

FACES

Country-rock star Margo Price talks excess, success
Page 18



ANALYSIS

N. Korea's growing nuclear forces raise fears, questions
Page 3



NBA

On All-Star break, teams ponder how much rest is best
Page 24

5th Fleet commander says Iran has 'attention of everyone' >> Page 4

STARS AND STRIPES®

stripes.com

Volume 81 Edition 219 ©SS 2023 WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2023 平成12年4月5日 第三種郵便物認可 日刊(土日除く) 発行所 星条旗新聞社 〒106-0032 東京都港区六本木7丁目23番17号 定価 ¥50 **50¢/Free to Deployed Areas**



JOHN SCHOEBEL/U.S. Army National Guard

A soldier with the 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment, directs an M1A2 tank crew Thursday during an exercise at Bemowo Piskie, Poland.

'Kyiv stands strong,' Biden declares in his Poland speech

BY AAMER MADHANI, ZEKE MILLER AND CHRIS MEGERIAN
Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — President Joe Biden, returning on Tuesday to the Polish castle where he spoke shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine last year, said the war had hardened Western resolve to defend democracy around the globe.

He warned that there were "hard and bitter days ahead," but pledged that the United States and its allies would "have Ukraine's back" as the war enters its second year.

"Democracies of the world will stand guard over freedom today, tomorrow and forever," he said at the Royal Castle, a historical landmark in Warsaw, before a cheering crowd of Polish citizens and Ukrainian refugees.

Biden's speech came one day after his daring, unannounced trip to Kyiv, where he met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

"Kyiv stands strong," Biden declared. "Kyiv stands proud."

Before his speech, Biden met with Polish President Andrzej Duda as he began a series of consultations with allies to prepare for an even more complicated stage of Russia's invasion.

"We have to have security in Europe," Biden said at the presi-

SEE BIDEN ON PAGE 5

RELATED
Putin says Russia suspending START nuclear pact
Page 5

Battlefield lessons learned

Year of fighting in Ukraine shows US military what it needs to improve, analysts say

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

A year ago, many outside observers said it was only a matter of time until Kyiv's fall, as Russian soldiers invaded Ukraine in a bid to capture its capital.

Instead, Moscow's full-scale invasion floundered. Two months into the fighting, Kyiv stood and Russian forces were in retreat.

But hidden amid those failures

is a threat still facing the United States military and its allies in Europe, where vulnerabilities persist on its eastern borders, experts say.

"The Russians didn't get close to capturing Kyiv in three days, but they did capture enough territory equal to the size of Estonia," retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, the former commander of the U.S. Ar-

my in Europe, said in a recent phone interview.

Despite the Kremlin's battlefield failures and the huge toll in lives and materiel in Ukraine, allies should be careful not to underestimate a Russian military that can be expected to undergo a major reset regardless of the outcome in Ukraine, analysts say.

"At the end of the day, NATO forces would crush Russian forces, but that doesn't mean that in

the early days, if we were caught flat-footed, that there would not be enormous casualties and damage," Hodges said.

Among the concerns are persistent bureaucratic obstacles that hamstring NATO's ability to mobilize on short notice to head off any potential incursion, Hodges said.

"The ability to move forces rap-

SEE LESSONS ON PAGE 6

ANALYSIS

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Home Depot to raise worker pay in US, Canada

Associated Press

Home Depot said Tuesday that it's investing \$1 billion in wage increases for its U.S. and Canadian hourly workers.

The Atlanta-based home improvement chain said every hourly employee will get a raise starting this month. Starting pay will be at least \$15 per hour in all markets.

Home Depot is one of many big retailers who have raised pay to attract workers in a strong U.S. job market, where unemployment is at its lowest level since 1969. Wal-

mart announced in January that it would be raising its hourly wage to an average of \$17.50, while Target invested \$300 million in hourly wage increases last year.

The pay raises could also help Home Depot head off a fledgling campaign to unionize its stores, which it has opposed. Workers at a Home Depot in Philadelphia filed to hold a union election last September, saying workers weren't benefiting from Home Depot's strong sales and that stores were understaffed. Workers at the store

voted to reject the union in November.

Home Depot employs 437,000 people in the United States and 34,000 in Canada. The vast majority are hourly employees, the company said. The company operates 2,000 stores in the U.S. and 182 stores in Canada.

"This investment will help us attract and retain the best talent into our pipeline," Home Depot's Chairman, President and CEO Ted Decker wrote in an email to employees.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Feb. 22)	\$1.04
Dollar buys (Feb. 22)	0.9146
British pound (Feb. 22)	\$1.18
Japanese yen (Feb. 22)	132.00
South Korean won (Feb. 22)	1,264.00

South Korea (Won)	1,304.63
Switzerland (Franc)	.9279
Thailand (Baht)	34.61
Turkey (New Lira)	18.8717

(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.)

Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	.3769
Britain (Pound)	1.2074
Canada (Dollar)	1.3522
China (Yuan)	6.8793
Denmark (Krone)	6.9914
Egypt (Pound)	30.5979
Euro	.9390
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8442
Hungary (Forint)	359.26
Israel (Shekel)	3.6436
Japan (Yen)	135.17
Kuwait (Dinar)	.3066
Norway (Krone)	10.3112
Philippines (Peso)	55.03
Poland (Zloty)	4.46
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7662
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3397

INTEREST RATES

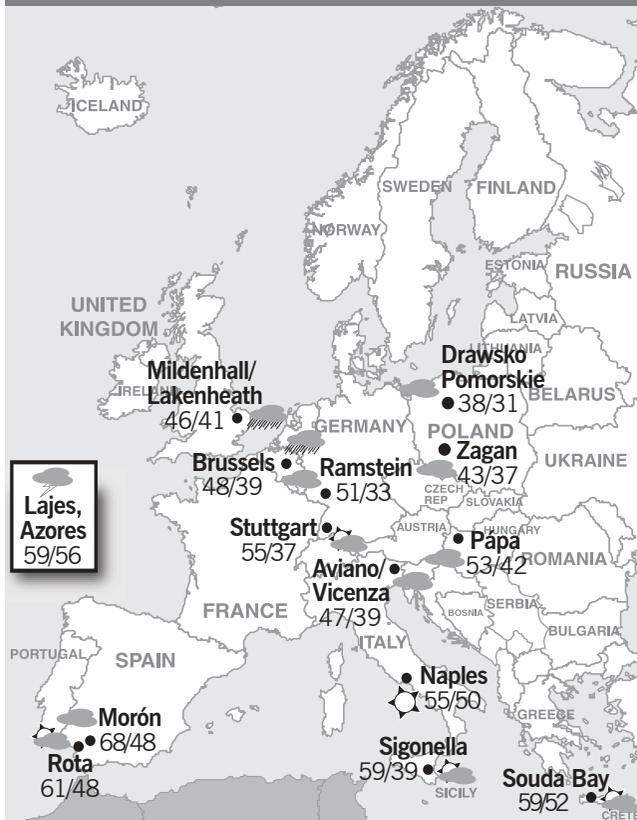
Prime rate	7.75
Interest Rates Discount rate	5.25
Federal funds market rate	4.58
3-month bill	4.82
30-year bond	3.87

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.

TODAY IN STRIPES

- American Roundup 15
- Classified 13
- Comics 17
- Crossword 17
- Faces 18
- Opinion 16
- Sports 19-24

STARS AND STRIPES

However you read us, wherever you need us.

Mobile • Online • Print

EUROPE

ADVERTISING
 CustomerService@stripes.com | +49 (0) 0631.3615.9111
 DSN: 314.583.9111

MIDDLE EAST

ADVERTISING
 CustomerService@stripes.com | +49 (0) 0631.3615.9111
 DSN: 314.583.9111

PACIFIC

ADVERTISING
 PacificAdvertising@stripes.com | +81 (42) 552.2511
 DSN: 315.227.7310



TURUMI LODGE

OSAN AIR BASE, KOREA

Do you have friends & family visiting soon? Or do you just need a time out? Make reservations at the most comfortable and affordable place in town. Room rate is \$72.00 per night for all rooms.

Space Available reservations can be made for up to 120 day in advance.

Turumi Lodge operation 24 hours, 7 days a week.

DSN: 315-784-1844 Comm: 82-31-661-1844

E-mail: turumilodge.reservat@us.af.mil

www.dodlodging.net www.51ffs.com



- Conference Room
- Mustang Café
- Laundry Services
- Business Center
- Fitness Room

PACIFIC

US urges UN to condemn North Korea

By EDITH M. LEDERER

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — The United States and its allies urged the U.N. Security Council on Monday to condemn North Korea's unlawful ballistic missile launches, but China and Russia blamed the U.S. for escalating tensions with stepped-up military exercises targeting Pyongyang.

At the emergency meeting, U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told the council that the United States will propose a presidential statement, saying at a minimum all 15 members should be agreeable to condemning the North's unprecedented missile launches, to urging Pyongyang to comply with U.N. Security Council sanctions resolutions, and "to engage in

meaningful dialogue."

A presidential statement from the Security Council requires the support of all its members, including North Korea's closest allies, China and Russia.

Thomas-Greenfield said the United States condemns North Korea's firing of two short-range ballistic missiles Monday following the launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile Satur-

day "in the strongest terms" as "flagrant violations" of the council's ban on the country's ballistic missile launches.

The launches and North Korea's threatening rhetoric are undermining international peace and security, Thomas-Greenfield said.

And she warned the council that its silence and failure to condemn the North's missile activ-

ities "leads to irrelevance."

But Pyongyang's allies China and Russia countered that what's needed now is dialogue between North Korea and the Biden administration, a de-escalation of military exercises, an easing of sanctions on North Korea, and approval of a resolution they circulated in November 2021 aimed at resolving the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

Fears, questions of N. Korea's growing nuclear missile arsenal

By KIM TONG-HYUNG
AND HYUNG-JIN KIM

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea's latest missile launches are a demonstration of the country's avowed ability to use nuclear force against South Korea and the mainland U.S. How immediate is that threat?

North Korea claims its nuclear forces are capable of destroying its rivals, and often follows its provocative weapons tests with launch details. But many foreign experts call the North's claim propaganda and suggest that the country is

ANALYSIS

not yet capable of hitting the United States or its allies with a nuclear weapon.

There's no question that North Korea has nuclear bombs, and that it has missiles that place the U.S. mainland, South Korea and Japan within striking distance. What's not yet clear is whether the country has mastered the tricky engineering required to join the bombs and the missiles.

ICBMs

North Korea has demonstrated that it has missiles that could fly far enough to reach deep into the continental U.S., but it's not clear whether they can survive re-entering the Earth's atmosphere on arrival.

North Korea said it had launched a Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missile on Saturday to verify the weapon's reliability and combat readiness of the country's nuclear forces. It's one of three kinds of ICBMs the country has developed, along with the Hwasong-14 and Hwasong-17. All three are liquid-fueled, and North Korea has portrayed them all as nuclear-capable.

Launched almost straight up to avoid the territories of neighbors, the weapon reached a maximum altitude of about 3,585 miles and flew 615 miles, according to North Korea's state media. The reported

flight details suggest the missile could travel 8,080 miles or beyond if launched on a normal trajectory.

"These days, North Korea has been disclosing information about its launches in a very detailed manner to try to let others believe what they've done is genuine," analyst Shin Jong-woo at South Korea's Defense and Security Forum said. "But I think that's part of their propaganda."

There are questions on whether North Korea has acquired the technology to shield warheads from the high-temperature, high-stress environment of atmospheric re-entry.

A South Korean biennial defense document released last week said that it's not clear whether the missiles can survive re-entry, because all of North Korea's ICBM tests have so far been made on high angles.

Lee Choon Geun, an honorary research fellow at South Korea's Science and Technology Policy Institute, said a normal trajectory would cause greater stress, as a warhead would spend longer time passing through altitudes of high air density.

North Korea's state media said the launch was made "suddenly" at a surprise order from leader Kim Jong Un.

"The Kim regime's claims of short-notice launches are thus intended to demonstrate not only the development of strategic and tactical nuclear forces but also the operational capability to use them," Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said.

In a military parade earlier this month, North Korea showcased around a dozen ICBMs, an unprecedented number that suggested progress in its efforts to mass-produce powerful weapons.

Among them were huge canister-sealed missiles that experts say were likely a version of a solid-fuel ICBM that North Korea has been trying to develop in recent years. Solid-fueled systems allow missiles to be mobile on the

ground and make them faster to launch.

Warheads

North Korea likely has dozens of nuclear warheads. The question is whether they are small enough to fit on a missile.

North Korea has so far performed six underground nuclear test explosions to manufacture warheads that it can place on missiles. Outside estimates on the number of North Korean nuclear warheads vary widely, ranging from 20-60 to up to about 115.

In a 2021 interview with 38 North, a North Korea-focused website, renowned nuclear physicist Siegfried Hecker, who has visited North Korea's main Yongbyon nuclear complex numerous times, said that "20 to 60 is possible, with the most likely number being 45."

