes moisture buildup was discovered in September. While no black mold has been discovered, unspecified mold was found “in some of the homes,” Stormer said after the forum.

Black mold has a sinister reputation, but any type of mold can cause a range of health problems, including lung infections for the immunocompromised, according to the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

The Air Force does not test for any specific molds and treats all

types equally “regarding potential health risks and remediation,” Stormer said by email Wednesday.

Air Force spouse Rachel Thomas, 33, who resides in one of the affected units, has seen mold in her guest bathroom, and engineers with the 718th Civil Engineer Squadron found water leaking in the crawlspace between her roof and ceiling, she said.

Thomas said residents were told that another 58 homes were allocated for the 27 families to choose from. Attendees filled out surveys in which they requested time frames to move, she said.

But Evans and others at the meeting were not clear what would happen if the first two home options were rejected, said Air Force spouse Stephanie Baldrige.

“They said we’ll talk through that when it arises,” she said. “My experience in the past has been if you do not accept their offers, then you move off base.”



BRIAN McELHINEY/Stars and Stripes

Seville Manor housing units were built at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, in the 1960s and recently renovated.

Since the issue was discovered in September, “no families have moved into or been offered the affected homes,” the wing has said. Thomas said she and her husband were the last family to move into one of the homes in mid-September.

“And then I heard from other neighbors that they weren’t moving anyone else into that neighborhood,” she said. “So, I don’t know how we got that house and how we were placed there.”

Baldrige, who has four children, said she has seen water dripping from the crawlspace between

her ceiling and roof, as well as mold in that space.

She said the issue is frustrating since she already had to move from a house in Stearley Heights, also on Kadena, over the summer. That home had “water seeping up through the floors when it rained” and cracked ceilings, Baldrige said.

“I think stuff fell through the cracks along the way that probably should have been found as they were building them,” she said. “I do think they’re trying their best to fix it as much as they can.”

Barracks: Navy identifies three key areas to improve upon

FROM PAGE 1

Communities of Excellence” initiative, is a three-tiered plan designed to improve barracks through targeted investments, renovations and construction.

The next step is to ensure consistent customer service by improving workforce training, optimization and resourcing. The final step is to provide sailors with a comfortable environment and high-quality services, such as Wi-Fi and better access to food.

“By focusing our efforts on three key areas of need, we can effectively and efficiently improve facility condition and improve resident satisfaction,” Gray said.

Service members and lawmakers have raised the issue of substandard housing for years, launching complaints of mold, leaky roofs, poor plumbing, pest infestations and otherwise unsafe and unhealthy conditions. Congress mandated in 2020 that the services develop a uniform code of

basic housing standards, plus plan, contract and conduct inspections in family housing, report to lawmakers on the inspections, and develop a hazard assessment tool.

But the Navy did not embark on a focused quality of life and service initiative until 2022 following rushes of suicides among young, mostly single sailors.

The Navy has already invested \$59 million to replace furnishings at 63 buildings at 35 locations. In the past year, renovation projects

were initiated for barracks at Submarine Base Kings Bay, Ga.; Naval Air Station Sigonella, Italy; Naval Base Kitsap, Wash.; Naval Base Ventura County, Calif.; and Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti.

In 2023, the Navy introduced the unaccompanied housing Resident Bill of Rights and Responsibilities and QR maintenance codes to make it easier for residents to report maintenance requests and track their progress.

Additionally, in 2024, the ser-

vice rolled out a free Wi-Fi pilot in 12 Hampton Roads, Va., barracks and expanded cooking capabilities throughout its unaccompanied housing by allowing sailors to use small cooking appliances in their barracks.

“It’s essential to readiness that sailors have a comfortable and safe place to lay their heads at the end of each hard day,” said Leslie Gould, director of Navy Installations Command’s fleet and family readiness programs.

US Navy base in Italy to inspect for lead in water lines

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Officials at the Navy’s largest base in Italy are determining whether pipes carrying water to homes, child care centers, schools and other facilities at the installation may pose a higher risk of lead contamination.

Water lines at Naval Support Activity Naples’ Support Site appear to be made of galvanized steel or an unknown material, base commander Capt. John Randazzo wrote in a Dec. 4 letter to consumers living on or doing business at Support Site and about 55 tenant commands.

Lead particles that have attached themselves to the surface of galvanized steel pipes can enter the water over time, resulting in

increased lead levels, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

“Further investigation is needed to determine if any service lines require replacement,” Randazzo said in the letter, which was also posted to the base’s Facebook page.

NSA Naples discovered the issue while fulfilling obligations of a revised EPA rule requiring water systems to inventory their lines and notify people of any that have or may have lead. Water systems were required to start complying with the revised rule on Oct. 16.

In February, NSA Naples will inspect the lines at Support Site, evaluating each one’s connection point with a main water pipe and at the point where it enters a build-

ing, the base said Tuesday in a statement.

It’s unclear what actions might be taken following that survey, but officials said the site’s water system complies with EPA rules regarding lead and copper.

“People living in homes with a galvanized service line that has adsorbed lead may have an increased risk of exposure to lead from their drinking water,” Randazzo wrote.

Water lines at the base’s Capodichino site, about 18 miles from Support Site, were not affected, the base said Tuesday.

There is no safe level for lead, a toxic metal that can have serious health impacts. Those effects are more pronounced in children and include behavioral problems, low-

er IQ and slowed growth, according to the EPA.

The agency requires water systems to take action if water samples show lead levels exceeding 15 parts per billion. A 2023 water quality report for NSA Naples showed an overall lead level of two parts per billion.

However, officials told parents in December 2021 that water tested from some sinks in the installation’s elementary and middle/high schools, child care centers and a few other facilities had lead levels at 15 parts per billion or higher.

To address the issue, the base cleaned or replaced faucet aerators, replaced fixtures and took other corrective actions, according to the notification letters.

Lead commonly enters drinking

water through corrosion of pipes, fixtures and faucets. Galvanized steel pipes typically have been dipped in zinc that contains lead to prevent rust and corrosion, according to a September report from the Maryland-based nonprofit Environmental Policy Innovation Center.

The risk of lead exposure can be reduced by regularly cleaning or replacing faucet aerators and running water for a few minutes before using for drinking or cooking, according to an EPA fact sheet online.

Hot water is more likely to contain higher levels of lead, so people should use only cold water for drinking or eating, including in the preparation of baby formula, the fact sheet states.

MILITARY

Navy, university team up to guard Hawaii resources

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Navy and the University of Hawaii have signed a 10-year agreement aimed at leveraging the institute's expertise to bolster climate resilience and protect natural and cultural resources on Navy and Marine Corps bases in the state.

The agreement covers Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam and Marine Corps Base Hawaii on Oahu and Pacific Missile Range Facility Barking Sands on Kauai, the university and service said Monday in a joint news release.

It enables the Navy to provide \$10 million in annual funding to the university for projects that will increase resilience against environmental hazards at the bases, the news release states.

"With increasing threats of extreme weather, defense programs throughout the U.S. are investing in collaborations that will allow them to better understand and address the ways severe weather and other hazards could impact military missions," the release states.

In September, the Defense Department issued its climate adaptation plan for the years 2024-27 that focuses on several lines of effort, including installation resilience and enhancing adaptation and resilience through collaboration.

"Interagency and academic partnerships ... are critical to develop and test new technologies that ensure the DOD can operate under changing climate conditions, preserve operational capability, and enhance the natural and man-made systems essential to the Department's success," the plan states.

The Navy agreement provides the framework for the university to "use its collective knowledge and resources — scientists, laboratories, students, and outreach programs — to help the [Department of the Navy] balance the critical needs and requirements of the nation's defense with its ongoing natural and cultural resource responsibilities in Hawaii," the release states.

It is the first agreement of its kind between an academic institution and Navy Region Hawaii and Marine Corps Installations Pacific, according to the release.

"Those who live and work in Hawaii have a responsibility to be good stewards of the land and this partnership with the Navy signi-



BODIE ESTEP/U.S. Navy

Sailors in Kauai, Hawaii, look for debris during an Earth Day beach cleanup on April 26.

fies their willingness to fulfill their natural and cultural resource responsibilities by utilizing UH's knowledge and expertise in these areas," Vassilis Syrmos, the university's vice president for research and innovation, said in the release.

Meredith Berger, assistant secretary of the Navy for energy, installations and environment, signed the agreement on behalf of the service.

The Navy will "benefit tremendously from [the university's] world-class research, specialized training programs, and the traditional ecological knowledge," she said in the release.

Among the support services the University of Hawaii could provide under the agreement are biological assessment development; cultural resource management; pest and predator control; marine debris removal; land and sea surveys; shoreline stabilization; wildfire management and planning; floodplain analysis; and sea-level rise mitigation.

Rep. Ed Case, D-Hawaii, who serves on the House Committee on Natural Resources, lauded the arrangement.

"This first-of-its-kind agreement between our flagship university and our Hawai'i military is a win-win all around," he said in the release.

"For the U.S. Navy, it demonstrates a commitment to draw on our local talent and expertise and cultural awareness wherever possible to advance national defense needs in our Hawai'i and beyond as respectful neighbors," Case said.



PHOTOS BY JONATHAN SNYDER/Stars and Stripes

Base commander Col. Richard Rusnok, right, and Sgt. Maj. Jody Armentrout browse inside the new thrift shop run by the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, on Tuesday.

Relief society reopens thrift shop on Marine Corps base in Japan

By JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — The thrift store at this base south of Hiroshima reopened this week under new management, nearly nine months after the base commander ordered it closed for undisclosed reasons.

The shop, which takes used clothing, appliances and other household items and makes them available for reuse by the air station community, is now the responsibility of a Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society chapter.

MCAS Iwakuni's senior enlisted Marine, Sgt. Maj. Jody Armentrout, contacted the society director on base, Christina Grantham, in August about reopening the thrift shop, Grantham said Tuesday at the grand opening.

"I wanted to make sure that we had something that was sustainable throughout the next years," Armentrout told Stars and Stripes at the store. "That it was ran complete, ran right financially, making sure the money is going to the right purposes, for the right reasons, making sure that we're taking care of the community."

The relief society provides financial assistance to service members in need in the form of loans and grants; it also provides tuition assistance and financial assistance for permanent changes of station, medical or dental costs and emergency travel.

Last year, for example, the society provided \$50 million in financial assistance, according to its website.

It also operates thrift shops, including those at the Sasebo and Yokosuka naval bases in Japan



Rusnok speaks during a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

and at Pearl Harbor.

Getting the MCAS Iwakuni store back in business was no easy feat, Grantham said.

"We wanted to open by Christmas, and so it was definitely a challenge to go from August to December and open," she said.

The shop was without any inventory, but it had a team of 28 volunteers behind it, she said. The Sasebo shop provided some merchandise to get things started.

"The thrift shop fills a critical gap in the community," base commander Col. Richard Rusnok said at Tuesday's ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The donated items are repurposed, resold and kept out of the garbage stream, he said.

Rusnok had ordered the store closed in March without publicly stating a reason.

"I understand the store's current situation is a result of numerous factors, and I very much appreciate your efforts to serve the MCAS Iwakuni community," Rusnok wrote to the nonprofit that ran

the shop at the time. "However, I do not believe all the issues related to store operations can be fully resolved under its current structure."

On Tuesday, he highlighted the effort made by the base Seabees detachment, which renovated and refurbished the building while it was vacant.

"We all know how important the community's need is, and what Navy-Marine Corps Relief provides every single day of the year here, upwards of \$350,000 a year in grants and travel expenses and things like that go back out to the community," he said.

The society has the highest charity rating from charitynavigator.org, a website that evaluates and rates charities on their cost-effectiveness and overall health.

"My hope for the thrift shop is that it's a hub," Grantham said. "So, for people to serve, for people to repurpose things and 100% of the sales go and feed the larger Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society mission."

MILITARY

Biden OKs guide for national security

BY AAMER MADHANI
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden has approved a new national security memorandum that is meant to serve as a roadmap for the incoming Trump administration as it looks to counter growing cooperation among China, Iran, North Korea and Russia, the White House said Wednesday.

Biden administration officials began developing the guidance this summer.

It was shaped to be a document that could help the next administration build its approach from day one on how it will go about dealing with the tightening relationships between the United

Memo aims to help Trump counter adversaries

States' most prominent adversaries and competitors, according to two senior administration officials.

The officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House, said the classified memorandum would not be made public because of the sensitivity of some of its findings.

The document includes four broad recommendations: improving U.S. government interagency cooperation, speeding up the sharing of information with allies about the four adversaries, cali-

brating the U.S. government's use of sanctions and other economic tools for maximum effectiveness, and bolstering preparation to manage simultaneous crises involving the adversaries.

The U.S. for many years has been concerned about cooperation among the four countries. Coordination has accelerated between the countries in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The officials noted that as Russia has become more isolated by much of the world, Moscow has turned to Iran for drones and mis-

siles.

From North Korea, the Russians have received artillery, missiles and even thousands of troops that have traveled to help the Russians try to repel Ukrainian forces from the Kursk region.

China, meanwhile, has supported Russia with dual use components that help keep its military industrial base afloat.

In return, Russia has sent fighter jets to Iran and assisted Tehran as it looks to bolster its missile defense and space technology.

North Korea has received from Russia much-needed fuel and

funding to help build out its manufacturing and military capabilities. The officials added that Russia has "de facto accepted North Korea as a nuclear weapon state."

China, meanwhile, is benefiting from Russian know-how, with the two countries working together to deepen their military technical cooperation.

The two nations are also conducting joint patrols in the Arctic region.

Biden and President-elect Donald Trump have sharply different worldviews, but officials in both the incoming and outgoing administrations said they have sought to coordinate on national security issues.

USO holiday tour delights soldiers, families in Vicenza

BY REBECCA HOLLAND
Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — Soldiers and their families in Vicenza reveled in their chance this week to meet with a variety of celebrities and enjoy a USO holiday show touring Europe.

On Tuesday, Caserma Del Din and Caserma Ederle welcomed former NFL star defensive tackle Vince Wilfork, actor and singer Charles Esten, comedians Hunter Hill and Melissa Villaseñor, and singer Tyler Rich.

Wilfork played for 13 seasons, all but two of them with the New England Patriots, who won the Super Bowl twice during his time with them. He was a five-time Pro Bowl selection and made first-team All-Pro in 2012.

In Vicenza on Tuesday, Wilfork joked and took photos with eager fans including Casey Hall, a specialist in the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

"You can't not love him," Hall said.

Michelle Ligitt, a reservist and Army spouse, brought her 10-month-old daughter in a Patriots onesie.

"I grew up in New England and am a huge Patriots fan," she said. "Plus, it's a great event for soldiers, great for morale."

Adm. Christopher Grady, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, kicked off the nighttime show Tuesday that followed the meet-and-greet.

"This is a great opportunity to spend a lot of time with the 173rd," he said. "You are defending forward. You are America's varsity team."

The tour started at Naval Station Rota in Spain before coming to Vicenza, and it will make seven stops across Europe. Grady said it was important for giving back to soldiers and their families.

Grady added that he hoped the tour could bring a bit of the U.S. to the audience, especially young, single soldiers who can't go home and don't have family in Italy.

The performers said their favorite part of the tour so far has been hanging out with troops over meals and learning about what they do day to day.

"Who they are really shines," said Esten, who had a role in the TV series "Nashville" and "Outer Banks" and was a regular on the comedy show "Whose Line is it Anyway?" in its early years. "I'm blown away, to a person, at how capable they are. We'll go home and share their stories."

Esten and fellow performer Hill have personal ties to Italy. Hill's mother-in-law was born in Vicenza, while Esten's wife was born in Naples and grew up playing sports on military bases. This is the second USO tour for both performers.

"If the USO calls, you answer," Hill said. "It's not only a huge gift, but a responsibility."

Rich, a country singer whose debut album "Two Thousand Miles" was released in 2020, is on his first USO tour and said the experience has been one of the most rewarding of his career so far.

