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Go time

US warns Ukraine it must make big battlefield gains

By YASMEEN ABUTALEB AND JOHN HUDSON
The Washington Post

As the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine nears, U.S. officials are telling Ukrainian leaders they face a critical moment to change the trajectory of the war, raising the pressure on Kyiv to make significant gains on the battlefield while weapons and aid from the United States and its allies are surging.

Despite promises to back Ukraine "as long as it takes," Biden officials say recent aid packages from Congress and America's allies represent Kyiv's best chance to decisively change the course of the war. Many conservatives in the Republican-led House have vowed to pull back support, and Europe's long-term appetite for funding the war effort remains unclear.

Several officials noted the strong bipartisan support that has accompanied every Ukraine package, adding that Congress gave the White House more than it asked for, but they acknowledged that was under a Democrat-led House and Senate.

SEE MOMENT ON PAGE 6

Ukrainian soldiers walk in trenches in the front line close to Bakhmut, Donetsk region, Ukraine, on Feb. 8.

LIBKOS/AP

Rumors swirling about balloons, UFOs as officials stay largely silent

By DAVID KLEPPER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Maybe they came from China. Maybe from somewhere farther away. A lot farther away.

The downing of four aerial devices by U.S. warplanes has

touched off rampant misinformation about the objects, their origin and their purpose, showing how complicated world events and a lack of information can quickly create the perfect conditions for unchecked conjecture and misinformation.

The presence of mysterious objects high in the sky doesn't help.

"There will be an investigation and we will learn more, but until then, this story has created a playground for people interested in speculating or stirring the pot for their own reasons," said Jim

Ludes, a former national defense analyst who now leads the Pell Center for International Relations at Salve Regina University.

"In part," Ludes added, "because it feeds into so many narratives about government secrecy."

President Joe Biden and other

top Washington officials have said little about the repeated shoot-downs, which began with a suspected Chinese spy balloon earlier this month. Three more unidentified devices have been shot down,

SEE RUMORS ON PAGE 3

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Ford to build \$3.5B EV battery plant in Michigan

Associated Press

DETROIT — Ford Motor Co. plans to build a \$3.5 billion factory in Michigan that would employ at least 2,500 people to make lower-cost batteries for a variety of new and existing electric vehicles.

The plant, to be built on land being readied for industrial development about 100 miles west of Detroit, would start making batteries in 2026. It would crank out enough batteries to supply 400,000 vehicles per year, Ford said.

The factory near the city of Mar-

shall would produce batteries with a lithium-iron-phosphate (LFP) chemistry, which is cheaper than the current nickel-cobalt-manganese chemistry now used in many EV batteries.

Consumers could then choose between a battery with lower range and cost, or pay more for higher range and power. The company wouldn't give any prices just yet.

"The whole intent here is to make EVs more affordable and accessible to customers," said Marin Gjaja, chief marketing officer for Ford's

electric vehicles.

Ford said a wholly owned subsidiary would own the factory and employ the workers. But China's Contemporary Amperex Technology Co. Limited, or CATL, known for its lithium-iron-phosphate expertise, would supply technology, some equipment and workers.

The plant was revealed Monday at a meeting of the Michigan Strategic Fund, which approved a large tax incentive package for the project near the junction of Interstates 94 and 69.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Commercial rates	
Euro costs (Feb. 15)	\$1.05	Bahrain (Dinar)	.3769
Dollar buys (Feb. 15)	0.9057	Britain (Pound)	1.2185
British pound (Feb. 15)	\$1.19	Canada (Dollar)	1.3340
Japanese yen (Feb. 15)	129.00	China (Yuan)	6.8214
South Korean won (Feb. 15)	1,239.00	Denmark (Krone)	6.9297
		Egypt (Pound)	30.5708
		Euro	.9300
		Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8504
		Hungary (Forint)	353.86
		Israel (Shekel)	3.5158
		Japan (Yen)	132.75
		Kuwait (Dinar)	.3060
		Norway (Krone)	10.1333
		Philippines (Peso)	54.82
		Poland (Zloty)	4.44
		Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7520
		Singapore (Dollar)	1.3276
		South Korea (Won)	1,269.84
		Switzerland (Franc)	.9189
		Thailand (Baht)	33.80
		Turkey (New Lira)	18.8461

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

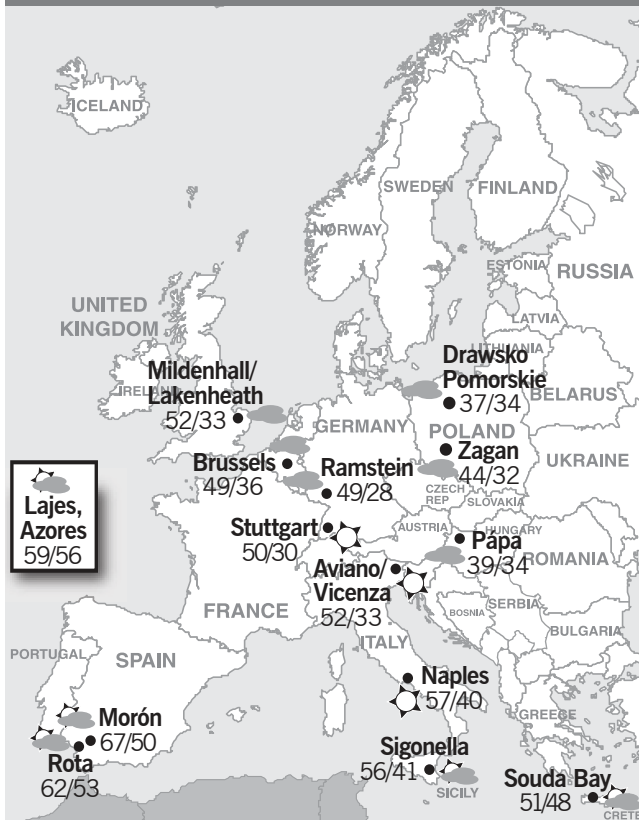
INTEREST RATES	
Prime rate	7.75
Interest Rates Discount rate	5.25
Federal funds market rate	4.58
3-month bill	4.80
30-year bond	3.76

WEATHER OUTLOOK

WEDNESDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



WEDNESDAY IN EUROPE



THURSDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

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MILITARY



RYAN SEELBACH, U.S. NAVY/AP

Sailors assigned to Assault Craft Unit 4 prepare material recovered off the coast of Myrtle Beach, S.C., for transport to the FBI, at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek in Virginia Beach, Va., on Friday.

Rumors: Conspiracy theories about devices range from political to alien

FROM PAGE 1

with the latest Sunday over Lake Huron. Pentagon officials said they posed no security threats, but have not disclosed their origins or purpose.

On Monday, many social media sites in the United States lit up with theories that Biden had deployed the aerial devices as a way to distract Americans from other, more pressing issues. Those concerns included immigration, inflation, the war in Ukraine and Republican investigations into his son, Hunter.

While the concentration of claims was highest on fringe sites popular with far-right Americans, the unfounded rumors and conspiracy theories popped up on bigger platforms like Twitter and Facebook, too.

One of the most popular theories suggested the White House and Pentagon are using the airborne devices to divert attention from a chemical spill earlier this month in Ohio.

That incident, caused by a train derailment, occurred several days before the most recent devices were shot down, and was covered extensively. Nonetheless, the spill remained the top subject searched on Google on Monday, showing continued public interest in the story.

Misleading claims about the airborne devices have also prompted violent threats, according to an analysis by the SITE Intelligence Group, a firm that tracks extremist rhetoric online. After the White House said earlier surveillance flights went undetected during Donald Trump's presidency, an article circulated on far-right sites urging the execution of any

Trump administration officials who may have withheld the information.

Trump administration officials have said they knew of no such surveillance craft.

Some commenters said Biden's decision to wait until the balloon had reached the East Coast before shooting it down showed he was in league with China. Others, meanwhile, chastised Biden for shooting down foreign aircraft that they imagined could be carrying bio-weapons or nuclear weapons.

Alongside the political conspiracy theories were suggestions that the aerial objects were extraterrestrial in origin. Photos of alleged UFOs were shared online and web searches for the term "UFO" soared around the world Sunday, according to information from Google Trends.

Online posts mentioning extraterrestrials increased by nearly 300% since the first balloon was identified, according to an analysis conducted for The Associated Press by Zignal Labs, a San Francisco-based media intelligence firm. Zignal's review included millions of posts on platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Reddit.

"Don't worry, just some of my friends of mine stopping by," Elon Musk, the CEO of Twitter, Tesla and SpaceX, joked in a tweet Sunday.

Humor aside, while the details of the different claims vary, they have two things in common: a lack of evidence and a strong distrust of America's elected leaders.

"Maybe Joe built the balloon & had Hunter launch it to scare we the people!" wrote one Facebook user. "How do WE know??? We don't!"

The federal government must balance the public's desire to know the details with the need for secrecy regarding national security and defense, Ludes said. That's not likely to satisfy Biden's critics, Ludes said, or prevent misleading explanations from going viral.

China has claimed the balloon shot down Feb. 4 was engaged in meteorological research. On Monday, China's foreign ministry said 10 U.S. balloons had entered Chinese airspace without permission in the past year.

Beijing's response to this diplomatic row seeks to portray China as the responsible actor while dodging surveillance claims made by the U.S., according to Kenton Thibault, a China expert at the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, a Washington-based nonprofit that tracks foreign disinformation and propaganda.

"It's about projecting an image of responsibility and rationality, of being the adult in the room," Thibault said of China's response. "It's a clear signal to nations in the developing world that the U.S. is selfish, untrustworthy and hypocritical."

On Monday, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre did refute one viral claim to have emerged from the balloon saga.

"I know there have been questions and concerns about this, but there is no — again no indication — of aliens or extraterrestrial activity with these recent take-downs," Jean-Pierre told reporters. "I wanted to make sure that the American people knew that, all of you knew that and it was important for us to say that from here because we've been hearing a lot about it."

Air Force general: More innovation needed in Mideast

BY DOUG G. WARE
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The top Air Force commander in the Middle East said Monday that the service will have to lean more on innovation to secure the region now that U.S. forces are out of Afghanistan and the Pentagon is focused on Russia and China.

Lt. Gen. Alexis Grynkeiwich, the commander of Air Forces Central, or AFCENT, said the Ninth Air Force is having to make do now with fewer resources in the region with more pressing threats in Eastern Europe and the Indo-Pacific region.

"We want to make sure we are keeping enough pressure on violent extremist organizations so they can't carry out an attack on our homeland," Grynkeiwich said during an interview with the Center for a New American Security, a Washington-based think tank funded by several defense contractors including Northrop Grumman. "That would have the potential to derail our focus on China."

The Pentagon's National Defense Strategy and President Joe Biden's National Security Strategy were issued in the fall and identified China as the top U.S. competitor and "pacing challenge" — with Russia and North Korea not far behind. The strategies still place importance in the Middle East, but the region now garners less attention after the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan in 2021.

"Iran is the other one we have to keep an eye on," Grynkeiwich said.

He said all U.S. commands are having to adjust their strategies, and for the Air Force in the Middle East that means relying more on brain power than traditional firepower.

"Where we are trying to shift our focus is thinking about how we reshape the region over the longer term," Grynkeiwich said. "That means a lot of partnering ... that means a lot of collaboration, that means a lot of longer-term thinking about what is it that we're doing on a daily basis."

Several months ago, the Air Force established Task Force 99, a unit dedicated to developing a "culture of innovation" to do more with less. Known as the Desert Catalysts, the unit is based in Qatar and since its formation, TF99 has tested drones, rockets and other technology experiments that it hopes will streamline capabilities.

Putting new emphasis on experimenting and inventing is a direction other military branches are also exploring. A few weeks after TF99 was created, the Army established its version of the unit — Task Force 39, which has also been charged with creating innovations that give the Pentagon more bang for its buck.

"Getting these new capabilities tested in [the Middle East] is what we bring to the table," Col. Adontis Atkins, commander of Task Force 39, said recently. "Actually getting it in the hands of soldiers and getting that feedback."

For example, Atkins said the Army will soon be testing semiautonomous cargo trucks on Middle East terrain. In 2021, the Navy formed a similar tech unit, Task Force 59, and the Air Force wants to copy its success.

"[Task Force 99] is a shameless attempt to replicate the success of Task Force 59," Grynkeiwich said. "It is a command that I have given some very hard tactical problems to ... that they are empowered to go out and find solutions for."

Even in the Middle East, U.S. forces are seeing influence from China and Russia, the AFCENT commander said. Moscow has been a supporter of the government in Syria for many years, and Grynkeiwich said Beijing wields serious economic influence across the region.

Already strained U.S.-China relations have been tested further in the last two weeks in the wake of the Chinese spy balloon incident, in which the balloon was shot down over the Atlantic Ocean on Feb. 4 after it traveled across the United States. U.S. fighter jets also shot down three different objects in the skies over North America last Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The origins of the objects shot down over the weekend have not been identified yet, U.S. officials have said.

Grynkeiwich said Monday that he knows of other high-altitude objects that crossed over the Middle East in the recent past. He declined, however, to identify them as balloons and didn't say from where they might have emanated.

"Even though we have seen high-altitude [objects] in the region before, they have not been a threat," he said. "The level of concern that I have about them is extremely low. ... It's not something that I would lose sleep [over] at night."

MILITARY

Japan mulls speeding up its US missile buy

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

TOKYO — Japan wants to accelerate a plan to purchase Tomahawk missiles from the United States to the coming fiscal year rather than wait another three years, Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada said Tuesday.

Hamada declined to say how many Tomahawk cruise missiles the government plans to buy and said doing so would disclose Japan's defense capabilities. But an earlier report Tuesday by the Kyodo News agency, citing an unnamed government source, said the government

wants as many as 500 of the missiles.

Japan has moved to strengthen its military in recent years amid a rapid Chinese military buildup and North Korean missile tests.

The country could buy a package of Tomahawks in fiscal 2023, which starts in April, instead of acquiring them over the next several years as initially planned, Hamada said at a news conference.

The missiles would be the same type used by the U.S. Navy and can be launched from Aegis destroyers of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force, the Kyodo source said.

A Tomahawk can strike targets at a range of 1,000 miles, according to its maker, Raytheon Technologies.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's administration is also considering talks with the U.S. over deploying the missiles sooner than fiscal 2026, the original schedule, the source told Kyodo.

Tokyo approved a national security strategy in December that includes acquiring "counterstrike" capabilities to attack enemy bases with missiles.

A defense budget for the coming fiscal year totaling \$51.4 billion, the nation's largest ever, was approved Dec. 23 by Ja-

pan's Cabinet. It includes \$1.59 billion to acquire Tomahawks and \$963 million to develop and manufacture improved surface-to-ship guided missiles.

Beijing has more than 1,900 ballistic missiles that can reach Japan, according to a 2022 Pentagon report on China's military capabilities.

In a Jan. 13 joint statement following talks in Washington, Kishida and President Joe Biden said they had instructed their ministers to reinforce cooperation on the development and effective employment of Japan's counterstrike capability.

Japan's government may be attempting to "strike while the

iron is hot," Ralph Cossa, president emeritus of the Pacific Forum think tank in Hawaii, said in an email Friday.

"There has been surprisingly little resistance or opposition to Japan acquiring or developing what others would categorize as offensive missile capabilities, despite their counterstrike connotation," he said.

The move is acceptable, if not preferable, to Washington as it looks for allies to step up as part of integrated deterrence, Cossa added.

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Soldiers recovering from crash in Germany

Stars and Stripes

A soldier who was seriously injured when two U.S. military trucks carrying weapons collided on a German autobahn last week is recovering at an Army hospital, service officials said Tuesday.

The soldier was one of four injured Friday afternoon in an accident involving a five-vehicle convoy of M915A5 tractor-trailers on the A6 highway near Kirchberg der Jagst, which is about 45 minutes west of the Army's post in Ansbach.

The driver of the third truck misjudged the distance while changing lanes and struck the truck in front of it, Aalen city police said at the time.

The cab of the merging truck was torn off by the impact and the vehicle caught fire, according to a police statement Friday. Firefighters were able to quickly extinguish the fire, police said.

The passenger in the third truck was airlifted to University Hospital Wuerzburg. That soldier has



JOHN FRIES/U.S. Army

A M915A5 line-haul tractor-trailer similar to this one shown in 2011 was involved in a two-vehicle accident Feb. 9, on autobahn A6 near Kirchberg an der Jagst, Germany.

been transferred to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center for further treatment and is recovering well, 21st Theater Sustainment Command spokesman Maj. Vonnie Wright said Tuesday.

The other three injured soldiers were released from the Landstuhl hospital over the weekend, Wright said.

The accident remains under in-

vestigation and damage assessments were not yet available, the command said.

The trucks were carrying large amounts of missiles and munitions, but the danger was limited because no detonators were attached, according to police.

The weapons were transferred to other trucks and weren't damaged, the Army said.

Lightning sparks fires at training area in Hawaii

By **WYATT OLSON**
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — A day-old pair of wildfires continued to rage through a military training range Monday on Hawaii's Big Island as three Army helicopters joined the firefighting effort.

The fires, caused by lightning strikes, had burned about 1,500 acres at the Pohakuloa Training Area, the Army said in a news release Monday.

The 132,000-acre training area is operated by the Army but used by all the services for live-fire training. No troops are currently training on the site, the Army said.

The fires were roughly 5% contained as of Monday morning, the Army said.

Firefighters must contend with strong trade winds that have swept the state during the past week but are expected to weaken after Tuesday.

Two UH-60 Black Hawks and one CH-47 Chinook from 25th Combat Aviation Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, at Schofield Barracks, Oahu, were dispatched to the training area Monday morning, the Army said.

They will join several helicop-



RYAN DEBOOV/U.S. Army

An Army HH-60 Black Hawk drops water on a fire near the Pohakuloa Training Area, Hawaii, on July 31, 2021.

ters operated by local firefighters in dropping water on the blaze.

The fires are east of Highway 190 and pose no threat to communities at this point, the Army said.

Highway 190 traverses the northwest portion of the island, and to its west lies a more populated area near the coastline.