Some experts argue that North Korea has likely already built miniaturized nuclear warheads to be mounted on missiles, citing the number of years the country has spent on its nuclear and missile programs. But others say North Korea is still years away from producing such warheads.

"After its sixth nuclear test, people accepted that North Korea really will have nuclear weapons. But they are still debating whether it has warhead miniaturization technology," Shin, the analyst, said.

The North described its sixth nuclear test in 2017 as a detonation of a thermonuclear bomb built for ICBMs. It created a tremor that measured 6.3 magnitude, and some studies put its estimated explosive yield at about 50 to 140 kilotons of TNT. In comparison, the pair of atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II — which killed more than 210,000 people — yielded explosions equivalent to about 15 and 20 kilotons of TNT, respectively.

The biennial South Korean defense document said that North Korea is estimated to have 154



KRT/AP

A ballistic missile is launched from an undisclosed location in North Korea, on Monday.

pounds of weapons-grade plutonium. Some observers say that's enough for about 9-18 bombs. The document estimated that North Korea has "a considerable amount of" highly enriched uranium as well.

North Korea's Yongbyon complex has facilities to produce both plutonium and highly enriched uranium, the two main ingredients to build nuclear weapons.

Plutonium plants are generally large and generate a lot of heat, making it easier to detect. But a uranium enrichment plant is more compact and can be easily hidden from satellite cameras. North Korea is believed to be running at least one additional covert uranium enrichment facility, in addition to one at its Yongbyon complex.

Short-range weapons

Following the collapse of diplomacy with then-President Donald Trump in 2019, Kim sped up the development of short-range solid-fuel, nuclear-capable missiles designed to strike key targets in South Korea, including U.S. military bases there.

The so-called "tactical" nuclear weapons include what North Korea calls "super-large" 600 mm multiple rocket launchers that it tested Monday. South Korea describes the weapon as a short-range missile system.

North Korea's state media said its new artillery system can carry

nuclear warheads, saying that four rockets would be enough to wipe out an enemy airfield. The statement drew quick outside doubts about whether weapons are indeed nuclear-capable.

"The North Korean claim doesn't make sense to some extent ... Why do they need four tactical nuclear weapons to destroy just one airfield?" Shin said. "Also, which country would disclose such attack scenarios via state media?"

Other new North Korean short-range systems include missiles that were apparently modeled after the Russian Iskander mobile ballistic system or outwardly resemble the U.S. MGM-140 Army Tactical Missile System. Launched from land vehicles, these missiles are designed to be maneuverable and fly at low altitudes, theoretically giving them a better chance of defeating South Korean and U.S. missile defense systems.

Whether North Korea has the ability to arm short-range missiles with nuclear warheads has not been independently confirmed.

While North Korea may be able to place simple nuclear warheads on some of its older missiles, including Scuds or Rodong missiles, it would likely require further technology advancements and nuclear tests to build smaller and more advanced warheads that can be installed on its newer tactical systems, said Lee, the expert.

MILITARY

5th Fleet head: Iran has everyone's attention

By JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates — Iranian attacks in the waterways of the Middle East and elsewhere in the region “have the attention of everyone” as tensions rise over Tehran’s advancing nuclear program, the head of the U.S. Navy’s 5th Fleet said Tuesday.

Vice Adm. Brad Cooper also told The Associated Press that he’s seen a rise in what he described as Iran’s “malign activities” in the region over his two years leading the Bahrain-based 5th Fleet.

While Cooper pointed to recent seizures of weapons by American and allied forces in the region as a success, he acknowledged that Iran has been able to carry out drone attacks targeting shipping in the Mideast and other assaults in the region.

“We’re focused on expanding our partnerships,” Cooper said on the sidelines of Abu Dhabi’s International Defense Exhibition and Conference. “The short answer is the Iranian actions have the attention of everyone.”

The 5th Fleet patrols the crucial Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of all oil transits. Its region also

stretches as far as the Red Sea up to the Suez Canal, the waterway in Egypt linking the Mideast to the Mediterranean Sea, and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait off Yemen.

Under Cooper’s command, which will end with the upcoming arrival of Rear Adm. George Wikoff in Bahrain, likely later this year, the 5th Fleet vastly expanded its use of drones and artificial intelligence to patrol those waterways.

Cooper said the Navy has reached the halfway mark of his goal to have 100 unmanned drones, both sailing and submersible, operating in the region with America’s allies. The Navy also conducted a drill Monday with the United Arab Emirates with the systems, he added.

But concerns about Iran have only grown in recent months as Tehran has enriched uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels and has enough fissile material for several nuclear bombs if it chooses to build them.

There have been several Iranian attacks on commercial shipping in the region, including a still-murky drone assault on the tanker Campo Square on Feb. 10 that’s been cited by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Iran carried out that attack, which wounded no one on



JON GAMBRELL/AP

U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, who heads the Navy’s Bahrain-based 5th Fleet, speaks at an event at the International Defense Exhibition and Conference in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates on Tuesday.

board, according to a U.S. defense official who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters.

Iran has denied targeting the vessel, though it has also denied other

attacks attributed to it since the collapse of the nuclear deal following America’s withdrawal from the accord in 2018.

“Obviously the nuclear component is all being handled via diplo-

matic means,” Cooper said. “I think over a two-year period, we have for sure seen an increase in the number of malign activities, much of which we’ve been catching just in the last 60 to 90 days.”

Unmanned Navy vessels pair with UAE aquatic drone in drill

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

A United Arab Emirates drone boat’s participation in drills earlier this month with four U.S. counterparts from an experimental task force is the latest step toward the Navy’s goal of having a 100-vessel robotic fleet in the Middle East.

The five unmanned surface vessels surveilled ships sailing through the Persian Gulf as part of a weeklong exercise in mid-February, Task Force 59’s first bilateral exercise with the kingdom, a U.S. 5th Fleet statement Monday said.

The Navy aims to have an unmanned surface fleet of 100 in the waters of the Middle East by the end of the summer, with 80 of the

vessels belonging to regional allies such as the UAE, Navy officials have said.

Previous unmanned systems exercises in the Middle East included one in September between the U.S. and Israel in the Gulf of Aqaba.

The 5th Fleet seeks to benefit from the unmanned vessels by having them patrol the Middle East’s waterways, through which much of the world’s trade transits.

Unmanned systems can operate for long stretches on their own as they gather information on passing ships. The Navy created Task Force 59 in 2021 to focus on testing drones and artificial intelligence.

In 2022, Task Force 59 operated unmanned surface ships in the Middle East for more than 25,000

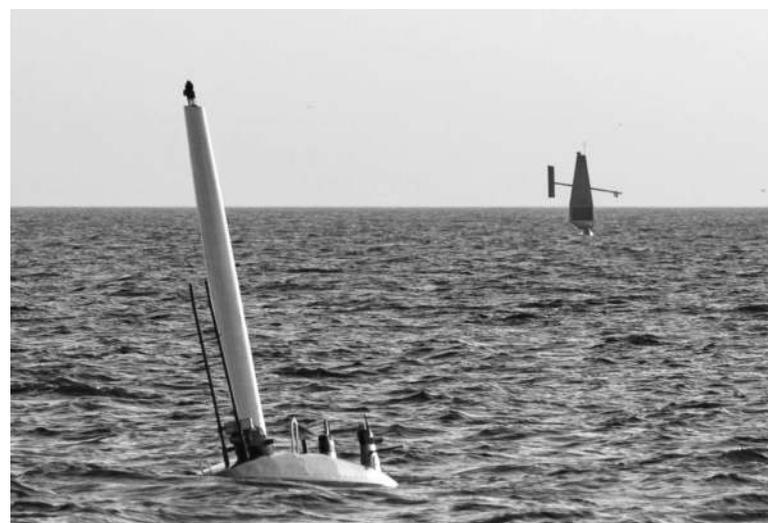
hours, a Naval Forces Central Command statement in December said.

Iran seized drones from Task Force 59 on separate occasions in August and September of that year and then released them when U.S. warships neared, the Navy said.

Iran and the U.S. have traded claims that the other is destabilizing the Middle East, which analysts say is locked in a shadow war between Tehran’s partners and Washington’s.

The Navy in recent months has seized thousands of rifles and rockets at sea that it says Iran was sending to militant proxies.

lawrence.jp@stripes.com
Twitter: @jplawrence3



JAY FAYLO/U.S. Navy

An Ocean Aero Triton unmanned surface vessel, left, operates in the Arabian Gulf with a Saildrone Explorer USV during a bilateral exercise between the U.S. Navy and United Arab Emirates navy on Thursday.

Blinken welcomes ‘time out’ on Greece-Turkey tension before elections

Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday urged NATO allies Greece and Turkey to calm rhetoric as both countries head to national elections, in an effort to bolster unity in the trans-Atlantic alliance as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine nears its anniversary.

Blinken met with officials in Athens after a stop in Turkey, where he also visited regions hit

hardest by devastating recent earthquakes.

Greek and Turkish officials said they are willing to take a time out from long-standing disputes over sea boundaries in the eastern Mediterranean in the aftermath of the earthquakes that have killed about 45,000 people in Turkey and Syria.

Blinken said he hoped the pause would provide an opportunity to return to diplomacy.

“It’s profoundly in our interest and I believe in the interest of both Greece and Turkey to find ways to resolve long-standing differences,” he told reporters in Athens on Tuesday.

“And to do it through dialogue through diplomacy to do it peacefully and in the meantime to not take any unilateral actions or use any charged rhetoric that would only make things more difficult.”

Greece is expected to hold a

parliamentary election in April, while Turkey will hold a general election in June.

“Both countries are heading to an election. That certainly creates, sometimes, incentives to engage in rhetoric that can create more problems,” Blinken said.

In Athens, he met with Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis as well as Greece’s ministers of foreign affairs and defense, continuing discussions to deepen bilat-

eral military cooperation that has significantly expanded in recent years.

“We’re all heartbroken over the humanitarian catastrophe that has struck our neighbors,” Mitsotakis told Blinken late Monday. “I think this horrible catastrophe has proven that there is a deep connection between our two peoples. We may have big, significant political differences, but the bonds between our peoples are there.”

EUROPE



EVAN VUCCI/AP

President Joe Biden stands with children after delivering a speech marking the one-year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, on Tuesday, at the Royal Castle Gardens in Warsaw.

Biden: US president uses Europe trip to reinforce support for Ukraine

FROM PAGE 1

dential palace in Warsaw. “It’s that basic, that simple, that consequential.”

He described NATO as “maybe the most consequential alliance in history,” and he said it’s “stronger than it’s ever been” despite Russian President Vladimir Putin’s hopes that it would fracture over the war in Ukraine.

Duda, in his meeting with Biden, praised the president’s unannounced visit to Kyiv as “spectacular,” saying it “boosted morale of Ukraine’s defenders.”

He said the visit was “a sign that the free world, and its biggest leader, the president of the United States, stands by them.”

On Wednesday, Biden plans to meet again with Duda along with other leaders of the Bucharest Nine, a group of the easternmost members of NATO military alliance.

The conflict in Ukraine — the most significant war in Europe since World War II — has already left tens of thousands of people dead, devastated Ukraine’s infrastructure system and damaged the global economy.

While Biden is looking to use his whirlwind trip to Europe as a moment of affirmation for Ukraine and allies, the White House has also emphasized that there is no clear endgame to the war in the near term, and the situation on the ground has become increasingly complex.

The administration on Sunday revealed it has new intelligence suggesting that China, which has remained on the sidelines of the

“United States needs Poland and NATO as much as NATO needs the United States.”

President Joe Biden

conflict, is now considering sending Moscow lethal aid. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said it could become a “serious problem” if Beijing follows through.

Biden and Zelenskyy discussed capabilities that Ukraine needs “to be able to succeed on the battlefield” in the months ahead, Sullivan said. Zelenskyy has been pushing the U.S. and European allies to provide fighter jets and long-range missile systems known as ATACMS — which Biden has declined to provide so far. Sullivan declined to comment on whether there was any movement on the matter during the leaders’ talk.

With no end in sight for the war, the anniversary is a critical moment for Biden to try to bolster European unity and reiterate that Putin’s invasion was a frontal attack on the post-World War II international order. The White House hopes the president’s visit to Kyiv and Warsaw will help bolster American and global resolve.

In the U.S., a poll published last week by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows that support for providing Ukraine with weapons and direct economic assistance is softening. And earlier this month, 11 House Republicans introduced what they called the “Ukraine fa-

tigue” resolution urging Biden to end military and financial aid to Ukraine, while pushing Ukraine and Russia to come to a peace agreement.

Biden dismissed the notion of waning American support during his visit to Kyiv.

“For all the disagreement we have in our Congress on some issues, there is significant agreement on support for Ukraine,” Biden said while in Kyiv. He described the conflict as “about freedom of democracy at large.”

Ahead of the trip, the White House spotlighted Poland’s efforts to assist Ukraine. More than 1.5 million Ukrainian refugees have settled in Poland since the start of the war and millions more have crossed through Poland on their way to other countries. Poland has also provided Ukraine with \$3.8 billion in military and humanitarian aid, according to the White House.