"I knew it was an honor, but the real time we've gotten to spend



PHOTOS BY REBECCA HOLLAND/STARS AND STRIPES /

Country singer Tyler Rich performs some of his biggest hits during a USO tour at Caserma Ederle in Vicenza, Italy, on Tuesday. The music video for his newest single will feature footage from the tour.



Grady



Members of the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade line up Tuesday at Caserma Del Din in Vicenza, Italy, to meet former NFL defensive tackle Vince Wilfork.



Former "Saturday Night Live" cast member Melissa Villaseñor does impressions for the Caserma Ederle audience.

with the troops is amazing," he said, adding that the tour has made such an impact that footage from it will feature in his newest music video, which is set to be released Jan. 10.

"I've got a song coming out

called 'Give Up to Get It,' about everything we give up to get our dreams," he said. "But then when you're on stage, you're surrounded by people who make it worth it."

U.S. service members stationed

elsewhere in Europe can check the Facebook page of their local USO to see whether remaining stops on the holiday tour will be in their area.

The tour will visit Naval Air Station Sigonella in Sicily on Thursday and Naples on Friday.

NATION

Writings of suspect in CEO slaying recovered

By MICHAEL R. SISAK
AND MARK SCOLFORO

Associated Press

ALTOONA, Pa. — Authorities have recovered a spiral notebook that the suspect in the killing of UnitedHealthcare's CEO kept, along with a three-page handwritten letter found when he was arrested, a law enforcement official said Wednesday.

The letter, found when Luigi Mangione was arrested Monday in Altoona, Pa., teased the possibility that clues to the attack — “some straggling notes and To Do lists that illuminate the gist of it” — could be found in the notebook, the law enforcement official said. The official wasn't authorized to disclose information about the investigation and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The New York Police Department's top detective, Joseph Kenny, told CBS New York on Tuesday that the motive might have been related to an accident that sent Mangione to an emergency room on July 4, 2023.

A law enforcement bulletin obtained by the AP earlier this week said the letter expressed anger with what Mangione called “parasitic” health insurance companies and a disdain for corporate greed and power. The prep school and Ivy League graduate wrote that the U.S. has the most expensive health care system in the world and that profits of major corporations continue to rise while life ex-



BENJAMIN B. BRAUN / AP

Luigi Mangione was shouting and writing in the grip of sheriff's deputies as he was led into court at Blair County Courthouse on Tuesday in Hollidaysburg, Pa.

pectancy doesn't, according to the bulletin.

Kenny also said that authorities were analyzing a fingerprint on a cellphone found after the killing of UnitedHealthcare's CEO.

No prints were found on bullets that killed Brian Thompson, but one fingerprint on a cellphone was recovered. Kenney said the evidence was being processed and didn't say whether it appeared to match Mangione, the 26-year-old charged in the shooting last week

in midtown Manhattan.

In his first public words since his arrest, Mangione emerged from a patrol car Tuesday shouting about an “insult to the intelligence of the American people” while deputies pushed him into a courthouse. Mangione remained jailed without bail in Pennsylvania, where he was initially charged with gun and forgery offenses.

Manhattan prosecutors were working to bring Mangione to

New York. At a brief hearing Tuesday in Pennsylvania, defense lawyer Thomas Dickey said Mangione will not waive extradition and instead wants a hearing on the issue.

“You can't rush to judgment in this case or any case,” Dickey said afterward. “He's presumed innocent. Let's not forget that.”

Mangione was arrested in Altoona, about 230 miles (about 370 kilometers) west of New York City, after a McDonald's customer

recognized him and notified an employee, authorities said.

New York police officials have said Mangione was carrying a gun like the one used to kill Thompson and the same fake ID the suspected shooter had used to check into a New York hostel, along with a passport and other fraudulent IDs.

Thompson, 50, was killed Dec. 4 as he walked alone to a Manhattan hotel for an investor conference. From surveillance video, New York investigators determined the shooter quickly fled the city, likely by bus.

His movements afterward are unclear, but authorities believe he took steps to stay off the radar. Prosecutors said at his Pennsylvania hearing Tuesday that when arrested, he had bags for his cellphone and laptop that prevent such devices from transmitting signals that authorities can use to track them.

Mangione, a grandson of a well-known Maryland real estate developer and philanthropist, had a graduate degree in computer science and worked for a time at a car-buying website. During the first half of 2022, he bunked at a “co-living” space in Hawaii, where those who knew him said he suffered from severe and sometimes debilitating back pain.

His relatives have said in a statement that they are was “shocked and devastated” at his arrest.”

Judge rejects Onion's Infowars auction win

Associated Press

A federal judge in Texas rejected the auction sale of Alex Jones' Infowars to The Onion satirical news outlet, criticizing the bidding for the conspiracy theory platform as flawed as well as how much money families of the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary shooting stood to receive.

The decision late Tuesday night is a victory for Jones, whose Infowars site was put up for sale as part of his bankruptcy case in the wake of the nearly \$1.5 billion that courts have ordered him to pay over falsely calling one of the deadliest school shootings in U.S. history a hoax. Families of the Sandy Hook victims had backed The Onion's bid.

Following a two-day hearing in Houston, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Christopher Lopez said he would not approve the sale, while citing concerns about transparency in the auction. That clears the way for Jones to keep — at least for now — Infowars, which is headquartered in Austin, Texas. The Onion had planned to kick Jones out and relaunch Infowars in January as a parody.

“We are deeply disappointed in today's decision, but The Onion will con-

tinue to seek a resolution that helps the Sandy Hook families receive a positive outcome for the horror they endured,” Ben Collins, CEO of The Onion's parent company, Global Tetrahedron, posted on social media late Tuesday.

Lopez cited problems — but no wrongdoing — with the auction process. He said he did not think that those involved in the auction acted in bad faith and that everyone “put their best foot forward and tried to play within the rules.”

Still, Lopez said he did not want another auction and left it up to the trustee who oversaw the auction to determine the next steps.

The Onion offered \$1.75 million in cash and other incentives for Infowars' assets in the auction. First United American Companies, which runs a website in Jones' name that sells nutritional supplements, bid \$3.5 million.

The bids were a fraction of the money that Jones has been ordered to pay in defamation lawsuits in Connecticut and Texas filed by relatives of victims of the Sandy Hook shooting. Lopez said the auction outcome “left a lot of money on the table” for families.



MELINA MARA / The Washington Post

Alex Jones

“You got to scratch and claw and get everything you can for them,” Lopez said.

Christopher Mattei, a lawyer for the Sandy Hook families who sued Jones in Connecticut, said they were disappointed in the judge's ruling.

“These families, who have already persevered through countless delays and roadblocks, remain resilient and determined as ever to hold Alex Jones and his corrupt businesses accountable for the harm he has caused,” Mattei said in a statement. “This decision doesn't change the fact that, soon, Alex Jones will begin to pay his debt to these families and he will continue doing so for as long as it takes.”

US inflation ticks up with price pressures

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Fueled by pricier used cars, hotel rooms and groceries, inflation in the United States moved slightly higher last month in the latest sign that some price pressures remain elevated.

Consumer prices rose 2.7% in November from a year earlier, up from a yearly figure of 2.6% in October. Excluding volatile food and energy costs, so-called core prices increased 3.3%, the same as in the previous month. Measured month to month, prices climbed 0.3% from October to November, the biggest such increase since April. Core prices also rose 0.3% for a fourth straight month.

Wednesday's inflation figures from the Labor Department are the final major piece of data that Federal Reserve officials will consider before they meet next week to decide on interest rates. The relatively mild November increase won't likely be enough to discourage the officials from cutting their key rate by a quarter-point.

The Fed slashed its benchmark rate, which affects many consumer and business loans, by a sizable half-point in September and by a quarter-point in November. Those cuts lowered the central bank's key rate to 4.6%, down from a four-decade high of 5.3%.

When the Fed's meeting ends Wednesday, it will not only announce its interest rate decision. The policymakers will also issue their latest quarterly projections for the economy and interest rates. In September, they projected four rate cuts for 2025. The officials will likely scale back that figure next week.

NATION



GENE J. PUSKAR/AP

Republican presidential candidate at the time Donald Trump is surrounded by Secret Service after a gunman made an assassination attempt at a campaign event in Butler, Pa., on July 13.

Report on attempts to kill Trump urges Secret Service to limit its foreign focus

By REBECCA SANTANA
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A congressional task force investigating the attempts to kill Donald Trump during his presidential campaign is recommending changes to the Secret Service, including protecting fewer foreign leaders during the height of election season and considering moving the agency out of the Homeland Security Department.

The 180-page report by the bipartisan task force released Tuesday is one of the most detailed looks so far into the July assassination attempt against Trump during a campaign rally in Pennsylvania and a second attempt in Florida two months later.

Like the series of other investigations and reports, the task force railed at the agency tasked with protecting the top echelon of America's democratic leaders.

"The events of July 13, 2024, were tragic and preventable, and the litany of related security failures are unacceptable," the authors wrote. "The Secret Service's zero fail mission allows no margin for error, let alone for the many errors described in this report."

In the July shooting, a gunman opened fire from the roof of a nearby building, wounding Trump in the ear, killing one rally-goer and wounding two others. He was killed by a countersniper.

In another assassination attempt in September, a gunman waited for hours for Trump to appear at his golf course in Florida, but a Secret Service agent thwarted the attack by spotting the firearm poking through some bushes.

The report's authors noted that the number of people the agency is

tasked with protecting has "greatly expanded." At the same time, the presidential campaign season is getting longer and more intense.

The agency is also tasked with protecting foreign dignitaries during the U.N. General Assembly, when heads of state and government flood into New York. That event happens every September, which comes at the "height of campaign season," the report noted, adding to the staffing crunch.

"Congress, DHS, and the USSS should jointly consider the protective role the USSS plays for foreign leaders and consider whether such duties can be transferred or abrogated in order to focus on the USSS's primary duty: to protect the President and other critical U.S. leaders," the report said.

The Secret Service is known for its high-profile work of protecting the president, the vice-president, presidential candidates, their families and others.

But agents also carry out a wide range of investigations not related to their protective mission — investigating fraud and financial crimes, for example. Stemming from when the agency was part of the Treasury Department, those investigations are an important part of training Secret Service officers for skills they'll need on protective details, agency leaders say.

But the task force recommended reviewing these investigative responsibilities — especially during campaign season — so the agency "can prioritize the protection of U.S. leaders and candidates running for office."

"These non-protective, investigative functions require systemic review because of the USSS's stunning failure to protect Presi-

dent-elect Trump on July 13," the report said. "The Secret Service's protective mission is at the core of the agency's purpose — anything that distracts or diverts resources from the agency's zero fail mission must be reconsidered."

After DHS was created in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the Secret Service was moved there from the Treasury Department.

The task force suggested reevaluating that move. During the time Secret Service has been in the Homeland Security Department, "USSS has not benefited from stable leadership," the lawmakers said.

They said the structure "potentially weakens USSS, a small but critically important agency, in advocating for its budget and other priorities inside a much larger entity."

"A fresh look at whether USSS might benefit from the status of an independent agency, with more freedom to make budget requests and advocate for itself, would be a healthy discussion for former USSS leaders to have with Congress," the task force said.

The task force said the gunman in Butler, Pa., Thomas Crooks, exploited gaps in protection because of a lack of assets and staff.

Much of the criticism in the aftermath of the July assassination attempt has centered on how the shooter could have gotten access to a roof with a clear line of sight to Trump and why there was such poor communications between the Secret Service and local law enforcement.

"The Secret Service must own responsibility for the security of the site," the report said.

Trump gives new picks including his son's fiancée

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump made another flurry of job announcements on Tuesday, selecting Andrew Ferguson as the next chair of the Federal Trade Commission, Ron Johnson was nominated to be ambassador to Mexico, and Kimberly Guilfoyle to be ambassador to Greece.

Ferguson, who is already one of the FTC's five commissioners, will replace Lina Khan, who became a lightning rod for Wall Street and Silicon Valley by blocking billions of dollars worth of corporate acquisitions and suing Amazon and Meta while alleging anticompetitive behavior.

"Andrew has a proven record of standing up to Big Tech censorship, and protecting Freedom of Speech in our Great Country," Trump wrote on Truth Social, adding, "Andrew will be the most America First, and pro-innovation FTC Chair in our Country's History."

Tom Barrack was chosen as the nominee for ambassador to Turkey. Barrack, a wealthy financier, met Trump in the 1980s while helping negotiate Trump's purchase of the renowned Plaza Hotel. He was charged with using his personal access to the former president to secretly promote the interests of the United Arab Emirates, but was acquitted of all counts at a federal trial in 2022.

Trump called him a "well-respected and experienced voice of reason."

Johnson — not the Republican senator — served as ambassador to El Salvador during Trump's first administration. His nomination comes as the president-elect has been threatening tariffs on Mexican imports and the mass deportation of migrants who have arrived to the U.S.-Mexico border. Johnson is also a former U.S. Army veteran and was in the Central Intelligence Agency.

Guilfoyle is a former California prosecutor and television news personality who led the fundraising for Trump's 2020 campaign and became engaged to Don Jr. in 2020. Trump called her "a close friend and ally" and praised her "sharp intellect make her supremely qualified." Guilfoyle was on stage with the family on election night.

"I am so proud of Kimberly. She loves America and she always has

wanted to serve the country as an Ambassador. She will be an amazing leader for America First," Don Jr. posted.

The ambassador positions must be approved by the U.S. Senate.

Guilfoyle said in a social media post that she was "honored to accept President Trump's nomination to serve as the next Ambassador to Greece and I look forward to earning the support of the U.S. Senate."

Trump also announced Tuesday that he had selected Jacob Helberg as the next undersecretary of state for economic growth, energy and the environment, and Dan Bishop as deputy director for budget at the Office of Budget and Management.

The replacement of Khan at the FTC likely means that the commission will operate with a lighter touch when it comes to antitrust enforcement. The new chair is expected to appoint new directors of the FTC's antitrust and consumer protection divisions.

"These changes likely will make the FTC more favorable to business than it has been in recent years, though the extent to which is to be determined," wrote Anthony DiResta, a consumer protection attorney at Holland & Knight, in a recent analysis.

Deals that were blocked by the Biden administration could find new life with Trump in command.

For example, the new leadership could be more open to a proposed merger between the country's two biggest supermarket chains, Kroger and Albertsons, which forged a \$24.6 billion deal to combine in 2022. Two judges halted the merger Tuesday night.

The FTC had filed a lawsuit in federal court earlier this year to block the merger, claiming the deal would eliminate competition, leading to higher prices and lower wages for workers.

And the FTC may continue to scrutinize Big Tech firms for any anticompetitive behavior. Many Republican politicians have accused firms such as Meta of censoring conservative views, and some officials in Trump's orbit, most notably Vice President-elect JD Vance, have previously expressed support for Khan's scrutiny of Big Tech firms.



Guilfoyle

NATION

East Coast braces as atmospheric river fuels storms

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine — The U.S. East Coast was beginning a whip-lash-inducing stretch of weather on Wednesday that was rainy, windy and potentially dangerous, due in part to an atmospheric river and developing bomb cyclone.

Parts of Maine experienced freezing rain that caused vehicles to slide off roads followed by a deluge of rain and unseasonably high temperatures — and the prospect of damaging winds — all in the same day, said Derek Schroeter, a forecaster with the National Weather Service. Some schools were closed across New England.

Severe thunderstorms, winds and a few tornadoes are possible from the eastern Carolinas to southern New England, the weather service said. Isolated severe thunderstorms may occur southward into portions of Florida.

The heavy rain and fierce winds will last until Wednesday night, and flash flooding was a concern because of the deluge and melting snow, forecasters said. Utilities were also gearing up for potential power outages from damage caused by winds that could exceed 60 mph.