Wildfires are not unusual on the Big Island nor the training area.

In August, high winds drove a wildfire that burned almost 20,000 acres that included portions of the training area.

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Korean War back as prerequisite at S. Korean military school

By **DAVID CHOI**
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The history of the Korean War will again become a required course at the Korea Military Academy and part of a more "future-oriented" curriculum for future South Korean army officers, the school announced Monday.

The academy — a public, undergraduate institution in Seoul — produces many of the nation's ar-

my officers. It is revising its curriculum next year for "individuals who have proper views of state and history and will lead a 'scientifically and technologically powerful army,'" according to a news release.

Fourth-year cadets already nearing graduation will receive 30-hour "intensive supplementary" courses on the 1950-53 Korean War, war and strategy and North Korean studies, according

to the release. The courses will include lectures from Korean War veterans and field trips during winter training.

Roughly 280 cadets are expected to graduate in 2024, an academy spokesperson told Stars and Stripes by phone Tuesday. South Korean officials customarily speak to the media on the condition of anonymity.

The decision comes after an internal review, according to the of-

ficial. Several South Korean lawmakers during a parliamentary inspection last year voiced concern over the lack of such courses.

Former South Korean Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn in a Facebook post on Oct. 21 criticized the academy's decision to remove the Korean War history course from its curriculum in 2019 and said, "a nation that forgets its past and history has no future."

"What is clear is that we have to

rectify curriculum even now," Hwang wrote. "War history of one's own country should be obligatory to cadets. Not teaching Korean War history correctly at the [Korea Military Academy] is the same as forgetting our roots."

The Korea Military Academy was founded in 1946.

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

New NATO talks sidestep sending F-16s to Ukraine

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The big question for NATO of whether to send F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine went unanswered Tuesday in Brussels, where Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and other allied officials convened for high-level talks.

The latest two-day NATO gathering is centered on getting more weaponry to the front lines of the Russia-Ukraine war, which started a year ago this month.

The idea of delivering fighter jets to Ukraine has divided allies, even as Kyiv says such air power could be a game changer.

During a meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, a collection of about 50 countries, most of the focus was on ensuring that weapons already sent or on their way to Ukraine have the ammunition and support to keep firing.

Austin, when asked about discussions on fighter aircraft, said he didn't have any new announcements. Instead, he said allies were trying to address Ukraine's "most pressing needs" as the force contemplates a spring offensive. Those needs include ensuring new tanks, armored fighting vehicles and other equipment arrive in time for the fight.

"It's a monumental task to bring all those systems together, get the troops trained on those platforms and make sure we have sustainment for that," Austin said.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg also downplayed the question of fighter jets.

"The issue of aircraft is not the most urgent issue now, but it is an ongoing discussion," Stoltenberg said as allies began arriving Tuesday at NATO headquarters.

Austin, flanked by Ukraine Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov during discussions, said a focus will be getting sufficient amounts of ammunition into Ukraine.

Ammunition supplies have be-

"The issue of aircraft is not the most urgent issue now, but it is an ongoing discussion."

Jens Stoltenberg
NATO Secretary-General

come a concern for NATO as Ukraine burns through allied stockpiles at a faster rate than industry can produce replacements. The alliance is evaluating multiple ways to ramp up production.

"We still have much more to do together, and we must intensify our focus," Austin said.

Meanwhile, Austin said that the more advanced training on maneuver warfare now being provided to Ukrainian troops could allow them to better shape the battlefield. That could mean ground units will require less artillery as their tactics improve, he said.

"But that's left to be seen," Austin said.

The meeting of the Ukraine defense group, also known as the Ramstein Group, took place in tandem with a two-day meeting of NATO defense ministers.

Stoltenberg echoed Austin's comments, saying the top priority was ensuring that sufficient ammunition, spare parts, fuel and other supplies are flowing into Ukraine fast enough to help it contend with another anticipated Russian offensive.

"It is not all about discussing new systems ... the urgent need now is to deliver the weapons that have already been promised," said Stoltenberg, who described the upcoming phase of the war as "a battle of logistics."

The U.S. and other NATO countries have steadily expanded the

range of weaponry they are willing to deliver to Ukraine.

"Today's meeting comes at a critical time. The Kremlin is still betting it can wait us out," Austin said.

At the outset of the conflict, modern battle tanks were generally regarded as a no-go among allies, but now the U.S. and Germany are in the process of getting Abrams and Leopard tanks to Ukrainian troops.

Allies also have moved from simpler systems, such as Javelins and Stingers, to longer-range artillery and Patriot air defense missiles. That raises the question of whether fighter jets should be next.

Dutch Defense Minister Kajsa Ollongren said Ukraine has formally requested the F-16 from the Netherlands.

"We have to debate this with our partners and also the United States," she said. "This is something that will take time, and it is best done behind closed doors."

Ukraine is "very aware" that a decision will take time, Ollongren said.

Two big obstacles to a collective decision on whether to send fighters are the U.S. and Germany.

President Joe Biden thus far has said he is unwilling to send fighter aircraft. Berlin has made similar statements because it regards the provision of fighters as potentially escalatory.

But alliance members including Poland, the Baltic states and the United Kingdom have been more bullish about the idea. Britain has committed to training Ukrainian pilots in the eventuality that NATO-standard aircraft are delivered.

"We know that Ukraine needs support and that also means jet fighters," Estonia Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur said Tuesday.

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MICHAL DYJUK/AP

A Polish soldier walks next to the Leopard 2 tanks during a training at a military base and test range in Swietoszow, Poland, on Monday.

Polish officials observe training of Ukrainians

By RAFAL NIEDZIELSKI
Associated Press

SWIETOSZOW, Poland — Poland's president and defense minister met Monday with Polish and foreign instructors intensively training Ukrainian troops to operate the German-made Leopard 2 tanks that some European countries and Canada have offered Kyiv to help fight the Russian invasion.

President Andrzej Duda and minister Mariusz Blaszczak also watched Leopard 2 training at a military base and test range in Swietoszow, in southwestern Poland. The training is part of the European Union's military assistance to Ukraine, but Canadian instructors also have a role, as do Norwegians.

Taking part are Ukrainian tank crews from units fighting in the east of the country. The intensive training lasts up to 10 hours a day, including weekends, the Polish military said. Instruction is also being held in Germany.

Duda voiced hope the tanks would help Ukrainian forces "in a much more efficient way to defeat

the enemy."

He said the Ukrainian trainees have come straight from the front line. "You can see in their faces that these people have gone through terrible things, but they are determined to defend their homeland."

A Polish instructor, Senior Staff Warrant Officer Krzysztof Siemradzki, said the Ukrainians are so motivated to learn everything fast that the instructors "have to hold them back and transfer knowledge to them in small batches."

The trainees' commander, Major Vadym Khodak, said they all have combat experience.

"They didn't come from the street, they've been fighting on our tanks for a long time, so I think learning how to operate these tanks will be a lot easier," said Khodak, who's from Dnipro in eastern Ukraine.

Khodak said the modern tanks would be a great help.

"If we learn how to use them, we will put them to test in combat conditions and it will give a great effect," he said.

NATO chief: Finland, Sweden don't need to join together

By LORNE COOK
Associated Press

BRUSSELS — NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg played down on Tuesday the importance of Finland and Sweden joining the world's biggest security organization at the same time as Turkey refuses to ratify their membership, mostly due to a dispute with Sweden.

"The main question is not whether Finland and Sweden are ratified together. The main ques-

tion is that they are both ratified as full members as soon as possible," Stoltenberg told reporters. The long-held consensus at NATO has been that both the Nordic neighbors should join at the same time.

Sweden and neighboring Finland abandoned decades of non-alignment and applied to join the 30-nation alliance in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. All NATO members except Turkey and Hungary have ratified their accession, but unanimity is re-

quired.

Turkey has accused the government in Stockholm of being too lenient toward groups it deems as terror organizations or existential threats, including Kurdish groups. Earlier this month, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Ankara has fewer problems with Finland joining.

He stressed, however, that it was up to the military alliance to decide whether to accept one country only or the Nordic duo to-

gether. So far, Finland has stood by Sweden and insisted they should join NATO's ranks together.

Stoltenberg said that he is "confident that both will be full members and are working hard to get both ratified as soon as possible." It had been hoped that both countries would be welcomed in at NATO's next summit in Lithuania in July.

Turkey is in an election year, and the topic of Nordic member-

ship of NATO is a possible vote winner. In recent weeks, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has expressed anger at a series of separate demonstrations in Stockholm. In one case a solitary anti-Islam activist burned the Quran outside the Turkish Embassy, while in an unconnected protest, an effigy of Erdogan was hanged.

Of the two countries, only Finland shares a border with Russia and would appear to be more at risk.

EUROPE

Moment: War's next few months expected to be critical

FROM PAGE 1

“We will continue to try to impress upon them that we can’t do anything and everything forever,” said one senior administration official, referring to Ukraine’s leaders. The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive diplomatic matters, added that it was the administration’s “very strong view” that it will be hard to keep getting the same level of security and economic assistance from Congress.

“As long as it takes’ pertains to the amount of conflict,” the official added. “It doesn’t pertain to the amount of assistance.”

The war in recent months has become a slow grind in eastern Ukraine, with neither side gaining the upper hand. Biden officials believe the critical juncture will come this spring, when Russia is expected to launch an offensive and Ukraine mounts a counteroffensive in an effort to reclaim lost territory.

Underlining the importance of the moment for the administration, Vice President Harris, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas headed to a major security summit in Germany this week and President Biden is traveling to Poland next week for a speech and meetings on the first anniversary.

The Biden administration is also working with Congress to approve another \$10 billion in direct budget assistance to Kyiv and is expected to announce another large military assistance package in the next week and the imposition of more sanctions on the Kremlin around the same time.

The critical nature of the next few months has already been conveyed to Kyiv in blunt terms by top Biden officials — including deputy national security adviser Jon Finer, deputy secretary of state Wendy Sherman and undersecretary of defense Colin Kahl, all of whom visited Ukraine last month.

CIA Director William J. Burns traveled to the country one week ahead of those officials, where he briefed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on his expectations for what Russia is planning militarily in the coming months and emphasized the urgency of the moment.

At the same time, Biden and his aides are eager to avoid any sign of defection or weakening resolve by Western allies ahead of the Feb. 24 anniversary, hoping to signal to Russian President Vladimir Putin that support for Ukraine is not waning.

But some analysts warned that neither Russia nor Ukraine is likely to seize a decisive military advantage in the foreseeable future.

“It feels like we are playing for a



LIBKOS/AP

Soldiers of the Ukrainian 3rd Army Assault Brigade of the Special Operations Forces “Azov” are in a trench in position near Bakhmut, Donetsk region, Ukraine, on Saturday.

long war,” said Andrea Kendall-Taylor, director of the Transatlantic Security Program at the Center for a New American Security. “I think it’s at odds with what so many people would hope for, that we’re actually trying to help Ukraine win militarily.”

She added, “It feels like a moment of really high uncertainty.”

Biden and his top aides say they are determined to back Ukraine as long and as fully as possible. But they warn that the political path will get tougher once Ukraine has exhausted the current congressional package, which could happen as early as this summer.

Some Western leaders have harbored reservations about sending certain types of heavy weaponry to Ukraine, worried about a direct confrontation with Russia, especially after Putin signaled a willingness to use nuclear weapons.

But loud public lobbying by Zelensky, followed by quiet behind-the-scenes dealmaking by U.S. officials, has changed the dynamic. Biden and Blinken spent much of December and January working to convince allies to help provide Ukraine with the tanks and missiles that his administration had resisted sending for months.

Biden aides encouraged the Netherlands, for example, to help the United States provide critical air defense systems. On Dec. 20, officials at the National Security Council met with senior Dutch officials and stressed the importance the United States was placing on air defense, according to a senior administration official familiar with the meeting, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to reveal details of private discussions.

What the officials did not know

was that the United States was working to bring Zelensky to Washington the next day, where Biden would announce that he was approving a Patriot Missile battery, Zelensky’s top request to help defend against Russian attacks on civilian infrastructure.

The battery needed a launcher — ideally one already in Europe — so Dutch officials worked through the holidays to see how they could assist the United States, the official said. In January, Biden invited the Dutch prime minister, Mark Rutte, to visit the White House, and the Dutch came up with a solution. When Rutte visited on Jan. 17, he said the Netherlands would provide two Patriot Missile launchers and missiles to Ukraine.

But Biden faced challenges on other fronts as well. While Britain had announced it would supply tanks to Ukraine, Germany refused to send its own Leopard 2 tanks or to authorize other countries to transfer their own Leopards — unless the United States agreed to send its prized M1 Abrams tanks to Ukraine.

For much of January, Pentagon and White House officials insisted the M1 Abrams tanks were not well-suited for Ukrainian troops because they are so complicated to operate and maintain. But Biden wanted to avoid the appearance of a fissure in the Western alliance.

In late January, Biden’s Cabinet came up with a plan for the United States to announce the provision of M1 Abrams tanks, which would placate Germany even though the U.S. tanks would not arrive for several months at the earliest. The following day, Biden gave the go-ahead.

Now, as the United States pre-

pares to send 31 of the premier tanks in the medium term, Europe is quickly assembling two Leopard tank battalions in the near term — the equivalent of at least 70 tanks — in a move that could significantly shift the balance of power on the battlefield.

Yet the public show of unity belies underlying tensions over how Ukraine should focus its resources in the coming months.

The frank discussions in Kyiv last month reflected an effort by the Biden administration to bring Ukraine’s goals in line with what the West can sustain as the war approaches its one-year mark. Getting Ukraine on the same page has not always been easy, according to people familiar with the discussions, speaking on the condition of anonymity to describe private talks.

For months, Ukraine has expended significant resources and troops defending Bakhmut in the eastern Donbas region. American military analysts and planners have argued that it is unrealistic to simultaneously defend Bakhmut and launch a spring counteroffensive to retake what the United States views as more critical territory.

Zelensky, however, attaches symbolic importance to Bakhmut, two senior administration officials said, and believes it would be a blow to Ukrainian morale to lose the city.

On Friday, Zelensky said his country’s forces would “fight as long as we can” to hold the embattled city that Russia is on the brink of capturing.

While U.S. officials said they respect that Zelensky knows how best to rally his country, they have expressed concerns that if Ukraine keeps fighting everywhere

Russia sends troops, it will work to Moscow’s advantage. Instead, they have urged Ukraine to prioritize the timing and execution of the spring counteroffensive, particularly as the United States and Europe train Ukrainian fighters on some of the more complex weaponry making its way to the battlefield.

“Generally, our view is they should take enough time that they can benefit from what we’ve provided in material and training,” a senior administration official said. If Russia takes Bakhmut, the official said, it “will not result in any significant strategic shift in the battlefield. Russians will try to claim it as such, [but] it’s a dot on the map for which they have expended an extraordinary amount of blood and treasure.”

Beyond Bakhmut, Zelensky has repeatedly rallied his country behind a military campaign to retake all of Russian-occupied Ukraine, including Crimea, the peninsula that Russia annexed in 2014.

Last month, Zelensky’s top aide, Andriy Yermak, reiterated that victory against Russia means restoring Ukraine’s internationally recognized borders, “including Donbas and Crimea.” Anything less is “absolutely unacceptable,” he said at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

U.S. intelligence officials have concluded, however, that retaking the heavily fortified peninsula is beyond the capability of Ukraine’s army right now, according to officials familiar with the matter, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive issues. That sobering assessment has been reiterated to multiple committees on Capitol Hill over the last several weeks.

That discrepancy between aims and capabilities has raised concerns in Europe that the Ukraine conflict will persist indefinitely, overburdening the West as it grapples with other challenges including stubbornly high inflation and unstable energy prices.

Against that backdrop, Biden’s aides say they are pursuing the best course of action: empowering Ukraine to retake as much territory as possible in coming months before sitting down with Putin at the negotiating table.

That effort will benefit from an influx of Patriot missiles, HIMARS launchers and an array of armored vehicles.

Optimists see a path for Ukraine to stave off further Russian incursions in the east, retake territory in the south and force Russia to negotiate an end to the war by year’s end.

But skeptics worry that time is not on Ukraine’s side as Russia throws hundreds of thousands of new troops onto the battlefield, including convicts, in advance of the expected spring offensive.

MILITARY

Air Force's No. 2 civilian stepping down from post

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Undersecretary of the Air Force Gina Ortiz Jones, a champion of broader diversity efforts and the first openly gay undersecretary, is stepping down as the service's second-highest ranking civilian effective March 6.

Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall praised Jones' leadership in a statement Monday, calling her "a tireless advocate" and saying she had enabled airmen, guardians and their families "to serve to their full potential."

The Senate confirmed Jones in July 2021, making her the sixth woman to hold the post since 1947.

Jones was forced to hide her sexual orientation as a young ROTC college cadet and, from 2003 to 2006, while serving as an



Jones

Air Force intelligence officer during "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." "I had to sign a piece of paper saying that I would not engage in homosexual behavior because DADT applied to me even as a cadet," Jones told a panel of LGBTQ+ community members, veterans and government leaders in 2021. "It became clear to me that an opportunity to get an education and serve our country all goes away just because we didn't have leaders with the courage to say anybody ready and willing to serve their country should have the opportunity to do so."

The since-repealed Defense Department policy prevented les-

bian, gay and bisexual military personnel from disclosing their sexuality while serving their country. Violating the policy carried the threat of discharge.

During her tenure as undersecretary, the Air Force and the Space Force began allowing pregnant women to apply for Air Force Officer Training School. Previously, pregnant enlisted airmen, guardians and civilians had to wait until 12 months postpartum to

begin the commissioning process.

And in August 2022, the Air Force and Space Force announced new recruiting demographic targets to increase the number of minority airmen and guardians in jobs traditionally held by white men.

When the Air Force announced in January that it was hiring more special agents to investigate allegations of domestic violence, Jones said the goal was to support

survivors and prevent such crimes from happening.

"This is a warfighting issue, a readiness issue and a leadership issue," Jones said in an Air Force statement.