The Biden administration announced last summer that it was establishing a permanent U.S. garrison in Poland, creating an enduring American foothold on NATO’s eastern flank.

“The truth of the matter is the United States needs Poland and NATO as much as NATO needs the United States,” Biden told Duda on Tuesday.

Putin raises tensions, halts nuclear treaty

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russian President Vladimir Putin declared Tuesday that Moscow was suspending its participation in the New START treaty — the last remaining nuclear arms control pact with the United States — sharply upping the ante amid tensions with Washington over the fighting in Ukraine.

Speaking in his state-of-the-nation address, Putin also said that Russia should stand ready to resume nuclear weapons tests if the U.S. does so, a move that would end a global ban on nuclear weapons tests in place since the end of the Cold War.

Explaining his decision to suspend Russia’s obligations under the 2010 New START treaty, Putin accused the U.S. and its NATO allies of openly declaring the goal of Russia’s defeat in Ukraine.

“They want to inflict a ‘strategic defeat’ on us and try to get to our nuclear facilities at the same time,” he said, declaring his decision to suspend Russia’s participation in the treaty. He later sent a draft bill on the pact’s suspension to the Kremlin-controlled lower house, which is expected to quickly rubber-stamp it Wednesday.

Putin emphasized, however, that Russia was not withdrawing from the pact altogether. Hours after his address, the Russian Foreign Ministry said the country would respect the caps on nuclear weapons set under the treaty.

Russia also will continue to exchange information about test launches of ballistic missiles per earlier agreements with the United States, the ministry said.

Noting that the decision to suspend Russia’s participation in New START could be reversed, the Foreign Ministry urged the U.S. to deescalate tensions and create a proper environment for the treaty’s implementation.

The New START treaty envisages caps on the number of nuclear weapons and broad inspections of nuclear sites. Putin said such inspections don’t make sense after the U.S. and its allies declared the goal of dealing Russia a military defeat in Ukraine and helped the Ukrainian military mount strikes on Russian nuclear facilities.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken deplored Putin’s move as “deeply unfortunate and irresponsible,” noting that “we’ll be watching carefully to see what Russia actual-



MIKHAIL METZEL, SPUTNIK/AP

Russian President Vladimir Putin gestures during his annual state of the nation address Tuesday.

ly does.”

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg also voiced regret about Putin’s move, saying that “with today’s decision on New START, full arms control architecture has been dismantled.”

“I strongly encourage Russia to reconsider its decision and respect existing agreements,” he told reporters.

Putin argued that while the U.S. has pushed for the resumption of inspections of Russian nuclear facilities under the treaty, NATO allies had helped Ukraine mount drone attacks on Russian air bases hosting nuclear-capable strategic bombers.

Putin on Tuesday mocked NATO’s statement urging Russia to allow the resumption of the U.S. inspections of Russian nuclear weapons sites as “some kind of theater of the absurd.”

Putin described the U.S. push for access to Russian nuclear sites as “the height of hypocrisy and cynicism.”

“They want to inflict a ‘strategic defeat’ on us and at the same time, they keep trying to get to our nuclear facilities,” he charged.

The Russian leader also alleged that a NATO statement on New START raised the issue of the nuclear weapons of Britain and France, which are part of the alliance’s nuclear capability but aren’t included in the U.S.-Russian pact.

Then-presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev signed the New START treaty in 2010. The pact limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers. The agreement envisages sweeping on-site inspections to verify compliance.

Just days before the treaty was due to expire in February 2021, Russia and the United States agreed to extend it for another five years.

EUROPE

Lessons: Munitions, planning highlight issues as war continues

FROM PAGE 1

idly throughout Europe in pre-crisis conditions, we still have not fixed this problem, and that is even more stark now," Hodges said.

Allies also are being pushed to the brink when it comes to their arms and munitions stockpiles, which have been greatly depleted during the past year as countries pour weaponry into Ukraine.

"I don't think NATO can be very bullish because our stockpiles are too low, especially in Europe," said John R. Deni, an expert on European security at the U.S. Army War College.

Much is riding on the war, whose outcome has security implications that ripple well beyond the battlefields in eastern Ukraine.

"If the Russians win, it is going to be bad news for the Baltic states, Finland. They're going to perceive a lot of pressure," Deni said. "We will have to use this window of time to more adequately prepare our defenses and square away our affairs on the eastern front."

Should the West waver and allow Moscow to eventually succeed, China could perceive that weakness as a green light to invade Taiwan.

If the U.S. wanted to support the Taiwanese with weaponry, there is a risk that the Pentagon would quickly find its arsenal short on inventory, said retired Air Force Lt. Gen. David Deptula, dean of the Mitchell Institute of Aerospace Power Studies in Washington.

"If there's anything that has been a wake-up call that we need to pay attention to, it is ensuring that there are adequate munition stocks," Deptula said. "Unfortunately, during peacetime, there's no constituency for munitions, so therefore, programmers when they work the budget, they often times go to the munitions accounts to find the offsets."

Considering that the U.S. and its allies in the European Union have a combined gross domestic product that dwarfs Russia's, Moscow shouldn't be able to compete in materiel production, Hodges said.

"If we're losing in a munitions race, it's not because there's not enough money. It's because we haven't done what needs to be done," Hodges said. "We've been talking about it for over a year now and it's still not fixed."

Poor planning

Outside observers say Ukraine deserves some blame as well. In the nearly nine years since Putin invaded and annexed Crimea in 2014, Kyiv never got the country on a wartime footing in domestic arms production, Hodges said.

"Now we are playing catch-up," he added.

Other analysts highlighted the



CLAUDIA NIX/U.S. Marine

Polish soldiers engage targets last year during a combined arms live-fire exercise with paratroopers assigned to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division in Nowa Deba, Poland. The focus of the 82nd Airborne Division's mission in Poland is to assure their Polish allies and enhance the readiness and strengthen of the NATO alliance.

shortcomings of Europe as a whole.

NATO and the EU need to "get further into the knickers" of their member states, Deni said.

"For example, in the U.S., we have defense industrial laws that allow the president to direct industry to do certain things. Germany doesn't have that," he said.

In the year ahead, the war's direction may hinge on whether the West can sustain or step up weapons deliveries to Ukraine, where spring offensives and counteroffensives will soon pick up.

"We need speed. Speed is crucial," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told global leaders gathered in Munich over the weekend in regard to deliveries.

Still, questions remain over how far the West is prepared to go to get Ukraine the weapons it says it needs.

For example, the U.S. and Germany have so far ruled out sending modern fighter jets, which are near the top of Ukraine's wish list.

"Without airpower, those tanks are simply going to feed the meat grinder of what's really devolved to a stalemate resembling a World War I-like quagmire," Deptula said. "And that's not a fight that Ukraine can win."

"We need to get Ukraine air power to replace its declining air force, and we need to get it to them as fast as possible."

Delivering F-16s or other NATO-standard aircraft would ex-



TARA FAJARDO ARTEAGA/U.S. Army

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Keynote Cropper and U.S. Army Sgt. Justin Spearow advance onto the battlefield last year next to an M1126 Stryker Combat Vehicle as part of Defender Europe at Mielno Range, Poland.

exploit advantages that only airpower can create and allow Ukraine's ground forces to carry out combined arms attacks more fully, he said.

The road ahead

Analysts expressed mixed views on the likely outcome in Ukraine. Some are skeptical about Kyiv's ability to reclaim its territory even with allied support.

A study by the Rand Corp. in January argues that it would be in the U.S.'s interest to focus more on a negotiated solution, even if that's at odds with Kyiv's goals.

"Territorial control, although immensely important to Ukraine, is not the most important dimension of the war's future for the

United States," stated the Rand study, called "Avoiding a Long War."

The aim for the U.S. should be "averting possible escalation to a Russia-NATO war or Russian nuclear use," the report said.

Such concerns take precedence over "facilitating significantly more Ukrainian territorial control," the report concludes.

During the past year, the question of whether the conflict could escalate to a point at which NATO is drawn into it has loomed over events and factored into weapons delivery decisions.

Early on, the U.S. and other allies balked at sending Ukraine modern battle tanks. But gradually, more advanced systems have

been cleared for delivery without bringing alliance troops into combat.

The Kremlin, which has lashed out repeatedly at Western military support, has painted itself as being at war indirectly with NATO.

Periodic nuclear saber-rattling from Putin also has raised fears that Russia could at some point use a tactical nuclear weapon in Ukraine to avoid losing the war.

Nonetheless, weapons convoys continue to flow into Ukraine virtually unchallenged. There has been no apparent attempt by the Russians to sabotage the efforts or target storage centers.

"I have been stunned that the Russians have let the West get away with supplying as much stuff as we have. I think the lesson here is that deterrence works," Deni said.

Hodges said the U.S. and allies have been unnecessarily concerned with the escalation question and moved too slowly in supplying weapons as a result. In so doing, they have only prolonged the war, he added.

"There's absolutely zero doubt in my mind that Ukraine is going to win, that they are going to regain control of their sovereign territory," Hodges said.

"I see no bright lights on Russia's horizons. The only hope they have is if we, the West, led by the United States, lose the will to keep doing what's needed to deliver the capabilities that Ukraine needs."

EUROPE



SERGEI ILNITSKY/AP

Russian businessman Yevgeny Prigozhin is a millionaire with close ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin and financier of the Wagner mercenary company.

Wagner owner blasts Russian military chiefs

Associated Press

The owner of the Russian private military company, Wagner, accused Russia's defense minister and chief of general staff on Tuesday of starving his fighters in Ukraine of ammunition, which he charged amounts to an attempt to "destroy" the force.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, a millionaire with close ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin, in an emotional audio statement released through his spokesperson decried "direct resistance" from the Russian military, "which is nothing other than an attempt to destroy Wagner."

Prigozhin said in a raised voice that Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov are handing out orders "left and right" not to supply Wagner with ammunition and not to support it with air transport.

The company has been actively involved in heavy fighting in the east of Ukraine.

This "can be likened to high treason in the very moment when Wagner is fighting for Bakhmut, losing hundreds of its fighters every day," Prigozhin said in a raised voice.

The millionaire and his fighters have been alleging for weeks that the Russian military doesn't provide them with enough ammunition, as Wagner's push to take over Bakhmut, a key city in Ukraine's partially occupied eastern Donetsk region, stalled and turned into a grinding battle.

Emotional statements from Prigozhin and his fighters highlighted the long-brewing tensions between the private Wagner, which has an unclear legal status as Russian law prohibits private military companies, and the Russian military.

Kremlin official urges deeper ties with China

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russia's security head on Tuesday held talks with the Chinese Communist Party's foreign policy chief, calling for closer cooperation with Beijing to resist Western pressure.

Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of Russia's National Security Council, said during a meeting with Wang Yi, the party's most senior foreign policy official who is visiting Moscow, that the West sought to deter Russia and China as part of its attempts to preserve global domination.

"The bloody events in Ukraine staged by the West is just one example of it," said Patrushev, a longtime associate of Russian President Vladimir Putin. "All that is being done against Russia and China and to the detriment of developing nations."

Russia has sought to cast what it

calls its "special military operation" as an effort to protect Russian speakers and to derail Western efforts to turn Ukraine into an anti-Russian bulwark. Kyiv and its Western allies have rejected that argument as a bogus cover for an unprovoked act of aggression.

During Tuesday's meeting with Wang, Patrushev emphasized that "amid a campaign by the West to deter both Russia and China, it is particularly important to further deepen the Russian-Chinese coordination and cooperation in the international arena."

Patrushev said that the development of "strategic partnership" with China remains a top priority for Russia, and reaffirmed Moscow's "invariable support for Beijing on the Taiwan, Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong issues, which the West has exploited to discredit China."

US treasury deputy: Russia sanctions degrading military

By FATIMA HUSSEIN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — American and allied sanctions and export controls are constraining Russia's ability to wage war on Ukraine by degrading its military, a top Treasury Department official said

Treasury Deputy Secretary Wally Adeyemo said at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington that as the war on Ukraine nears the one-year mark, U.S. sanctions are effectively resulting in military losses for Russia by straining its military machine.

Russia is the world's second-largest arms producer after the United States, but Adeyemo asserted that "today, Russia can't produce enough arms to meet their basic needs and to be a supplier to the countries that rely on them."

The financial penalties imposed by the U.S. and its allies "have degraded Russia's ability to replace more than 9,000 pieces of military equipment lost since the start of the war," he said, adding, "Russia has also lost up to 50% of its tanks."

More than 30 countries, including the U.S., the EU nations, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Japan and others — representing more than half the world's economy — have imposed price

"While we have far more to do, we are succeeding in reversing the course of Russia's budget and undercutting its military-industrial complex."

Wally Adeyemo
U.S. Treasury Deputy Secretary

caps on Russian oil and diesel, instituted export controls, frozen Russian Central Bank funds and restricted access to SWIFT, the dominant system for global financial transactions.

Adeyemo said the U.S. plans to announce additional sanctions on Russia this week targeting its military manufacturing industry. President Joe Biden reiterated the need for additional sanctions in a speech Tuesday in Poland.