One of the key factors driving the weather is an atmospheric river, which is a long band of water

vapor that can transport moisture from the tropics to more northern areas, said Schroeter, who's based in Gray, Maine. New England was expected to bear the brunt as the storm tapped moisture from the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of the U.S. Southeast, and transported it to places like Maine, Schroeter said.

Forecasters also said the storm had the potential to include a process that meteorologists call bombogenesis, or a "bomb cyclone." That is the rapid intensification of a cyclone in a short period of time, and it has the ability to bring severe rainfall.

"Is that what they're calling it?" said Jen Roberts, co-owner of On-ion River Outdoors sporting goods store in Montpelier, Vt. She said they had snow for about a five-day stretch, as well as a lot of customers coming in for ski gear.

The storm began with combination of fog and light freezing rain on Tuesday night into early Wednesday.

Ice accumulated and travel became treacherous in parts of New England.

A tractor-trailer carrying a load of oranges went off the Maine Turnpike in New Gloucester; the road was so treacherous that the oranges couldn't be removed until a day later.



PATRICK WHITTLE / AP

People walk to their cars as freezing rain and snow falls Wednesday in Kennebunk, Maine.



HANS GUTKNECHT, THE ORANGE COUNTY (CALIF.) REGISTER/AP

A Los Angeles County Community Brigade member douses hot spots Tuesday on a home burned during the Franklin Fire in Malibu, Calif.

Winds boost Malibu wildfires

Associated Press

MALIBU, Calif. — Officials in Southern California reported significant overnight growth of a wind-driven wildfire that has forced thousands of people, including celebrities like Cher and Dick Van Dyke, from their homes in Malibu, but forecasters said firefighters would get a break from improving weather conditions.

With much of the coastal city under evacuation orders and warnings, residents waited anxiously to see whether their properties had been spared by the fire, which erupted late Monday and grew to more than 6 square miles by Wednesday morning. It was just 7% contained.

More than 1,500 firefighters were battling the blaze, with many climbing in steep canyons near lines of flames and others hosing down collapsed roofs of horse stables and charred homes.

"The deep and rugged terrain, along with the strong winds and low humidity, continue to pose challenges for firefighters," the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire, said in an incident update.

The National Weather Service said the strongest Santa Ana winds, with gusts that reached 40 mph, have passed.

"We're far better off this morning than we were in the last 30-plus hours," Malibu Mayor Doug Stewart said at a Wednesday news conference.

Even as the weather was expected to improve, forecasters said gusty winds will continue through Wednesday morning, especially in the mountains, and critical fire conditions remain. Santa Ana's notorious seasonal winds are withering, dry gusts that sweep out of the interior toward the coast, pushing back moist ocean breezes.

Los Angeles County Fire Department Chief Anthony C. Marrone said the blaze grew by nearly 40% overnight. At least 7,500 structures, mostly homes, were threatened, with at least 12,600 people under evacuation orders, officials said.

Much of the devastation occurred in Malibu, a community of about 10,000 people on the western edge of Los Angeles known for its stunning bluffs and Zuma Beach, which features in many Hollywood films. Flames burned near celebrities' seaside mansions, horse farms and Pepperdine University, where about 3,000 students were forced to shelter in place on campus. Many evacuated their dorms to the library through smoke and ash as flames roared in

the canyon nearby.

An early analysis showed little to no damage to structures on campus, the university said in an update Tuesday night. Fire activity was diminished, but some flames were still visible.

It isn't known how the blaze started. Marrone said seven structures had been destroyed and nine others had been damaged.

Malibu City Hall was in the fire's path, so officials had to relocate to nearby Calabasas as a base for emergency operations, he said.

Many major fires have burned in Malibu, and there's now a familiar cycle where once-lush vegetation is charred.

"It burns, it grows back, and we're resilient and strong," the mayor said Tuesday.

Van Dyke, one of many celebrities with homes in Malibu, said in a Facebook post that he and his wife, Arlene Silver, evacuated as the fire swept in. Although the couple and most of their animals evacuated safely, one of their cats, Bobo, escaped as they were leaving. "We're praying he'll be OK and that our community in Serra Retreat will survive these terrible fires," he wrote.

Cher evacuated from her Malibu home when ordered and is staying at a hotel, her publicist, Liz Rosenberg, said late Tuesday.

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WORLD

S. Korean ex-official attempted suicide after arrest

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

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's previous defense minister was stopped from attempting suicide while in detention over last week's martial law declaration, officials said Wednesday, as President Yoon Suk Yeol's office resisted a police attempt to search the compound.

The main liberal opposition Democratic Party is pushing for a new motion to impeach Yoon for his Dec. 3 decree that imposed martial law in South Korea for the first time in more than four decades. Its first impeachment attempt against Yoon last Saturday failed after ruling party lawmakers boycotted the vote. The party said it plans to submit the new motion on Thursday to set up a vote on Saturday.

Yoon's ill-conceived power grab has paralyzed South Korean politics, frozen its foreign policy and rattled financial markets. On

Wednesday, rival North Korea's state media for the first time reported about the turmoil across the border, but the country hasn't shown any suspicious activities.

Shin Yong Hae, commissioner general of the Korea Correctional Service, told lawmakers that former Defense Minister Kim Yong Hyun tried to kill himself the previous night at a detention center in Seoul. He said correctional officers stopped him and that he was in stable condition.

Kim was arrested by prosecutors early Wednesday on allegations of playing a key role in a rebellion and committing abuse of power. He became the first person formally arrested over the martial law decree.

Kim, one of Yoon's close associates, has been accused of recommending martial law to Yoon and sending troops to the National Assembly to block lawmakers from voting on it. Enough lawmakers eventually managed to enter a parliament chamber and they

unanimously rejected Yoon's decree, forcing the Cabinet to lift it before daybreak on Dec. 4.

Prosecutors have up to 20 days to determine whether to indict Kim.

Later Wednesday, police detained National Police Agency Commissioner General Cho Ji Ho and Kim Bong-sik, head of Seoul's metropolitan police. They were accused of deploying police forces to parliament to block lawmakers from voting.

The main focus of the investigation is finding whether Yoon, Kim and others involved in imposing martial law committed rebellion. A conviction for rebellion carries a maximum penalty of death.

South Korean police said they sent officers to search Yoon's office on Wednesday to look for any evidence related to the martial law introduction. But investigators failed to enter the office as of Wednesday evening, about six hours after their arrival, senior police officer Lee Ho-young told



AHN YOUNG-JOON / AP

A participant wearing a mask of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol performs during a rally to demand his impeachment Wednesday.

the parliament.

Vice Defense Minister Kim Seon Ho reiterated Wednesday that Yoon remains in charge of the military. But Yoon hasn't been involved in any major official activ-

ities since lifting martial law, except for accepting resignation offers by officials involved in the martial law case and appointing the head for the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

2 Ukrainian women pulled alive from rubble after Russian strike

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Rescue crews working through the night pulled two women from rubble more than seven hours after a Russian missile struck a private medical clinic in a southern Ukraine city, killing eight people and wounding 22 others, authorities said Wednesday.

The women called rescue services on their cellphones to say they were buried under the rubble after the attack late Tuesday

in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine's Emergency Services said.

Deadly Russian strikes on civilian areas have been a feature of the almost three-year war.

Ukraine's Western allies are sending more aid to help it keep fighting Russia's invasion, but Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the Zaporizhzhia strike showed that his country still needs more air defense systems.

He urged Western partners to

send weaponry they are holding in their arsenals.

"We currently do not have enough systems to protect our country from Russian missiles. But partners have these systems," Zelenskyy said late Tuesday in his daily address to the nation.

Air defense systems that Ukraine's allies possess "should save lives, and not gather dust in storage bases," he said.

Meanwhile, Ukraine kept up its

long-range attacks on areas behind Russian lines that are supporting its war effort.

A Ukrainian drone attack caused a blaze at an industrial facility in Russia's Bryansk region, Gov. Alexander Bogomaz said.

Air defenses downed 14 Ukrainian drones over the Bryansk region early Wednesday, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

Also, a Ukrainian missile attack on the city of Taganrog in the Rostov region early Wednes-

day damaged an industrial plant, regional Gov. Yuri Slusar said.

Zelenskyy thanked Ukrainian forces for hitting what he called "military facilities on the territory of Russia, as well as facilities of the fuel and energy complex."

"It is precisely such long range and accuracy that step-by-step bring Russia back to reality — to the reality that the war must be ended," he said on Telegram.

It wasn't possible to verify either side's claims.

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Satanic Temple statue put near city Nativity

NH CONCORD — A dark, horned figure with a goat's head stands in front of the New Hampshire State House.

It's a holiday display installed by The Satanic Temple — near the city of Concord's Nativity scene, according to the city's Dec. 7 Facebook post.

The nationwide group, which has congregations in dozens of states, is recognized as a church by the IRS and describes itself as “the primary religious Satanic organization in the world.”

The Satanic Temple was issued a permit that allows it to keep its statue in front of the State House for the month of December, according to Concord. The statue is of Baphomet, a pagan idol associated with the occult.

With glowing yellow eyes, The Satanic Temple's statue of Baphomet is seen holding lilacs in one hand and an apple in the other, the Concord Monitor reported.

Police: Hoax bomb threat came from Russia

GA ATLANTA — The Rome Police Department has determined that an emailed threat claiming that a bomb had been placed at the home of U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene was a hoax that originated from a Russian IP address.

“We are pleased to report that Congresswoman Greene is safe,” her office said in a news release Monday. “She extends her heartfelt gratitude to the Rome Police Department for their swift and professional response in ensuring her safety.”

The release said the email was sent to the assistant chief of police, who immediately dispatched the bomb squad to search Greene's property. Greene, a Republican, lives in the city.

The officers determined there was no active threat. But because the email appeared to come from an international source, Rome police notified federal law enforcement, including the FBI.

Firms sue to stop law that raises wages

MO COLUMBIA, Mo. — Missouri business groups announced Monday that they have filed a lawsuit to try to stop a voter-approved law that will raise the state's minimum wage and require employers to give workers paid sick leave.

The powerful Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry, restaurant and grocers associations say the law violates a state constitutional requirement that ballot measures only address one issue because it included the minimum wage increase and paid sick leave.

The law will increase the state's minimum wage from the current \$12.30 an hour to \$13.75 in January



ASHLEY LANDIS / AP

Space, a very merry place

A child plays among space-themed holiday lights near a replica of shuttle Independence at Space Center Houston on Monday in Houston.

and \$15 in 2026. It gives workers up to seven paid sick days per year starting in May.

Oil income investments surpass income tax cash

NM SANTA FE — Efforts by New Mexico to save and invest portions of a financial windfall from local oil production are paying off as state government income on investments surpasses personal income tax collections for the first time, according to a new forecast Monday.

General fund income from the state's two, multibillion-dollar permanent funds and interest on treasury accounts is expected to climb to \$2.1 billion for the fiscal year between July 2024 and June 2025, surpassing \$2 billion in revenue from personal income taxes.

The investment earnings are designed to ensure that critical programs — ranging from child care subsidies to tuition-free college and trade school education — endure if oil income falters amid a possible transition to new sources of energy.

At the same time, legislators this year revised personal income tax brackets to lower taxes in the nation's No. 2 state for oil production behind Texas.

Biden move keeps door open to drilling in refuge

AK JUNEAU — The Biden administration has approved plans for a sale of oil and

gas leases in Alaska that leaves open the door for drilling in a portion of the pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The sale will be held Jan. 9, less than two weeks before President Joe Biden leaves office. It will include a fraction of the land total that was available for bidding roughly four years ago in a sale held during the Trump administration.

President-elect Donald Trump pledged during his latest run for the White House to expand oil drilling in the U.S., and he's pointed to the passage of a 2017 law that enabled Monday's announcement as a highlight when it comes to Alaska policy.

The law called for lease sales in the refuge's coastal plain, a roughly 1.5-million acre swath of the vast, wild refuge that borders the Beaufort Sea.

Boeing lays off hundreds in Washington, California

WA SEATTLE — Boeing has laid off hundreds of additional employees in Washington state and California as part of planned cuts that will eventually reduce the company's workforce by about 17,000.

Nearly 400 Boeing employees were laid off in Washington state and more than 500 in California, news outlets reported Monday.

The aerospace giant announced previously it would reduce its workforce by 10% in the coming months as it tries to recover from

financial and regulatory troubles and a strike by its machinists that lasted almost two months.

CEO Kelly Ortberg has said the strike did not cause the layoffs, which he said was the result of overstaffing.

Boeing, based in Arlington, Va., has been in financial trouble since two crashes of its 737 Max jetliner killed 346 people in 2018 and 2019. The company's fortunes and reputation took an additional hit when a panel blew off the fuselage of an Alaska Airlines plane in January.

Officers accused of 'egregious misconduct'

MA BOSTON — Worcester police officers were accused of sexually assaulting women, engaging in sex acts with prostitutes, and other “egregious misconduct” in a new scathing report from the feds.

The Department of Justice on Monday released a bombshell report about the Worcester Police Department, alleging that the city and police department have committed civil rights violations.

“First, WPD uses excessive force,” the DOJ wrote. “Second, WPD engages in outrageous government conduct by permitting undercover officers to participate in sexual contact with women suspected of being involved in the commercial sex trade.”

The Department of Justice also raised “serious concerns” that Worcester police officers have sexually assaulted women under

threat of arrest and engaged in other sexual misconduct.

The Justice Department opened this investigation two years ago.

The report acknowledges the changes already made by the city and WPD, and identifies additional remedial measures that the department believes are necessary to address its findings.

Lawmakers eye change to school funding formula

AL MONTGOMERY — Alabama lawmakers are eyeing an overhaul to the state's method of funding public schools and heard details Monday about possible new formulas for allocating money to schools.

Lawmakers have no plans to increase taxes but are looking to revamp the formula that divvies out state funds. A panel of lawmakers heard information about three possible funding models. The formulas would allocate a base per-student amount and then provide extra dollars based on student needs.

Bellwether, a nonpartisan research, and policy organization, presented information to lawmakers on three possible funding formulas. Each formula includes a base amount and weighted funding for six student groups: low-income students, students with disabilities, students learning English, gifted students, rural students and charter school students.

FACES



PARAMOUNT PICTURES/AP

Matthew McConaughey is one of the stars of "Interstellar," which made \$4.5 million from 166 screens last weekend in North America.

Cosmic success 10 years later

'Interstellar' director Nolan thrilled by staggering response to IMAX re-release

BY LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

The hardest movie ticket to get last weekend was for a film audiences have been able to watch at home for years: Christopher Nolan's "Interstellar."

The science fiction epic starring Matthew McConaughey and Anne Hathaway earned \$4.5 million from only 166 screens in the U.S. and Canada. Its 70mm IMAX film presentations sold out in minutes, leaving theaters scrambling to add more and people paying up to \$300 on the resale market. Those 10 film screens alone had a staggering \$70,000 per theater average, one of the highest of the year and usually the bragging rights of acclaimed arthouse movies playing on only four screens.

Ten years after "Interstellar" was given a film release as a special exception at time when its studio, Paramount, was committing to a digital future, film is not only back but driving audiences to theaters.

"I was just so gratified by the response," Nolan said in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press. "It's really thrilling when people respond to your work at any point. But 10 years later, to have new audiences coming and experiencing it in the way that we'd originally intended it on the big IMAX screens and in particular on those IMAX film prints? It's really rewarding to see that it continues to have a life."

Nolan's fight for film, re-release

"Interstellar" had been a labor of love, with Nolan fighting against the tides of a changing industry to use film, certain of its value. Like McConaughey's Cooper, an astronaut clinging to skills that were all but obsolete in his dust bowl reality, "Interstellar" was made by a celluloid-loving filmmaker when the format was least valued.

"Celluloid film was very threatened. Digital was taking over everything," Nolan

said. "We put an enormous amount of work and effort into the IMAX 70mm film format release at the time feeling like we didn't know how much longer we'd be able to do that."