Kristyn Jones, the Air Force's comptroller and chief financial officer, will become acting undersecretary, the statement said.

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German workers at US bases strike for increase in wages

BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Roses and chocolates were far from the minds of German employees at multiple U.S. installations who participated in walkouts Tuesday to demand better wages and working conditions.

Nearly 500 employees spent part of Valentine's Day on downtown Grafenwoehr's streets, where they were gathered for picketing and speeches by union leaders, Ver.di workers union representative Kathrin Birner said.

Some services at Tower Barracks and Rose Barracks were affected by the strike, but gates remained open throughout and there was no security disruption, a spokesman for U.S. Army Garrison Bavaria said Tuesday.

Meanwhile, firefighters who work for the Army and Air Force in the southwestern state of Rheinland-Pfalz have been on strike since Monday.

The Kaiserslautern Military Community, which is spread over numerous installations in the state, is the largest overseas U.S. military community.

"We are not only fighting for our urgently needed wage increase in this tariff round, we are fighting for our profession and for the appreciation of our work," Georg Fanous, a firefighter for the U.S. Army in Germersheim, said Friday in a statement by Ver.di.

Firefighters spend an average of 256 hours per month at work, which translates to German entry-level hires earning 12 euros per hour during their 24-hour shifts, the union said in a statement.

The protest did not affect emer-

gency preparedness at the base, a spokeswoman for the 86th Airlift Wing said Tuesday.

Last week, German workers in Wiesbaden, Ansbach, Garmisch-Partenkirchen and Hohenfels held walkouts.

The strikes are occurring because the association representing American, British, French and NATO employers of approximately 11,500 German workers rejected union demands for higher raises during two previous rounds of negotiations last month.

Employees were demanding a 9.5% pay increase, and the association offered a 4.1% figure, Ver.di said in a statement Friday.

U.S. troops and federal civilian workers received a 4.6% raise this year.

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NATION

Inflation slows to 6.4%; prices still increasing

By **CHRISTOPHER RUGABER**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The pace of consumer price increases eased again in January compared with a year earlier, the latest sign that the high inflation that has gripped Americans for nearly two years is slowing.

At the same time, Tuesday's consumer price report from the government showed that inflationary pressures in the U.S. economy remain stubborn and are likely to fuel price spikes well into this year.

Consumer prices rose 6.4% in January from 12 months earlier, down from 6.5% in December. It was the seventh straight year-over-year slowdown and well below a recent peak of 9.1% in June. Yet it remains far above the Federal Reserve's 2% annual inflation target.

And on a monthly basis, consumer prices increased 0.5% from December to January, much higher than the 0.1% rise from November to December. More expensive gas, food and clothing drove up inflation in January.

The Fed has aggressively raised its benchmark interest rate in the past year to its highest level in 15 years in its drive to get ramping inflation under control. The Fed's goal is to slow borrowing and spending, cool the pace of hiring and relieve the pressure many businesses feel to raise wages to find or keep workers. Businesses typically pass their higher labor costs on to their customers in the form of higher prices, thereby helping fuel inflation. So far, most of the slowdown in

inflation reflects freer-flowing supply chains and earlier declines in gas prices. But the Fed's rate hikes — eight since March of last year — have had no discernible effect on America's job market, which remains exceptionally strong.

The unemployment rate has dropped to 3.4%, the lowest level in 53 years, and job openings remain high. The strength of the job market has, in turn, helped support consumer spending, which underpins the bulk of the U.S. economy.

Yet the flip side of healthier spending is that inflation may become harder to tame. Gas prices rose 2.4% in January, the government said, with prices averaging \$3.50 a gallon nationwide by the end of last month. That is still much lower than the \$5 a gallon peak reached in June. Prices at the pump have since dropped back to \$3.41 as of Tuesday, according to AAA.

Tuesday's inflation report showed that food prices jumped 0.5% from December to January, defying hopes for a smaller increase. Cereals and bread products became costlier. And egg prices jumped 8.5% just in January and have skyrocketed 70% in the past year. Those prices have been driven up by an avian flu epidemic that has devastated chicken flocks and more expensive feed.

Excluding volatile food and energy costs, so-called "core" prices increased 0.4% last month, up from 0.3% in December. Compared with a year ago, core prices rose 5.6%, down just a tick from December's 5.7%.



SETH WENG/AP

President Donald Trump speaks with U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley at U.N. headquarters in 2017. Both are now candidates to be the Republican Party's 2024 presidential nominee.

Haley announces presidential campaign, challenging Trump

By **MEG KINNARD**
Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Nikki Haley, the former South Carolina governor and United Nations ambassador, announced her candidacy for president on Tuesday, becoming the first major challenger to former President Donald Trump for the 2024 Republican nomination.

The announcement, delivered in a tweeted video, marks an about-face for the ex-Trump Cabinet official, who said two years ago that she wouldn't challenge her former boss for the White House in 2024. But she changed her mind in recent months, citing, among other things, the country's economic troubles and the need for "generational change," a nod to the 76-year-old Trump's age.

"You should know this about me. I don't put up with bullies. And when you kick back, it hurts them more if you're wearing

heels," Haley said. "I'm Nikki Haley, and I'm running for president."

Haley, 51, is the first in a long line of Republicans who are expected to launch 2024 campaigns in the coming months. Among them are Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former Vice President Mike Pence, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina.

President Joe Biden has said he intends to seek reelection in 2024, stalling any jostling for the Democratic nomination.

Haley has regularly boasted about her track record of defying political expectations, saying, "I've never lost an election, and I'm not going to start now."

If elected, Haley would be the nation's first female president and the first U.S. president of Indian descent.

The daughter of Indian immigrants, Haley grew up enduring

racist taunts in a small South Carolina town and has long referenced that impact on her personal and political arc.

In the three-and-a-half minute video, Haley referenced that past, saying she grew up "not Black, not white — I was different."

Despite that, Haley insisted that America is not a racist country: "Nothing could be further from the truth." Playing in the background of her video were images of media reports related to The New York Times Magazine's Pulitzer Prize-winning "1619 Project" — which centered the country's history around slavery.

Haley never mentions Trump by name in the video, instead saying "the Washington establishment has failed us over and over and over again," Haley leans into a call for "a new generation of leadership," which has become the refrain of her messaging leading up to the launch.

GOP launches probe into COVID origins with letter to Fauci

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republicans kicked off an investigation Monday into the origins of COVID-19 by issuing a series of letters to current and former Biden administration officials for documents and testimony.

The Republican chairmen of the House Oversight Committee and the subcommittee on the coronavirus pandemic requested information from several people, including Dr. Anthony Fauci, surrounding the hypothesis that the coronavirus leaked

accidentally from a Chinese lab.

"This investigation must begin with where and how this virus came about so that we can attempt to predict, prepare or prevent it from happening again," Rep. Brad Wenstrup, R-Ohio, chair of the virus subcommittee, said in a statement.

Rep. James Comer, R-Tenn., chairman of the oversight com-

mittee, added that Republicans will "follow the facts" and "hold U.S. government officials that took part in any sort of cover-up accountable."

The letters to Fauci, National Intelligence Director Avril Haines, Health Secretary Xavier Becerra and others are the latest effort by the new Republican majority to make good on promises made during the 2022 midterms campaign.

Wenstrup, who is also a longtime member of the House Intelligence Committee, has accused

U.S. intelligence of withholding key facts about its investigation into the coronavirus. Republicans on the committee last year issued a staff report arguing that there are "indications" that the virus may have been developed as a bioweapon inside China's Wuhan Institute of Virology.

That would contradict a U.S. intelligence community assessment released in unclassified form in August 2021 that said analysts do not believe the virus was a bioweapon, though it may have leaked in a lab accident.

The letters sent Monday do not require the cooperation of recipients. But in announcing the Republican staff report in December, Wenstrup said that lawmakers would issue subpoenas if potential witnesses didn't cooperate.

It is extremely difficult for scientists to establish definitively how diseases emerge, but studies by experts around the world have determined that COVID-19 most likely emerged from a live animal market in Wuhan, China.



Fauci

NATION

Police seek motive of Michigan State gunman

Associated Press

EAST LANSING, Mich. — The gunman who killed three students and wounded five at Michigan State University was a 43-year-old who fatally shot himself in a confrontation with police miles from campus, officials said Tuesday.



McRae

Investigators still were sorting out why Anthony McRae fired inside an academic building and the student union shortly before 8:30 p.m. Monday. The shootings led to a harrowing campus lockdown and a search for the gunman that ended roughly three hours later.

“We have absolutely no idea what the motive was,” said Chris Rozman, deputy chief of campus police, adding that McRae, of Lansing, was not a student or Michigan State employee.

The dead and injured in the gunfire at Berkey Hall and the MSU Union, a popular place to eat and study, were all Michigan State students. Five remained in critical condition at Sparrow Hospital, said Dr. Denny Martin, who fought back tears during a news conference.

“This is still fluid,” Rozman said. “There are still crime scenes that are being processed, and we still are in the process of putting together



NICK KING, LANSING STATE JOURNAL/AP

A stretcher is unloaded from an ambulance outside the Michigan State University Union following shootings on campus Monday in East Lansing, Mich.

er the pieces to try to understand what happened.”

Two of the dead were graduates of separate high schools in the Grosse Pointe district in suburban Detroit. One was identified by Michigan State as Brian Fraser; the other was not publicly disclosed yet. Alexandria Verner, a graduate of Clawson High School in the Detroit area, also died.

“If you knew her, you loved her and we will forever remember the lasting impact she has had on all of us,” Clawson Superintendent Billy Shellenbarger said in an email to

families.

The shootings took place in an area of older, stately buildings on the northern edge of the Michigan State campus. Just across busy Grand River Avenue lies East Lansing’s downtown, teeming with restaurants, bars and shops.

Michigan State has about 50,000 students, including 19,000 who live on campus. As hundreds of officers scoured the campus, about 90 miles northwest of Detroit, students hid where they could Monday night.

During that time, police released a photo of the suspect, and an “alert

citizen” recognized him in the Lansing area, Rozman said.

“That was exactly what we were trying to achieve by releasing that picture. We had no idea where he was at that point,” the deputy chief said.

Police confronted McRae about 5 miles from campus in an industrial area, where he killed himself, Rozman said.

McRae was on probation for 18 months until May 2021 for possessing a loaded gun in a vehicle, according to the state Corrections Department.

Students recalled the previous night’s terror. Dominik Molotky said he was learning about Cuban history around 8:15 p.m. when he and the other students heard a gunshot outside the classroom. He told ABC’s “Good Morning America” that a few seconds later, the gunman entered and fired three to four more rounds while the students took cover.

“I was ducking and covering, and the same with the rest of the students. He let off four more rounds and when it went silent for about 30 seconds to a minute, two of my classmates started breaking open a window, and that took about 30 seconds to happen. There was glass everywhere,” Molotky said.

“After that, we broke out the window and I climbed out of there, and then I booked it back to my apartment,” he said. He was unsure whether gunfire hit any of the students.

Claire Papoulias, a sophomore, described on NBC’s “Today” how she and other students scrambled to escape a history class through a window after the gunman entered from a back door and began firing.

“There was a boy in my class, and he was waiting outside the window, and he was catching people and helping people down,” she said. “As soon as I fell out of the window I kind of hit the ground a little. I just grabbed my backpack and my phone, and I remember I just ran for my life.”

U-Haul driver’s NYC ‘rampage’ leaves at least 1 dead

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A man driving a U-Haul truck swerved onto sidewalks and plowed into cyclists and scooter riders in New York City on Monday, killing one person and injuring eight others before police were able to pin the careening vehicle against a building following a milelong pursuit through Brooklyn.

The driver was arrested and taken to a police station. His son identified him as Weng Sor, 62, a troubled man with a history of harmful behavior and stints behind bars.

The mayhem unfolded over a harrowing 48 minutes as the truck tore through Brook-



Sor

lyn’s bustling Bay Ridge neighborhood, hitting people at several points along the way before veering on and off a highway as police gave chase.

Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell described it as a “violent rampage,” but said there was no evidence of “terrorism involvement.”

The nine people struck by the vehicle ranged in age from 30 to 66. All were men. One of the injured people was a police officer.

The 44-year-old man who was killed suffered a head injury when he was hit by the truck roughly a half hour after it struck the first victim, the police department said in a statement.

The truck’s winding route ended when a police cruiser cut it off and blocked it against a building near the entrance to a tunnel leading from Brooklyn to Manhattan, more than 3 miles from where the chase began.

Weng Sor’s son, Stephen Sor, 30, told The Associated Press that his father had a history of mental illness and, until recently, was living in Las Vegas, where records show he

was convicted and served time for multiple acts of violence, including stabbing his own brother.

“Very frequently he’ll choose to skip out on his medications and do something like this,” Stephen Sor said in an interview outside his Brooklyn home. “This isn’t the first time he’s been arrested. It’s not the first time he’s gone to jail.”

The truck struck the first victim at 10:17 a.m., police said, and other reports followed as the vehicle moved through a busy section of Brooklyn, just north of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge along New York Harbor.

Bill Gates joins 26 newcomers on list of 50 biggest donors

The Chronicle of Philanthropy

As the ranks of America’s super wealthy grow, the roster of major philanthropists is expanding to include not-so-typical megadonors — among them, a professional clarinetist, a Ph.D. in meat science, and a lawyer who regularly argues before the U.S. Supreme Court.

That’s according to a Chronicle of Philanthropy analysis of giving by the country’s 50 biggest donors in 2022. Twenty-six of the 50 are

new to the Chronicle’s annual ranking, which dates to 2000. They include big names from business such as Airbnb’s Brian Chesky (who gave \$100 million to the Obama Foundation), FedEx’s Fred Smith (\$65 million to the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation) and Roku founder Anthony Wood (\$71.5 million to several charitable giving vehicles).

Also, Jacklyn Bezos, mother of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, made her debut on the list with her hus-

band, Miguel. The two gave \$710.5 million to the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center.

Other Philanthropy 50 first-timers, however, lack the national profile, the Silicon Valley address, or Wall Street credentials that are commonplace in today’s philanthropy world, where such tech and finance titans as Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg and Warren Buffett set the tone.

The ranking’s newcomers include:

■ Edward Avedisian, a retired Boston Pops clarinetist who amassed a fortune trading stocks on the side. Avedisian gave \$100 million to Boston University before his death in December.

■ David Frederick and his wife, Sophia Lynn, who made gifts totaling \$40 million to the University of Pittsburgh and Oxford University in England. Frederick is an appellate attorney who’s argued dozens of cases before the Supreme Court.

■ Sisters Mary Bastian and Emily Markham, the last members of a multigenerational Utah farming and ranching family, who donated 100 acres of land worth \$41.3 million to Utah State University.

■ Gordon and Joyce Davis, who gave \$44 million to Texas Tech, where Gordon — who holds a doctorate in meat science — once taught and coached the university’s meat-judging team to a national championship.

NATION

Antisemitism fears growing for many Jews, survey finds

Associated Press

More than four in 10 Jews in the United States feel their status in America is less secure than it was a year earlier, according to a new survey by the American Jewish Committee.

The survey, conducted in the fall of 2022, was released Monday by the AJC, a prominent Jewish advocacy organization.

The survey was taken in a year of high-profile incidents of antisemitism, including a hostage-taking at a Texas synagogue and anti-Jewish statements shared by celebrities on social media. Former President Donald Trump dined with two openly antisemitic guests, drawing criticism from his own Jewish supporters.

According to the AJC survey, 41% of the respondents said the status of Jews in the U.S. is less secure than it was the year before, while 55% said it was the same. Only 4% thought it was more secure.

The results show anxieties increasing since a comparable survey in 2021, when 31% of respondents thought their status was less secure than a year earlier.

Four in five Jews said in the 2022 survey that antisemitism has grown in the past five years; nearly half said it's taken less seriously than other forms of bigotry or hate.

A quarter of the respondents said they were directly targeted by antisemitic expressions, either in person or on social media, with 3% reporting a physical attack. Nearly four in 10 changed their behavior to lower risks to

their safety.

Similarly, nearly four in 10 reported avoiding visible expressions of Jewishness in public, such as wearing a skullcap. Smaller percentages reported taking similar steps on campus or at work.

Other findings:

■ Nearly 90% of U.S. Jews — and the same percentage of the country's total population — believe antisemitism is a serious problem, up from 73% in 2016.

■ Of the Jews surveyed in 2022, 63% said they see law enforcement as appropriately responsive when it comes to antisemitism, a substantial drop from 2019 when that number was 81%.

The survey collected data from a nationally representative sample of 1,507 adults of Jewish religion or background. It was conducted from Sept. 28 through Nov. 3.

News of antisemitic incidents surfaces almost daily in the U.S. Earlier this month, for example, numerous antisemitic flyers were distributed in suburban Atlanta, including at the home of Georgia's only Jewish state legislator.

Rep. Esther Panitch, a freshman Democrat, denounced the flyers from the floor of the House of Representatives, with dozens of colleagues surrounding her to show solidarity.

"This weekend, it was my turn to be targeted," Panitch said. "Unfortunately, it's not the first time to be afraid as a Jew in the United States."



DANNY WOOD/AP

A tractor sits at a farm in northeastern Colorado in May 2022.

Lawmakers in 11 states considering 'right to repair' for farm equipment

By JESSE BEDAYN
AP/Report for America

DENVER — On Colorado's northeastern plains, where the pencil-straight horizon divides golden fields and blue sky, a farmer named Danny Wood scrambles to plant and harvest proso millet, dryland corn and winter wheat in short, seasonal windows. That is until his high-tech Steiger 370 tractor conks out.

The tractor's manufacturer doesn't allow Wood to make certain fixes himself, and last spring, his fertilizing operations were stalled for three days before the service arrived to add a few lines of missing computer code for \$950.

"That's where they have us over the barrel, it's more like we are renting it than buying it," said Wood, who spent \$300,000 on the used tractor.

Wood's plight, echoed by farmers across the country, has pushed lawmakers in Colorado and 10 other states to introduce bills that would

force manufacturers to provide the tools, software, parts and manuals needed for farmers to do their own repairs—thereby avoiding steep labor costs and delays that imperil profits.