U.S. officials say Moscow has turned to North Korea and Iran to resupply the Russian military with drones and surface-to-surface missiles.

"Our view is that it is a sign of

weakness, not strength, that Russia today is forced to rely on Iran and North Korea for their military arms, from countries that have already been cut off from the international financial system," he said.

"While we have far more to do, we are succeeding in reversing the course of Russia's budget and undercutting its military-industrial complex," Adeyemo says.

As the invasion enters its second year, the U.S. will intensify its efforts to boost sanctions, Adeyemo said, including cracking down on sanctions evasion and putting economic pressure on countries and firms that continue to do business with Russia.

He acknowledged recent reports that Russia's economy is performing better than expected. This year, its economy is projected to outperform the U.K.'s, growing 0.3% while the U.K. faces a 0.6% contraction, according to the International Monetary Fund.

"While Russia's economic data appears to be better than many expected early in the conflict," Adeyemo said, "our actions are forcing the Kremlin to use its limited resources to prop up their economy at a time where they would rather be investing every dollar in their war machine."



Tax Season is NOW Here



H&R BLOCK

Tax Season 2023

OPERATING HOURS:

Monday-Friday
10am-5pm

Saturday
by appointment only

Give us a call:
0631-3554711
0631-30396446

Send us a message:
elmer.stokes@hrblock.com
hrblock.ktown1@yahoo.com

Visit Us:
Kaiserstrasse 65 (B40)
67661 Kaiserslautern-Einsiedlerhof

NATION

In New Orleans, crime, politics don't stop party

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — New Orleans' annual Carnival season entered its ebullient crescendo Tuesday with thousands of revelers expected to pack the French Quarter and line miles of parade routes in a citywide Mardi Gras celebration underpinned this year by violent crime concerns and political turmoil.

Gunfire that broke out during a parade Sunday night left a teenager dead and four others injured, including a 4-year-old girl. Police quickly arrested Mansour Mbodj, 21, for illegally carrying a weapon, then upgraded the charge to second-degree murder.

Officials stressed Monday that the shooting was an isolated event.

The violence appeared to have little effect on Monday night crowds. St. Charles Avenue, including the area where gunfire broke out, was again lined with people dancing, drinking and eating in a football tailgate atmosphere as they awaited the evening's parades. The French Quar-

ter was packed with partiers wandering among bars, restaurants and strip clubs.

Revelers shrugged off crime at an afternoon riverside park event celebrating this year's king and queen of the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club.

"I think whatever it was, it was a private dispute that happened in a public place," said Chris Flug of New Orleans, referencing the Sunday night shooting. "It's always sad when gun violence takes a life, but it shouldn't taint the city or the event. You can't predict people's behavior."

Crime has contributed to dissatisfaction with Mayor LaToya Cantrell. She won re-election easily in 2021, but has suffered myriad political problems since, including criticism about crime, the slow pace of major street repairs and questions over her personal use of a city-owned French Quarter apartment.

A recall petition launched last year is nearing a Wednesday deadline. One of the organizers,



DORTHY RAY/AP

Revelers cheer as the Krewe of Orpheus rolls through New Orleans the night before Mardi Gras, known as Lundi Gras, on Monday.

Eileen Carter, said she believes the movement has enough signatures, but will make a last-minute push.

"We're going to have people canvassing the parade routes," Carter said. "That's been really helpful to us."

Fueling the political tumult: Cantrell was captured in a social media video gesturing with her middle-finger as a parade passed by a city reviewing stand over the weekend.

What sparked the gesture was

unclear.

The mayor's press office did not respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press. A statement given to The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate shed little light.

"Mardi Gras is a time where satire and jest are on full display," spokesperson Gregory Joseph said in a prepared statement. "The city has been enjoying a safe and healthy Carnival," the statement said, adding that the mayor was looking forward to continuing the

celebration.

Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday, is the culmination of Carnival season, which officially begins each year on Jan. 6, the 12th day after Christmas, and closes with the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday.

New Orleans' raucous celebration is the nation's most well-known, but the holiday is also celebrated throughout much of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast. Mobile, Ala., lays claim to the oldest Mardi Gras celebration in the country.

Calif. city weighs balloon ban to protect coast

Associated Press

Environmental advocates are celebrating in Laguna Beach — but it won't be with balloons.

The hilly seaside city known for stunning ocean views and rolling bluffs is weighing a plan to ban the sale and public use of balloons to curtail the risk of devastating wildfires and eliminate a major source of trash floating near the community's scenic shores.

The Laguna Beach City Council is expected to vote Tuesday on the proposal to ban in public the popular mainstay of birthday and graduation parties, whether inflated with helium or not.

The move in the community of 23,000 people 50 miles southeast of Los Angeles comes as several California beach cities have limited balloons and the state enacted a law to regulate the types made of foil.

"This is the beginning," said Chad Nelsen, chief executive of the nonprofit environmental organization Surfrider Foundation, adding that he sees momentum to weed out balloons that tangle with turtles and sea lions much like he did with the effort to phase out single-use plastic bags. "We're chipping away at all these things we find and trying to clean up the ocean one item at a time."

Environmental advocates are taking aim at balloons, arguing they're a preventable cause of coastal pollution that threatens animals and seabirds.

Balloon debris can tangle wildlife or be ingested by animals that mistake it for food, and

more than 3,000 pieces of balloon litter were picked up on ocean beaches by volunteers in Virginia over a five-year period, according to the NOAA Office of Response and Restoration.

In California, fire officials have long warned against foil balloons that can tangle with power lines, causing a power outage and potential fire hazard.

Southern California Edison, one of the state's major utilities, reported more than 1,000 foil balloon-related power outages in 2017, affecting more than 1 million customers, according to a state legislative analysis.

But coastal advocates want legislation that addresses balloon litter in addition to fire risk. Coastal communities in Florida, Delaware and New York have adopted rules aimed at curtailing balloon pollution. Several in Southern California have taken similar steps.

The city of Manhattan Beach has banned foil balloons on public property and the mass release of latex balloons, while two San Diego County beach cities have barred balloons filled with a gas lighter than air.

Officials in Laguna Beach have long discussed the idea. Lawmakers held an initial, unanimous vote in January to phase out the public use of all balloons, with a second and

final vote scheduled for Tuesday.

Balloons can still be used by residents at home, said Mayor Bob Whalen.

"Even the balloon advocates and balloon industry was not opposed to banning them on the beach," Whalen said, adding that the city

moved on the issue both to reduce the risk of fires and to protect marine life along the city's roughly 6 miles of shoreline. "There is going to be some impact on the local distribution of balloons, but as I say, people will still find places to buy balloons."

Treb Heining
balloon advocate

Treb Heining, who began selling balloons at Disneyland when he was 15 years old and now, more than 50 years later, works internationally in the balloon industry, said balloons bring happiness to the world.

"All my life, I've seen children thrilled — of all ages. You can still be a child at 90 years old," he said.

Heining said Laguna Beach officials would not come to the table for a compromise.

He suggested banning portable helium tanks for the public, barring balloon releases and prohibiting balloons on the beach, rather than an all-or-nothing approach.

"They're doing anything they can to make balloons into this evil, horrible thing. And they're not," he said.

"They're doing anything they can to make balloons into this evil, horrible thing. And they're not."

Justices reject appeal from man who made fun of police

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court has rejected an appeal, backed by the satirical The Onion, from a man who was arrested and prosecuted for making fun of police on social media.

The justices on Tuesday left in place a lower court ruling against Anthony Novak, who was arrested after he spoofed the Parma, Ohio, police force in Facebook posts.

After his acquittal on criminal charges, Novak sued the police for violating his constitutional rights. But a federal appeals court ruled the officers have "qualified immunity" and threw out the lawsuit.

The Onion filed its brief in defense of parody. Its lawyers wrote that the First Amendment protects people from prosecution when they make fun of others.

"The Onion's writers also have a self-serving interest in preventing political authorities from imprisoning humorists," the site's lawyers wrote. "This brief is submitted in the interest of at least mitigating their future punishment."

NATION

Seattle considers law barring caste prejudice

By DEEPA BHARATH
Associated Press

Among Kshama Sawant's earliest memories of the caste system was hearing her grandfather — a man she "otherwise loved very much" — utter a slur to summon their lower-caste maid.

The Seattle City Council member, raised in an upper-caste Hindu Brahmin household in India, was 6 when she questioned her grandfather about it. He responded that his granddaughter "talked too much."

Now 50, and an elected official in a city far from India, Sawant has proposed an ordinance to add caste to Seattle's anti-discrimination laws. If the council approves it Tuesday, Seattle will become the first U.S. city to specifically outlaw caste discrimination.

In India, the caste system's origins can be traced back 3,000 years as a social hierarchy based on birth. While the definition of caste has evolved, under Muslim and British rule, the suffering of those at the bottom of the caste pyramid — known as Dalits — has continued.

In 1948, India banned caste discrimination, and enshrined that

policy in the constitution in 1950. Yet the undercurrents of caste continue across Indian society; caste-based violence is rampant.

The U.S. caste debate has divided the South Asian community. Dalit activists say caste discrimination is prevalent in diaspora communities, surfacing in social relations, housing, education and the tech sector.

The United States is the second most popular destination for Indians living abroad, according to the Migration Policy Institute, which estimates the U.S. diaspora grew from about 206,000 in 1980 to about 2.7 million in 2021. The group South Asian Americans Leading Together says nearly 5.4 million South Asians live in the U.S. — up from 3.5 million counted in the 2010 census. Most trace their roots to Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

There has been strong pushback to anti-discrimination laws and policies that target caste from some groups. They say it will hurt a community that already faces discrimination.

But over the past decade, Dalit activism has garnered support

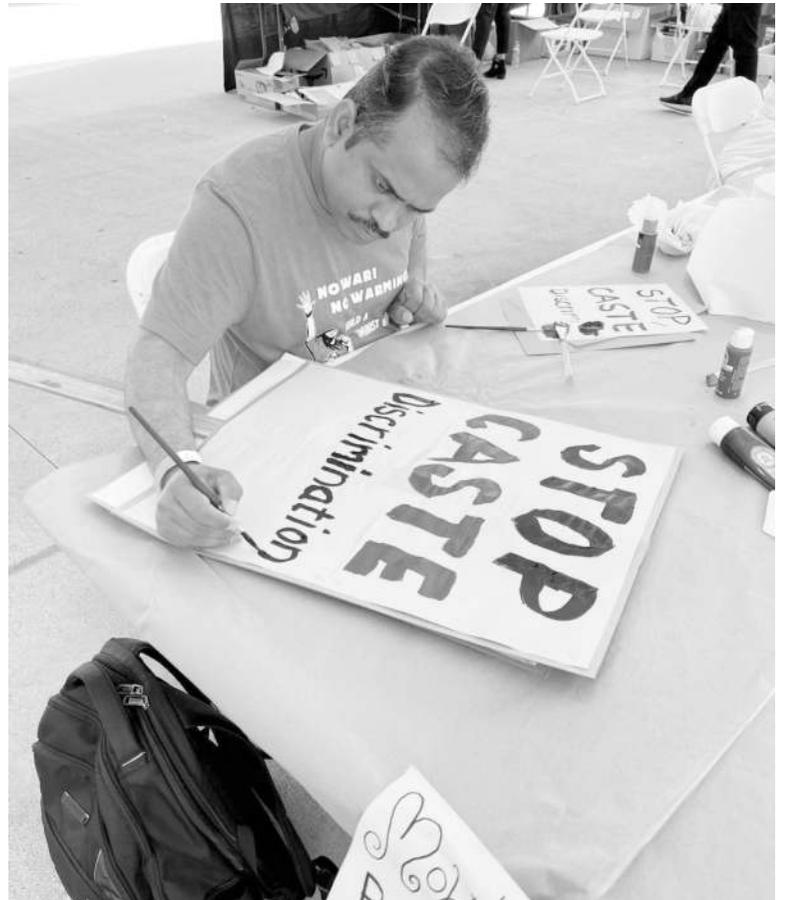
from parts of the diaspora. One recent trend: More Dalits are telling their stories, energizing this movement.

Prem Pariyar, a Dalit Hindu from Nepal, gets emotional as he recalls escaping caste violence in his native village. His family was attacked for taking water from a community tap, said Pariyar, now a social worker in California who serves on Alameda County's Human Relations Commission. He moved to the U.S. but says he couldn't escape discrimination.

"I'm fighting so Dalits can be recognized as human beings," he said.

Pariyar helped caste become a protected category in the California State University system in January 2022. In 2019, Brandeis University near Boston became the first college to include caste in its nondiscrimination policy. Other universities have adopted similar measures.

Among the striking findings in a survey of 1,500 South Asians in the U.S. by Equality Labs: 67% of Dalits who responded reported being treated unfairly at their workplace because of their caste and 40% of Dalit students who



COURTESY OF PREM PARIYAR

Prem Pariyar, a Dalit Hindu from Nepal, works on a banner at a People's Summit for Democracy event in Los Angeles last June.

were surveyed reported facing discrimination in educational institutions compared to 3% of upper-caste respondents. Also, 40% of Dalit respondents said they felt unwelcome at their place of worship due to caste.