During its time, "Interstellar" was received warmly and an unambiguous success, but it also had its detractors. Its five Oscar nominations and win were all for crafts. And yet in the decade since, "Interstellar" has become beloved, a true classic. Nolan observed that it was the film that people kept wanting to talk about, telling him what it meant to them and asking if it was ever going to be re-released. Those grand emotions and sentimental themes of love, family and exploration that were a liability with some are now its most cherished qualities.

"A lot of these people were younger people who, it was clear to me, had seen the film in the home and hadn't had the chance to see it on the big screen," Nolan said.

While there have been "Interstellar" re-releases internationally, in China and at the Science Museum in London, Nolan saw an opportunity and spoke to IMAX and Paramount, now under a new regime, about a proper North American re-release for its 10th anniversary. The prints, Nolan said, hadn't aged a day.

IMAX didn't need convincing: They've had the anniversary date circled on the calendar. For years, "Interstellar" was by far the biggest request on their social channels.

"We saw this coming from the beginning," IMAX CEO Rich Gelfond said. "It re-

minded us in a small way of the frenzy around 'Oppenheimer.' But the result is far beyond our expectations."

"Interstellar" is now the ninth highest-grossing IMAX release of all time and is closing in on eight (currently "The Last Jedi.") The company is exploring options for re-releases in different territories.

What should Hollywood learn?

The "Oppenheimer" effect was real in re-deeming film's value for the business.

IMAX screens accounted for some 20% of the nearly \$1 billion this year's Oscar best picture winner made globally (it ranks at No. 5 for IMAX). While filmmakers have long cherished film stock, "Oppenheimer" had studios, distributors and theaters taking note of the demand. Earlier this year, the film showings of "Dune: Part Two" were sold out for four weeks. And there's more to come: Ryan Coogler's new film "Sinners," opening in March 2025, was shot with IMAX cameras.

The "Interstellar" release was fairly "low key" when it came to promotion, but it also didn't need much. Before IMAX had even announced that tickets were on sale, some fans noticed their availability online.

While Nolan is in some ways an anomaly, as the rare filmmaker whose name alone can draw crowds for original fare, there are lessons to be learned from the weekend.

"It just shows our industry once again that audiences truly understand the difference between a communal, big-screen theatrical experience that they crave even on films that they've had the opportunities to see in the home," Nolan said. "That theatrical experience that we all know and love is so powerful and so exciting. It's a very clear demonstration of it, especially coming amidst all the great successes right now, 'Wicked,' 'Gladiator II,' 'Moana 2.'"

"Audiences are coming out in droves for that experience that we all love so much."

Evans reportedly returning to MCU in 'Doomsday' film

From wire reports

Chris Evans is reportedly returning to the Marvel Cinematic Universe and is rumored to co-star with his former co-Avenger Robert Downey Jr. in "Avengers: Doomsday."

The Wrap first reported that the "Captain America" star would be joining the cast and "involved in some capacity, but the extent and exact nature of his role is unknown." Variety, the Hollywood Reporter and Deadline also confirmed Evans' MCU comeback but were scant on details.

Representatives for Evans and Marvel Studios did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

It remains unclear if Evans, who starred as Captain America Steve Rogers and made appear-

ances as that character in several MCU films, will reprise that role or take on a new one in "Avengers: Doomsday," due in theaters in May 2026.

The Oscar-winning Downey, who famously launched the blockbuster MCU when he first starred as billionaire playboy Tony Stark in the 2008 comic-book adaptation "Iron Man," concluded his run as the lead Avenger when he heroically sacrificed himself to save the universe in 2019's "Avengers: Endgame." Downey is set to break with that onscreen persona in "Avengers: Doomsday" to take on the role of the villainous Dr. Victor von Doom, aka "Doctor Doom." The character, who originated in Marvel's "Fantastic Four" comic books, is said to be a Tony Stark variant in the upcoming film, according to the Wrap.

"Fantastic Four" storylines seem like they could intersect, or at least be queued up, again in "Avengers: Doomsday," which will likely contend with several multiverses and timelines.

Evans' Cap, who survived Thanos' existence-ending snap and its ramifications in "Infinity War" and "Endgame," concluded his run five years ago by allowing his supersoldier body to finally grow old. He also passed his iconic shield to Anthony Mackie's Falcon ahead of the next phase of Marvel films and TV series, most notably Disney+'s "The Falcon and the Winter Soldier."

Directors Anthony and Joe Russo are set to helm the fifth "Avengers" title.

Iron Maiden drummer retires

Nicko McBrain bid farewell over the weekend to his role as a touring member of Iron Maiden.

McBrain, 72, who has served as the British heavy metal band's drummer for more than 40 years, announced his retirement from touring hours before the band's Dec. 7 show in Sao Paulo, Brazil — the closer of the Future Past Tour.

"After much consideration, it is with both sorrow and joy, I announce my decision to take a step back from the grind of the extensive touring lifestyle," the London-born musician wrote in a statement on the band's website.

McBrain said he will now dedicate himself to "different personal projects" and "existing business and ventures."



Evans

STARS AND STRIPES

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Assad's fall deals blow to Russia, Iran

BY TRUDY RUBIN

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Syrrians are dancing in the streets of Damascus and other cities, to celebrate the collapse of the hideous regime of Bashar Assad, the man responsible for an estimated 600,000 dead in a 13-year-long civil war — including tens of thousands viciously tortured to death in his dungeons.

Those still alive have been staggering out of liberated prisons, limping and running toward family and freedom.

"This is the moment of celebration," I was told by the University of Oklahoma's Joshua Landis, a Syria specialist with family in the country. He told me the dispirited Syrian army had faded away and let rebels win because they had been receiving little or no pay and no further support from their Russian and Iranian backers.

That's the good news.

The not so good news: No one is certain what kind of government will follow Assad in the weeks to come — whether it will help stabilize the region, including Lebanon and possibly Gaza, or further tear it apart.

The critical news, which may save Syria from a relapse into violence: Assad's flight to exile in Moscow is a body blow to Iran's ayatollahs and Russian dictator Vladimir Putin, for whom Syria had critical importance. It displays their increasing weakness and paints them as losers. It makes them more vulnerable to anyone who seeks negotiations with either.

President-elect Donald Trump, take note.

The immediate post-Assad threat is that Syria might collapse into separate militia fiefs or into another civil war. Hayat Tahrir

al-Sham (known as HTS) — the main rebel group that toppled the government in a lightning advance from the north — was once the Syrian branch of al-Qaida. Its leader, Abu Mohammed al-Golani, broke with the terrorist group several years ago and is trying to soften his image. But Syria's many minorities will have doubts.

"Golani's going to have to reach out to all these different Syrian communities," said Landis, hopefully.

How to coalesce secular Syrians, moderate Muslims, Kurds, and Christians into a government with Islamists, and whether free elections will be possible is the huge challenge Syria will face.

Yet, what gives me hope is that the Iranians and Russians will no longer be able to bend Syria to their will.

After a popular uprising in 2011, Assad was only able to retain power because of intervention by Tehran, and later by Moscow. Although Syria has a religiously and ethnically mixed population, including a plurality of Sunni Muslims along with Kurds, Christians and other minorities, Assad belongs to a minority Shiite sect, known as Alawites, who have controlled the country for decades. Thus he was close to the Shiite regime in Tehran.

The Iranians sent thousands of fighters to Syria, comprised of their own forces along with Iraqi Shiite militias and even Afghan refugees living in Iran. Led by Iranian Revolutionary Guard officers, they were much more effective combatants than the underpaid and corrupt Syrian army.

Iran's quid pro quo was Assad's permission to allow Iranian weapons and missiles to be trucked and flown from Tehran via Damascus to Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon

to use against Israel.

Syria thus became a critical element of Tehran's effort to encircle Israel with a "ring of fire" that included Lebanon's Hezbollah militiamen (along with Hamas in Gaza and Houthis in Yemen).

With Assad gone and Sunni Syrian rebel groups in charge, Iranians are fleeing the country. No more will they be able to transport weapons to Lebanon to be used against Israel. Nor will they be able to help the Alawite minority dominate the country.

Russia, for its part, sent planes in 2015 to bomb Syrian civilians and cities into rubble, just as they have done to Ukraine. Moscow was rewarded with a critical Mediterranean port in Tartus and a major airfield which helped support Putin's expansionist ambitions.

Russia will most likely lose those bases, which gave them their only access to the Mediterranean and gave Putin an important Mideast role. His global access is thus shrinking. And Syria, hopefully, will be freed from his colonial games.

This means that the Islamists, and Golani, will have to look to the moderate Sunni Arab world and to the West to help rebuild their country and resettle Syrian refugees who return. Which in turn gives those Arabs and Western leaders leverage to prevent any attempt to impose an ultraconservative religious state.

If this leverage is not used wisely, Golani could become a threat, in a country where ISIS still has cells that are in touch with their counterparts in Iraq. If used wisely, Syria could revive and rebuild its shattered society.

Nothing less is owed to the thousands who died under torture during Assad's rule.

Trump tries a softer tone – and a harder one, too

The Washington Post Editorial Board

Donald Trump tried to sound a conciliatory tone during his first broadcast interview since winning the Nov. 5 election. On NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday, the president-elect pledged to treat those who didn't vote for him "every bit as well" as "the greatest MAGA supporters" and announced that "unity" will be the theme of his second inaugural address, a contrast to the "American carnage" of 2017.

The former and future president has mouthed such assurances before. On Sunday, though, he backed them with a dash of substance. Trump declared that he doesn't plan on ousting Federal Reserve Chair Jerome H. Powell before the central bank chief's term ends in May 2026, averting an early confrontation over the keystone principle of Fed independence, and a possible constitutional clash over the president's power to fire the Fed chair. He said also that he wants "dreamers," undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children, to be able to remain in the country, saying he would work with Democrats to settle their status.

Additionally, Trump said that he would not restrict the national availability of abortion medication, and that the United States will "absolutely" remain in NATO, as long as other member states spend what they have pledged on defense. It is easy for him to make the latter commitment, because Congress recently barred the president

from removing the United States from the transatlantic alliance without lawmakers' approval; yet, from Trump, anything resembling rhetorical support for NATO is notable.

As for Trump's many hard-line positions, he implied on Sunday that some of them might be opening moves in longer negotiations. Even as he pledged to raise tariffs and admitted that such a move could push up prices, he said he would not "use them like a madman" and noted Americans' discontent over grocery costs. His threat to slap 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico could certainly qualify as a "madman" move, considering the harm it would do to raise prices on goods from trading partners so deeply integrated with the U.S. economy. The question is whether Trump and his staff see it that way — and whether he hopes to extract concessions from foreign governments without resorting to tariffs.

And on exacting revenge against his political opponents, Trump insisted that "retribution will be through success," disclaiming interest in Justice Department action against President Joe Biden or in investigating the 2020 election, which he falsely claims was stolen from him.

Yet Trump could not sustain his softer tone for the whole interview. He acknowledged that he would have to fire Christopher A. Wray if the FBI director, whom he nominated for the job in 2017, did not voluntarily quit, a move that would defeat the purpose of the single 10-year term Congress

long ago enacted for the head of the bureau. He suggested also that members of the special House committee that probed the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol attack, including former GOP congresswoman Liz Cheney, "should go to jail" for supposedly lying and deleting evidence uncovered during the investigation.

Trump repeatedly said he would not order Justice Department leaders or the FBI to investigate his critics, yet he added that his pick to replace Wray, Kash Patel, "probably has an obligation" to look into those "dishonest or crooked" politicians who came after him. In any case, Patel, who has already drawn up a list of "deep state" members, likely would not need explicit direction from Trump to investigate the president-elect's opponents.

Going further than he has previously, Trump said he will "most likely" pardon, as early as his first day back in office, people convicted in connection with crimes on Jan. 6, 2021, including the 169 who pleaded guilty to assaulting police officers.

Where does all this leave Americans worried about what a second Trump term will bring — and, indeed, Democrats now considering how to respond to him? The opposition party should take all opportunities to work with the president-elect when it can — and oppose him on the big issues he gets wrong, of which there will undoubtedly be many. In short, as Trump approaches his second term, prepare for the worst — but do not assume it at every turn.

Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

11x11 crossword grid with black squares indicating non-letter positions.

ACROSS

- 1 Bath powder
5 Snoop
8 Has
12 "The Time Machine" people
13 Chowed down
14 Leak out slowly
15 Starting quartet
16 Logical beginning?
17 Entreaty
18 Get by
20 Planets
22 Knock
23 Fresh
24 Life stories
27 Nudniks
32 Request
33 — long way
34 Brit's restroom
35 Raze

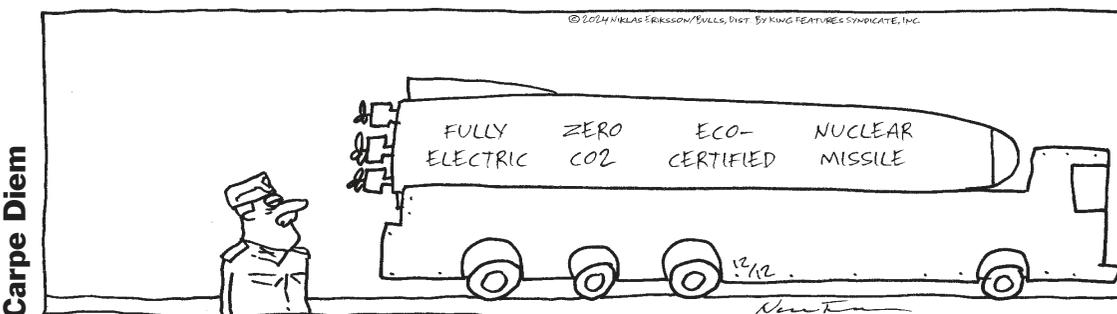
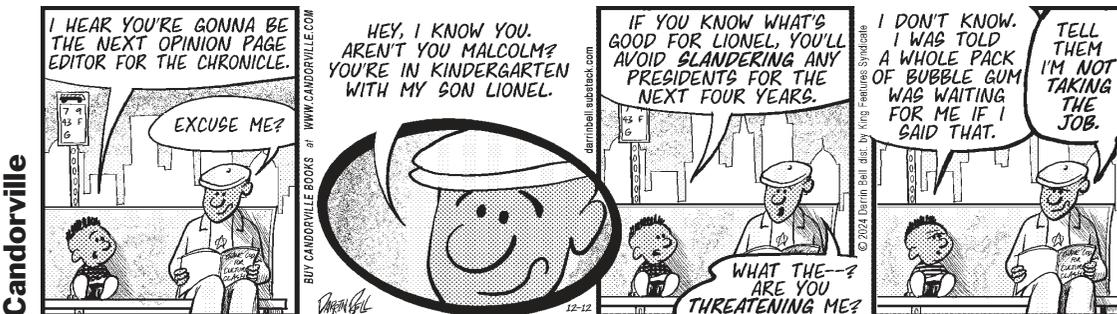
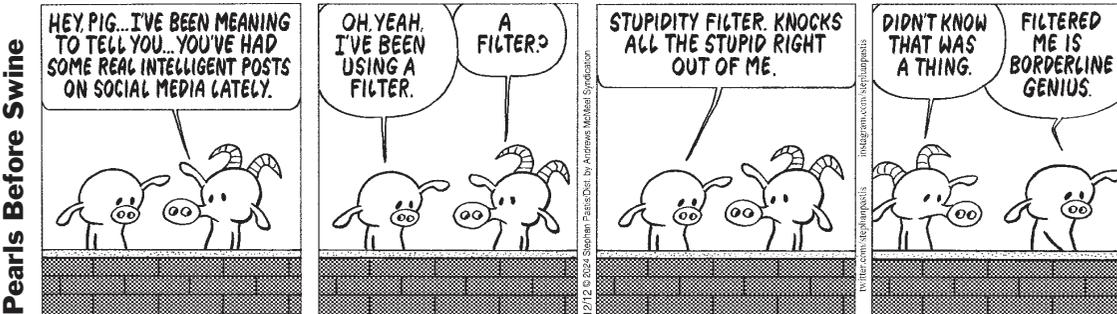
DOWN

- 55 Farm measure
56 Sets (down)
57 — Dhabi
58 Distort
1 "Squad"
2 Actress Jessica
3 Canal feature
4 Autumnal drinks
5 Samoan port
6 Numbered rd.
7 Cry of pain
8 Fish-eating hawk
9 "Oho!"
10 Must have
11 Relaxing resorts
19 Opposite of nyet
21 Lennon's partner
24 Belfry critter

- 25 British verb ending
26 "I heard you the first time!"
28 At once
29 Mork's sign-off
30 French monarch
31 Turf
36 Awakens harshly
37 Flop
38 Brazilian dances
41 "Heavens!"
42 Furnace fuel
43 Tibetan monk
44 Country singer Evans
46 Quick kiss
47 "Present!"
48 Hearty dish
51 Poke

Answer to Previous Puzzle

11x11 crossword grid with letters filled in from the previous puzzle.