"The manufacturers and the dealers have a monopoly on that repair market because it's lucrative," said Rep. Brianna Titone, a Democrat and one of the bill's sponsors. "(Farmers) just want to get their machine going again."

In Colorado, the legislation is largely being pushed by Democrats while their Republican colleagues find themselves stuck in a tough spot: torn between right-leaning farming constituents asking to be able to repair their own machines and the manufacturing businesses that oppose the idea.

The manufacturers have argued that changing the current practice with this type of legislation would force companies to expose trade secrets. They have also said it would

make it easier for farmers to tinker with the software and illegally crank up the horsepower and bypass the emissions controller — risking operators' safety and the environment.

For the right to repair farm equipment — from thin tractors used between grape vines to behemoth combines for harvesting grain that can cost over half a million dollars — Colorado is joined by 10 states including Florida, Maryland, Missouri, New Jersey, Texas and Vermont.

Many of the bills are finding bipartisan support, said Nathan Proctor, who leads Public Interest Research Group's national right to repair campaign. But in Colorado's House committee on agriculture, Democrats pushed the bill forward in a 9-4 vote along party lines, with Republicans in opposition even though the bill's second sponsor is Republican Rep. Ron Weinberg.

"That's really surprising, and that upset me," said the Republican Wood.

California will try to enshrine right to same-sex marriage in constitution

AP/Report for America

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California, a U.S. trendsetter for progressive policies and a state where the current governor once made news issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples in San Francisco before it was legal, will attempt to enshrine marriage equality in the state constitution.

The effort comes 15 years after a voter-approved initiative, called Proposition 8, banned the state from recognizing same-sex marriages. In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way for same-sex marriage in California. The constitutional amendment is still on the books, however, and that has worried advocates who think

the high court may revisit the 2015 case that legalized gay marriage nationwide.

"It's absolute poison, it is so destructive and it's humiliating that this is in our constitution," said Democrat Scott Wiener, a state senator who represents San Francisco.

He and Democratic Assembly Member Evan Low of Silicon Valley planned to introduce legislation Tuesday to rescind Proposition 8. The measure would need to be approved in the Legislature by a two-thirds vote, and then it will ultimately fall to voters to decide via a referendum.

In the days leading up to Proposition 8's approval, Low joined op-

ponents of the measure outside his alma mater De Anza College in Cupertino, Calif., to call on voters to reject the initiative. When it passed, it felt personal to Low, who is gay.

"Why do fellow Californians hate me?" he said. "Why do they feel that my rights should be eliminated?"

California could follow in the footsteps of Nevada, which in 2020 became the first state to amend its constitution to ensure the right to same-sex marriage. The matter took on fresh urgency last year when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the right to an abortion established by *Roe v. Wade*. At the time, Supreme

Court Justice Clarence Thomas called into question other prominent cases and urged the court to reconsider them. His list included *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which forced states to issue and recognize same-sex marriages.

"In future cases, we should reconsider all of this Court's substantive due process precedents, including *Griswold*, *Lawrence* and *Obergefell*," Thomas wrote, referencing two other landmark cases involving access to birth control and a decision striking down laws against same-sex sexual activity.

In December, President Joe Biden signed into law the Respect for Marriage Act, which requires

states to recognize same-sex marriages, but the legislation doesn't force states to allow them if *Obergefell* is overturned.

Wiener and Low hope to replicate the process under which state voters in November approved a constitutional change guaranteeing the right to abortion.

Proposition 8 has yet to be repealed because there was less urgency to do so after the state was allowed to resume issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples and gay marriage was legalized nationwide, Wiener said.

"It became a fire drill once the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*," he said.

TECHNOLOGY

Some teachers using ChatGPT despite outcry

By JOCELYN GECKER
Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Under the fluorescent lights of a fifth grade classroom in Lexington, Ky., Donnie Piercey instructed his 23 students to try and outwit the “robot” that was churning out writing assignments.

The robot was the new artificial intelligence tool ChatGPT, which can generate everything from essays and haikus to term papers within seconds. The technology has panicked teachers and prompted school districts to block access to the site. But Piercey has taken another approach by embracing it as a teaching tool, saying his job is to prepare students for a world where knowledge of AI will be required.

“This is the future,” said Piercey, who describes ChatGPT as just the latest technology in his 17 years of teaching that prompted concerns about the potential for cheating. The calculator, spell-check, Google, Wikipedia, YouTube. Now all his students have Chromebooks on their desks. “As educators, we haven’t figured out the best way to use artificial intelligence yet. But it’s coming, whether we want it to or not.”

One exercise in his class pitted students against the machine in a lively, interactive writing game. Piercey asked students to “Find

the Bot.” Each student summarized a text about boxing champion and Kentucky icon Muhammad Ali, then tried to figure out which was written by the chatbot.

At the elementary school level, Piercey is less worried about cheating and plagiarism than high school teachers. His district has blocked students from ChatGPT while allowing teacher access. Many educators around the country say districts need time to evaluate and figure out the chatbot but also acknowledge the futility of a ban that today’s tech-savvy students can work around.

“To be perfectly honest, do I wish it could be uninvented? Yes. But it happened,” said Steve Darlow, the technology trainer at Florida’s Santa Rosa County District Schools, which has blocked the application on school-issued devices and networks.

He sees the advent of AI platforms as both “revolutionary and disruptive” to education. He envisions teachers asking ChatGPT to make “amazing lesson plans for a substitute” or even for help grading papers. “I know it’s lofty talk, but this is a real game changer. You are going to have an advantage in life and business and education from using it.”

ChatGPT quickly became a global phenomenon after its No-



TIMOTHY D. EASLEY/AP

Kimaya Johnson, left, and Bella Whitice go over their lines of a play written by ChatGPT in Donnie Piercey’s class at Stonewall Elementary School in Lexington, Ky., on Feb. 6.

vember launch, and rival companies including Google are racing to release their own versions of AI-powered chatbots.

The topic of AI platforms and how schools should respond drew hundreds of educators to conference rooms at the Future of Education Technology Conference in New Orleans last month, where Texas math teacher Heather Brantley gave an enthusiastic talk on the “Magic of Writing with AI for all Subjects.”

Brantley said she was amazed at ChatGPT’s ability to make her sixth grade math lessons more creative and applicable to everyday life.

“I’m using ChatGPT to enhance all my lessons,” she said in an interview. The platform is blocked for students but open to teachers at her school, White Oak Intermediate. “Take any lesson you’re doing and say, ‘Give me a real-world

example,’ and you’ll get examples from today — not 20 years ago when the textbooks we’re using were written.”

For a lesson about slope, the chatbot suggested students build ramps out of cardboard and other items found in a classroom, then measure the slope. For teaching about surface area, the chatbot noted that sixth graders would see how the concept applies to real life when wrapping gifts or building a cardboard box, said Brantley.

She is urging districts to train staff to use the AI platform to stimulate student creativity and problem solving skills. “We have an opportunity to guide our students with the next big thing that will be part of their entire lives. Let’s not block it and shut them out.”

Students in Piercey’s class said the novelty of working with a chatbot makes learning fun.

After a few rounds of “Find the

Bot,” Piercey asked his class what skills it helped them hone. Hands shot up. “How to properly summarize and correctly capitalize words and use commas,” said one student. A lively discussion ensued on the importance of developing a writing voice and how some of the chatbot’s sentences lacked flair or sounded stilted.

Trevor James Medley, 11, felt that sentences written by students “have a little more feeling. More backbone. More flavor.”

The fifth graders seemed unaware of the hype or controversy surrounding ChatGPT. For these children, who will grow up as the world’s first native AI users, their approach is simple: Use it for suggestions, but do your own work.

“You shouldn’t take advantage of it,” says Katherine McCormick, 10. “You’re not learning anything if you type in what you want, and then it gives you the answer.”

Dubai again plans for flying taxi takeoff, this time by 2026

By JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Dubai again is planning for the takeoff of flying taxis in this futuristic city-state on the Arabian Peninsula, offering its firmest details yet Monday for a pledged launch by 2026.

Since 2017, the commercial capital of the United Arab Emirates has offered promises to launch flying taxis in the city already home to the world’s tallest building and other architectural wonders. A series of different types and companies have cycled through those promises as well, most timed to be included at Dubai’s annual World Government Summit, which saw this year’s edition begin Monday.

Dubai’s ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, announced the relaunched flying



KAMRAN JEBRELI/AP

A man experiences a driving simulator of a flying taxi at the Dubai Roads and Transportation Authority’s stand during the World Government SummitWLD in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on Monday.

taxi program on Twitter on Sunday. This time, Dubai highlighted the six-rotor electric flying taxi

made by Joby Aviation of Santa Cruz, Calif., in the promotional video.

The inclusion of Joby Aviation, rather than the Chinese-made EHang 184 and XPeng X2 or the German-made electric Volocopter all previously displayed in Dubai, wasn’t explained by Emirati officials. Joby aircraft featured at a stand at the World Government Summit on Monday.

“We’re excited about the opportunity and actively exploring the possibility,” said Oliver Walker-Jones, a spokesman for Joby Aviation.

Ahmed Bahrozian, an official in the emirate’s Roads and Transport Authority, similarly told the state-owned Dubai Eye radio station on Monday that “it’s early days” for the plan.

“We haven’t yet signed with any partners yet,” he said.

Another difference in this year’s promise on flying taxis is

the release of specifics about the program. The city plans four “vertiports” by Dubai International Airport, the world’s busiest for international travel, downtown Dubai, the manmade Palm Jumeirah archipelago and Dubai Marina. Those points will include two launching pads and four charging points for the flying taxis.

“We believe those are attractive areas with business hubs and tourist hubs that could generate considerable demand,” Bahrozian said.

The pricing for the flying taxis “will be in the range of a limousine service in Dubai, maybe slightly higher,” Bahrozian said. The RTA describes limo services rates as “at least 30% higher than taxi fares” in the city. Taxis have a minimum fare of around \$3.25 and charge \$0.50 a kilometer.

WORLD

Russia denies claims it plans to destabilize Moldova

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russia on Tuesday angrily rejected the Moldovan president's claims about an alleged plot by Moscow to overthrow her government and accused Moldovan authorities of trying to distract public attention away from the country's own domestic problems.

Moldova's President Maia Sandu said Monday that the purported Russian plot envisioned attacks on government buildings, hostage-takings and other violent actions by groups of saboteurs in order to put the nation "at the disposal of Russia" and derail its hopes to join the Euro-

pean Union.

Responding Tuesday, Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova dismissed Sandu's claims as "absolutely unfounded and unsubstantiated."

Sandu's claim came a week after neighboring Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his country had intercepted plans by Russian secret services to destroy Moldova. Moldovan intelligence officials later said they confirmed the allegations.

Zakharova charged that Ukrainian authorities made up the claim about a purported Russian plan to

destabilize Moldova in order to draw it into a confrontation with Russia. She argued that Moldovan authorities used "the myth about a Russian threat to distract Moldovan citizens' attention from internal problems resulting from a disastrous social-economic course of the current administration and to step up the fight against dissent and political opponents."

Zakharova insisted Russia poses no threat to Moldova, and hopes to develop mutually beneficial cooperation.

Also on Tuesday, UEFA decided a playoff soccer game scheduled in

Moldova would be played in an empty stadium because of the situation. UEFA said no fans will be allowed in the stadium Thursday when Sheriff hosts Serbian club Partizan in the first leg of a Europa Conference League knockout playoff.

The order was "due to the decision of the authorities in Moldova," UEFA said in a statement.

Since Russian troops rolled into Ukraine nearly a year ago, Moldova, a former Soviet republic of about 2.6 million people, has sought to forge closer ties with its Western partners. Last June, it was granted EU

membership candidate status, the same day as Ukraine.

In December, Moldova's national intelligence agency warned Russia could launch a new offensive with the aim of creating a land corridor through southern Ukraine to Moldova's Moscow-backed breakaway region of Transnistria.

Transnistria broke away after a 1992 civil war, but is not recognized by most countries. It extends roughly 250 miles from the eastern bank of the Dniester River to the country's border with Ukraine. Russia has about 1,500 troops nominally as "peacekeepers" in the region.

Hackers target Bahrain airport, news sites to mark uprising anniversary

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Hackers said they had taken down the websites of Bahrain's international airport, state news agency and chamber of commerce on Tuesday to mark the 12-year anniversary of an Arab Spring uprising in the small Gulf country.

A statement posted online by a

group calling itself Al-Toufan, or "The Flood" in Arabic, claimed to have hacked the airport website, which was unavailable for at least a half hour in the middle of the day.

It also claimed to have taken down the websites of the state-run Bahrain News Agency, which was sporadically unavailable midday,

and the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce, which was down in the afternoon.

The group posted images showing 504 Gateway Timeout Errors, saying the hacking was "in support of the revolution of our oppressed people of Bahrain."

The same group appears to have hacked and changed articles on

the website of Akhbar Al Khaleej, a pro-government newspaper in Bahrain, hours earlier. The newspaper's website was still down Tuesday.

Feb. 14, 2011, marked the first day of protests led by Bahrain's Shiite majority against the Sunni monarchy. Bahrain quashed the pro-democracy uprising by force

with the support of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, but has continued to see sporadic unrest over the years.

The same shadowy group of hackers targeted government websites during elections held in November that were boycotted by a banned Shiite opposition group and others.

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SERVICE DIRECTORY
 The Daily Guide to Navigating the European Business Market

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman convicted in poison food ID theft bid

NY NEW YORK — A New York City woman accused of feeding poisoned cheesecake to her lookalike in a bid to steal the other woman's identity has been convicted of attempted murder, prosecutors said.

Viktoria Nasyrova, 47, was found guilty by a jury of trying to kill Olga Tsvyk, 35, with cheesecake laced with a powerful sedative and then stealing her passport and other valuables in August 2016, Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz said in a news release.

The two women resemble each other, with dark hair and similar skin tones, and Nasyrova hoped to impersonate Tsvyk after killing her, the district attorney said.

Nasyrova was convicted of charges including attempted murder, assault and unlawful imprisonment. She faces up to 25 years in prison when she is sentenced March 21.

Man pleads guilty to racial attack of neighbors

MA LEXINGTON — A Massachusetts man has pleaded guilty to repeatedly tossing banana peels onto his neighbors' property in what prosecutors said was a case of racial harassment, and to having more than 70 guns in his home that he was not legally allowed to possess.

Robert Ivarson, 55, of Lexington, was sentenced to up to nine years in prison after pleading guilty in Middlesex Superior Court to criminal harassment, a criminal civil rights violation and more than 100 weapons charges, District Attorney Marian Ryan said in a statement. He was also ordered to have no contact with the victims and undergo a mental health evaluation and any recommended treatment.

Ivarson was arrested in December 2016 after a Black family from Haiti in his neighborhood reported finding banana peels on their property on 30 to 40 occasions over several months, authorities said.

Menstrual questions cut from athletic forms

FL ORLANDO — Questions about female athletes' menstrual history will no longer appear on the medical forms that Florida high school students have to fill out before participating in sports.

The Florida High School Athletic Association axed the questions after listening to a flood of complaints contained in letters read aloud during an emergency meeting of the board.

Answering the questions was previously optional, but an association advisory committee recently recommended that it be mandatory, sparking the firestorm of criticism.



JOHN MINCHILLO/AP

Bringing in the New Year

Revelers celebrate Lunar New Year in Manhattan's Chinatown, on Sunday, in New York.

Some called the questions "humiliating" and "invasive," and others suggested they were connected to a recent bill barring transgender girls and women from playing on public school teams intended for student athletes identified as girls at birth.

Dennis the Menace statue found in lake

CA MONTEREY — Dennis the Menace has been found.

A statue of the comic strip character that was stolen from a park in Monterey, Calif., last summer was found submerged in a nearby lake.

"Today is a happy day!" Monterey County Sheriff Tina Nieto said at a press conference where the statue was wheeled in on a handcart.

The sheriff's dive team found the 3-foot-tall statue in Roberts Lake after Monterey city police received an anonymous tip about its location.

Goats let loose in protest of homeless sweep

OR PORTLAND — A herd of city goats well-known in Portland, Ore., were temporarily set free in what appeared to be an act of protest against a planned sweep of a neighborhood by homeless encampment.

The fence of the goats' enclosure in north Portland was cut, allowing them to get out. The Oregonian/OregonLive reported that the co-owner of the Belmont

THE CENSUS

\$91M The amount a suburban Chicago man won in a settlement with 7-Eleven after his legs were amputated after a car lurched forward into a parking space, pinning him against the front of the store. The man was waiting in front of a 7-Eleven store in Bensenville, Ill., for his carpool ride when a motorist pulling into a parking space stepped on his car's accelerator instead of the brake, said James Power, one of the attorneys representing the plaintiff. The crash could have been prevented, Power said, if 7-Elevens had installed bollards between storefronts and parking spaces.

Goats nonprofit, Robin Casey, found a note rolled up inside the fence.

"In what reality is the comfort of five goats valued over the shelter of more than fifteen people," the news outlet reported the letter as saying. "So, it's time for the Belmont Goats to enjoy a little walk in the park." It was signed by "some anarchists."

Casey said all the escaped goats have been retrieved and appear to be healthy.

Portland officials announced last year that they had selected the site where the goats currently live, on city-owned land, for tiny home village and affordable housing projects. They agreed to relocate the goats to another area nearby. But the spot where the goats are supposed to be relocated to is home to an encampment where more than a dozen people live.

Mars Wrigley fined after workers fall into chocolate

PA ELIZABETHTOWN — Federal workplace safety authorities have fined a central Pennsylvania confectionery factory more than \$14,500 fol-

lowing an accident last year in which two workers fell into a vat of chocolate.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration cited Mars Wrigley in the June accident at the Elizabethtown M&M/Mars factory, saying the workers were not authorized to work in the tanks and weren't trained on the proper safety procedures for the equipment.

Officials said two workers employed by an outside contracting firm fell into the partially filled chocolate tank while doing maintenance work. Emergency responders were able to free the pair by cutting a hole in the bottom of the tank, officials said. Both were taken to hospitals.