The Dalit American community is not monolithic. Aldrin Deepak, an India-born Dalit living

near San Francisco, said he has never faced caste discrimination during 35 years in the U.S. He has decorated local Hindu temple deities and hosted community members for Diwali celebrations.

"Making an issue where there is none is only creating more fractures in our community," he said.

Man arrested in killing of Catholic bishop had worked at his home

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ
AND DAMIAN DOVARGANES
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A man arrested Monday in the weekend killing of a Catholic bishop that shocked Los Angeles religious and immigrant communities is the husband of the victim's housekeeper and had done work at his home, authorities said.

Auxiliary Bishop David O'Connell, 69, was fatally shot Saturday in the bedroom of his home in Hacienda Heights, an unincorporated community about 20 miles east of downtown Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna said.

A SWAT team arrested Carlos Medina, the husband of O'Connell's housekeeper, at their home in Torrance, about 35 miles southwest of Hacienda Heights, Luna said.

The sheriff said detectives first linked Medina to the crime after finding surveillance video that showed his SUV in the driveway of

O'Connell's home at the time of the killing.

A caller told authorities that Medina, 65, was acting irrationally and had made comments about O'Connell "owing him money," Luna said, adding that a motive in the killing remains under investigation.

He said detectives found no evidence of forced entry at the archdiocese-owned home and that Medina's wife was cooperating with detectives. Detectives recovered weapons at Medina's home and ballistic tests are pending, Luna said.

It was not immediately known if Medina has an attorney who can speak on his behalf.

O'Connell had been a priest for 45 years and was a native of Ireland, according to Angelus News, the news outlet of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the nation's largest.

Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez said Monday that O'Connell spoke fluent Spanish



DAMIAN DOVARGANES/AP

Gabriela Gil and her children pay their respects to Bishop David O'Connell at the corner of his home in Hacienda Heights, Calif., on Sunday.

with an Irish accent and every day showed "compassion to the poor, to the homeless, to the immigrant, and to all those living on society's margins."

"He was a good priest and a good bishop and a man of peace and we're very sad to lose him," added Gomez, his voice breaking.

Baldwin faces less jail time after move by prosecution

By ANITA SNOW
Associated Press

The prosecution in the case of a fatal New Mexico film-set shooting made a stark turnaround Monday, dropping the possibility of a mandatory five-year sentence against Alec Baldwin, new court filings show.

The actor-producer's attorneys had earlier objected to the enhancement, saying it was unconstitutional because it was added after the October 2021 shooting. Legal experts had said Baldwin had a strong chance of seeing it tossed out.

"The prosecutors committed a basic legal error by charging Mr. Baldwin under a version of the firearm-enhancement statute that did not exist on the date of the accident," Baldwin's attorneys said in an earlier court filing.

Baldwin's attorney declined to comment Monday after the reversal by prosecutors, who earlier criticized his efforts to have the sentencing requirement dropped. The related standard for the possibility of a mandatory five years would be reckless disregard of safety "without due caution and

circumspection" and carried a higher threshold of wrongdoing.

The remaining alternative standard and set of penalties in the case now requires proof of negligence, which is punishable by up to 18 months in jail and a \$5,000 fine under New Mexico law.

Heather Brewer, spokesperson for the New Mexico

First Judicial District Attorney's Office, said in an email earlier this month that the prosecution's focus "will remain on ensuring that justice is served and that everyone — even celebrities with fancy attorneys — is held accountable under the law."

Baldwin and Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the weapons supervisor on the set of the film "Rust," were charged last month with felony involuntary manslaughter in the shooting death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, who died shortly after being wounded during rehearsals at a ranch on the outskirts of Santa Fe.



Baldwin

NATION

House GOP casts wide net in upcoming probes

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The security at the U.S. border with Mexico. The origins of COVID-19. The treatment of parents who protest “woke” school board policies.

These are among the far-reaching and politically charged investigations House Republicans are launching, along with probes of President Joe Biden and his family, an ambitious oversight agenda that taps into the concerns of hard-right conservatives but risks alienating other Americans focused on different priorities.

Republicans have tasked every House committee with developing an oversight budget, and GOP leaders are educating rank-and-file lawmakers — many have never had subpoena powers — with how-to courses including “Investigations 101.” They are planning to take their investigations on the road to stir public interest, including a border hearing this week in Yuma, Ariz.

“We have a constitutional duty to do oversight,” Rep. Jim Jordan told The Associated Press in an interview. He is chairman of the House Judiciary Committee and its powerful new select subcommittee on what Republicans call the “weaponization” of the federal government.

Jordan, R-Ohio, said his goal is “to figure out what legislative changes need to be made to help stop the egregious behavior that we discovered.”

The approach is all part of House Speaker Kevin McCarthy’s effort to steer his new majority to one of the core roles of the legislative branch, oversight of the executive, as he promised voters ahead of the fall election. But powered by some of the more firebrand figures in the GOP, the investigations pose a high-risk, high-reward proposition that is quickly drowning out much of the other House business.

The first hearing of the “weaponization” of the federal government, perhaps the signature panel of the new House majority ostensibly modeled after the post-Watergate Church Commission, devolved into a litany of allegations and theories about the Bidens, the FBI and the coronavirus, among others. The far-flung ideas are familiar to consumers of conservative media, and of-



CAROLYN KASTER/AP

House Judiciary Committee Chair Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, says his committee has a constitutional duty for oversight.

ten linked, but may not necessarily be top of mind for the wider public.

Timothy Naftali, a professor at New York University and a scholar of the Nixon era, said congressional oversight is one of the functions of good governance, but he warned that “one of the possible downsides is you end up with paralysis.”

“Oversight is healthy,” Naftali said. “Then it’s a question of what the goal of oversight is.”

Naftali said that while Americans may share many of the same questions and concerns Republicans are raising on topics like the origins of COVID-19 or the ability of the FBI to investigate Americans, he warned against a rising “performative nature” of Congress that results in political grandstanding without concrete legislative or policy solutions.

“It’s potentially very healthy if these investigations are animated by an empiricism — an ability to get to the facts,” he said. “But I’m not convinced of that.”

Rather than focus on a singular mission — as happened with the impeachment probes of President Donald Trump by Democrats or the Republican investigations of the attack on the U.S. diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya — Republicans have cast a net both deep and wide.

McCarthy, of California, laid out a road map last year and gathered key congressional staff for training sessions even before Republicans won the House majority in the fall election, according to a senior GOP leadership aide who insisted on anonymity to discuss the private machinations.

Some of the investigations underway into the U.S. border with Mexico are focused on

potentially building an impeachment case against Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

A coronavirus committee will dig into the work of Dr. Anthony Fauci, the former National Institutes of Health official who served both Republican and Democratic presidents but came under scrutiny during the Trump era for his handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

The workings of the Justice Department and particularly the FBI are under deep scrutiny, particularly as federal law enforcement works to stamp out the alarming rise of domestic extremism in the U.S., which Republicans argue is a heavy-handed and overblown infringement of Americans’ First Amendment rights.

The Justice Department’s prosecutions of Trump supporters who stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, trying to overturn Biden’s election victory and its investigations of parents making menacing and even threatening protests at school boards over the teaching of Black history or other “woke” policies are part of the GOP’s probe of the FBI’s handling of extremists.

Subpoenas have already been issued by Jordan’s committee to the five largest technology companies — Apple, Microsoft, Meta, Alphabet and Amazon — to appear for questioning about what Republicans assert is widespread corporate censorship of conservative voices.

There will be national security investigations by two committees surrounding Biden’s withdrawal from Afghanistan, which ended the 20-year war, as well as the U.S. approach to China.

The White House sees the far-reaching Republican investigations as potentially overlapping and even interfering with one another and argues that the GOP priorities are not in line with those of the American people.

“Peddling debunked conspiracy theories through stunt investigations may make good fodder for Fox News primetime, but it won’t help make a dozen of eggs or a gallon of milk cheaper for American families,” Ian Sams, White House spokesperson for oversight and investigations, said in a statement to the AP.

Inside the Trump grand jury that probed election meddling

Associated Press

ATLANTA — They were led down a staircase into a garage beneath a downtown Atlanta courthouse, where officers with big guns were waiting. From there, they were ushered into vans with heavily tinted windows and driven to their cars under police escort.

For Emily Kohrs, these were the moments last May when she realized she wasn’t participating in just any grand jury.

“That was the first indication that this was a big freaking deal,” Kohrs told The Associated Press.

The 30-year-old Fulton County resident who was between jobs suddenly found herself at the center of one of the nation’s most significant legal proceedings. She would become foreperson of the

special grand jury selected to investigate whether then-President Donald Trump and his Republican associates illegally meddled in Georgia’s 2020 presidential election.

The case has emerged as one of Trump’s most glaring legal vulnerabilities as he mounts a third presidential campaign, in part because he was recorded asking state election officials to “find 11,780 votes” for him.

For the next eight months, Kohrs and her fellow jurors would hear testimony from 75 witnesses, ranging from some of Trump’s most prominent allies to local

election workers. Portions of the panel’s final report released last Thursday said jurors believed that “one or more witnesses” committed perjury and urged local prosecutors to bring charges.

The AP identified Kohrs after her name was included on subpoenas obtained through open records requests. Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, who was on the receiving end of Trump’s pressure campaign, was “a really geeky kind of funny,” she said. State House Speaker David Ralston, who died in November, was hilarious and had the room in stitches. And Gov. Brian Kemp, who succeeded in delaying his appearance until after his reelection in November, seemed unhappy to be there. Kohrs was fascinated by

an explainer on Georgia’s voting machines offered by a former Dominion Voting Systems executive. She also enjoyed learning about the inner workings of the White House from Cassidy Hutchinson, who Kohrs said was much more forthcoming than her old boss, former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows.

Of the 26 people on the panel — 23 jurors and three alternates — 16 had to be present for a quorum. There was a core group of between 12 and 16 who showed up almost every day they were in session, Kohrs said, and she could recall only one day when they couldn’t proceed because not enough seats were filled. The most they ever had in the room was 22 — on the day Former New York

mayor and Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani testified.

As the months passed, the grand jurors grew more comfortable with each other and with the four lawyers on Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis’ team who led the proceedings. But they’re not best friends now that it’s over.

“We are not meeting up now. We don’t have a group chat,” Kohrs said.

While the jurors asked to hear from certain witnesses, most witnesses were decided upon by the district attorney’s office. But Kohrs said she didn’t feel as though prosecutors were trying to influence the jurors’ final report.

“I fully stand by our report as our decision and our conclusion,” she said.



Trump

SCIENCE

Lonely tunes

Humpback whales wail less as population grows, study finds

By CHRISTINA LARSON
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Those melancholy tunes sung by humpback whales may really be a sign of loneliness.

Scientists who tracked humpback whales in Australia noticed that fewer whales wailed to find mates as their population grew.

“Humpback whale song is loud and travels far in the ocean,” said marine biologist Rebecca Dunlop, who has studied humpback whales that breed near the Great Barrier Reef for more than two decades.

As whale numbers dramatically rebounded following the end of commercial whaling — one of the world’s great conservation success stories — she noticed something unexpected.

“It was getting more difficult to actually find singers,” said Dunlop, who is based at the University of Queensland in Brisbane. “When there were fewer of them, there was a lot of singing — now that there are lots of them, no need to be singing so much.”

Scientists first began to hear and study the elaborate songs of humpback whales in the 1970s, thanks to new underwater microphones. Only male whales sing, and the tunes are thought to play a role in attracting mates and asserting



MARK BAKER/AP

A humpback whale breaches off the coast of Port Stephens, Australia, in June 2021. Lonely humpback whales are more likely to sing — but as populations grow, whales wail less, a new study suggests.

dominance.

Eastern Australia’s humpback whales were facing regional extinction in the 1960s, with only around 200 whales left. But numbers grew and reached 27,000 whales by 2015 — approaching es-

timated pre-whaling levels.

As the density of whales increased, their courtship changed. While 2 in 10 males were singers in 2004, a decade later that ratio had dropped to just 1 in 10, Dunlop and colleagues reported Thursday in

the journal *Nature Communications Biology*.

Dunlop speculates that singing played an outsized role in attracting mates when populations were severely depleted.

“It was hard just to find other

whales in the area, because there weren’t many,” she said.

When whales live in denser populations, a male looking for a mate also has to ward off the competition, and singing may tip off other suitors, she explained.

“As animal populations recover, they change their behavior — they have different constraints,” said marine biologist Boris Worm of Canada’s Dalhousie University, who was not involved in the study.

To be sure, the seas are still noisy. Many humpbacks woo with a combination of singing and physical jostling, the Australia researchers report.

“Such a big increase in animals over the time they were studying gave them a unique opportunity to get insights about changes in behavior,” said Simon Ingram, a University of Plymouth marine biologist in England, who not involved in the study.

Ingram said that while humpback whales must have been singers long before whaling depleted their numbers, the new study highlights just how essential their elaborate and beautiful songs were to their survival and recovery.

“Clearly singing became incredibly valuable when their numbers were very low,” he said.