12-12

CRYPTOQUIP

RBXR HXZK YL HLYSDU DYQLKDZ
BDU QLA TLUIFYS XR RBD
AUDXZ AXIDUK. RBFYSC TDUD
SDRRFYS CRXHD.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHENEVER GENEROUS PEOPLE GIFT ME WITH BOTTLES OF WINE, I BELIEVE I AM ALWAYS VERY GRAPE-FUL.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals H

SCOREBOARD/GOLF

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Tuesday's men's scores EAST

Albertus Magnus 79, Amherst 63
Bowie St. 72, Goldey-Beacom 59
Brown 84, Rhode Island 80, 2A
Bryn Athyn 73, Salisbury 66
Caldwell 61, Queens (NY) 58
City College (NY) 76, Mount St. Mary 65
Coll. of Charleston 78, Saint Joseph's 75
Delaware 78, Chestnut Hill 51
Emerson 101, Bridgewater (Mass.) 98
Felician 90, American International 73
Hamilton 73, Ithaca 70
Hunter 65, Merchant Marine 63
John Jay 87, St. Joseph's (LI) 77
Mass. College 88, Elms 69
Mercyhurst 77, Penn State-Altoona 51
New England 107, Gordon 95, OT
New Haven 62, Georgian Court 53
Northern Vermont-Johnson 69, New
England Coll. 61
Old Westbury 93, York College (NY) 83
Pace 99, Wilmington (DC) 60
Pitt.-Bradford 120, Houghton 87
Princeton 71, Monmouth (NJ) 67
Roger Williams 91, Curry 68
Rutgers 80, Penn St. 76
Suffolk 77, Endicott 73
Syracuse 102, Albany (NY) 85
Temple 110, Holy Family 81
Thiel 83, Bethany (WV) 72
UMBC 103, Cairn 57
Washington & Jefferson 85, Geneva 69
West Virginia 79, NC Central 45
Westfield St. 91, Johnson & Wales (RI) 74

SOUTH

Davidson 75, Charlotte 71
Duke 72, Incarnate Word 46
FAU 85, Jacksonville 63
Hampton 86, The Apprentice School 68
Lynn 83, Webber International 56
NC State 66, Coppin St. 56
Nicholls 110, Southern (NO) 66
Queens (NC) 91, Piedmont International
53
Southern U. 94, Lindsey Wilson 69
Tennessee 75, Miami 62
Tulane 86, Southern Miss. 58
W. Kentucky 84, Tennessee St. 60
Warren Wilson 84, Appalachian Bible
Warriors 46

MIDWEST

Illinois 86, Wisconsin 80
Lindenwood (Mo.) 99, Harris-Stowe 53
Martin Luther 80, Buena Vista 74
N. Dakota St. 71, Butler 68
Oberlin 78, Kalamazoo 65
Providence 70, DePaul 63, OT
South Dakota 82, Wyoming 81
Washington (Mo.) 107, Fontbonne 57
Xavier 119, Morgan St. 58

SOUTHWEST

Arkansas 89, Michigan 87
Houston 62, Troy 42
Trinity (FL) 78, Hardin-Simmons 71
UALR 80, Ouachita Baptist 57

FAR WEST

Cal St.-Fullerton 61, La Sierra 55
Cornell 88, California 80
Denver 94, Colo.-Colo. Springs 87
Fort Lewis 80, N.M. Highlands 77
Long Beach St. 76, San Diego 70
Montana 89, Montana Tech 60
UMKC 69, Portland 64
Washington 87, E. Washington 69

Top 25 schedule

Wednesday's games

No. 5 Kentucky (8-1) vs. Colgate (2-8)
No. 23 San Diego St. (6-2) vs. Cal Baptist
(5-4)

Thursday's game

No. 3 Iowa St. (7-1) at Iowa (7-2)

Saturday's games

No. 1 Tennessee (8-0) at Illinois (6-2)
No. 2 Auburn (8-1) vs. Ohio St. (6-3)
No. 5 Kentucky (8-1) vs. Louisville (5-4)
No. 6 Marquette (9-1) at Dayton (8-2)
No. 7 Alabama (7-2) vs. Creighton (7-3)
No. 8 Gonzaga (7-2) vs. No. 18 UConn
(7-3)
No. 9 Florida (9-0) vs. Arizona St. (8-1)
No. 10 Kansas (7-2) vs. NC State (6-3)
No. 11 Purdue (8-2) vs. No. 17 Texas A&M
(8-2)
No. 13 Oklahoma (9-0) vs. Oklahoma St.
(6-2)
No. 16 Clemson (9-1) vs. Memphis (7-2)
No. 19 Mississippi (8-1) vs. Southern
Miss. (4-4)
No. 20 Wisconsin (8-2) vs. Butler (7-2)
No. 22 Cincinnati (7-1) vs. Xavier (7-2)
No. 24 UCLA (8-1) vs. Arizona (4-4)
No. 25 Mississippi St. (8-1) vs. McNeese
St. (5-4)

Tuesday's women's scores

EAST

Albany (NY) 72, Boston U. 36
Brown 53, Bryant 50
Colgate 92, Union (NY) 51
Coppin St. 64, George Washington 61, OT
Duquesne 65, Bucknell 48
Mass.-Lowell 49, Iona 38
Stonehill 75, Dartmouth 43

SOUTH

Tulane 67, N. Dakota St. 61

MIDWEST

N. Iowa 78, South Dakota 59
Ohio St. 80, Ball St. 48

FAR WEST

Arizona 76, CS Bakersfield 39
BYU 76, Utah Valley St. 36
Colorado 78, Denver 61
Southern Cal 89, Fresno St. 40
Tulsa 77, San Jose St. 48

PRO FOOTBALL

NFL

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

	East					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-Buffalo	10	3	0	.769	397	268
Miami	6	7	0	.462	264	292
e-N.Y. Jets	3	10	0	.231	251	300
e-New England	3	10	0	.231	221	307

	South					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Houston	8	5	0	.615	308	288
Indianapolis	6	7	0	.462	267	298
e-Jacksonville	3	10	0	.231	238	345
e-Tennessee	3	10	0	.231	227	342

	North					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Pittsburgh	10	3	0	.769	323	238
Baltimore	8	5	0	.615	383	318
Cincinnati	5	8	0	.385	362	360
e-Cleveland	3	10	0	.231	232	335

	West					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-Kansas City	12	1	0	.923	308	252
Denver	8	5	0	.615	305	234
L.A. Chargers	8	5	0	.615	277	207
e-Las Vegas	2	11	0	.154	236	361

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

	East					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
x-Philadelphia	11	2	0	.846	342	234
Washington	8	5	0	.615	376	296
Dallas	5	8	0	.385	268	366
e-N.Y. Giants	2	11	0	.154	194	293

	South					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Tampa Bay	7	6	0	.538	363	309
Atlanta	6	7	0	.462	278	333
New Orleans	5	8	0	.385	290	292
Carolina	3	10	0	.231	233	388

	North					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
x-Detroit	12	1	0	.923	417	234
Minnesota	11	2	0	.846	339	240
Green Bay	9	4	0	.692	349	274
Chicago	4	9	0	.308	254	278

	West					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Seattle	8	5	0	.615	302	283
L.A. Rams	7	6	0	.538	298	332
Arizona	6	7	0	.462	284	289
San Francisco	6	7	0	.462	308	308

e-Eliminated from playoffs
x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division

Thursday's game

Detroit 34, Green Bay 31

Sunday's games

Jacksonville 10, Tennessee 6
Miami 32, N.Y. Jets 26, OT
Minnesota 42, Atlanta 21
New Orleans 14, N.Y. Giants 11
Philadelphia 22, Carolina 16
Pittsburgh 27, Cleveland 14
Tampa Bay 28, Las Vegas 13
Seattle 30, Arizona 18
L.A. Rams 44, Buffalo 42
San Francisco 38, Chicago 13
Kansas City 19, L.A. Chargers 17
Open: Baltimore, Denver, Houston, Indi-
anapolis, New England, Washington

Monday's game

Cincinnati 27, Dallas 20

Thursday, Dec. 12

L.A. Rams at San Francisco

Sunday, Dec. 15

Baltimore at N.Y. Giants
Cincinnati at Tennessee
Dallas at Carolina
Kansas City at Cleveland
Miami at Houston
N.Y. Jets at Jacksonville
Washington at New Orleans
Buffalo at Detroit
Indianapolis at Denver
New England at Arizona
Pittsburgh at Philadelphia
Tampa Bay at L.A. Chargers
Green Bay at Seattle

Monday, Dec. 16

Chicago at Minnesota
Atlanta at Las Vegas

Thursday, Dec. 19

Denver at L.A. Chargers

Saturday, Dec. 21

Houston at Kansas City
Pittsburgh at Baltimore

DEALS

Tuesday's transactions

BASEBALL Major League Baseball American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Agreed to terms with OF Tyler O'Neill on a three-year contract and C Gary Sanchez on a one-year contract.

BOSTON RED SOX — Agreed to terms with LHP Aroldis Chapman on a one-year contract.

DETROIT TIGERS — Agreed to terms with RHP Alex Cobb on a one-year contract. Designated OF Akil Baddoo for assignment.

TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Acquired 2B Andrés Giménez and RHP Nick Sandlin from Cleveland in exchange for INF Spencer Horwitz and OF Nick Mitchell.

National League

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Agreed to terms with RHP Blake Treinen on a two-year contract and OF Michael Conforto on a one-year contract.

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Signed RHP Deivi Garcia to a minor league contract.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Agreed to terms with INF Willy Adames on a seven-year contract.

FOOTBALL National Football League

ARIZONA CARDINALS — Released C Keith Ismael from the practice squad.

CAROLINA PANTHERS — Signed WR Trenton Irwin to the practice squad. Placed RB Jonathon Brooks on injured reserve. Waived DL DeShawn Williams. Signed RB Velus Jones to a contract. Elevated DT Sam Roberts to the active roster. Released WR Dax Milne.

CHICAGO BEARS — Released DB Demetric Felton from the practice squad.

CLEVELAND BROWNS — Waived WR Kadarius Toney. Placed CB Greg Newsome II on injured reserve. Signed WRs Kaden Davis and Jaelen Gill, K Riley Patterson and OT Julian Pearl to the practice squad. Released DT Michael Dwumfour from the practice squad.

DENVER BRONCOS — Signed LB K.J. Clody to the practice squad.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Placed DT Tresten Hill on the practice squad.

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Signed G Jerome Carvin and RB Myles Gaskin to the practice squad. Released P Matt Haack and LS Tucker Addington from the practice squad.

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Placed RB Zamir White on injured reserve. Signed QB Carter Bradley to the active roster and QB Jake Luton and DT Tyler Manoa to the practice squad. Released DT Marquan McCall from the practice squad.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Signed WR Dez Fitzpatrick to the practice squad. Released OT Alex Leatherwood.

LOS ANGELES RAIDERS — Placed RB Zamir White on injured reserve. Released NT Marquan McCall from the practice squad. Signed QB Carter Bradley to the active roster. Signed DT Tyler Manoa and QB Jake Luton to the practice squad.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Placed G Cole Strange on the active roster. Released WR K.J. Osborn. Signed K John Parker Romo to the practice squad. Released LB Keshawn Banks from the practice squad.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Signed QB Ben DiNucci to a contract.

NEW YORK GIANTS — Signed DL Ross Blacklock, QB Tim Boyle and CBs Ekow Boye-Doe and Azizi Hearn to the practice squad. Placed CB Tre Hawkins III on injured reserve and C Jimmy Morrissey on the practice squad injured reserve.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Released P Ty Zentner from the practice squad.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Signed LB Deion Jones to the practice squad.

TENNESSEE TITANS — Released T Leroy Watson. Signed LB Curtis Bolton, T Kellen Diesch and K Brayden Narveson to the practice squad.

HOCKEY National Hockey League

NEW JERSEY DEVILS — Assigned F Nathan Legare to Utica (AHL). Reinstated F Nathan Bastian from injured reserve.

OTTAWA SENATORS — Recalled D Nikolas Matinpalo from Belleville (AHL).

SAN JOSE SHARKS — Placed C Will Smith on injured reserve. Reinstated Barclay Goodrow from injured reserve. Recalled D Shakir Mukhamadullin from San Jose (AHL).

TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Recalled D Steven Santini from Syracuse (AHL).

TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Reinstated C Max Domi from injured reserve.

VANCOUVER CANUCKS — Recalled C Mas Sasson from Abbotsford (AHL).

SOCCER Major League Soccer

COLORADO RAPIDS — Acquired eight natural MLS SuperDraft selections from Philadelphia in exchange for \$350,000 in general allocation money.

INTER MIAMI CF — Transferred M Diego Gomez to Brighton & Hove Albion F.C. (English Premier League) for a transfer fee.

LOS ANGELES FC — Signed M Jude Terry to a two-year homegrown contract.

LA GALAXY — Exercised contract options on D Jalen Neal and Ms Mark Delgado, Tucker Lepley, Isaiah Parente and Gino Vivi.

NASHVILLE SC — Resigned D Josh Bauer to a two-year contract extension.

National Women's Soccer League

HOUSTON DASH — Acquired Christen Westphal from San Diego in exchange for a 2025 international roster spot and \$14,000 in allocation money.



JASON ALLEN/AP

Scottie Scheffler, above, joins Tiger Woods as the only players to win three consecutive PGA Tour player of the year awards.

PGA TOUR AWARDS

Scheffler again voted top player

By DOUG FERGUSON

Associated Press

Scottie Scheffler added another trophy to his awesome display Tuesday when he won the Jack Nicklaus Award as PGA Tour player of the year in a landslide, joining Tiger Woods as the only players to win the award three straight times.

Scheffler won 91% of the vote from players and appeared to be the obvious choice given the victories he piled up, including an Olympic gold medal when he shot 62 on the final day.

His seven PGA Tour wins included a second Masters title, and he became the first repeat winner of The Players Championship. He also won the Tour Championship to claim the FedEx Cup. His other four wins were all signature events against the strongest fields — Bay Hill and Memorial, Hilton Head and Hartford.

While no one could match that year, there was the question of how players would view Xander Schauffele's rare feat of winning two majors in one year, at the PGA Championship and the British Open. Scheffler's standard was too much to overlook.

Schauffele became the first player to win two majors and not be voted player of the year since the award began in 1990. Nick Faldo won the Masters and British Open in 1990, but he was not a PGA Tour member and ineligible for the award.

Woods is an 11-time winner of the award, winning five straight times (1999 through 2003) and three straight times (2005-2007).

Rory McIlroy is the only other player to win the award three times, in 2012, 2014 and 2019.

Scheffler has wound up in the same conversation with Woods a

lot lately — from his statistics, the first to win seven times in a season since Woods in 2007 and the first to hold the No. 1 ranking the entire year since Woods in 2009.

He finds comparisons to Woods "a bit silly."