Don't feed the bears! But birds OK, research shows

NV RENO — Don't feed the bears!

Wildlife biologists and forest rangers have preached the mantra for nearly a century at national parks like Yellowstone and Yosemite, and for decades in areas where urban development increasingly invaded native wildlife habitat.

But don't feed the birds? That may be a different story — at least for one bird species at Lake Tahoe.

Snowshoe and cross-country ski enthusiasts routinely feed the tiny mountain chickadees high above the north shore of the alpine lake on the California-Nevada border.

New research from University of Nevada scientists found that supplementing the chickadees' natural food sources with food provided in feeders or by hand did not negatively impact them, as long as proper food is used and certain rules are followed.

Abortion pill could be pulled off market by suit

DC WASHINGTON — A Texas lawsuit with a key deadline this month could threaten the nationwide availability of medication abortion, which now accounts for the majority of abortions in the U.S.

The case filed by abortion opponents who helped challenge Roe v. Wade seeks to reverse a decades-old approval by the Food and Drug Administration.

If a federal judge appointed by former President Donald Trump sides with them, it could halt the supply of the drug mifepristone in all states.

"It could have an immediate impact on the country," said Mini Timmaraju, president of NARAL Pro-Choice America. "In some ways this is a backdoor ban on abortion."

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Quake compounds economic woes in Turkey, Syria

By **STEPHEN FRANKLIN**
Chicago Tribune

Tragedy has long haunted the broad swath of land where earthquakes have just claimed thousands of lives, left many thousands of people injured and plunged already impoverished millions into yet deeper financial despair.

For centuries, an angry earth has shaken communities in the sunbaked mountains and valleys that sprawl across southeastern Turkey. But the earth's latest deadly roar comes at an especially vulnerable moment for Turkey and Syria, where an unusually bitter cold hourly seals the rubble and the earthquakes' countless bodies.

This tragedy is not a distant one for me.

As a journalist, I have traveled along Turkey's southeastern border and visited Syrian refugees and the places where they were living. But the deeper significance is that my wife and I, as Peace Corps volunteers, ran a small, meagerly supported orphanage for Turkish boys in a slum on the far edge of Istanbul more than five decades ago.

Many of the boys, at 6 years old and up, were the sole survivors of an earthquake in eastern Turkey. We used our Peace Corps salaries to buy the boys meat or fish one day of the week and pleaded with charities to provide clothes for them.

The enormous calamity confronts the two nations that have been equally struggling for some time to overcome massive economic crises and a lingering 12-year civil war in Sy-

ria that has made the country a pariah and sent millions of Syrians into exile in Turkey or independent pockets within the country. That includes a narrow scrap of land in northwestern Syria where they are huddled along the Turkish border and protected by fighters against the regime.

One of the places hit by the earthquake, this tiny haven is a remnant of a once-hopeful uprising that collapsed when Russia sent fighters and air power to rescue Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime. Many of those living there have fled again and again, leaving all behind. At the peak of the fighting, the Russian-led air war was exceptionally cruel in targeting hospitals there and elsewhere, leaving few medical resources for today's victims of the earthquake.

For those living in the regime-controlled areas, existence has similarly been difficult. Much of the nation's infrastructure has been demolished. Many Syrians have succumbed to poverty, and the financially crippled regime has markedly reduced subsidies.

So, too, as Turkey rushes to move thousands to safe housing, set up medical facilities in cities and distant villages, and lead a global race to pull lives from the rubble, it is pinned down by a daunting economic collapse. An inflation rate nearing 90% in the last year has crippled businesses and meant great sacrifices for working-class Turks to buy basics. In February 2021, the U.S. dollar was equal to seven Turkish lira. Today, it is about 18.

Turkey generously welcomed Syrians fleeing mayhem in their country, and the number

eventually reached 3.6 million. Years later, many Syrians live in the earthquake area in whatever housing they can afford or the refugee camp network created when they first arrived. However, their welcome has waned as some Turks view them as competitors for jobs or burdens for a struggling Turkish economy. Southeastern Turkey is one of the nation's poorest regions, one of the reasons large numbers of Turks have traditionally fled to large cities.

The history of earthquakes has also been the cruelest for Turks living in remote villages in mud homes or those made of similarly flimsy construction. But the quakes have also extracted heavy tolls in larger communities where construction precautions were not taken. That danger was theoretically swept aside by 2018 legislation that laid down new construction safety measures. But Turks have complained that the law has not been well enforced. Indeed, compelling video of the sudden collapse of a 14-story apartment building in Adana, a large city about 100 miles from the earthquake's epicenter, makes clear the quake's immense power and the precarious nature of housing for numbers of Turks.

And so, as before, I expect the survivors of this latest tragedy will most likely need far more than bandages and temporary housing to recover.

As will their nations.

Stephen Franklin is a former foreign correspondent and labor writer for the Chicago Tribune who has trained journalists in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. He and his wife, Suzanne, were Peace Corps volunteers in Turkey.

West should send captured Iranian weapons to Ukraine

By **JONATHAN LORD**
 AND **ANDREA KENDALL-TAYLOR**
Special to The Washington Post

Last month, both the U.S. and French navies intercepted cargo vessels smuggling thousands of weapons from Iran bound for Yemen. Tehran sent the shipments in defiance of a U.N. Security Council resolution banning the provision of weapons to the Houthis, Iran's Yemeni partner and proxy force in the civil conflict. The two seizures alone netted thousands of Russian-style assault rifles and machine guns, dozens of antitank missiles, and over half a million rounds of ammunition. Likewise, last summer, the British navy snagged an Iranian vessel carrying surface-to-air missiles and engines for land-attack cruise missiles. Instead of allowing these weapons to gather dust, Washington should send them to Ukraine.

U.S. Central Command, through its work with European allies and Gulf partners, is well on its way to turning the critical waterways around the Arabian Peninsula into a panopticon, making it increasingly difficult for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps navy to operate without detection. The U.S. Naval Forces Central Command's Task Force 59 has blazed the trail of innovation in maritime domain awareness, which has enabled more and more seizures of smuggled Iranian weapons at sea. Its success in stymying Iran has left CENTCOM with vast stores of seized weapons. These weapons, once inspected and recorded by the United Nations as evidence of Iran's violations of U.N. Security Council resolution 2624, are housed in U.S. military facilities across the region.

It's time to put these weapons in service to a good cause: supporting Ukraine. The Defense Department and NATO allies have mobilized

to deliver various weapons to Ukraine, everything from rifles to rockets, and soon tanks. Last month, the Pentagon went so far as to raid its weapons stockpile in Israel for artillery shells to support Kyiv. And the need is not going away. The Pentagon is scrambling, for example, to boost its production of artillery shells by 500% within two years, all the while storing thousands of Iranian munitions. While these captured Iranian weapons will not fill every requirement of the Ukrainian army, many would certainly help as it approaches the first anniversary of defending its homeland against Russia's illegal invasion.

Beyond filling immediate military necessities, the transfer of these weapons would have other positive knock-on effects. Sending Iran's weapons to Ukraine for use against Russia could drive a wedge between Moscow and Tehran at a moment when their interests are converging. Iran has trained and equipped the Russian military with loitering munitions, which the Russians have unleashed on Kyiv's civilian infrastructure, in a blatant effort to leave Ukrainians in the dark and cold this winter. Russia and Iran have colluded to evade sanctions, trade and resist the West's attempts to constrain their respective efforts to destabilize Europe and the Middle East. Turning Iran's weapons back on Russia might drive Moscow to pressure Tehran to stop smuggling weapons to Yemen, particularly as more shipments are intercepted.

Additionally, the transfer of these weapons could also give ammunition to Ukraine in the information war. Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government has demonstrated tremendous aptitude for info operations and could easily find innovative ways to translate Iranian weapons not just into battlefield victories but also into public messaging ones as well.

Legal obstacles may exist that prevent President Joe Biden from treating these seized Iranian weapons as U.S. stocks and simply authorizing their transfer under Presidential Drawdown Authority, as he has done 31 times so far since August 2021. But if these weapons are technically still the property of Iran, the president should waste no time in seeking legal action to seize them under U.S. civil forfeiture authorities. The Biden administration and its European allies have already demonstrated tremendous creativity in applying new policy tools in support of Kyiv. Biden could, for example, request legal authorities from Congress to enable this transfer of arms. Already, the Biden administration secured congressional support to allow Washington to send the seized assets of Russian oligarchs to support Ukraine's reconstruction. Congress would welcome the opportunity to find new, low-cost avenues to support Ukraine — and would likely jump at the chance to poke Moscow in the eye with Tehran's finger.

Last year, the Biden administration debuted a National Security Strategy that seeks to marshal the resources of the United States, with those of its partners and allies, to defend the rules-based order. Iran and Russia are prime offenders that have sought to bully their way to greater power and influence through the brutalization of their neighbors. While these two pariah-states deserve each other, there's poetic justice in turning their malign activities back on them. Sending Iran's weapons to Ukraine advances the mission in ways both tangible and symbolic. Washington should move without delay.

Jonathan Lord is a senior fellow and director of the Middle East security program at the Center for a New American Security. Andrea Kendall-Taylor is a senior fellow and director of the trans-Atlantic security program at the center.

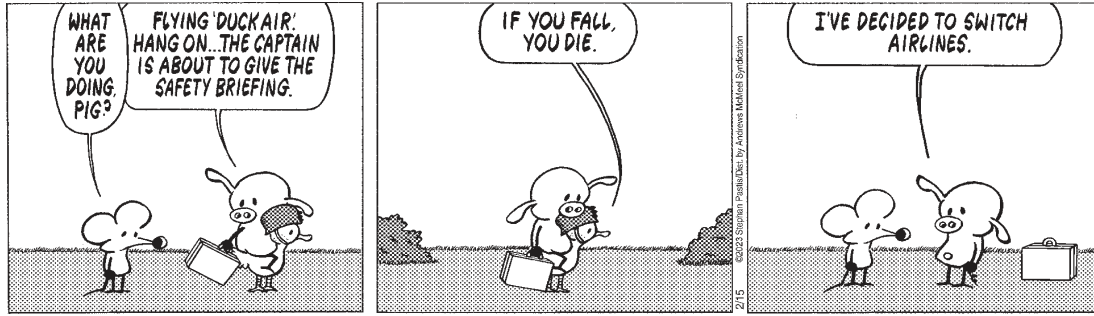
Frazz



Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



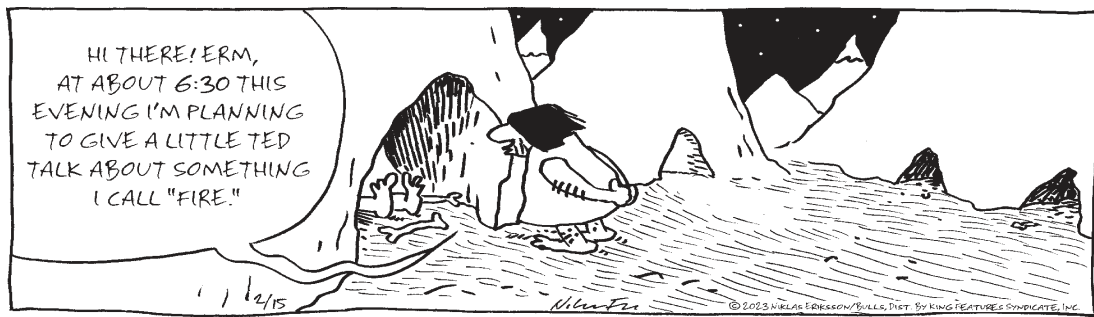
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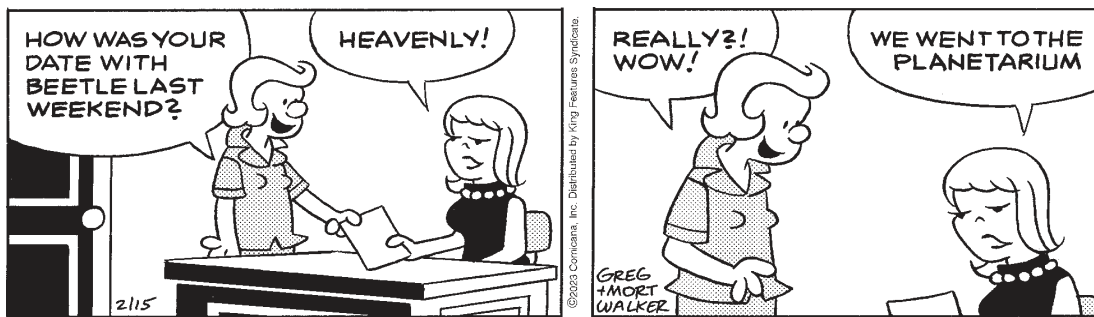
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16				17			
18							19	20				
			21				22					
23	24	25		26		27		28			29	30
31			32		33		34		35			
36				37		38		39		40		
			41		42		43		44			
45	46						47			48	49	50
51					52	53						
54					55				56			
57					58				59			

ACROSS

- 1 "Young Frankenstein" role
- 5 Crater edge
- 8 Writer Kingsley
- 12 Only
- 13 Yale grad
- 14 React in horror
- 15 Facial treatments
- 17 Sofa brand
- 18 TV detective Remington
- 19 Lustrous fabric
- 21 Young bloke
- 22 Pro votes
- 23 — Kippur
- 26 PBS supporter
- 28 March honoree, for short
- 31 Art colony in New Mexico
- 33 24 horas
- 35 Jug handles
- 36 Celtic priest
- 38 AOL rival
- 40 Shred
- 41 Belgrade resident
- 43 Short trip
- 45 Black Sea port
- 47 Ruling periods
- 51 Sobbed
- 52 Making lunches for the week, say
- 54 Final Four org.
- 55 Vagrant

- 56 Bosc, for one lawn, say
- 58 Apr. check cashier
- 59 Wrong

- 20 DDE's opponent
- 23 Since Jan. 1
- 24 Rowing need
- 25 Computer accessory
- 27 Goal
- 29 MSNBC's Melber
- 30 Recipe abbr.
- 32 Naps
- 34 Hindu retreats
- 37 ER workers
- 39 Yuletide tune
- 42 Disney deer
- 44 Kate Middleton's sister
- 45 Has
- 46 1920s art style
- 48 Mushroomed
- 49 Close
- 50 Agile
- 53 Continent north of Afr.

DOWN

- 1 Doctrines
- 2 Toe malady
- 3 Shoppe description
- 4 Drive away
- 5 Ebbed
- 6 Sort
- 7 Singer Elliott
- 8 Stir up
- 9 Does well, golf-wise
- 10 "Understood"
- 11 Bridge
- 16 Arkin or Alda

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

2-15

CRYPTOQUIP

W YKQDYOC XZKO CZP Y APHGF

ZR XWSDT LFYX W LWKK

GZZU RZQ OWHHDQ XZSZQQZL.

TFDDTF! UDAYAT!

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN THEY HEARD I WAS PICKED FOR THE BASKETBALL TEAM, MY FRIENDS CHEERED "HOOP HOOP HOORAY!"

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals W

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FACES

New this week: Pink, J-Hope, 'Woman King'

Associated Press

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

Movies

■ A week after it hit theaters, the neo-noir thriller "Sharper" — anchored by Julianne Moore — arrives on Apple TV+ on Friday. No one is quite who they seem in the film, directed by Benjamin Caron, whose credits include "Andor" and "The Crown," as we delve into myriad cons among New York's well-heeled set.

■ Directory Gina Prince-Bythewood's "The Woman King" arrives on Netflix on Thursday, perfect for a rewatch or to finally get those holdouts on board with one of last year's most exciting mainstream blockbusters. The action epic starring Viola Davis as an African warrior was widely expected to get Oscar nominations but was completely shut out.

■ If you've already made it through last week's streaming rom-com options, "Somebody I Used to Know" on Prime Video, and "Your Place or Mine" on Netflix, another starry offering is on video on demand. "Maybe I Do," which became available to rent on Tuesday, brings together Diane Keaton, Richard Gere, Susan Sarandon, Emma Roberts, Luke Bracey and William H. Macy for a classic meet-the-parents setup.

— AP Film Writer
Lindsey Bahr

Music

■ You can take away Pink's dinner, fun, liquor, soul, dog, birthday cake and everything she loves, but don't take away her dancing shoes. That's the message from "Never Gonna Not Dance Again," an explosion of pop she wrote with hitmakers Max Martin and Shellback, with a video of Pink roller-dancing through a supermarket. The single is on "Trustfall," her ninth studio album set for release on Friday, which features appearances from The Lumineers, Chris Stapleton and First Aid Kit.



RCA RECORDS/AP

Pink will release her ninth album, "Trustfall," on Friday.

■ BTS star J-Hope has a documentary dropping Friday that chronicles three milestones: the making of the singer's first solo album, "Jack In the Box"; his 2022 Lollapalooza performance as the first South Korean artist to headline the festival; and the album's listening party. "J-Hope in the Box" will release globally on Disney+. J-Hope — born Jeong Hoseok — is on hiatus from BTS while the rest of the band — RM, Jin, Suga, Jimin, V and Jung Kook — fulfill their mandatory military duties in South Korea.

— Entertainment Writer
Mark Kennedy

Television

■ Billy Crudup stars in a new Apple TV+ series called "Hello Tomorrow!" Set in the future — which looks like a mashup of "The Jetsons" and "Pleasantville" — Crudup plays Jack, a traveling salesman of lunar timeshares. He is a leader among his colleagues (including Hank Azaria) for his unwavering optimism and sales numbers, but beneath the surface there's a darker side to Jack. "Hello Tomorrow!" debuts Friday.

■ Roseanne Barr has been relatively quiet since she was fired from ABC's "Roseanne" revival in 2018 for posting a racist tweet. She's back with her first comedy special in almost 20 years, "Roseanne Barr: Cancel This," which premiered Monday on the Fox Nation streaming service along with the documentary "Who is Roseanne Barr?"

— Alicia Rancilio

Elba rules himself out of James Bond role

Idris Elba says he's sticking with being tormented detective John Luther — not James Bond.