Japanese startup to launch space viewing balloon flights

By MARI YAMAGUCHI
Associated Press

TOKYO — A Japanese startup announced plans Tuesday to launch commercial space viewing balloon flights that it hopes will bring an otherwise astronomically expensive experience down to Earth.

Company president Keisuke Iwaya said passengers do not need to be billionaires, go through intense training or have the language skills needed to fly in a rocket.

“It’s safe, economical and gentle for people,” Iwaya told reporters. “The idea is to make space tourism for everyone.” He said he wants to “democratize space.”

The company, Iwaya Giken, based in Sapporo in northern Japan, has been working on the project since 2012 and says it has developed an airtight two-seat cabin and a balloon capable of rising up to an altitude of 15 miles, where the curve of the Earth can be clearly viewed. While passengers won’t be in outer space — the balloon only goes up to roughly the middle of the stratosphere — they’ll be higher than a jet plane flies and have an unobstructed view of outer space.

The company teamed up with major Japanese travel agency

JTB Corp., which announced plans to collaborate on the project when the company is ready for a commercial trip. Initially, a flight would cost about \$180,000, but Iwaya said he aims to eventually bring it down to tens of thousands of dollars.

While Japanese space ventures have fallen behind U.S. companies like SpaceX, Iwaya said his aim is to make space more reachable.

SpaceX launched three rich businessmen and their astronaut escort to the International Space Station in April for \$55 million each — the company’s first private charter flight to the orbiting lab after two years of carrying astronauts there for NASA.

But unlike a rocket or a hot air balloon, the Iwaya Giken vessel will be lifted by helium that can be largely reused, company officials said, and flights will safely stay above Japanese territory or airspace. The first trip is planned as early as later this year.

The balloon, which can carry a pilot and a passenger, would take off from a balloon port in Hokkaido, rise for two hours to as high as 15 miles and stay there for one hour before a one-hour descent. The drum-shaped plastic cabin is 4.9 feet in diameter and has sever-



EUGENE HOSHIKO/AP

Keisuke Iwaya, left, CEO of a Japanese space development company, Iwaya Giken, and Takayuki Hanasaka, JTB Senior Managing Executive Officer, pose for a photo during a news conference in Tokyo on Tuesday. The two unveiled a two-seater cabin and a balloon that the company says is capable of rising to an altitude of 15 miles, which is roughly the middle of the stratosphere.

al large windows to allow a view of space above or the Earth below, the company said.

Applications for a space view-

ing ride opened Tuesday and will continue through the end of August. The first five passengers selected will be announced in Octo-

ber, company officials said, and flights will be approximately a week apart, depending on the weather.

WORLD

Australian spy chief details widespread espionage danger

By ROD MCGUIRK
Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia — Australia faces an unprecedented threat of espionage and foreign interference with more Australians being targeted by agents than ever before, the head of the nation's main domestic spy agency said on Tuesday.

Multiple nations were using espionage and foreign interference to advance their interests and undermine Australia's, Mike Burgess, secretary-general of security at the Australian Security Intelligence Organization, said in his 21-page assessment speech.

"They are using espionage to covertly understand Australia's politics and decision-making, our alliances and partnerships, and our economic and policy priorities," Burgess said.

"Based on what ASIO is seeing, more Australians are being targeted for espionage and foreign inter-

ference than at any time in Australia's history — more hostile foreign intelligence services, more spies, more targeting, more harm, more ASIO investigations, more ASIO disruptions."

He added, "From where I sit, it feels like hand-to-hand combat."

His comments were released to the media before the speech at ASIO headquarters in the Australian capital Canberra.

He said his agency had noticed an uptick in online targeting of people working in Australia's defense industry since September 2021, when U.S. President Joe Biden, then-British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and then-Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced a three-way agreement known as AUKUS to provide Australia with a fleet of submarines powered by U.S. nuclear technology.

"As we progress AUKUS, it's critical our allies know we can keep our secrets and keep their se-

crets," Burgess said.

Australians being targeted by foreign governments include judges, media commentators and journalists, Burgess said, adding that a small number of "judicial figures" has been subjected to "suspicious approaches."

Spies were seeking to use litigation as an "intelligence collection toll," Burgess said.

ASIO had uncovered and stopped a plot to potentially recruit Australian journalists through all-expenses paid "study tours" of a foreign country. The agency also had been tracking for several years former Australian military personnel who were willing to sell their training and expertise to foreign governments, Burgess said.

Australian, British and Canadian defense officials have voiced concerns in recent months that China is attempting to poach military expertise such as fighter jet pilots.

Group urges radiation tests for 900 N. Korean escapees

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — Human rights advocates on Tuesday urged South Korea to offer radiation exposure tests to hundreds of North Korean escapees who had lived near the country's nuclear testing ground.

Tests conducted by the South Korean government on 40 people in 2017 and 2018 found at least nine of them had abnormalities that could indicate high radiation exposure, but Seoul's Unification Ministry said a conclusive link to North Korea's nuclear activity couldn't be established and other factors were possible, such as age, smoking habits or other types of chemical exposure.

The South Korean radiation tests were subsequently discontinued.

The Seoul-based Transitional Justice Working Group cited the findings and its own analysis of geographic and census data to say that North Korea's six nuclear detonations could have spread radioactive materials by water within 24.8 miles of the Punggye-ri nuclear facility. It said more than a million people live in the area dependent on groundwa-

ter and wells since piped water is scarce beyond the capital, Pyongyang and a few other cities.

North Korea has rejected safety concerns surrounding its nuclear tests, saying the testing environment each time was fully controlled and that it detected no radioactive leaks. It allowed foreign journalists to film the detonation of some tunnels at the site in 2018 but has never allowed international nuclear inspectors to visit the Punggye-ri testing ground.

Seoul's Unification Ministry, which handles affairs with the North, said in a statement that it would consider resuming the tests if the North Korean escapees have health problems or request examinations.

The advocacy group said South Korean records show nearly 900 people from the region around the Punggye-ri site have escaped to South Korea since the North's first nuclear test in 2006. It said resuming radiation testing for them was crucial considering the lack of access to North Korea's nuclear facility.

Transportation 944

VEHICLE SHIPPING SERVICES

- International Shipping
- Import & Export
- Inland trucking (U.S. & Europe)
- Door to door pick-up/delivery service
- Customs clearance
- All Risk Marine Insurance
- Auto Insurance (Germany only)

For Further Information Please Contact

GERMANY	UNITED KINGDOM	U.S.A.
Phone: +49-(0)6134-2592730	+44-(0)1638-515714	+1-972-602-1670 Ext. 1701
Toll-free: 0800-CARSHIP (Germany only)		+1-800-264-8167 (US only)
E-Mail: info@transglobal-logistics.de	enquiries@carshipuk.co.uk	info@tgal.us
WEB: www.transglobal-logistics.de	www.carshipuk.co.uk	www.tgal.us

For 2nd POV Shipments - Offices / Agencies near Military Installations

Are you in the picture?

Reading Stars and Stripes gives you a better handle on issues that affect you most.

No one covers the bases the way we do.

Transportation 944

Ship Cars and Containers to and from the USA

OPENING HOURS: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mon - Fri
0800-522-6274 or 800-WSA-SHIP (972-7447)

For a free rate request, please email: info@worldwide-ship.de
Visit our Website: www.worldwide-ship.de

Off Duty? Amuse Yourself!

Concert, events, TV, movies, music, video games, celebrity antics...

Get entertained with...

RELIGION

Clergy: ChatGPT sermons will have no soul

Some fear AI will take passion away from preaching

By DAVID CRARY
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Among sermon writers, there is fascination — and unease — over the fast-expanding abilities of artificial-intelligence chatbots.

For now, the evolving consensus among clergy is this: Yes, they can write a passably competent sermon. But no, they can't replicate the passion of actual preaching.

"It lacks a soul — I don't know how else to say it," said Hershael York, a pastor in Kentucky who also is dean of the school of theology and a professor of Christian preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Sermons are meant to be the core of a worship service — and often are faith leaders' best weekly shot at grabbing their congregation's attention to impart theological and moral guidance.

Lazy pastors might be tempted to use AI for this purpose, York said, "but not the great shepherds, the ones who love preaching, who love their people."

A rabbi in New York, Joshua Franklin, recently told his congregation at the Jewish Center of the Hamptons that he was going to deliver a plagiarized sermon — dealing with such issues as trust, vulnerability and forgiveness.

Upon finishing, he asked the worshippers to guess who wrote it. When they appeared stumped, he revealed that the writer was ChatGPT, responding to his request to write a 1,000-word sermon related to that week's lesson from the Torah.

"Now, you're clapping — I'm deathly afraid," Franklin said when several congregants applauded. "I thought truck drivers were going to go long before the rabbi, in terms of losing our positions to artificial intelligence."

"ChatGPT might be really great at sounding intelligent, but the question is, can it be empathetic? And that, not yet at least, it can't," added Franklin.

He said AI has yet to develop compassion and love, and is unable to build community and relationships.

"Those are the things that bring us together," the rabbi concluded.

Rachael Keefe, pastor of Living Table United Church of Christ in Minneapolis, undertook an experiment similar to Franklin's.

She posted a brief essay in her online Pastoral Notes in January, addressing how to attend to one's mental health amid the stresses of the holiday season.



ROBERT BUMSTED/AP

Rabbi Joshua Franklin stands inside the sanctuary at the Jewish Center of the Hamptons in East Hampton, N.Y., on Feb. 10. Franklin experimented writing a sermon for his congregation using artificial intelligence software ChatGPT, and concluded that AI can't replace the work of human faith leaders.

"The preaching of Artificial Intelligence can't convincingly sympathize with the human plight."

Todd Brewer
New Testament scholar

It was pleasant, but somewhat bland, and at the end, Keefe revealed that it was written by ChatGPT, not by herself.

"While the facts are correct, there's something deeper missing," she wrote. "AI cannot understand community and inclusivity and how important these things are in creating church."

Several congregation members responded.

"It's not terrible, but yes, I agree. Rather generic and a little bit eerie," wrote Douglas Federhart. "I like what you write a lot more. It comes from an actually living being, with a great brain and a compassionate, beating heart."

Todd Brewer, a New Testament scholar and managing editor of the Christian website Mocking-

bird, wrote in December about an experiment of his own — asking ChatGPT to write a Christmas sermon for him.

He was specific, requesting a sermon "based upon Luke's birth narrative, with quotations from Karl Barth, Martin Luther, Irenaeus of Lyon, and Barack Obama."

Brewer wrote that he was "not prepared" when ChatGPT responded with a creation that met his criteria and "is better than several Christmas sermons I've heard over the years."

"The A.I. even seems to understand what makes the birth of Jesus genuinely good news," Brewer added.

Yet the ChatGPT sermon "lacks any human warmth," he wrote. "The preaching of Artificial Intelligence can't convincingly sympathize with the human plight."

In Brentwood, Tenn., Mike Glenn, senior pastor for 32 years at Brentwood Baptist Church, wrote a blog post in January after a computer-savvy assistant joked that Glenn could be replaced by an AI machine.

"I'm not buying it," Glenn wrote. "AI will never be able to preach a decent sermon. Why? Because the gospel is more than words. It's the evidence of a

changed life."

"When listening to a sermon, what a congregation is looking for is evidence that the pastor has been with Jesus," Glenn added. "AI will always have to — literally — take someone else's words for it... it won't ever be a sermon that will convince anyone to come and follow Jesus."

Also weighing in with an online essay was the Rev. Russell Moore, formerly head of the Southern Baptist Convention's public policy division and now editor-in-chief of the evangelical magazine Christianity Today.

He confided to his readers that his first sermon, delivered at age 12, was a well-intentioned mess.

"Preaching needs someone who knows the text and can convey that to the people — but it's not just about transmitting information," Moore wrote. "When we listen to the Word preached, we are hearing not just a word about God but a word from God."

"Such life-altering news needs to be delivered by a human, in person," he added. "A chatbot can research. A chatbot can write. Perhaps a chatbot can even orate. But a chatbot can't preach."

The Southern Baptist department formerly led by Moore — the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission — has been moni-

toring artificial-intelligence developments for several years under the direction of Jason Thacker, its chair of research in technology ethics.

He shares the view that "wise, virtuous pastors" won't let new technology deter them from personal immersion in sermon-writing.

"But I also can see it being used in unhelpful or unethical ways," he added.

"Some young pastors may become overly reliant on these machines ... and not see the imperfections of these tools," Thacker told The Associated Press. "Many pastors are overworked, exhausted, filled with anxiety. ... One can see why a pastor might say, 'I can't do everything I'm supposed to do,' and start passing ideas off as their own."

Hershael York, the Kentucky pastor and professor, said some of the greatest sermons contain elements of anguish.

"Artificial intelligence can imitate that to some level. But I don't think it can ever give any kind of a sense of suffering, grief, sorrow, the same way that a human being can," he said. "It comes from deep within the heart and the soul — that's what the great preachers have, and I don't think you can get that by proxy."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

3rd person pleads guilty in romance scam

RI PROVIDENCE — A third person who played a role in an internet romance scam that cheated multiple victims across the country out of about \$3.2 million has pleaded guilty, federal prosecutors said.