"There's really only one Tiger," Scheffler said on a conference call. "I'm trying to get the best out of myself and that's really all I'm focused on. I'm not chasing records or chasing history or anything like that, I'm just trying to day in and day out continue to improve a little bit, just go out there and compete, have fun."

Scheffler doesn't rank his wins or much else, though he conceded this was the best golf he played across the year. He won the Arnold Palmer Invitational at Bay Hill in his sixth start, and then never went more than two tournaments without winning.

"Scottie took on challenges from the best players in the world on the biggest stages all season, and being honored as PGA Tour player of the year is the ultimate sign of respect from his peers," Commissioner Jay Monahan said.

Scheffler also won the Byron Nelson Award for the second straight year for having the lowest scoring average. Overlooked as he kept winning titles was his streak of 28 consecutive rounds under par to start the year.

He shattered the PGA Tour earnings record, somewhat inevitable given the spike in money this year. Eleven tournaments had prize funds of \$20 million or more, not including the four majors.

Scheffler won just over \$29.2 million in 18 official tournaments with prize money, along with the \$25 million FedEx Cup bonus and the \$8 million bonus for leading the regular season.

BIATHLON/MLB

Biathletes: US officials ignored abuses

Female racers say they were forced out of sport for reporting sexual harassment as men involved climbed ranks

By **MARTHA BELLISLE**
Associated Press

Sexual abuse and harassment by coaches and others who held positions of power over women on the U.S. Biathlon team have been dismissed, ignored or excused over decades by officials more concerned with winning medals than holding offenders accountable, according to a half-dozen former Olympians and other biathletes.

While the men involved climbed the ranks of the sport, these women — who described a culture of abuse dating back to the 1990s — told The Associated Press they were forced to end their racing careers early.

One coach resigned after the young biathlete he was accused of sexually abusing attempted suicide, but he was later hired to coach the U.S. Paralympic team.

Max Cobb, who the women said was informed but failed to address the claims, went from U.S. domestic team manager to CEO of the U.S. Biathlon Association and is now secretary general of the International

Biathlon Union, the worldwide governing body of the sport, which combines cross-country skiing with target shooting.

Two male coaches and a former racer on the men's team confirmed the culture of misogyny described by the women, who all said they faced retaliation for speaking up.

"My safety on the team was clearly secondary to a top-down power structure focused on image, medals and marketing," said two-time Olympian Joan Wilder, 58, who said her coach got away with trying to sexually assault her in 1990 despite her complaints to Cobb.

Grace Boutot, a 2009 Youth World Championship silver medalist, said her reports to Cobb and other officials about abuse committed by two coaches, beginning when she was 15, also went unheeded, eventually leading to a suicide attempt.

"U.S. Biathlon leadership always seems to choose to support the predators instead of the person who was abused," the now 33-year-old Boutot said.

The women came forward after the AP reported that Olympian Joanne Reid was sexually abused and harassed for years, according to findings by the U.S. Center for SafeSport, a watchdog group created to investigate sex-abuse allegations in Olympic sports in the aftermath of the Larry Nassar U.S. Gymnastics scandal.

The AP generally does not identify victims of sexual abuse except in cases where they publicly identify themselves or share their stories openly, as these women have.

Reid told the AP her repeated complaints to top U.S. Biathlon officials, which were relayed to Cobb, were ignored for three years.

Cobb denied the women's allegations that he failed to act.

"During my 33 years at U.S. Biathlon, athlete safety was always fundamental to me and I can't recall ever hearing from athletes or others that my efforts in this regard were not appropriate," he said in an email to the AP.

Cobb declined to be interviewed to re-

spond to specific allegations raised by the women, saying it would be a violation of SafeSport's code.

However, an independent investigation ordered by U.S. Biathlon into team culture and safety following the AP report found biathletes faced "misogynistic" behavior while racing and feared retaliation if they came forward with their concerns.

The assessment by outside auditor Vestry Laight, released last week, said the athletes surveyed described a sport "dominated by men who have a very different outlook on how to treat women" and criticized the "lack of attention paid to create a respectful environment."

Biathlon officials said they were adopting an "action plan" in response to the auditor's report.

SafeSport interviews also confirmed the sexualized atmosphere. U.S. Biathlon team psychologist Sean McCann described "a European boys club culture" in the watchdog group's 2022 report on the Reid case.

BASEBALL WINTER MEETINGS

Source: Fried, Yanks agree to record contract for lefty

Associated Press

DALLAS — The New York Yankees hope Max Fried pitches like he did in 2021 — when he won the World Series clincher for the Atlanta Braves.

Two days after the Yankees lost Juan Soto to the rival Mets, Fried agreed Tuesday to join the pinstripes with a \$218 million, eight-year contract, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press.

Fried's deal is the largest for a left-handed pitcher in baseball history, \$1 million more than David Price's seven-year contract with the Boston Red Sox ahead of the 2016 season. Fried's agreement, first reported by ESPN, was subject to a successful physical, the person said on condition of anonymity because the deal had not been finalized.

Yankees fans were angry after Soto accepted the Mets' \$765 million, 15-year offer over the Yankees' \$760 million, 16-year proposal. The Yankees then redirected money to starting pitching, though Fried represents some risk: The two-time All-Star has been on the injured list 10 times since 2018, including at least once each season.

After spending his first eight seasons with the Braves, Fried joins a list of rotation possibilities that also includes Gerrit Cole, Carlos Rodón, Luis Gil, Clarke Schmidt, Nestor Cortes and Marcus Stroman, making additional moves likely. He reached the agreement the day Cortes turned 30 and Rodón turned 32.

A three-time Gold Glove winner who turns 31 on Jan. 18, Fried has one of the broadest repertoires in the major leagues, throwing seven pitches.

He was 11-10 with a 3.25 ERA over 29 starts this year, striking out 166 and walking a career-high 57 in 174⅓ innings. Fried

missed time for left forearm neuritis, his seventh straight season on the IL.

Source: Eovaldi staying in Texas on \$75 million, 3-year contract

The Texas Rangers have accomplished one of their primary offseason goals with a deal to re-sign Nathan Eovaldi, the winning pitcher in their 2023 World Series clincher.

Texas has agreed on a \$75 million, three-year contract with the right-hander, a person with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press on Tuesday night. The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the deal was subject to a successful physical.

Eovaldi will stay in the Rangers rotation with two-time NL Cy Young Award winner Jacob deGrom, who made three starts at the end of last season after missing nearly 17 months following right elbow surgery. Texas won all six of deGrom's starts at the beginning of the 2023 season before he got hurt that April.

In other news:

■ The Cleveland Guardians pulled off two trades, first sending three-time Gold Glove second baseman Andrés Giménez to the Toronto Blue Jays. Giménez, considered one of baseball's best defensive middle infielders, was dealt by the Guardians along with reliever Nick Sandlin to the Blue Jays for infielder Spencer Horwitz and outfielder Nick Mitchell. Cleveland then shipped Horwitz to the Pittsburgh Pirates for three pitchers: right-hander Luis Ortiz and lefties Michael Kennedy and Josh Hartle. Ortiz could slide immediately into a starting slot after going 7-6 with a 3.32 ERA last season. The Guardians re-signed ace Shane Bieber last week, but he may not be ready to pitch until June.



MARTA LAVANDIER/AP

Max Fried, who helped the Atlanta Braves win a championship in 2021, has agreed to an eight-year, \$218 million deal with the New York Yankees, according to a source.

9-time All-Star outfielder Colavito dies at 91

CLEVELAND — Rocky Colavito, a wildly popular outfielder who was involved in one of the most debated trades in Cleveland history, has died. He was 91.

A nine-time All-Star, Colavito died at home Tuesday in Bernville, Pa. Team spokesman Bob DiBiasio said he was informed by the family.

In eight seasons with the Indians, Colavito hit 190 homers and drove in 574 runs. He is 12th on the club's career homers list. He was inducted into the team's Hall of Fame in 2006.

Born in the Bronx, N.Y., on Aug. 10, 1933, Colavito signed with Cleveland at just 17 years old after a tryout in 1951.

He quickly rose through the team's minor league system before making his major league debut in 1955, joining an outfield that already had Ralph Kiner

and Larry Doby, both future Hall of Famers.

In 1958, Colavito batted .303 with 41 homers and led the majors in slugging percentage. He finished third in AL MVP voting.

The next season, he led the American League with 42 homers. Then in 1960, the Indians traded him to the Detroit Tigers in exchange for Harvey Kuenn, a move that was condemned by fans.

In 14 seasons, he hit 374 career homers and finished in the top five in MVP voting three times. Colavito is the only player in Cleveland history to hit four home runs in a game, and he shares the MLB record for highest fielding percentage by an outfielder in a season (1.000).

From The Associated Press

NBA/COLLEGE BASKETBALL

NBA CUP ROUNDUP

Thunder top Mavs in quarterfinals

Associated Press

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 39 points, and the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Dallas Mavericks 118-104 on Tuesday night in an NBA Cup quarterfinal.

Jalen Williams scored 18 points and Isaiah Hartenstein added 10 points and 13 rebounds for the Thunder, who will play Wednesday's Golden State-Houston winner in a semifinal Saturday in Las Vegas.

Oklahoma City's largest lead was 20 points in a rematch of last season's Western Conference semifinals series that Dallas won 4-2.

The Thunder and their collection of elite perimeter defenders held Luka Doncic to 16 points on 5-for-15 shooting. Lu Dort led the effort, with Alex Caruso and Carson Wallace among the primary helpers.

Naji Marshall and Klay Thompson each scored 19 points and Kyrie Irving added 17 for the Mavericks.

P.J. Washington, a thorn in Oklahoma City's side during the playoffs last season and in Dallas' victory last month, missed the game with an illness.

The Thunder led 57-54 at half-time behind 18 points from Gilgeous-Alexander. Doncic had two points on 1-for-7 shooting at the break.

Gilgeous-Alexander scored 16 points on 7-for-8 shooting in the third quarter to help Oklahoma City take control. Isaiah Joe's deep 3-pointer at the buzzer gave



NATE BILLINGS/AP

Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander drives against Dallas Mavericks guard Luka Doncic during the first half of an Emirates NBA Cup game Tuesday in Oklahoma City. The Thunder won 118-104.

the Thunder a 90-73 lead heading into the fourth.

Bucks 114, Magic 109: Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 37 points, Damian Lillard had nine of his 28 in the final minute and host Milwaukee returned to the NBA Cup semifinals in Las Vegas by beating Orlando.

The Bucks reached the semifinals

of the in-season tournament in Las Vegas last December and will be the only returning team in Year 2. They will play Saturday against the winner of Wednesday's quarterfinal between the New York Knicks and Atlanta Hawks.

Jalen Suggs led a short-handed Magic team with 32 points but

missed a potential go-ahead 3-pointer with 12 seconds left. Lillard was fouled and sank two free throws with 9.1 seconds remaining and Suggs missed a potential tying 3.

Antetokounmpo then made both free throws with 5 seconds left and Milwaukee was able to hold on.

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	19	5	.792	—
New York	15	9	.625	4
Brooklyn	10	14	.417	9
Philadelphia	7	15	.318	11
Toronto	7	18	.280	12½

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	17	10	.630	—
Miami	12	10	.545	2½
Atlanta	13	12	.520	3
Charlotte	7	17	.292	8½
Washington	3	19	.136	11½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	21	4	.840	—
Milwaukee	13	11	.542	7½
Indiana	10	15	.400	11
Chicago	10	15	.400	11
Detroit	10	15	.400	11

Western Conference

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	17	8	.680	—
Houston	16	8	.667	½
Dallas	16	9	.640	1
San Antonio	12	12	.500	4½
New Orleans	5	20	.200	12

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	19	5	.792	—
Denver	12	10	.545	6
Minnesota	12	11	.522	6½
Portland	8	16	.333	11
Utah	5	18	.217	13½

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Golden State	14	9	.609	—
L.A. Clippers	14	11	.560	1
L.A. Lakers	13	11	.542	1½
Phoenix	12	11	.522	2
Sacramento	12	13	.480	3

Tuesday's games

Milwaukee 114, Orlando 109 (Quarterfinal Game 1)
Oklahoma City 118, Dallas 104 (Quarterfinal Game 2)

Wednesday's games

Atlanta at New York
Golden State at Houston

Thursday's games

Detroit at Boston
Toronto at Miami
Sacramento at New Orleans

TOP 25 ROUNDUP

Lainer leads No. 1 Tennessee over Miami at Jimmy V Classic

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Chaz Lainer scored 22 points, and No. 1 Tennessee beat Miami 75-62 on Tuesday night at the Jimmy V Classic in Madison Square Garden.

Igor Milicic Jr. added 16 and nine rebounds for the Volunteers, who took the top spot in the AP Top 25 this week for the first time since February 2019. Zakai Zeigler added 13 points and nine assists for Tennessee, which pulled away late in the first half and withstood a Hurricanes comeback attempt for its first 9-0 start since 2000-01.

Lynn Kidd scored 14 as Miami (3-8) dropped its seventh straight game. Nyjel Pack added 12 and AJ Station-McCray added 11 for the Hurricanes, who shot 39.3%.

Miami held a two-point lead on a hook shot by Kidd with 7:52 remaining in the first half. The Vols never trailed after Ziegler hit three free throws 30 seconds later to start a 14-0 run.

No. 4 Duke 72, Incarnate Word 46: Khaman Maluach scored a season-high 17 points and the Blue Devils beat the visiting Cardinals.

Maluach — a 7-foot-2 freshman center from South Sudan — shot 6 of 7 from floor and had seven rebounds as Duke (8-2) won its fourth straight. Isaiah Evans scored 14 points and Kon Knueppel 10.

Jalin Anderson and Dylan Hayman each scored 11 points for Incarnate Word (5-5).

Arkansas 89, No. 14 Michigan 87: Boogie Fland scored 20 points

as the Razorbacks stormed back from a 15-point deficit, withstood a late comeback attempt and hung on for a victory over the Wolverines in the Jimmy V Classic.

D.J. Wagner added 16 points for Arkansas (8-2), which went without a basket for the final 3:01 and nearly blew an 18-point lead. Trevon Brazile added 15 points and a key block on Vladislav Goldin with 14 seconds left.

Goldin scored 17 for Michigan (8-2), which had won seven straight games and was trying to match last season's win total. Danny Wolf added 14 points, while Will Tschetter and Roddy Gayle Jr. contributed 13 apiece.

No. 15 Houston 62, Troy 42: L.J. Cryer scored 22 points and had six 3-pointers, and the Cou-



JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON/AP

Tennessee players celebrate on the sidelines during the first half against Miami on Tuesday in New York. The Volunteers won 75-62.

gars used a strong defensive effort to beat the visiting Trojans.

Cryer scored 16 points in the first half on 6-of-9 shooting from the field, including 4 of 5 on 3-pointers, as Houston (6-3) built a 33-11 halftime lead. He finished 8 of 11 from the field.

Illinois 86, No. 20 Wisconsin 80: Kasparas Jakucionis scored a

career-high 24 points, Tre White had 23 points and eight rebounds and Kylan Boswell added 19 points and six assists to lead the host Illini past the Badgers.

It was the fourth straight game in which Jakucionis scored 20 or more points for Illinois (7-2, 1-1 Big Ten), which beat Wisconsin for the ninth consecutive time.