Speaking Tuesday to the World Government Summit in Dubai, Elba brought up the persistent discussions about him taking over as Ian Fleming's famed British spy. Those had grown louder after Daniel Craig's demise as Bond in "No Time to Die."

Asked about his upcoming film based on the British series "Luth-

er," Elba, 50, clearly took himself out of playing 007.

"You know, a lot of people talk about another character that begins with 'J' and ends with 'B,' but I'm not going to be that guy. I'm going to be John Luther. That's who I am."

"Luther: The Fallen Sun" is due in U.S. theaters on Feb. 24 and on Netflix beginning March 10.

From The Associated Press



WILLY SANJUAN, INVISION/AP

Jamie Lee Curtis, left, talks with Tom Cruise at the Academy Awards nominees luncheon Monday at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, Calif.

Academy head: Response to Oscars slap inadequate

Cruise causes a stir as stars mingle at nominees luncheon

By ANDREW DALTON

Associated Press

The slap sat front and center at Monday's Oscar nominees luncheon.

Motion picture academy president Janet Yang neither had to describe it nor say the names Will Smith or Chris Rock for the ballroom full of award hopefuls to know what she was talking about when she aired her regrets.

"I'm sure you all remember we experienced an unprecedented event at the Oscars," Yang told a crowd that included Tom Cruise, Angela Bassett, Cate Blanchett and Steven Spielberg. "What happened onstage was wholly unacceptable and the response from our organization was inadequate."

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences did little in response to Smith storming the stage and slapping Rock during last year's telecast or in the immediate aftermath. It was nearly two weeks before its board of governors voted to ban Smith from the Oscars and all other academy events for 10 years. Smith had preemptively resigned as an academy member.

"We learned from this that the academy must be fully transparent and accountable in our actions," Yang said, "and particularly in times of crisis you must act swiftly, compassionately and decisively for ourselves and for our industry. You should and can expect no less from us going forward."

Yang, who was not president at the time, was interrupted by a mild round of applause, and did not elaborate further, moving on to happier topics.

She was met with whooping applause when told the nominees that all categories will be shown live on the March 12 ABC telecast. Last year, in a controversy largely eclipsed by the slap, several Oscars were handed out in a pre-show ceremony and winners' edited speeches were squeezed into the main show.

The luncheon is a warm, feel-good affair where nominees are in general treated with equality, and a relative unknown up for best animated short might be seated next to an A-lister up for best actor.

Some attract more attention than others, and don't need to wear the nametags handed out to all.

Cruise, nominated as a producer for best picture candidate "Top Gun: Maverick," managed briefly to mix in with the crowd in a ballroom at the Beverly Hilton before he attracted a crowd of gawkers.

He and Jamie Lee Curtis, up for best supporting actress for "Everything Everywhere All at Once," pressed their foreheads together and giggled when they bumped into each other.

He smiled widely as he posed for photos with his old "War of the Worlds" and "Minority Report" collaborator Steven Spielberg, up for best director for "The Fabelmans," and Michelle Yeoh, up for best actress for "Everything Everywhere All at Once," the year's most nominated film.

The centerpiece of the luncheon is the class picture, the staging of which feels like a high school graduation. An academy governor read off the names of 182 nominees and their peers cheered as they walked up and took their spots on the risers.

"Jamie Lee Curtis," producer DeVon Franklin enunciated loudly into the mic. Curtis leapt up and got a big ovation as she climbed alone to the top tier.

"Causeway" supporting actor Brian Tyree Henry, a first-time nominee, stood at his table, raised an arm in the air and yelled when his name was called.

Bassett, nominated for best supporting actress for "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever," got one of the biggest cheers when her name was called, and hugged Cruise when she got to her spot next to him.

The luncheon also functions as an Oscars orientation for would-be winners. Yang emphasized that acceptance speeches at next month's ceremony have to be kept to 45 seconds.

"Let's say it together, 45 seconds," she told the crowd.

They repeated it back to her in unison, though at least a few are sure to forget — or ignore her — once they get the statue in their hands.



Henry



Bassett

SCOREBOARD/NBA

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Men's AP Top 25

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

	Record	Pts	Prv
1. Alabama (38)	22-3	1523	3
2. Houston (22)	23-2	1503	2
3. Purdue (2)	23-3	1408	1
4. UCLA	21-4	1302	7
5. Kansas	20-5	1283	9
6. Texas	20-5	1214	5
7. Virginia	19-4	1212	8
8. Arizona	22-4	1139	4
9. Baylor	19-6	1072	14
10. Tennessee	19-6	896	6
11. Marquette	20-6	815	10
12. Kansas St	19-6	790	12
13. Gonzaga	21-5	761	16
14. Indiana	18-7	717	18
15. Miami	20-5	693	19
16. Xavier	19-6	642	13
17. Saint Mary's	22-5	567	15
18. Creighton	17-8	517	23
19. Iowa St.	16-8	396	11
20. UConn	19-7	358	21
21. San Diego St.	20-5	271	25
22. TCU	17-8	204	17
23. NC State	20-6	140	22
24. Providence	18-7	136	20
25. FAU	24-2	117	—

Others receiving votes: Missouri 114, Northwestern 96, Illinois 84, Pittsburgh 82, Nevada 36, Oklahoma St. 23, Texas A&M 16, Oral Roberts 9, Iowa 5, Arkansas 4, Rutgers 2, Maryland 1, Coll of Charleston 1, Boise St. 1.

Men's USA Today Top 25

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

	Record	Pts	Pvs
1. Alabama (15)	22-3	782	3
2. Houston (15)	23-2	775	2
3. Purdue (1)	23-3	728	1
4. UCLA	21-4	679	7
5. Texas	20-5	642	6
6. Virginia (1)	19-4	634	9
7. Kansas	20-5	624	8
8. Arizona	22-4	554	4
9. Baylor	19-6	549	12
10. Marquette	20-6	455	10
11. Tennessee	19-6	438	5
12. Gonzaga	21-5	368	16
13. Miami (Fla.)	20-5	360	20
14. Kansas St.	19-6	354	11
15. Indiana	18-7	346	18
16. Xavier	19-6	328	15
17. Saint Mary's	22-5	305	14
18. Iowa St.	16-8	238	13
19. Creighton	17-8	226	—
20. San Diego St.	20-5	158	23
21. Providence	18-7	151	17
22. North Carolina St.	20-6	128	22
23. Connecticut	19-7	119	21
24. TCU	17-8	78	19
25. Texas A&M	18-7	65	—

Dropped out: No. 24 Clemson (18-7); No. 24 Duke (17-8).

Others receiving votes: Northwestern (18-7) 54; Florida Atlantic (24-2) 49; Illinois (17-7) 41; Pittsburgh (18-7) 35; Clemson (18-7) 21; Rutgers (16-9) 21; Maryland (17-8) 20; Missouri (19-6) 15; Oklahoma State (16-9) 15; Auburn (17-8) 13; Nevada (20-6) 13; Duke (17-8) 12; Iowa (16-9) 4; College of Charleston (24-3) 2; Oral Roberts (23-4) 1.

Monday's men's scores

EAST	
Bucknell 73, American 51	
Delaware 71, Stony Brook 60	
Hofstra 66, Drexel 52	
Howard 78, Md.-Eastern Shore 69	
Monmouth (NJ) 85, NC A&T 71	
SOUTH	
Alcorn St. 67, Florida A&M 64	
Coll. of Charleston 99, Northeastern 63	
Elon 70, Hampton 68	
Grambling St. 68, Prairie View 64	
Jackson St. 91, Bethune-Cookman 64	
MVSU 76, Alabama St. 70	
Miami 80, North Carolina 72	
NC Central 85, Coppin St. 52	
Norfolk St. 97, Delaware St. 58	
SC State 74, Morgan St. 62	
South Alabama 77, Hartford 53	
Texas Southern 79, Southern U. 68	
William & Mary 68, Towson 66	
SOUTHWEST	
Alabama A&M 75, Ark.-Pine Bluff 72	
Baylor 79, West Virginia 67	
Texas Tech 74, Texas 67	

Men's AP Top 25 schedule

Wednesday's games
No. 1 Alabama at No. 10 Tennessee

No. 7 Virginia at Louisville
No. 11 Marquette vs. No. 16 Xavier
No. 14 Indiana at Northwestern
No. 19 Iowa St. vs. No. 22 TCU
No. 21 San Diego St. at Fresno St.

Thursday's games
No. 2 Houston at SMU
No. 3 Purdue at Maryland
No. 4 UCLA vs. Stanford
No. 8 Arizona vs. Utah
No. 13 Gonzaga at Loyola Marymount
No. 17 Saint Mary's (Cal.) at San Diego
No. 25 FAU at Middle Tennessee

Saturday's games
No. 1 Alabama vs. Georgia
No. 4 UCLA vs. California
No. 5 Kansas vs. No. 9 Baylor
No. 6 Texas vs. Oklahoma
No. 7 Virginia vs. Notre Dame
No. 8 Arizona vs. Colorado
No. 10 Tennessee at Kentucky
No. 12 Kansas St. vs. No. 19 Iowa St.
No. 13 Gonzaga at Pepperdine
No. 14 Indiana vs. Illinois
No. 15 Miami vs. Wake Forest
No. 16 Xavier vs. DePaul
No. 17 Saint Mary's (Cal.) vs. BYU
No. 18 Creighton at St. John's
No. 20 UConn vs. Seton Hall
No. 22 TCU vs. Oklahoma St.
No. 24 Providence vs. Villanova

Women's AP Top 25

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

	Record	Pts	Prv
1. South Carolina (28)	25-0	700	1
2. Indiana	23-1	670	2
3. Stanford	24-3	627	6
4. Utah	22-2	574	7
5. LSU	23-1	562	3
6. UConn	22-4	561	4
7. Iowa	20-5	552	5
8. Maryland	21-5	513	8
9. Duke	22-3	478	9
10. Notre Dame	20-4	447	10
11. Virginia Tech	20-4	427	11
12. Michigan	20-5	386	12
13. Ohio St.	21-4	354	13
14. Villanova	22-4	313	15
15. Oklahoma	20-4	288	16
16. UCLA	20-6	256	18
17. Texas	20-6	243	20
18. Arizona	19-6	215	17
19. North Carolina	18-7	212	14
20. Gonzaga	23-3	187	23
21. Colorado	20-5	175	25
22. Iowa St.	15-7	58	21
23. UNLV	24-2	52	—
24. Florida St.	20-7	51	19
25. Southern Cal	19-6	31	—

Others receiving votes: NC State 30, Illinois 30, Middle Tennessee 23, South Florida 19, Oklahoma St. 17, Creighton 17, Louisville 11, Rhode Island 6, Florida Gulf Coast 6, Marquette 5, Cleveland St. 2, South Dakota St. 1, Tennessee 1.

Monday's women's scores

EAST	
Maine 56, New Hampshire 45	
Merrimack 81, Fisher 32	
Seton Hall 89, DePaul 82	
SOUTH	
Alabama St. 66, MVSU 61	
Alcorn St. 73, Florida A&M 67	
Howard 80, Md.-Eastern Shore 59	
Jackson St. 77, Bethune-Cookman 52	
Mississippi 74, Kentucky 52	
Morgan St. 69, SC State 48	
NC Central 67, Coppin St. 54	
Norfolk St. 70, Delaware St. 42	
North Alabama 63, Cent. Arkansas 58	
Prairie View 67, Grambling St. 60	
Southern U. 70, Texas Southern 52	
MIDWEST	
Cleveland St. 73, Fort Wayne 63	
Indiana 83, Ohio St. 59	
Iowa St. 66, Texas 61	
SOUTHWEST	
Ark.-Pine Bluff 60, Alabama A&M 57	

Women's AP Top 25 schedule

Wednesday's games
No. 6 UConn vs. No. 18 Creighton
No. 16 Iowa vs. Wisconsin
No. 19 Baylor at No. 24 Kansas St.
No. 23 Oklahoma vs. Texas Tech
No. 25 Villanova at St. John's

Thursday's games
No. 1 South Carolina vs. Florida
No. 3 Ohio St. at Penn St.
No. 4 Indiana vs. No. 14 Michigan
No. 5 Notre Dame vs. Louisville
No. 7 Virginia Tech vs. Duke
No. 8 NC State vs. No. 8 North Carolina
No. 11 LSU vs. Mississippi
No. 21 Arkansas vs. Tennessee
No. 22 Gonzaga vs. Pacific

Friday's games
No. 2 Stanford vs. Southern Cal
No. 12 Arizona vs. No. 15 Utah
No. 13 UCLA at California
No. 17 Oregon at Washington St.

Saturday's games
No. 6 UConn at No. 25 Villanova
No. 10 Iowa St. at No. 19 Baylor
No. 16 Iowa at Nebraska
No. 18 Creighton vs. Georgetown
No. 20 Maryland at Michigan St.
No. 22 Gonzaga vs. Saint Mary's (Cal.)
No. 24 Kansas St. at TCU

COLLEGE HOCKEY

Monday's scores

EAST
Boston College 4, Boston U. 2
Harvard 2, Northeastern 2, 2OT

FAR WEST
Air Force 2, Canisius 1

TENNIS

Delray Beach Open

Monday
At Delray Beach Stadium & Tennis Center
Delray Beach, Fla.
Purse: \$642,735
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Men's Singles
Round of 32
Denis Kudla, United States, def. Jordan Thompson, Australia, 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (2).
Emilio Gomez, Ecuador, def. Tung-Lin Wu, Taiwan, 7-6 (3), 6-4.
Nuno Borges, Portugal, def. Steve Johnson, United States, 6-4, 3-6, 6-4.
Yoshihito Nishioka (5), Japan, def. Oscar Otte, Germany, 6-3, 0-6, 6-4.
Michael Mmoh, United States, def. Aleksandar Kovacevic, United States, 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

Men's Doubles

Round of 16
Jean-Julien Rojer, Netherlands, and Marcelo Arevalo-Gonzalez (1), El Salvador, def. Alex Lawson and Brandon Holt, United States, 6-3, 7-5.
John-Patrick Smith, Australia, and Robert Galloway, United States, def. Mackenzie McDonald and Ben Shelton, United States, 6-4, 7-6 (6).

Argentina Open

Monday
At Buenos Aires Lawn Tennis Club
Buenos Aires
Purse: \$626,945
Surface: Red clay
Men's Singles
Round of 32
Bernabe Zapata Miralles, Spain, def. Pedro Martinez, Spain, 6-1, 3-6, 6-4.
Pedro Cachin, Argentina, def. Thiago Monteiro, Brazil, 7-6 (2), 6-4.
Laslo Djere, Serbia, def. Fabio Fognini, Italy, 6-4, 6-4.
Jaume Munar, Spain, def. Guido Pella, Argentina, 6-4, 7-5.

Men's Doubles

Round of 16
Nikola Patic, Serbia, and Francisco Cabral, Portugal, def. Gonzalo Escobar, Ecuador, and Tomislav Brkic, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 6-3, 6-7 (4), 10-4.
Facundo Bagnis and Sebastian Baez, Argentina, def. Dominic Thiem, Austria, and Diego Schwartzman, Argentina, 7-5, 6-4.

ABN AMRO Open

Monday
At Ahoy Rotterdam
Rotterdam, Netherlands
Purse: Euro 2,074,505
Surface: Hardcourt indoor
Men's Singles
Round of 32
Richard Gasquet, France, def. Pablo Carreno Busta (7), Spain, 2-6, 7-6 (2), 6-2.
Grigor Dimitrov, Bulgaria, def. Aslan Karatsev, Russia, 6-1, 6-3.
Stan Wawrinka, Switzerland, def. Alexander Bublik, Kazakhstan, 7-6 (5), 6-4.
Gregoire Barrere, France, def. David Goffin, Belgium, 6-0, 7-6 (3).

Men's Doubles

Round of 16
Harri Heliövaara, Finland, and Lloyd Glasspool (4), Britain, def. Stefanos Tsitsipas and Petros Tsitsipas, Greece, 6-3, 6-4.
Sander Gille and Joran Vliegen, Belgium, def. Botić Van de Zandschulp and Tallon Griekspoor, Netherlands, 6-3, 5-7, 10-3.

Qatar Open

Monday
At Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex
Doha, Qatar
Purse: \$780,637
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Women's Singles
Qualification
Karolina Pliskova (1), Czech Republic, def. Leylah Annie Fernandez (7), Canada, 6-2, 7-5.
Rebecca Marino, Canada, def. Marie Bouzkova (2), Czech Republic, 7-5, 6-1.
Elise Mertens (5), Belgium, def. Elena-Gabriela Ruse, Romania, 6-4, 2-6, 6-4.
Viktoria Tomova, Bulgaria, def. Madison Brengle, United States, 6-3, 6-3.

Women's Doubles

Round of 32
Karolina Muchova, Czech Republic, def. Martina Trevisan, Italy, 6-2, 6-2.
Veronika Kudermetova (8), Russia, def. Barbora Krejckova, Czech Republic, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (5).
Victoria Azarenka, Belarus, def. Ipek Oz, Turkiye, 6-1, 6-1.

Women's Doubles

Round of 16
Alicja Rosolska, Poland, and Erin Routliffe, New Zealand, def. Ekaterina Yashina, Russia, and Mubarak Al-Naimi, Qatar, 7-5, 6-2.
Vera Zvonareva, Russia, and Zhaoxuan Yang, China, def. Beatriz Haddad Maia, Brazil, and Marie Bouzkova, Czech Republic, 6-4, 6-4.
Lyudmyla Kichenok, Ukraine, and Jelena Ostapenko (2), Latvia, def. Karolina Muchova, Czech Republic, and Sofia Kenin, United States, 6-3, 7-6 (3).
Jessica Pegula and Coco Gauff (1), United States, def. Xu Yifan, China, and Tereza Mihalikova, Slovakia, 6-4, 6-0.

DEALS

Monday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League
HOUSTON ASTROS — Claimed LHP Matt Gage off waivers from Toronto.
TAMPA BAY RAYS — Agreed to terms with RHP Kyle Crick and 2B Daniel Robertson on minor league contracts.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
NBA — Fined Washington G Bradley Beal an undisclosed amount for making contact with a game official during a Feb. 11 game against Indiana.