Sadae Mills, 28, of Houston, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Providence to conspiracy to commit money laundering.

Mills' role in the scheme was to receive payments that she knew had been fraudulently obtained through internet and app-based romance scams, according to the U.S. attorney's office in Rhode Island.

Over a three-month period in 2018, she took the payments and deposited them into her bank account. She then withdrew or transferred the money when directed to do so by one of her accomplices, prosecutors said.

City manager fired over widespread outages

TX AUSTIN — Austin's city manager was fired in the wake of outrage over a slow and fumbled response to a winter storm power outage that left thousands of people without electricity for a week or longer in the Texas capital.

The 10-1 vote by the Austin City Council to remove Spencer Cronk, the city's top executive, came in the face of growing calls for accountability after an ice storm this month knocked out power to more than 170,000 customers. Frustration in the nation's 11th-largest city boiled as Austin officials publicly offered little information and gave residents no estimates on how long repairs would take.

Cronk, who had been in the job since 2018, was the city's first executive to lose his job over the prolonged outages.

Teen killed after fall while climbing atop overlook

UT HURRICANE CITY — A Utah teenager died after falling 150 feet while climbing near a cliff's edge with a friend.

The fall was reported from an overlook in the southern Utah city of Hurricane about 15 miles from the Arizona border, the Hurricane City Police Department said.

Emergency personnel reached the 17-year-old male victim within 15 minutes but he did not survive the fall. The victim was from LaVerkin, Utah and a student at Hurricane High School, police said.

State senators move to curb vaping in new law

GA ATLANTA — Georgia senators are moving to restrict vaping in public spaces.

The state Senate voted 51-3 to pass Senate Bill 47, which would



GERALD HERBERT/AP

Mystical Mardi Gras

Members of the Krewe of Iris, founded in 1917, throw trinkets during a Saturday Mardi Gras parade in New Orleans. Iris is the oldest and now largest all-female Krewe in New Orleans. Its namesake, the Goddess Iris, is known as the Goddess of the Rainbow and messenger to the Gods.

regulate vaping in the same way the state already regulates smoking. The measure moves to the House for more debate.

Georgia's 2005 Smoke-Free Air Act said that people can't smoke indoors in many public places, although it excludes some places including tobacco stores, bars that only admit patrons older than 18, and privately owned convention rooms

A person who violates the law commits a misdemeanor and can be fined \$100 to \$500.

Tesla workers fired after union push at plant

NY BUFFALO — Several employees at a Tesla factory in New York have been fired a day after launching union organizing efforts, according to Tesla Workers United, but the company said they're not related.

The workers at the Buffalo plant received an email updating them on a new policy that prohibits them from recording workplace meetings without all participants' permission, Tesla Workers United said. The group, which is behind the union movement, said that such restrictions violate federal labor law and flouts New York's one-party consent law to record conversations.

"We're angry. This won't slow us down. This won't stop us," Sara Costantino, a current Tesla employee and organizing committee

member, said in a prepared statement. "They want us to be scared, but I think they just started a stampede. We can do this. But I believe we will do this."

In a statement, Tesla said the terminations were the result of poor ratings on performance reviews that were conducted before the union campaign was announced. The list of employees being dismissed was finalized Feb. 3, and Tesla became aware of organizing activities Feb. 13, the company said.

2nd Amendment sanctuary bill overturned

OR PORTLAND — Local governments in Oregon can't declare themselves Second Amendment sanctuaries and ban police from enforcing certain gun laws, a state appeals court decided, in the first court case filed over a concept that hundreds of U.S. counties have adopted in recent years.

The measure in question, which was approved in Columbia County, forbids local officials from enforcing most federal and state gun laws and would impose thousands of dollars in fines on those who try.

The state Court of Appeals ruled that it violates a law giving the state the power to regulate firearms. The ordinance would effectively, it found, "create a 'patchwork quilt' of firearms regula-

tions that applied in some counties would not apply in Columbia County," something lawmakers specifically wanted to avoid.

Opponents included the legal arm of the group Everytown for Gun Safety, which had argued that the ordinance violated the U.S. Constitution. Eric Tirschwell, executive director of Everytown Law, called the court's decision "a win for public safety and the rule of law."

Airport, 50K people lose power due to fire

CA OAKLAND — A power substation fire temporarily caused outages at the Oakland International Airport and left 50,000 customers around the east San Francisco Bay Area without electricity, Oakland fire officials said.

The Oakland Fire Department responded to a fire on Pacific Gas & Electric property and found a transformer on fire, an unidentified spokesman for the Oakland Fire Department said in a video posted on Twitter. The fire has been extinguished.

The Oakland International Airport, which serves about 170 flights a day, lost power for nearly two hours, spokesman Robert Bernardo told the San Francisco Chronicle. A few security lines remained open for screening, KNTV reported. Social media posts showed large crowds of people

gathered at airport baggage claim.

The power outage also halted some public transportation to the airport and snarled traffic on other roadways.

Universal resort raises hourly wage to \$17

FL ORLANDO — Universal Orlando Resort plans to raise its starting minimum wage by \$2 to \$17 an hour, becoming the wage leader among the big theme parks in central Florida, just as its crosstown rival, Walt Disney World, is in contract talks with service worker unions who are pushing to increase the starting hourly wage from \$15 to \$18.

The new wage structure, which includes raising pay for other workers based on the new rates and their time with the company, goes into effect in June, Universal Orlando Resort President and Chief Operating Officer Karen Irwin said in a letter to the resort's 25,000 workers.

The starting hourly wage hike is part of a larger effort aimed at improving worker benefits in a tight labor market that includes increasing 401(k) matches and tuition reimbursement, adding compassionate leave, doubling the amount of parental leave and upgrading behind-the-scenes areas for workers like break rooms and bathrooms, park officials said.

STARS AND STRIPES

OPINION

Max D. Lederer Jr., Publisher
 Laura Law, Chief Operating Officer
 Lt. Col. Marci Hoffman, Europe commander
 John Rodriguez, Europe chief of staff
 Lt. Col. Michael Kerschbaum, Pacific commander
 Michael Ryan, Pacific chief of staff

EDITORIAL

Terry Leonard, Editor
 leonard.terry@stripes.com

Robert H. Reid, Senior Managing Editor
 reid.robert@stripes.com

Sean Moores, Managing Editor for Presentation
 moores.sean@stripes.com

Ann Pinson, Digital Managing Editor
 pinson.ann@stripes.com

BUREAU STAFF

Europe/Mideast

Erik Slavin, Europe & Mideast Bureau Chief
 slavin.erik@stripes.com
 +49(0)631.3615.9350; DSN (314)583.9350

Pacific

Aaron Kidd, Pacific Bureau Chief
 kidd.aaron@stripes.com
 +81.42.552.2511 ext. 88380; DSN (315)227.7380

Washington

Joseph Cacchioli, Washington Bureau Chief
 cacchioli.joseph@stripes.com
 (+1)(202)886-0033

Brian Bowers, Assistant Managing Editor, News
 bowers.brian@stripes.com

CIRCULATION

Mideast

David Schultz, District Manager
 schultz.david@stripes.com
 xsscirculation@stripes.com
 +49(0)152.5672.5036; DSN (314)583-9111

Europe

Karen Lewis, Community Engagement Manager
 lewis.karen@stripes.com
 memberservices@stripes.com
 +49(0)631.3615.9090; DSN (314)583.9090

Pacific

Mari Mori, customerhelp@stripes.com
 +81-3 6385.3171; DSN (315)227.7333

CONTACT US

Washington

tel: (+1)202.886.0003
 633 3rd St. NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20001-3050

Reader letters

letters@stripes.com

Additional contacts

stripes.com/contactus

OMBUDSMAN

Ernie Gates

The Stars and Stripes ombudsman protects the free flow of news and information, reporting any attempts by the military or other authorities to undermine the newspaper's independence. The ombudsman also responds to concerns and questions from readers, and monitors coverage for fairness, accuracy, timeliness and balance. The ombudsman welcomes comments from readers, and can be contacted by email at ombudsman@stripes.com, or by phone at 202.886.0003.

Stars and Stripes (USPS 0417900) is published week-days (except Dec. 25 and Jan. 1) for 50 cents Monday through Thursday and for \$1 on Friday by Pacific Stars and Stripes, Unit 45002, APO AP 96301-5002. Periodicals postage paid at San Francisco, CA. Postmaster: Send address changes to Pacific Stars and Stripes, Unit 45002, APO AP 96301-5002. This newspaper is authorized by the Department of Defense for members of the military services overseas. However, the contents of Stars and Stripes are unofficial, and are not to be considered as the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government. As a DOD newspaper, Stars and Stripes may be distributed through official channels and use appropriated funds for distribution to remote locations where overseas DOD personnel are located.

The appearance of advertising in this publication does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense or Stars and Stripes of the products or services advertised. Products or services advertised shall be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation or any other nonmerit factor of the purchaser, user or patron.

© Stars and Stripes 2023

stripes.com

Biden's Ukraine strategy is aided by GOP opposition

BY JASON WILLOCK

The Washington Post

The usual assumption is that presidents benefit from having Congress united behind their stated foreign-policy strategy. Partisan discord can call a strategy's durability into question. But sometimes discord provides a president with an opportunity that can be exploited for political and strategic benefit.

In the second year of the war in Ukraine, President Joe Biden will be positioned to do just that, with populist Republicans who oppose continued support for Ukraine as his foil. The administration might even be furiously grateful for divided government if it helps bring the war to an end on terms favorable to the United States.

Start with the fact that the president is not, on the evidence of the war's first year, an enthusiast for what strategist Edward Luttwak has called "the victory lobby." Many in Western capitals and the media believe that the only acceptable outcome is a total defeat of Russia, including its expulsion from occupied Ukraine and possibly the collapse of the government in Moscow.

That has not been Biden's inclination. He has emphasized the importance of defending Ukraine while avoiding direct war with Russia. In the war's first year, the steady escalation in Pentagon military assistance to Kyiv has not been led by the White House. It has been driven by Congress and sustained media pressure, which the administration tends to resist before falling in line.

This demonstrated caution runs counter to Biden's soaring rhetoric about the war. He has cast it as part of an existential struggle between "democracy and autocracy," declared that Russian President Vladimir Putin "cannot remain in power" and insisted that his administration will support Ukraine "as long as

it takes." Meanwhile, Republican voters' enthusiasm for a forcefully pro-Ukraine policy has waned, and some of their representatives are following suit. Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley delivered a speech criticizing U.S. policy on Thursday, citing the threat from China, and Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz, who helped hold up Rep. Kevin McCarthy's bid for House speaker, introduced a resolution this month against further support for Kyiv. This conservative tendency will have greater expression in the GOP-controlled House, making Biden's approach appear more hawkish.

That contrast might work in Biden's favor. He can take political credit for the United States' record of strongly supporting Ukraine — broadly popular with Democrats and independents — while attributing limits on that support to recalcitrant Republicans. For example, The Washington Post last week reported a "senior administration official" said, "We will continue to try to impress upon [Ukraine's leaders] that we can't do anything and everything forever," citing possible resistance from Congress.

That remark sparked outrage within the victory lobby, but the stance it revealed was hardly a surprise to close observers of administration policy and media messaging. Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in November raised the possibility of a negotiated end to the war, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken recently signaled that he is thinking actively about the war's endgame. As Bloomberg's Hal Brands observed this month, "The US doesn't want the war to drag on forever, because it is turning much of Ukraine into a wasteland while taking a toll on Western treasuries, arsenals and attention."

That is not what the liberal internationalists in Biden's elite base want to hear, or what Biden's rhetoric has suggested they can ex-

pect. Nor, of course, is it what Ukraine's courageous defenders want to hear. While Biden clearly envisions a viable, well-armed Ukraine as part of any settlement, he likely sees the risks and costs associated with Kyiv's version of victory as too high for the U.S. government to bear.

Politically, Biden and his allies can cast populists in Congress as their chief ideological opponents — as heartless at best and opponents of democracy at worst. But behind the scenes, I suspect, some officials are grateful that Congress is no longer united in support of escalating America's role.

That gives the administration more flexibility in the next year. It can say that while it wants to make available the full suite of American weaponry until Kyiv's vision of victory is achieved, it is politically constrained. The presence of a "bad cop" in Congress could help the "good cop" administration nudge Kyiv toward the negotiating table while maintaining its trust (which is crucial for a sustainable settlement).

Signs of internal American discord over the war in Ukraine could embolden Putin, it is true. But democracies rarely have the luxury of fighting wars as a unified front. The challenge for a foreign-policy leader isn't to create uniform agreement, but to leverage disagreement in pursuit of the national interest.

Republican skepticism of the war is likely to persist, and one interpretation is that this will undercut America's strategic objectives. Another interpretation is that it will help the Biden administration triangulate and make its real objectives — the degradation of Russia's military, the preservation of Ukraine's independence and the avoidance of direct war — more likely to be vindicated in the end.

Jason Willock writes a regular Washington Post column on legal issues, political ideas and foreign affairs.