NHL

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference							
Atlantic Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Florida	29	18	9	2	38	108	92
Toronto	28	17	9	2	36	82	72
Boston	30	15	12	3	33	76	95
Tampa Bay	26	14	10	2	30	99	78
Ottawa	27	12	13	2	26	82	86
Detroit	28	11	13	4	26	73	88
Buffalo	28	11	13	4	26	85	92
Montreal	28	11	14	3	25	78	100

Metropolitan Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	27	19	6	2	40	109	74
New Jersey	31	18	10	3	39	103	84
Carolina	28	18	9	1	37	104	83
Philadelphia	29	13	12	4	30	88	101
N.Y. Rangers	27	14	12	1	29	86	81
N.Y. Islanders	30	11	12	7	29	78	90
Pittsburgh	30	12	14	4	28	86	116
Columbus	28	12	13	3	27	96	101

Western Conference							
Central Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Minnesota	28	19	5	4	42	91	69
Winnipeg	30	21	9	0	42	111	76
Dallas	27	17	10	0	34	92	69
Colorado	30	17	13	0	34	101	105
St. Louis	29	14	13	2	30	77	90
Utah	28	12	11	5	29	83	84
Chicago	28	9	17	2	20	68	87
Nashville	29	7	16	6	20	64	92

Pacific Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	28	18	7	3	39	99	82
Los Angeles	28	17	8	3	37	86	72
Edmonton	28	16	10	2	34	84	80
Vancouver	27	14	8	5	33	88	87
Calgary	29	14	10	5	33	78	87
Seattle	30	14	14	2	30	90	90
San Jose	31	10	16	5	25	84	111
Anaheim	26	10	12	4	24	64	79

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.

Tuesday's games
 Philadelphia 5, Columbus 3
 Carolina 3, San Jose 2
 Toronto 2, New Jersey 1, OT
 Colorado 6, Pittsburgh 2
 Los Angeles 3, N.Y. Islanders 1
 Calgary 4, Nashville 3
 Winnipeg 8, Boston 1
 Edmonton 2, Tampa Bay 1
 Minnesota 5, Utah 4, SO
 St. Louis 4, Vancouver 3, OT
 Florida 2, Seattle 1, SO

Wednesday's games
 N.Y. Rangers at Buffalo
 Anaheim at Ottawa

Thursday's games
 Anaheim at Toronto
 Detroit at Philadelphia
 Los Angeles at New Jersey
 Pittsburgh at Montreal
 Washington at Columbus
 Chicago at N.Y. Islanders
 Nashville at Dallas
 San Jose at St. Louis
 Vegas at Winnipeg
 Edmonton at Minnesota
 Tampa Bay at Calgary
 Utah at Colorado
 Boston at Seattle
 Florida at Vancouver

Friday's games
 Ottawa at Carolina

Saturday's games
 Chicago at New Jersey
 Los Angeles at N.Y. Rangers
 Philadelphia at Minnesota
 Vegas at Edmonton
 Montreal at Winnipeg
 Pittsburgh at Ottawa
 Anaheim at Columbus
 Buffalo at Washington
 Toronto at Detroit
 St. Louis at Dallas
 Nashville at Colorado
 Florida at Calgary
 Tampa Bay at Seattle
 Boston at Vancouver
 Utah at San Jose

Scoring leaders Through Tuesday				
	GP	G	A	PTS
Nathan MacKinnon, COL	30	10	36	46
Martin Necas, CAR	28	14	29	43
Kirill Kaprizov, MIN	27	18	25	43
Mikko Rantanen, COL	30	18	24	42
Jack Eichel, LV	28	9	30	39
Sam Reinhart, FLA	29	19	20	39
Mitch Marner, TOR	28	10	28	38
Nikita Kucherov, TB	24	13	25	38
Jesper Bratt, NJ	31	13	25	38
Connor McDavid, EDM	25	14	24	38

ROUNDUP

Rantanen hat trick lifts Avalanche

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Mikko Rantanen collected his 10th career hat trick and added two assists as the Colorado Avalanche beat the Pittsburgh Penguins 6-2 on Tuesday night.

Rantanen, playing in his 600th game, flipped in a puck over Tristan Jarry late in the first period, beat Jarry from in close early in the second and added an empty-netter in the third.

Nathan MacKinnon added a goal and four assists for Colorado. Valeri Nichushkin and Artturi Lehkonen also scored for the Avalanche.

Scott Wedgewood made 24 saves for Colorado to win for the third time in four starts. Goal-tender MacKenzie Blackwood, acquired in a deal with San Jose on Monday, was scratched due to an illness.

Michael Bunting scored his seventh goal for Pittsburgh. Cody Glass collected his first of the season. Jarry stopped 21 shots for the Penguins, who lost for just the second time in seven games.

Flyers 5, Blue Jackets 3: Travis Konecny scored twice in the second period and visiting Philadelphia snapped a three-game slide with its first victory in December.

Noah Cates, Owen Tippett and Morgan Frost also scored for the Flyers. Matvei Michkov had two assists and Samuel Ersson made 15 saves.

Sean Monahan finished with a goal and an assist, Zach Werenski scored with a man advantage, and Kent Johnson added a goal for Columbus, which has lost four of its past five games. Elvis Merzlikins made 19 saves for the Blue Jackets.

Hurricanes 3, Sharks 2: Jalen Chatfield scored with 2:39 left, and host Carolina beat San Jose.

Chatfield caught a high clearing attempt at the top of the right circle, then dropped the puck and pushed a shot at the goal that snuck under Vitek Vanecek's right arm. It was Chatfield's third goal of the season.

Luke Kunin scored both of the Sharks' goals. Vanecek made 25 saves in San Jose's first game since it traded goalie Mackenzie Blackwood to Colorado on Monday.

Brent Burns and Shayne Gostisbehere also scored for the Hurricanes.

Maple Leafs 2, Devils 1 (OT): Auston Matthews scored with 2:09 left in overtime to give Toronto a victory at New Jersey.

Matthews outskated Devils defenseman Brett Pesce, grabbing a loose puck near center ice in for a breakaway, and beat New Jersey's Jacob Markstrom on the glove side for his ninth goal of the season.

Pontus Holmberg scored short-handed for the Maple Leafs at 10:42 of the third period and tied the game at 1.

Ondrej Palat gave the Devils a 1-0 lead at 7:16 of the second, scoring off an assist from Jesper Bratt. It was Palat's first goal since Nov. 12, against Florida, a span of 11 games.

Kings 3, Islanders 1: Adrian Kempe and Kevin Fiala scored, Darcy Kuemper made 19 saves and visiting Los Angeles beat New York for its sixth straight win.

The Kings started a seven-game road trip, their longest of the season, with a strong performance. Mikey Anderson added an empty-net goal as Los Angeles improved to 17-8-3 with its eighth victory in 10 games.

Anders Lee scored for the Islanders, who had won their previous two.

Kempe opened the scoring at 13:51 of the first period with his 14th goal. Kings captain



MATT FREED/AP

Avalanche right wing Mikko Rantanen tries to put a shot between his legs against Penguins goaltender Tristan Jarry on Tuesday night in Pittsburgh. Rantanen, playing in his 600th career game, had three goals and two assists in Colorado's 6-2 victory.

Anze Kopitar, playing his 1,401st career game, assisted along with Trevor Moore.

Kopitar, 37, leads Los Angeles with 32 points, including eight goals.

Flames 4, Predators 3: Jonathan Huberdeau and Kevin Rooney each scored a goal and added an assist to lead visiting Calgary to a comeback victory over skidding Nashville.

Brayden Pachal and Nazem Kadri also scored and Dan Vladar made 17 saves for the Flames, who had lost six of seven.

Jonathan Marchessault scored twice and Tommy Novak had a goal for the Predators, who tied a franchise record with their eighth straight loss. Juuse Saros made 24 saves.

Nashville captain Roman Josi did not play in the final two periods due to a lower-body injury. The Predators were already without regular defensemen Jeremy Lauzon and Alexandre Carrier, both sidelined due to injury.

Jets 8, Bruins 1: Mark Scheifele scored two goals and added an assist to lead host Winnipeg to a convincing victory over Boston.

Nikita Chibrikov, Mason Appleton, Alex Iafallo, Gabriel Vilardi, Kyle Connor and Vladislav Namestnikov scored the other Jets goals.

Scheifele has a 13-game point streak at home, totaling 20 points in that stretch.

David Pastrnak scored for the Bruins, who had a four-game winning streak snapped.

Connor Hellebuyck made 23 saves for Winnipeg. Jeremy Swayman stopped 27 shots for Boston.

Oilers 2, Lightning 1: Leon Draisaitl had a goal and an assist and host Edmonton won its third straight game, beating Tampa Bay.

Connor McDavid also scored for the Oilers (16-10-2) who have won six of their past seven.

Jake Guentzel scored for the Lightning (14-10-2) who had their two-game winning streak halted.

Stuart Skinner made 21 stops for Edmonton. Andrei Vasilevskiy had 23 saves for Tampa Bay.

Wild 5, Utah 4 (SO): Matt Boldy, the only scorer in the shootout, lifted Minnesota to a victory at Utah.

The Wild's Marco Rossi scored with 43.2 seconds left in regulation to force overtime. Kirill Kaprizov added his 18th goal of the season, and Marat Khusnutdinov and Marcus Johansson also scored for Minnesota. Filip Gustavsson finished with 21 saves.

Clayton Keller scored twice in the third period to rally Utah from a one-goal deficit. Kevin Stenlund and Juuso Valimaki also scored, and Karel Vejmelka made 34 saves.

Panthers 2, Kraken 1 (SO): Aleksander Barkov scored the tying goal late in the second period and then scored in the shootout, and Sam Reinhart scored the clinching shootout goal as Florida won at Seattle.

Reinhart also had the assist on Barkov's equalizer.

Panthers goalie Sergei Bobrovsky, who had 17 saves through regulation and overtime, made stick saves on Eeli Tolvanen and Oliver Bjorkstrand in the shootout.

Blues 4, Canucks 3 (OT): Dylan Holloway scored 1:40 into overtime as visiting St. Louis beat Vancouver.

Robert Thomas had a goal and two assists for the Blues. Zack Bolduc and Jordan Kyrou also scored, and Joel Hofer stopped 22 shots.

The Canucks got a goal and an assist from Elias Pettersson. Dakota Joshua and Jake DeBrusk also scored, while Brock Boeser and Connor Garland each had two assists.

Thatcher Demko made 21 saves in his first start for Vancouver since injuring his knee at the beginning of the postseason earlier this year.

NFL

ANALYSIS



STACY BENGIS/AP

Minnesota's Sam Darnold became the ninth NFL quarterback to hit these benchmarks in a game: at least 325 passing yards, five TD passes, a 75% completion rate, no interceptions and a 155-plus rating.

Vikings' clicking offense will be tough to outscore

By Dave Campbell
Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. — Sam Darnold pinballed around his collapsed pocket to dodge a sack on third-and-8, before slicing through a skinny opening to sprint right in search of more space as Justin Jefferson's hand shot up downfield.

Darnold let rip an on-the-run throw that sailed 45 yards in the air and straight into Jefferson's arms, where he was stunningly wide open inside the 10. He danced his way into the end zone to give the Minnesota Vikings a 21-13 lead, the harbinger of a fourth-quarter surge past the Atlanta Falcons on Sunday.

"I'm not going to tell you what I told him in regards to my opinion on how many guys make that throw," coach Kevin O'Connell said with a smile.

The 42-21 win not only gave Minnesota (11-2) its sixth consecutive victory, but further validated their decision to let Kirk Cousins leave in free agency for a cheaper replacement.

With O'Connell directing the quarterback development program and calling the plays and Jefferson leading a dangerous and diverse group of pass-catchers, Darnold has finally found a place he can thrive in after such an environment long eluded the third overall pick in the 2018 draft — even in this roundabout way after the season-ending injury to rookie J.J. McCarthy.

Factor in a defense that's allowing only 18.5 points per game, sixth-best in the NFL, and leads the league in interceptions (20), and these Vikings are going to be a tough team to outscore in the playoffs.

Darnold became the ninth quarterback in NFL history and the first since Aaron Rodgers in 2019 to hit these benchmarks in a game: at least 325 passing yards, five touchdown passes, a 75% completion rate, no interceptions and a 155-plus passer rating.

Jefferson and Jordan Addison combined for 15 catches, 265 yards and five scores.

"This is definitely the ball that we want to play every single game," Jefferson said. "Just the energy,

the tempo that we had, just going out there and executing the plays."

None more spectacular than that on-the-run 52-yard TD pass from Darnold to Jefferson, who started the play in motion from left to right into a three-man bunch with Addison and Jalen Nailor to set up a favorable matchup with nickel cornerback Dee Alford.

Addison ran a clear-out route toward the opposite corner, initially drawing the attention of three defenders. Pro Bowl safety Jessie Bates, who was in a single-high alignment while the other Pro Bowl safety Justin Simmons blitzed, diverted from Addison toward an uncovered Nailor on the other side while ignoring Jefferson streaking behind him. Cornerback Clark Phillips left Nailor to try to catch Jefferson, who'd blown by Alford.

"He absolutely cooked the dude on the route," Darnold said.

Atlanta couldn't have played its coverage worse, leaving three receivers open, but that's the type of stress Minnesota can put on a defense with the way Darnold is throwing the ball.

"We already knew what he was about once we got him on our team, that he could throw any pass," Addison said. "He's just put it on display for everybody else."

What's working

Though Darnold has been sacked 40 times this season, he has the athleticism and instinct to extend plays and find one of his tough-to-cover receivers on longer-developing routes even if pressure comes.

What needs help

The Vikings have allowed their two highest rushing totals of the season in the past two weeks for an average of 4.95 yards per attempt. Their final two games against division rivals Green Bay and Detroit will pit them against two of the top five rushing teams in the league.