INDIANA PACERS — Signed F James Johnson to a rest-of-season contract.

Women's National Basketball Association
CHICAGO SKY — Signed G Rebekah Gardner to a regular contract.

CONNECTICUT SUN — Signed F Brianna Jones to a core contract.

PHOENIX MERCURY — Signed G Moriah Jefferson to a regular contract.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

BALTIMORE RAVENS — Claimed DB Trayvon Mullen off waivers from Dallas.

CINCINNATI BENGALS — Claimed CB Chris Lammons off waivers from Kansas City.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Claimed C Dakoda Shepley off waivers from Dallas.

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Signed RB Qadree Ollison to a reserve/futures contract.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Announced the retirement of QB Chad Henne.

NEW YORK GIANTS — Re-signed TE Lawrence Cager.

NEW YORK JETS — Claimed DT Isaiah Mack off waivers from Seattle.

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Re-signed LB Marcelino McCrary-Ball to a one year contract.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

ANAHEIM DUCKS — Recalled G Lukas Dostal from San Diego (AHL).

CAROLINA PANTHERS — Reassigned RW Tuukka Tiekola from Chicago (AHL) to Karpat (Liga).

COLORADO AVALANCHE — Recalled G Jonas Johansson from Colorado (AHL). Reassigned G Trent Miner from Utah (ECHL) to Colorado. Placed D Brad Hunt on waivers.

LOS ANGELES KINGS — Recalled D Tobie Bisson and D Jacob Moverare from Ontario (AHL).

NASHVILLE PREDATORS — Recalled F Philip Tomasino from Milwaukee (AHL).

NEW YORK ISLANDERS — Recalled LW Otto Koivu from Bridgeport (AHL). Loaned D Samuel Bolduc to Bridgeport.

ST. LOUIS BLUES — Assigned D Scott Perunovich to Springfield (AHL) on a conditioning loan.

TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Loaned C Pontus Holmberg and G Joseph Woll to Toronto (AHL). Assigned LW Alex Steeves to Toronto. Recalled G Erik Kallgren from Toronto.

VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS — Recalled G Laurent Brossoit from Henderson (AHL).

SOCCER
Major League Soccer

HOUSTON DYNAMO — Named Jasmine James chief of staff.

REAL SALT LAKE — Signed F Brayan Vera to a three-year contract, pending receipt of his international transfer certificate (ITC) and P-1 visa.

National Women's Soccer League
HOUSTON DASH — Signed D Courtney Petersen to a one-year contract.

COLLEGE
FORDHAM — Named Frank Giufre football offensive line coach.

AP SPORTLIGHT

Feb. 15

1932 — Eddie Eagen, as a member of the four-man U.S. bobsled team, wins a gold medal at the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, N.Y. He previously won a gold medal in the boxing light heavyweight division at the 1920 Summer Games in Antwerp, Belgium.

1936 — Sonja Henie of Norway wins her third consecutive Olympics figure skating gold medal in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany.

1953 — Tenley Albright becomes the first American woman to win a world figure skating title, beating Germany's Gundi Busch at the World Championships in Davos, Switzerland.

1964 — Ken Hubbs, the 22-year-old Chicago Cubs second baseman, dies when his private plane crashes in Utah. The 1962 NL Rookie of the Year had his pilot's license for two weeks and was flying in bad weather.

1974 — Boston's Phil Esposito scores his 1,000th point with an assist in the Bruins' 4-2 victory over the Vancouver Canucks.

1980 — Rookie Wayne Gretzky ties the NHL record with seven assists in a game and sets a scoring record for first-year players in Edmonton's 8-2 victory over the Washington Capitals.

1986 — A crowd of 44,180, at the time the largest to attend an NBA game, turned out at the Pontiac Silverdome to watch the Pistons beat the Sixers 134-133 in overtime.

Curry not yet ready to return

By JANIE MCCAULEY
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Stephen Curry hopes to get back to some on-court work during the All-Star break but will miss time afterward as he recovers from a left leg injury.

The reigning NBA Finals MVP missed his fourth straight game after getting injured against Dallas on Feb. 4 in a collision while defending McKinley Wright IV as he drove to the basket. Wright's knee hit Curry's shin.

"It was pretty big knock that kind of jolted the bone and liga-



Curry

ments in there, which was all terms I didn't know existed before," Curry said. "It was just a timing thing. If my foot's elevated and it's just

more like a contusion you can kind of deal with it but because my foot was planted and a lot of weight on it, the force of the impact was a little more serious than I wanted it to be."

Curry said he will likely have a better idea of the timeline and a possible target date for his return once he actually tests the leg on the court. An MRI exam showed partial tears to his superior tibiofibular ligament and interosseous membrane in his left leg. He

NBA

ROUNDUP

T-wolves survive Mavs' late push

Associated Press

DALLAS — Kyrie Irving was trying to get Luka Doncic a shot. The All-Star guard for the Dallas Mavericks was trying to do the same for his new teammate making his home debut.

Neither one of them got a shot off in the closing seconds, and the Mavs' big comeback attempt came up short against the Minnesota Timberwolves.

"Man. I'm still trying to emotionally recover ... still so raw," Irving said. "Oh, man. I would have liked to at least get a shot up."

Irving had the highest-scoring fourth quarter of his career, scoring 26 of his 36 points in the final 12 minutes Monday night. But he made a bad pass after stepping inside the three-point line on the final possession after Minnesota had thrown off the timing between him and Doncic by knocking the inbound pass into the backcourt. The Timberwolves nearly blew a 26-point lead, but held on to win 124-121.

After Doncic tracked down the tipped inbound pass, he passed to Irving before crossing midcourt. Irving pump-faked a three and passed back to Doncic, who almost immediately gave it back to him on a bounce pass before the final turnover.

"Great stop. Guys wanted to play it out. Trust the defense in that moment," Timberwolves coach Chris Finch said. "Did a really good job of kind of disrupting their play, pressuring and denying the catch. Forced it out. It became a broken play."

Doncic, who finished with 33 points, said it was a great defensive play at the end for the visitors.

"We didn't get a clear shot, we just passed (to) each other, but I think it was a great defense," Doncic said. "I was trying to get him a shot, he was trying to give me a shot. At the end, nobody got a shot, but he was going off."

It was the second game Irving and Doncic played together. The Mavs have lost both, falling in overtime at Sacramento on Saturday night. Irving, acquired a week ago from the Brooklyn Nets, had played two road games for Dallas before that — both victories.

"I really wanted this win," Irving said.

First-time All-Star guard Anthony Edwards scored 32 points and Rudy Gobert had 21 points and 14 rebounds for the Timberwolves, who had their biggest lead at 89-63 on a long step-back jumper by Edwards midway through the third quarter.

Nuggets 112, Heat 108: Niko-



TONY GUTIERREZ/AP

Minnesota Timberwolves guard Anthony Edwards goes up for a shot in front of the Dallas Mavericks' Christian Wood, right, as Kyle Anderson looks on during the first half Monday in Dallas.

la Jokic finished with 27 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists, and Denver snapped Miami's eight-game home winning streak.

Jokic made 12 of 14 shots, and Denver shot 58%.

Michael Porter Jr. scored 17, Bruce Brown added 16, Jeff Green scored 12 and three Nuggets — Vlatko Cancar, Christian Braun and Thomas Bryant — each finished with 10 points.

Jimmy Butler had 24 points, nine assists and eight rebounds for the Heat. Max Strus scored 23, Bam Adebayo had 19, Gabe Vincent 15 and Jamaree Bouyea added 10 for Miami.

Knicks 124, Nets 106: Jalen Brunson scored 40 points, Josh Hart added a season-high 27 in his second game with his new team and host New York snapped a nine-game losing streak against Brooklyn.

Julius Randle had 18 points and 10 rebounds for the Knicks, who beat the Nets for the first time in three years. Brooklyn never lost to the Knicks when Kevin Durant or Kyrie Irving played.

More importantly for the seventh-place Knicks, they pulled within two games of the Nets for fifth place in the Eastern Conference.

Warriors 135, Wizards 126: Andrew Wiggins had 29 points and seven rebounds, Klay Thompson scored 27 points and host Golden State beat Washington.

JaMychal Green went 4-for-4

from deep and made all five of his field goals for 14 points to go with five assists. Donte DiVincenzo added 17 points off the bench, while Kevon Looney contributed 13 points and 13 rebounds as the Warriors snapped a two-game skid.

Kristaps Porzingis scored 34 points on 12-for-16 shooting for a Wizards team that had won 8 of 11 and five of its previous six road games. Bradley Beal added 33 points and topped 15,000 for his career.

Trail Blazers 127, Lakers 115: Damian Lillard had 40 points, including eight three-pointers, to lead host Portland past Los Angeles.

LeBron James missed his third straight game for the Lakers with a sore left ankle. He has not played since breaking Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's NBA scoring record last Tuesday in a loss to Oklahoma City.

The Blazers led by as many as 27 points and made a season-best 23 three-pointers, including a franchise-record 17 threes in the first half.

Hornets 144, Hawks 138: LaMelo Ball had 30 points and 15 assists, Terry Rozier added 29 points and host Charlotte held off Atlanta to snap a seven-game skid.

Gordon Hayward scored 26 points and P.J. Washington added 22 as the Hornets shot 63% from the field. Ball had six three-pointers and Rozier hit five as Char-

lotte never trailed and tied a season high with 20 threes.

It was the second-highest point total in Hornets franchise history, behind the 158 they scored against Indiana last season.

Cavaliers 117, Spurs 109: Donovan Mitchell scored 41 points and led host Cleveland to its seventh straight win as nose-diving San Antonio matched a team record with its 13th consecutive loss.

Jarrett Allen had 17 points and 11 rebounds as Cleveland improved to 25-6 at home. Evan Mobley had 15 points and 10 boards.

76ers 123, Rockets 104: James Harden had 29 points and 10 assists against his former team while Tyrese Maxey scored 26 off the bench as host Philadelphia beat Houston.

Joel Embiid scored 23 points in 31 minutes for the Sixers, who have won three in a row and improved to 22-8 at home.

Pelicans 103, Thunder 100: Brandon Ingram scored 34 points and visiting New Orleans outlasted Oklahoma City.

Oklahoma City had a chance to tie in the closing seconds, but Isaiah Joe's three-pointer bounced away at the buzzer.

Jazz 123, Pacers 117: Jordan Clarkson and Lauri Markkanen each scored 29 points and visiting Utah beat Indiana.

Clarkson hit a three-pointer for a 115-110 lead with 2:03 remaining, and added a 13-foot baseline jumper to extend the lead to 117-113 in the final minute. Markka-

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	41	16	.719	—
Philadelphia	37	19	.661	3½
Brooklyn	33	24	.579	8
New York	32	27	.542	10
Toronto	27	31	.466	14½

Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	32	26	.552	—
Atlanta	29	29	.500	3
Washington	26	30	.464	5
Orlando	24	34	.414	8
Charlotte	16	43	.271	16½

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	39	17	.696	—
Cleveland	38	22	.633	3
Chicago	26	31	.456	13½
Indiana	25	34	.424	15½
Detroit	15	43	.259	25

Western Conference

Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	34	22	.607	—
Dallas	31	28	.525	4½
New Orleans	30	28	.517	5
San Antonio	14	44	.241	21
Houston	13	44	.228	21½

Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Denver	40	18	.690	—
Minnesota	31	29	.517	10
Utah	29	30	.492	11½
Portland	28	29	.491	11½
Oklahoma City	27	29	.482	12

Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Sacramento	32	24	.571	—
Phoenix	31	27	.534	2
L.A. Clippers	31	28	.525	2½
Golden State	29	28	.509	3½
L.A. Lakers	26	32	.448	7

Monday's games

Philadelphia 123, Houston 104
 Cleveland 117, San Antonio 109
 Charlotte 144, Atlanta 138
 Utah 123, Indiana 117
 Denver 112, Miami 108
 New York 124, Brooklyn 106
 Orlando 100, Chicago 91
 New Orleans 103, Oklahoma City 100
 Minnesota 124, Dallas 121
 Portland 127, L.A. Lakers 115
 Golden State 135, Washington 126

Tuesday's games

Boston at Milwaukee
 Orlando at Toronto
 Sacramento at Phoenix
 Golden State at L.A. Clippers
 Washington at Portland

Wednesday's games

Chicago at Indiana
 San Antonio at Charlotte
 Cleveland at Philadelphia
 Detroit at Boston
 Miami at Brooklyn
 New York at Atlanta
 Houston at Oklahoma City
 Utah at Memphis
 Dallas at Denver
 New Orleans at L.A. Lakers

Thursday's games

Milwaukee at Chicago
 Washington at Minnesota
 L.A. Clippers at Phoenix

Friday's games

No games scheduled.

nen hit 10 of 18 shots and had 11 rebounds for the Jazz, who had lost four of their last five games.

Magic 100, Bulls 91: Paolo Banchero scored 22 points, Franz Wagner and Markelle Fultz added 18 points apiece and visiting Orlando beat cold-shooting Chicago.

Fultz just missed a triple-double with 10 rebounds and nine assists. Wendell Carter Jr. scored 15 points against his former team as the Magic won for the fourth time in six games.

SPORTS BRIEFS/OLYMPICS/NFL

BRIEFLY

Ovechkin to be away from Capitals for family issue

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. — Alex Ovechkin will be away from the Washington Capitals to attend to a family matter and the health of a loved one and is expected to be gone for at least the rest of the week, if not longer.

General manager Brian MacLellan announced Ovechkin's absence before the team's morning skate Tuesday. No further details were released, though it appears Washington is preparing to be without its longtime captain and face of the franchise for an extended period.

Coach Peter Laviolette said he doesn't envision Ovechkin will be back "in the foreseeable future."

"When it comes to your family and parents, that's what matters," Laviolette said. "He's going to deal with some things right now and we're going to be supportive."

Further complicating matters if Ovechkin needs to go home to Russia, where his parents and other family members live, are travel restrictions in place amid the country's war in Ukraine. There are no direct flights between North America and Moscow.

The Capitals play two home games this week before facing the Carolina Hurricanes in the NHL's Stadium Series outdoors in Raleigh on Saturday night.

"Sending positive thoughts on behalf of the organization," the Hurricanes posted on Twitter before the team played at the Capitals on Tuesday night. "There is nothing more important than those we love. We are wishing the best for Alex and his family."

Ovechkin, 37, leads Washington with 32 goals and 54 points. He has missed only 48 games throughout his 18-year NHL career, and the Capitals have lost 25 of them.

The Capitals enter an important stretch in a precarious position: holding on to one of two wild-card spots in the Eastern Conference and in danger of falling out of playoff position by the end of the week. Even before Ovechkin's absence, they have averaged 2.27 goals over their past 14 games.

'Ghost runner' made permanent

NEW YORK — Starting extra innings with a runner on second base during the regular season was made a permanent rules change by Major League Baseball on Monday after three seasons of use during the coronavirus pandemic.

Known by some as the "Ghost Runner" and by others as the "Manfred Man" after baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred, the rule was unanimously adopted by the sport's 11-person competition committee.

Use of position players as pitchers also was tightened by the committee. They will be limited to extra innings, when a player's team is losing by eight or more runs or is winning by 10 or more runs in the ninth inning. Last year, a position player could pitch only in extra innings or if his team was losing or winning by six or more runs.



ALESSANDRO TROVATI/AP

Italy's Christof Innerhofer is airborne during training for the men's downhill at the World Championships in Courchevel, France, on Friday.

Winter Games may have to resort to fixed hosts

By ANDREW DAMPF

Associated Press

MERIBEL, France — Considering the dearth of candidates to stage the Winter Olympics amid spiraling venue costs, the IOC may have to resort to lining up a list of fixed, rotating hosts.

A highly theoretical list could include Salt Lake City and Vancouver in North America, Pyeongchang in Asia and places like Switzerland, Italy and Scandinavia in Europe.

"There are talks. It is a challenge with climate change and also infrastructure to be able to find venues for the Winter Olympics," retired Olympic skiing champion Lindsey Vonn said in a recent interview with The Associated Press.

Vonn is on the bid committee for Salt Lake City's candidacy for the 2030 or 2034 Games.

Most of the rotating hosts would have hosted the Olympics previously, or have most of the venues already built.

"A rotating venue option is on the table in which certain altitude standards would be in place and it would have to have mostly pre-existing structures and it would limit the cost for the venues and it would limit the chances of climate change affecting the competitions in a negative way," Vonn said.

"I know that's been discussed. How early that will happen, I don't know, but I don't think it would happen before 2034."

Sweden's Olympic leaders announced last week that they are weighing up whether to bid for 2030 while the International Olympic Committee has delayed the process to search for more contenders.

Sapporo, Japan was considered the favorite for 2030 before an ongoing bid-rigging scandal related to the Summer Olympics in Tokyo held in 2021. Salt Lake City is the only other known bidder that might consider taking 2030, though officials have said they favor a bid for 2034.

If a Stockholm-centered bid does go

ahead, it currently seems sure to win without opposition and get the IOC out of a hole less than seven years before the Games open.

After last year's Beijing Games were held almost entirely on artificial snow, the Milan-Cortina Games in 2026 will be held across a wide swath of northern Italy.

For 2022, Beijing beat Almaty, Kazakhstan — the only other candidate — for hosting rights after several other bids were scrapped by public referendums.

"There's a lot of events that are really difficult to run," said Canadian skier James Crawford, who won the super-G last week at the world championships. "I think there's a lot of places that can host the Winter Olympics ... but it's definitely hard for us when there's so few that want to."

Alexis Pinturault, the French skier who won gold in combined and bronze in super-G at the worlds, grew up utilizing the facilities built for the 1992 Albertville Games.

"I also (tried) ski jumping here," he said in his hometown of Courchevel, where the ski jump is adjacent to the downhill course. "I also did cross country skiing. That was the thing with the Courchevel ski club: when you are young you can try many different sports. Then you can choose afterward. I chose Alpine skiing because that's the discipline that gave me the most pleasure."

Pinturault was born a year before the Albertville Games.