Weekly statistics

AFC individual leaders						NFC individual leaders					
Quarterbacks						Quarterbacks					
	Att	Com	Yds	TD	Int		Att	Com	Yds	TD	Int
Burrow, Cin	490	335	3706	33	6	Smith, Sea	466	324	3474	14	12
L.Jackson, Bal	379	254	3290	29	3	Cousins, Atl	436	292	3396	17	15
Mahomes, KC	464	316	3189	20	11	Mayfield, TB	436	306	3329	28	13
Stroud, Hou	430	272	3117	15	9	Stafford, LAR	439	293	3303	19	7
Allen, Buf	393	252	3033	23	5	Darnold, Min	386	264	3299	28	10
Rodgers, NYJ	458	289	2966	20	8	Goff, Det	381	276	3265	25	10
Nix, Den	434	277	2842	17	8	Purdy, SF	349	233	3032	15	8
Herbert, LAC	366	234	2764	14	1	Murray, Ari	396	271	2862	15	8
Tagovailoa, Mia	325	240	2456	17	4	Daniels, Was	362	252	2819	15	6
Lawrence, Jac	284	172	2045	11	7	Ca.Williams, Chi	434	270	2746	16	5
Rushers						Rushers					
	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD		Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Henry, Bal	240	1407	5.9	87t	13	Barkley, Phi	266	1623	6.1	72t	11
Pollard, Ten	213	937	4.4	41	4	Jacobs, GB	239	1053	4.4	38t	11
Mixon, Hou	205	887	4.3	59	11	Gibbs, Det	178	1016	5.7	70t	10
Harris, Pit	223	877	3.9	36t	5	K.Williams, LAR	251	1013	4.0	30	12
Taylor, Ind	186	804	4.3	58	5	Hubbard, Car	215	1011	4.7	38t	8
Dobbins, LAC	158	766	4.8	61	8	Robinson, Atl	215	977	4.5	37t	8
C.Brown, Cin	166	735	4.4	40	6	Kamara, NO	223	938	4.2	24	6
Cook, Buf	157	723	4.6	65t	11	A.Jones, Min	197	893	4.5	41	4
Hall, NYJ	164	692	4.2	42	4	Conner, Ari	201	863	4.3	23	5
L.Jackson, Bal	111	678	6.1	39	3	Mason, SF	153	789	5.2	38	3
Receivers						Receivers					
	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD		No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Chase, Cin	93	1319	14.2	70t	15	Jefferson, Min	75	1170	15.6	97t	7
Jeudy, Cle	59	944	16.0	89t	4	Lamb, Dal	85	973	11.4	65t	5
Bowers, Las	87	933	10.7	57t	4	Smith-Njgba, Sea	75	911	12.1	46	5
Wilson, NYJ	81	877	10.8	42	5	McLaurin, Was	61	896	14.7	86t	9
Flowers, Bal	60	863	14.4	53t	4	Mooney, Atl	57	873	15.3	49	5
B.Thomas, Jac	54	851	15.8	85t	6	London, Atl	75	866	11.5	31	6
Pickens, Pit	55	850	15.5	44	3	St. Brown, Det	81	863	10.7	35t	9
Sutton, Den	63	846	13.4	37	5	McBride, Ari	80	851	10.6	37	0
Collins, Hou	49	832	17.0	67t	4	A.Brown, Phi	48	836	17.4	67t	4
McConkey, LAC	58	815	14.1	60t	4	Nabers, NYG	80	819	10.2	39	3
Punters						Punters					
	No	Yds	Lg	Avg		No	Yds	Lg	Avg		
Cole, Las	48	2482	70	51.7		Fox, Det	39	1979	68	50.7	
Cooke, Jac	52	2660	73	51.2		Mann, Phi	43	2156	70	50.1	
Scoring Touchdowns						Scoring Touchdowns					
	TDRush	Rec	Ret	Pts		TDRush	Rec	Ret	Pts		
Chase, Cin	15	0	15	0	90	K.Williams, LAR	14	12	2	0	84
Henry, Bal	15	13	2	0	90	Barkley, Phi	13	11	2	0	78
Cook, Buf	12	11	1	0	72	Hurts, Phi	13	13	0	0	78
Mixon, Hou	12	11	1	0	72	Gibbs, Det	12	10	2	0	72
Kicking						Kicking					
	PAT	FG	LG	Pts		PAT	FG	LG	Pts		
Boswell, Pit	29/29	36/39	57	137		Bates, Det	48/49	21/22	58	111	
Fairbairn, Hou	29/29	31/37	59	122		Aubrey, Dal	23/23	29/34	65	110	
AFC team statistics						NFC team statistics					
AVERAGE PER GAME OFFENSE						AVERAGE PER GAME OFFENSE					
	Yards	Rush	Pass			Yards	Rush	Pass			
Baltimore	422.5	179.1	243.4			Detroit	394.8	151.1	243.8		
Cincinnati	361.9	90.3	271.6			Tampa Bay	379.3	138.3	241.0		
Buffalo	355.0	125.7	229.3			San Francisco	378.5	138.9	239.6		
Kansas City	338.2	110.6	227.6			Washington	377.6	156.9	220.7		
Pittsburgh	338.1	132.1	206.0			Green Bay	376.3	144.7	231.6		
Houston	335.2	114.1	221.2			Philadelphia	371.1	190.5	180.6		
Miami	331.8	105.2	226.5			Atlanta	371.0	120.8	250.2		
Denver	320.2	111.2	209.0			Minnesota	351.4	113.2	238.2		
Cleveland	313.0	88.5	224.5			Arizona	348.0	139.8	208.2		
Indianapolis	311.5	118.8	192.7			Seattle	344.4	95.4	249.0		
L.A. Chargers	309.5	111.5	198.1			New Orleans	341.5	128.7	212.8		
Las Vegas	303.0	79.1	223.9			L.A. Rams	340.7	103.0	237.7		
N.Y. Jets	299.8	87.0	212.8			Dallas	322.6	91.2	231.4		
Jacksonville	297.2	98.9	198.2			N.Y. Giants	301.1	115.6	185.5		
Tennessee	295.4	112.5	182.8			Carolina	293.1	106.2	186.8		
New England	291.1	119.5	171.5			Chicago	288.5	105.8	182.7		
DEFENSE						DEFENSE					
	Yards	Rush	Pass			Yards	Rush	Pass			
Tennessee	291.8	116.3	175.5			Philadelphia	284.2	105.8	178.5		
N.Y. Jets	306.8	119.9	186.9			San Francisco	298.5	115.9	182.6		
Houston	308.5	109.7	198.8			Detroit	318.6	93.9	224.7		
Kansas City	310.1	88.3	221.8			Washington	327.7	137.0	190.7		
Pittsburgh	310.2	91.5	218.6			Green Bay	329.1	106.9	222.2		
Denver	315.7	94.7	221.0			N.Y. Giants	336.4	141.7	194.7		
Miami	318.4	105.6	212.8			Minnesota	337.8	87.2	250.6		
L.A. Chargers	323.7	117.6	206.1			Seattle	339.0	126.5	212.5		
Buffalo	332.0	123.1	208.9			Arizona	340.5	121.8	218.7		
Las Vegas	334.8	117.6	217.2			Atlanta	349.8	120.8	229.1		
New England	340.2	124.7	215.5			Chicago	352.8	134.8	218.0		
Cleveland	343.2	127.9	215.3			Dallas	365.3	141.9	223.4		
Baltimore	347.6	82.7	264.9			L.A. Rams	366.1	141.0	225.1		
Cincinnati	365.5	130.3	235.2			Tampa Bay	368.5	115.2	253.4		
Indianapolis	379.4	147.0	232.4			New Orleans	380.5	134.2	246.3		
Jacksonville	396.1	132.6	263.5			Carolina	384.4	170.1	214.3		

NFL



GODOFREDO A. VASQUEZ/AP

San Francisco 49ers wide receiver Deebo Samuel has gained just 97 yards from scrimmage in his last four games, which led him to write then delete a post on X expressing his recent frustrations.

49ers' Samuel used deleted post to take out frustration

By JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — The least productive four-game stretch of Deebo Samuel's career sent the frustrated wide receiver for the San Francisco 49ers to social media.

In a now-deleted post on X, formerly known as Twitter, Samuel tried to give an explanation on why he has gained only 97 yards from scrimmage the past four games, as the big plays that made him an All-Pro in 2021 are no longer coming.

"Not struggling at all just not getting the ball!!!!!!!" he wrote on Monday.

Samuel later deleted the post, but not after it caused a bit of a social media firestorm. Asked Tuesday if

he wanted to expand on what he wrote, Samuel simply said, "You read what you read. A little frustrated, for sure."

Coach Kyle Shanahan said Tuesday that he would prefer if Samuel had kept his frustrations off social media, but said it wasn't a distraction to the players and coaches in the building as the 49ers prepare to host the Los Angeles Rams on Thursday night.

Shanahan said he and Samuel talk often about his role and getting Samuel more touches is always a priority for San Francisco.

"I mean I understand Deebo saying that," Shanahan said. "Deebo wants to help us out and the only way he helps us out is getting the

ball more and we'd like to get it to him more. We'll continue to work at that."

Samuel helped carry the Niners to the NFC title game in 2022 as a "wide back" who split time lining up as a wide receiver and a running back. He finished that season with 1,770 yards and 14 touchdowns from scrimmage, leading to a lucrative contract extension that offseason.

He is averaging just 2.9 yards on his 32 carries as teams are more prepared for when he runs the ball and is on pace for his worst season in terms of catches and receiving yards per game with 40 receptions for 553 yards. He hasn't scored a TD since Week 6.

Eagles: Concerns linger despite dominant record

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godfather for Brown's daughter.

"The person that's complaining (needs) to be accountable," Graham said of Brown. "I'm just being honest. ... Like and he (knows) this. I don't know the whole story, but I know that (Hurts) is trying. And I mean, (Brown) could be a little better with how he responds to things and they were friends before this. It's like, man, but things have changed, and I understand that because life happens, but we gotta — it's the business side that we have to make sure that we don't let the personal get in the way of the business and that's what we gotta do better at right now because we know it's the issue."

"Everybody is saying some things, but we need to be able to talk things out as men, you know what I'm saying? But we need to let personal stuff go and let's get right for this game because man, it's like most of the time it's just a conversation that just (needs) to be had, but the person with the problem (has) to want to talk to the person other than others. That's all I'm saying."

Graham, who is sidelined with a

triceps injury, clarified his comments later to an ESPN reporter, saying he made the wrong assumption about the relationship between Hurts and Brown and planned to apologize to both players.

But the damage was done.

Or was it?

While social media ran wild with news there's more trouble in Philadelphia, the Eagles have been here before. They fell apart last year after a 10-1 start, dropping six of their final seven games, including a lopsided loss in the playoffs to Tampa Bay.

There were questions about Hurts' leadership, his relationship to teammates and the team's locker room dynamic. Coach Nick Sirianni was also harshly criticized for the team's failures.

They overcame a tumultuous offseason and are 11-2 and in position to make a Super Bowl run.

All they have to do is get along, put the team first and focus on the overall goal of winning a championship instead of pouting about individual statistics.

One breakout passing game can change everything.



TERRANCE WILLIAMS/AP

Philadelphia wide receiver DeVonta Smith has been caught up in the Eagles' lack of passing, which almost cost them a win over the Panthers.

BRIEFS

Burrow's house broken into in latest athlete home invasion

Associated Press

ANDERSON TOWNSHIP, Ohio — Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow's home was broken into during Monday Night Football in the latest home invasion of a pro athlete in the United States, authorities said Tuesday.

No one was injured in the break-in, but the home was ransacked, according to a report provided by the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office.

Deputies weren't immediately able to determine what items were stolen. A person who is employed by Burrow arrived at the Anderson Township home Monday night to find a shattered bedroom window and the home in disarray. The person called their mother, and then 911 was contacted, ac-



Burrow

ording to the report.

The homes of Chiefs stars Patrick Mahomes and Travis Kelce were broken into in October. In the NBA, Milwaukee Bucks forward Bobby Portis had his home broken into Nov. 2 and Minnesota Timberwolves guard Mike Conley Jr.'s home was burglarized on Sept. 15 while he was at a Minnesota Vikings game.

Cowboys LB Overshown could miss '25 season with knee injury

FRISCO, Texas — Dallas Cowboys linebacker DeMarvion Overshown could miss

the 2025 season recovering from the right knee injury sustained in a loss to Cincinnati, coach Mike McCarthy said Tuesday.

McCarthy said Overshown has a "long road of rehab in front of him." The second-year player tore multiple ligaments when a Bengals lineman crashed into his leg in the Cowboys' 27-20 loss Monday night.

Overshown missed all of his rookie year in 2023 after tearing the ACL in his left knee in a preseason game. The latest injury came in his first game since Thanksgiving.

Retired Eagles star Kelce won't be charged over fan incident

Penn State University police will not

charge retired Philadelphia Eagles center Jason Kelce after investigating an altercation with a fan over a cellphone before a Nov. 2 home game between the Nittany Lions and Ohio State.

University Police and Public Safety public information officer Jacqueline Sheader confirmed in an email to the Associated Press on Tuesday night that the case has been closed. The Philadelphia Inquirer first reported that the investigation was closed without charges against Kelce.

Sheader's email added that the individual in a video that went viral on social media has not been identified, and no one has come forward to police with a complaint about damage to personal property.

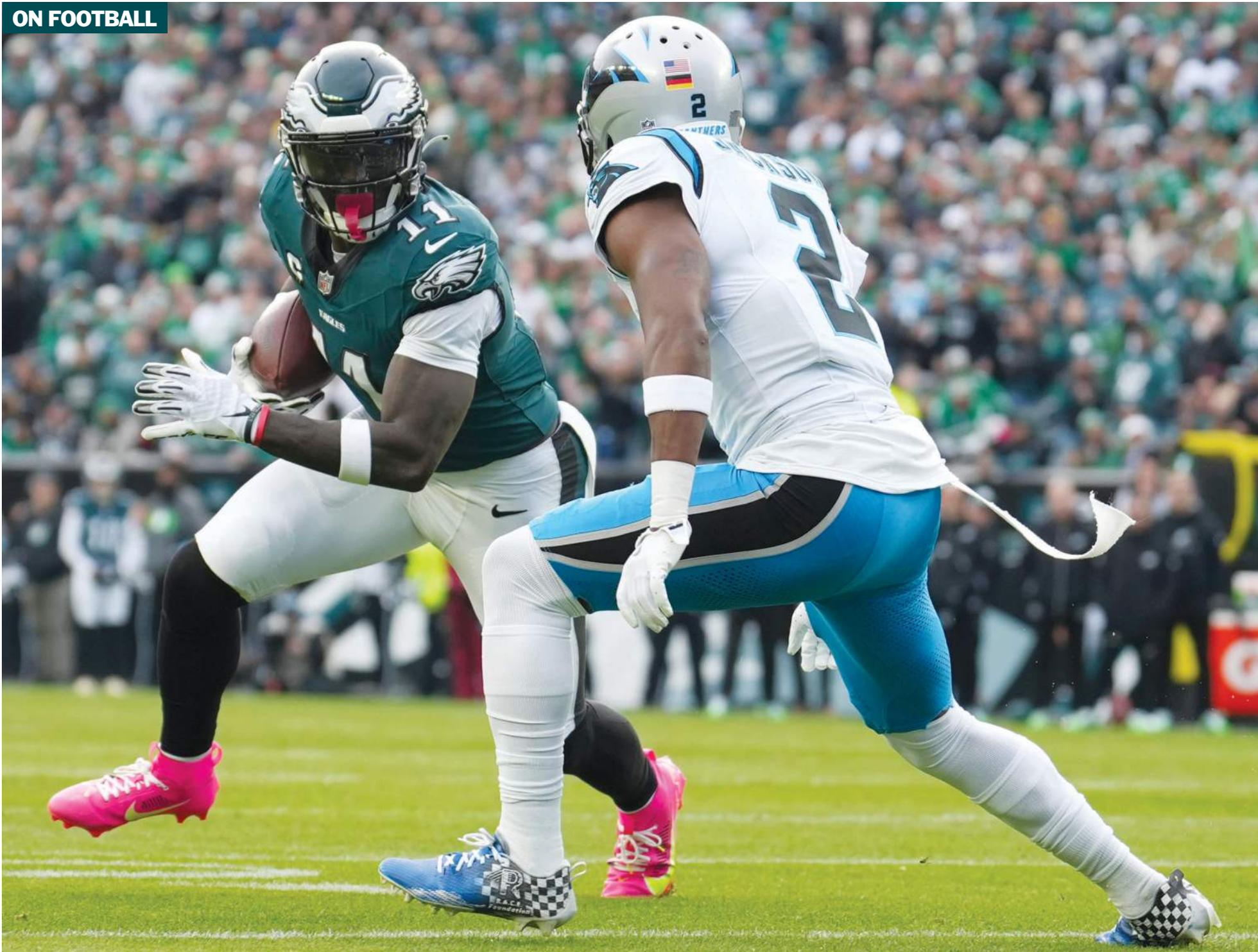
SPORTS

Another record deal

Yankees sign Fried to biggest contract ever for left-hander » **MLB, Page 19**



ON FOOTBALL



PETER JONELEIT/AP

Eagles wide receiver A.J. Brown runs past Carolina Panthers cornerback Michael Jackson on Sunday in Philadelphia. The Eagles won despite Brown only catching four passes for 43 yards.

One hurdle to overcome

NFC East-leading Eagles can fix any issues with breakout passing game

By **ROB MAADDI**
Associated Press

The Philadelphia Eagles have to make sure they don't beat themselves.

A nine-game winning streak helped the Eagles (11-2) clinch their fourth consecutive playoff berth. They're seeking an

NFC East title and still have a chance at catching Detroit (12-1) for the NFC's No. 1 seed.

But an ugly win over Carolina in which Jalen Hurts only threw 21 passes for 108 yards left wide receivers A.J. Brown and DeVonta Smith in a bad mood. He made it clear the offense, specifically the

passing attack, wasn't playing up to standard.

He's right. Hurts has thrown for under 200 yards in three straight games. But Saquon Barkley is running at a record-setting pace, so the Eagles haven't had to rely on Hurts throwing to Brown and Smith as much as they have in the past.

Brown caught four passes on four targets for 43 yards while Smith had four catches on six targets for 37 yards and one touchdown against the Panthers.

That led to Brown bluntly responding "passing" when asked by a reporter after the game what needs improvement.

Veteran leader Brandon Graham added fuel to the drama on his radio show Monday night by implying there's friction between Brown and Hurts. The two were close friends long before they became teammates, and Hurts is the

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Avs beat Pens behind Rantanen's hat trick » **NHL, Page 21**