"There is still some infrastructure. That's why the Olympics are good in some (ways)," he said. "It's a big part of our history."

Italian veteran Christof Innerhofer added: "For 2026, a lot of venues will be renovated and that's the first step for developing young athletes. For us, the Milan-Cortina Games will be the start of a new cycle. Ten years later, those young athletes will be competing at the Olympics."

Colts hire Eagles OC Steichen as head coach

By MICHAEL MAROT

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indianapolis Colts have hired Shane Steichen as their head coach.

The move announced Tuesday ends a search that took over a month, involved more than a dozen candidates and finally gives the Colts some direction in what still appears to be a tumultuous offseason. A news conference was scheduled for later in the day.

Each of Indy's last two full-time hires were offensive coordinators for Philadelphia Eagles teams that made the Super Bowl. Frank Reich was hired in 2018 after the Eagles won their first championship since 1960 but was fired in October as the Colts' season started to unravel.

He was replaced by interim coach Jeff Saturday, who won his first game but lost the final seven to give Indy the No. 4 overall draft pick. Saturday was one of the finalists for the full-time job.

Now, though, the Colts seem to be changing directions again, this time likely with a young, promising quarterback. That's a major reason team owner Jim Irsay and general manager Chris Ballard, who led the lengthy search, sought out the 37-year-old Steichen.

Under Steichen's tenure in Philadelphia, Jalen Hurts went from second-round draft pick in 2020 to solid starter in 2021 to NFL MVP runner-up in 2022.

But Hurts isn't Steichen's only prized pupil.

In 2020, as offensive coordinator of the Los Angeles Chargers, Steichen presided over Justin Herbert's NFL offensive rookie of the year campaign. Before that, he worked with former Chargers star Philip Rivers, who joined Reich and current Eagles head coach Nick Sirianni in Indianapolis for his final NFL season.

The similarities between Steichen and Reich are striking.

Both climbed the coaching ladder with a franchise that previously called San Diego home, and both were college quarterbacks, though Steichen, unlike Reich, never took a snap in the NFL. And both left the Philadelphia staff just days after their teams played in the Super Bowl, though Reich was hired only after Josh McDaniels backed out of an agreement to take the job.

Still, Irsay is hoping for different results from Steichen, who becomes the league's third-youngest coach behind two other 37-year-olds, Sean McVay of the Los Angeles Rams and Kevin O'Connell of the Minnesota Vikings.

McVay won last year's Super Bowl title and O'Connell finished sixth in the coach of the year balloting after leading Minnesota to a division crown in his first season.



Steichen

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

TOP 25 ROUNDUP

Texas Tech holds on to beat No. 6 Texas

Associated Press

LUBBOCK, Texas — De'vion Harmon scored 25 points and Kevin Obanor added 19 as Texas Tech defeated its second ranked opponent in three days, upending No. 6 Texas 74-67 on Monday night.

Fardaws Aimaq had a season-high 12 points for the Red Raiders, who led by 13 in the second half before fending off the Longhorns down the stretch.

Texas Tech (14-12, 3-10 Big 12) also topped No. 12 Kansas State on Saturday.

"Obviously, I'm extremely excited for these guys," Red Raiders coach Mark Adams said. "It was a great team effort. That is a good basketball team that we beat. Texas plays hard. We matched their intensity and played, I thought, 40 minutes of great basketball."

Texas (20-6, 9-4) tied the game at 64 on a three-pointer by Dylan Disu, but Tech responded by scoring the next six points as Obanor had two dunks and Aimaq converted a tip-in. Harmon added a driving basket with 35.1 seconds remaining, and the Red Raiders held on.

"Give them credit," Texas interim coach Rodney Terry said. "They made shots. Our guys had great effort. We just didn't do enough to put ourselves in position to win. In our league, anybody can beat anybody."

Marcus Carr led the Longhorns with 23 points, and Disu scored 11.

"We're a team that has been through a lot of adversity this season," Obanor said. "It's like being in a boxing match, and you get beat up, but it speaks to your character when you get back up, have a sense

of urgency and refuse to give up."

No. 9 Baylor 79, West Virginia 65: LJ Cryer scored 26 points to lead four players in double figures, and the host Bears won their fourth straight game.

Cryer was 8-for-11 from three-point range to lead Baylor (20-6, 9-4 Big 12), which has won 10 of its last 11 after an 0-3 start in the conference.

Adam Flagler added 13 points and Jalen Bridges had 12 for Baylor, which shot 51% from the floor and was 14-for-27 from three-point range. Keyonte George led the Bears with nine rebounds and seven assists.

Emmitt Matthews Jr. scored 17 points to lead West Virginia (15-11, 4-9).

No. 15 Miami 80, North Carolina 72: Jordan Miller had 24 points and 11 rebounds as the visiting Hurricanes took over after halftime then had to hold off a late rally by the Tar Heels.

Nijel Pack added 23 points for Miami (21-5, 12-4 Atlantic Coast Conference), which led by just one at halftime but shot 52% after the break. The Hurricanes also locked down UNC's drivers, who had been getting to the rim in the first 20 minutes. The combination helped Miami stretch the lead to as many as 14 points, with Miller and Pack leading the way from either behind the arc or with nifty moves inside.

R.J. Davis scored 23 points while Caleb Love had 20 for UNC (16-10, 8-7), which shot 43.9%. But the Tar Heels continued their season-long struggles with their outside shooting, missing 26 of 31 three-pointers.



JUSTIN REX/AP

Texas Tech forward Kevin Obanor shoots against Texas on Monday. The Red Raiders beat their second ranked team in three days.



MORRY GASH/AP

Marquette's Kam Jones reacts after making a three-pointer at the buzzer at the end of the first half against Butler on Saturday. The Golden Eagles lead the Big East but have tough matchups in the next week.

TOP 25 THIS WEEK

Key matchups in Big East

BY JOHN MARSHALL

Associated Press

It will be a big week in the Big East.

The conference's top four teams are within 1½ games of each other with three weeks left in the regular season and two big games could help spread things out a bit.

On Tuesday, No. 18 Creighton plays at No. 24 Providence.

At 11-3, the Bluejays (17-8) are a half-game behind Big East-leading Marquette. Creighton has won eight straight since losing to No. 16 Xavier and had one of the biggest jumps in this week's AP Top 25, climbing five places after beating Seton Hall and No. 20 UConn.

The Friars (18-7) are 10-4 in Big East play, but dropped four spots in this week's poll thanks to a road loss to St. John's on Saturday.

Creighton won the first meeting 73-67 after blowing a 16-point lead, but that game was in Omaha. The Bluejays play St. John's, and Providence goes against Villanova on Saturday.

The following night, No. 11 Marquette (20-6, 12-3 Big East) faces a stiff test at No. 16 Xavier.

The Golden Eagles lost a chance to extend their conference lead with a 15-point loss to No. 20 UConn last week, but bounced back with a win over Georgetown.

The Musketeers (19-6, 11-3) are coming off a two-point loss to Butler that dropped them a spot in this week's poll. Xavier won the first meeting 80-76 at home in a game that went back and forth most of the afternoon.

Marquette doesn't play again until facing Creighton next Tuesday.

Big 12 battles

The Big 12 race has an even larger gathering at the top in the hunt for the regular-season title, six teams all within two games of each other.

The marquee game this week will be No. 5 Kansas at No. 9 Baylor on Saturday.

The past two national champions met on Jan. 23 when the Jayhawks were struggling. Baylor won that game 75-69 in Waco to send Kansas to its first three-game losing streak under coach Bill Self.

The Jayhawks (20-5) have won four of five since to remain in the Big 12 hunt at 8-4.

Baylor (20-6) moved to 9-4 in conference play with a 79-67 win over West Virginia on Monday night.

No. 19 Iowa State (16-8, 7-5 Big 12) faces two ranked



REBECCA S. GRATZ/AP

Creighton's Ryan Kalkbrenner, left, celebrates with Ryan Nembhard after dunking against UConn on Saturday. Creighton defeated UConn 56-53.

opponents this week, playing home games against No. 22 TCU on Wednesday and No. 12 Kansas State on Saturday.

The Cyclones beat the Horned Frogs 69-67 Jan. 7 in Fort Worth when Gabe Kalscheur hit a three-pointer with 1.3 seconds left. Iowa State also has a road win over Kansas State, pulling out an 80-76 victory on Jan. 24.

Alabama basketball

Alabama is showing that it's not just a football school.

The Crimson Tide moved to No. 1 in the AP Top 25 for the first time in 20 years in this week's poll. With the football team earning a top ranking in the fall, Alabama is the first school to have its football and basketball teams ranked No. 1 in the same season since Ohio State in 2010-11.

The Tide face a tough first test in their return to No. 1, playing at No. 10 Tennessee on Wednesday.

The Vols will not only have the additional motivation of facing the country's top-ranked team, they're looking to get back on track after consecutive losses to Vanderbilt and Missouri.

Their matchup will be strength vs. strength.

Tennessee has the nation's third-best scoring defense, allowing 56.3 points per game. Alabama scores 83.4 points per game, sixth nationally.

NHL



CRAIG LASSIG/AP

Florida Panthers center Anton Lundell scores a goal on Minnesota Wild goalie Filip Gustavsson during the shootout of Monday's game in St. Paul, Minn. The Panthers won 2-1 and have won four of their past five.

ROUNDUP

Panthers outlast Wild in shootout

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Anton Lundell and Aleksander Barkov scored in the shootout to send the Florida Panthers to a 2-1 win against the Minnesota Wild on Monday night.

Eetu Luostarinen scored in regulation for Florida, which has won four of its past five games. Sergei Bobrovsky made 27 saves for the Panthers in a low-scoring game with plenty of scoring opportunities.

Bobrovsky stopped two of the three players he faced in the shootout.

Filip Gustavsson nearly matched Bobrovsky save for save, making 33 saves for Minnesota. Kirill Kaprizov scored in regulation for the Wild, who have lost four of five since the All-Star break.

Both teams had their chances. They went a combined 0-for-12 on the power play, with the Panthers unable to score on seven man-advantage opportunities.

Senators 4, Flames 3 (OT): Tim Stutzle had three assists in regulation and scored at 1:55 of overtime to cap host Ottawa's comeback from two goals down.

Brady Tkachuk, Drake Batherson and Alex DeBrincat also scored for the Senators. Mads Søgaard, appearing in his fourth NHL game, made 34 saves.

Dillon Dube had two goals and Tyler Toffoli had a goal and an assist for Calgary. Jacob Markstrom finished with 21 saves.

Red Wings 6, Canucks 1: Dylan Larkin scored twice and visiting Detroit won its third straight.

Robby Fabbri and Gustav Lindstrom each had a goal and an assist, and Pius Suter and Jonatan Berggren also scored for the Red Wings. Michael Rasmussen had two assists and Ville Husso made 29 saves, including a late penalty shot.

Sheldon Dries scored for the Canucks and Collin Delia stopped 17 shots.

Coyotes 4, Predators 2: Lawson Crouse scored two goals to help Arizona end a two-game road skid.

Nick Schmaltz and Christian Fischer also scored as the Coyotes capped their three-game road swing after back-to-back overtime losses. Matias Maccelli, J.J. Moser and Clayton Keller each had two assists. Karel Vejmelka had 29 saves for his first win against the team that drafted him in the fifth round in 2015.

Roman Josi and Colton Sissons scored for Nashville, and Kevin Lankinen had 15 saves.

Kings 5, Sabres 2: Adrian Kempe scored for the third straight game, Viktor Arvidsson had a goal and two assists, and host Los Angeles won its second straight since the All-Star break and bye week.

Sean Walker and Matt Roy also scored and Phillip Danault had three assists for the Kings. Phoenix Copley made 27 saves.

Dylan Cozens and Peyton Krebs scored, and Craig Anderson allowed five goals on 28 shots for the Sabres, who have dropped four straight games following a five-game winning streak.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division									
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA		
Boston	52	39	8	5	83	193	113		
Toronto	54	32	14	8	72	181	145		
Tampa Bay	52	34	16	2	70	187	153		
Florida	56	27	23	6	60	194	191		
Buffalo	52	26	22	4	56	190	182		
Detroit	52	24	20	8	56	160	169		
Ottawa	52	25	24	3	53	158	168		
Montreal	53	22	27	4	48	144	194		

Metropolitan Division									
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA		
Carolina	52	34	10	8	76	175	142		
New Jersey	52	34	13	5	73	181	139		
N.Y. Rangers	53	31	14	8	70	178	141		
Washington	55	28	21	6	62	169	157		
Pittsburgh	52	26	17	9	61	169	163		
N.Y. Islanders	56	27	23	6	60	162	155		
Philadelphia	55	22	23	10	54	149	171		
Columbus	53	16	33	4	36	135	204		

Western Conference

Central Division									
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA		
Dallas	54	30	14	10	70	181	139		
Winnipeg	53	33	19	1	67	171	138		
Minnesota	53	28	20	5	61	159	154		
Colorado	51	28	19	4	60	157	143		
Nashville	51	25	20	6	56	142	151		
St. Louis	52	24	25	3	51	162	190		
Arizona	54	18	28	8	44	146	191		
Chicago	51	16	30	5	37	125	186		

Pacific Division									
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA		
Vegas	54	32	18	4	68	177	152		
Los Angeles	55	30	18	7	67	184	185		
Seattle	53	30	18	5	65	185	167		
Edmonton	54	30	19	5	65	201	176		
Calgary	54	25	18	11	61	175	166		
Vancouver	54	21	29	4	46	182	221		
San Jose	54	17	26	11	45	166	204		
Anaheim	54	17	31	6	40	135	223		

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

Monday's games

Ottawa 4, Calgary 3, OT
Arizona 4, Nashville 2
Florida 2, Minnesota 1, SO
Detroit 6, Vancouver 1
Los Angeles 5, Buffalo 2

Tuesday's games

Carolina at Washington
Chicago at Montreal
New Jersey at Columbus
Ottawa at N.Y. Islanders
Florida at St. Louis
Seattle at Winnipeg
Boston at Dallas
Tampa Bay at Colorado
Pittsburgh at San Jose

Wednesday's games

Chicago at Toronto
Tampa Bay at Arizona
Colorado at Minnesota
Detroit at Edmonton
Buffalo at Anaheim
N.Y. Rangers at Vancouver

Season: Ullmark feels more at home in Boston

FROM PAGE 24

"He's been standing on the head," Bruins leading scorer and fellow MVP candidate David Pastrnak said. "He's been playing unbelievable. It's just fun to watch him, honestly, this year. He's playing confident. He's big. He's very confident in the net, and he's having a special year."

Ullmark credits being more comfortable in his new surroundings and it has shown in his play: He already has tied his career high with 26 victories, his .937 save percentage is more than 10 points higher than the next-closest competitor and his 1.90 GAA would be the lowest by a goalie with 40 or more games since Hall of Famer Martin Brodeur in 1997-98.

The 29-year-old Swede has been thinking a lot about what changed in his game and finds it hard to pinpoint. Feeling more "at home" in Boston is one piece of many.

"I just think it's just small pieces here and there that are just falling into place," Ullmark said. "We have a great team, as well, and it goes kind of hand in hand with my performance and also with Sway's performance. It's not just a one-man show. It's a team effort."

The Bruins lead Eastern Conference behind Pastrnak's 38 goals, captain Patrice Bergeron's two-way dominance at the age of 37 and the coaching of newcomer Jim Montgomery. But Bruce Cassidy, who was fired after coaching Boston to six playoff appearances, called Ullmark's emergence "the big one" when asked about his former team's consistency.

"He finished really well last year, and he's carried that into this year," Cassidy said. "Now you're creating competition with Sway-



Skinner



Thompson

man at that position. I think that's a great thing for Boston."

Cassidy, now behind the bench for the Golden Knights, has had Thompson on top of his game after Vegas learned late in the offseason Robin Lehner would be out for the season rehabbing from hip surgery.

Thrust into a leading role by injuries last season, Thompson won 20 of his first 35 starts this season before getting sidelined himself last week. Before that, the undrafted late bloomer earned All-Star honors and put himself in the conversation for the Calder Trophy as rookie of the year.

"There was a lot of times when I was really close to just quitting and giving up," Thompson said. "That competitiveness in me never went away. That's the biggest thing is never stop working hard at what you want."

Oilers coach Jay Woodcroft saw similar tendencies in Skinner when they were together in the minors last year. Edmonton's American Hockey League affiliate in Bakersfield, Calif., was desperate for a starter one night; Skinner rushed to the rink after travel issues, getting there 5 minutes before warmups and then backstopping a win.

"He showed me something — he showed his teammates something in how serious he is about winning games," Woodcroft said. "He just kept getting better and better."

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SPORTS



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Texas Tech beats second ranked foe in 3 days » College basketball, Page 22

Breakout season

Bruins' Ullmark is NHL's biggest surprise in goal

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**
Associated Press

Linus Ullmark moved to the Boston area in the summer of 2021 with his wife, their two young children and their dogs after signing with the Bruins. Settling in with his new team didn't happen right away.

Fresh off signing a \$20 million, four-year contract, Ullmark shared the net with rookie Jeremy Swayman and then, briefly, with Tuukka Rask, the organization cornerstone who was trying to come back from hip surgery. Ullmark allowed eight goals in two playoff games before losing the starting job to Swayman and went into an offseason of change unsure what his role would be.

Turns out, it's a starring one as the best goaltender in the NHL.

Ullmark leads the league in wins, save percentage and goals-against average, and is one of the biggest reasons the Bruins are atop the standings and on pace for the best regular season in NHL history. Along with fellow All-Stars Stuart Skinner and Logan Thompson, who respectively have the Edmonton Oilers and Vegas Golden Knights on track to make the playoffs, Ullmark tops the list of the biggest goalie surprises of the season.

SEE SEASON ON PAGE 23

INSIDE

Lundell, Barkov score shootout goals to lift Panthers over Wild
Page 23



Goalie Linus Ullmark's 26 victories and .937 save percentage are two big reasons the Boston Bruins are on pace for the best regular season in NHL history.

ADAM HUNGER/AP

Colts hire Eagles OC Steichen as new coach » NFL, Page 21