President's surprise trip to Kyiv to show US resolve

(Minneapolis, Minn.) *Star Tribune Editorial*
 President Joe Biden was greeted by a grateful Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during a surprise trip to Kyiv on Monday. In an admirable show of solidarity, Biden declared America's "unwavering commitment" to the besieged but brave Ukrainians just days before the one-year anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion.

"One year later, Kyiv stands," Biden said. "Ukraine stands. And democracy stands."

That outcome is due in no small part to the president himself, as well as bipartisan backing from most members of Congress and from the American people. They've been mostly united in aiding Ukraine in its existential fight against Russia's illegal, immoral invasion and its "crimes against humanity," as Vice President Kamala Harris rightly charged Saturday at the Munich Security Conference. And it's due in no small part to allies — of Ukraine, but also to the U.S., as NATO nations also gave military, diplomatic and political support.

Russia's bid to retake territory — and military momentum — will be bolstered by more troops and armaments from Iran, North Korea and potentially from China.

To date, China hasn't supplied Russia with weapons, despite a pledge of partnership "without limits" between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping just weeks before the invasion.

China does continue to supply political and diplomatic cover and a market for Russian energy exports. Sending arms would be a game changer, however, for the hot war in Ukraine and the increasingly cold one between China and the U.S. And perhaps for geopolitics writ large, since the Ukraine conflict would then indirectly involve the world's three superpowers.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken directly and correctly confronted his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Munich about the specter of China arming Russia, warning that it would have "serious" (if not explicit) consequences for U.S.-China ties.

Blinken's blunt warning and public airing of the administration's concerns about China sending weapons is likely calculated to limit Beijing's maneuverability. The administration is probably correct on the intelligence, as it was in warning the world that Russia wasn't bluffing about a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. While that didn't deter the Kremlin, the U.S. and the world can hope the tactic has success with Beijing.

Biden recalled asking Zelenskyy how he could help on the first night of the invasion. "Gather the leaders of the world," Zelenskyy told Biden. "Ask them to support Ukraine."

Biden did precisely that — rallying allies from the free world to come to Ukraine's defense. But Putin did his version of eliciting support, too, albeit from fellow dictators in

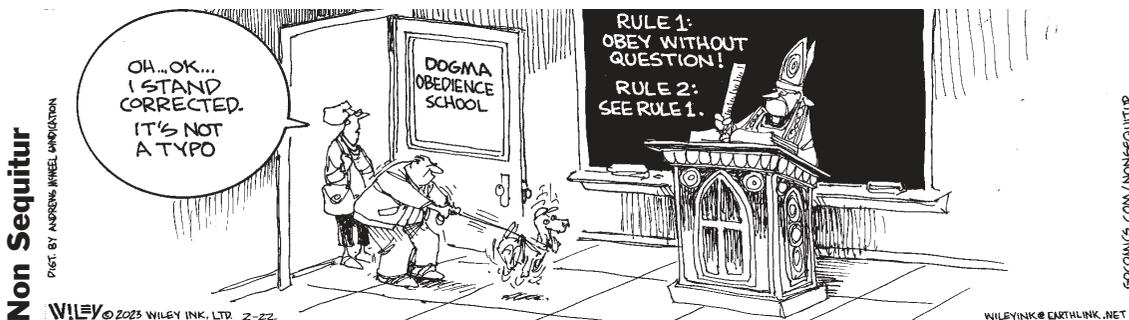
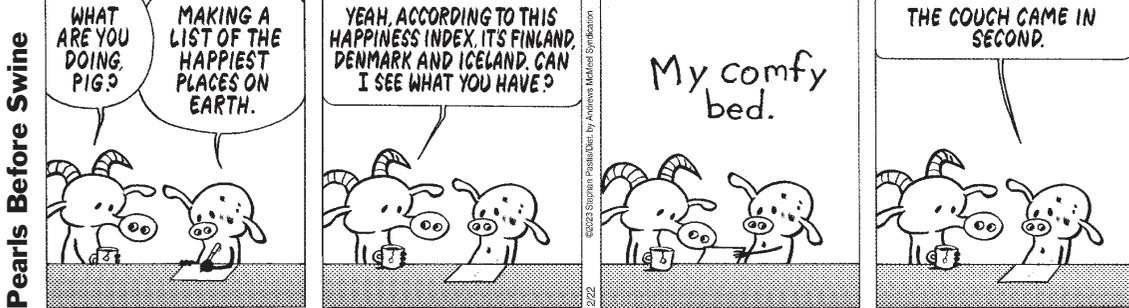
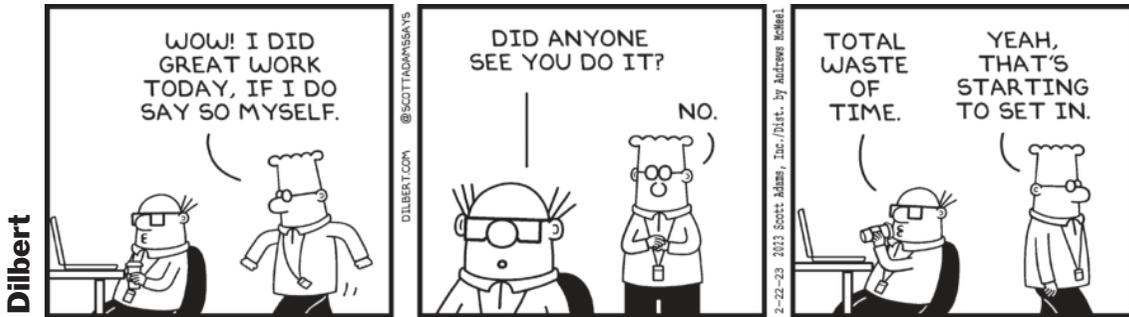
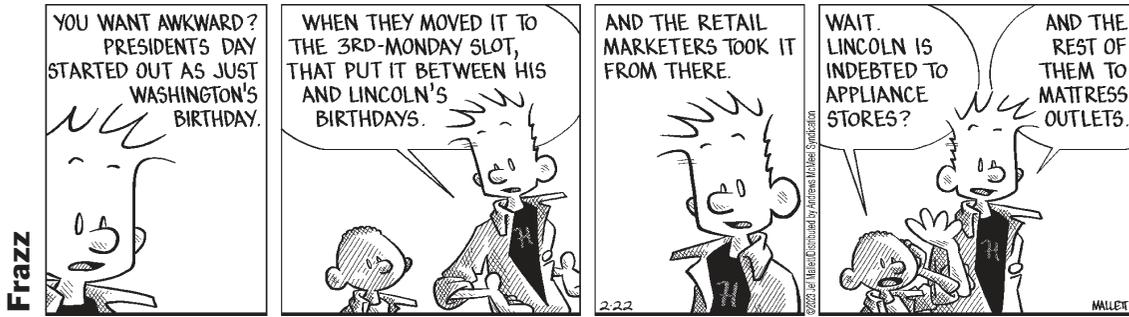
Beijing, Pyongyang and Tehran.

Which side prevails in Ukraine will determine the geopolitical order in the near term and maybe even the long term. Americans should remain stalwart, steeling their elected representatives, especially the far-right Republicans hostile to the cause. Biden should not retreat from his pledge in Kyiv to back Ukraine "for as long as it takes." And he should heed Zelenskyy's call in Munich for speed in supplying arms.

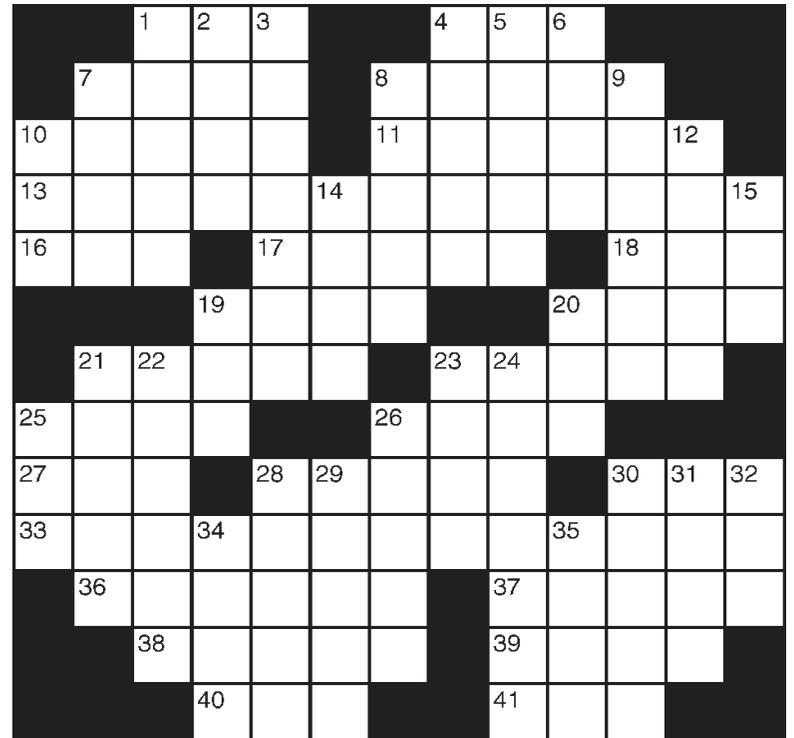
It's not just Ukraine's president pressing for faster action on deciding upon and delivering weapons requests. "There needs to be less applause and better supplies with arms," Josep Borrell, the top diplomat for the European Union, said in Munich. "Much more has to be done, and much quicker."

Melinda Haring, a senior nonresident fellow at the Atlantic Council added that Western Europe "has finally woken up to the Russian threat and is taking it seriously. Eastern Europe has always understood the nature of it. I'm buoyed by the levels of support we continue to see. I'm buoyed by the very strong coalition that Putin did not expect."

Indeed, there's reason for guarded optimism as the war enters year two. And it's grounded in Biden's actions to date on Ukraine, which reflect the enduring bipartisan value of standing up for endangered democracies. Even in these deeply divided times, that's an objective American citizens and lawmakers can and should agree on.



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Billboards
- 4 Navy address
- 7 Field yield
- 8 Big rigs
- 10 Ski lodge quaff
- 11 Deleted
- 13 Trucks with buckets
- 16 Turf
- 17 April forecasts
- 18 Joke
- 19 "Arrivederci —"
- 20 Faxed
- 21 Makes coffee
- 23 Elroy's dog
- 25 Complaint
- 26 Asset
- 27 Apr. addressee
- 28 "Narnia" lion
- 30 Unpaid TV ad
- 33 Bushy-tailed nut eaters
- 36 Central courtyard
- 37 Ancient Greek region
- 38 — Hawkins Day
- 39 Did the crawl
- 40 Danson of "The Good Place"

41 Snaky fish

DOWN

- 1 Rainbow-shaped
- 2 Entryway
- 3 Small songbird
- 4 Canary's kin
- 5 Apple products
- 6 Jeopardize
- 7 Silver salmon
- 8 Old photo tint
- 9 Folk singer Pete
- 10 IV measures
- 12 Clog-cleaning brand
- 14 Orange veggies
- 15 Boot camp VIP
- 19 Game official
- 20 Map lines (Abbr.)
- 21 Quotable Yogi
- 22 Puts back to zero
- 23 Jai —
- 24 Dawn follower
- 25 Iota
- 26 Feather in one's cap
- 28 Comment to the audience
- 29 Ink squirter
- 30 Jail-related
- 31 Slender
- 32 Botanist Gray
- 34 Part of Q.E.D.
- 35 TV host and narrator Mike

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

2-22

CRYPTOQUIP

ZG RIQLNIOH ZDKAZPLO "MIV QABM VZCC HIAP BSN PZOL BIRE?," EMSE VIACO NL S GSPL KALREZID.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: LEAN, TOUGH AND SINEWY FOLKS ALWAYS APPEAR TO BE BUSY DOING WORK. NO REST FOR THE WIRY!

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals Q

FACES

Roundabout trip

Margo Price talks about alcoholism, mushrooms and family tragedy on her way to memoir, album

BY CHRIS RIEMENSCHNEIDER
Star Tribune

When you hear her talk about giving up drinking and having a spiritual awakening, you might think Margo Price has turned into some kind of teetotaling goody-two-shoes.

Yeah, right.

"I count my psychedelic experiences up there with the most important experiences of my life," she said, "even as symbolic as it was to have children."

Price, 39, has come a long way musically, professionally and metaphysically since her Loretta Lynn-channeling 2016 breakout album, "Midwest Farmer's Daughter."

Her biggest leap yet arguably came before her newest record, "Straits." An album that literally strays from her throwback country sound into Southern rock and folk balladry, the LP was heavily inspired by Price's experiences writing her well-received, heart-tugging memoir "Maybe We'll Make It."

Talking by phone, Price also cited her experiences taking psychedelic mushrooms with husband/guitarist Jeremy Ivey during the songwriting phase as a major influence on the album.

"We wanted to take this little vacation just the two of us to write some songs, and we brought along a bag of mushrooms and kind of just let them guide us wherever we wanted to go next," she recounted. "I'm very grateful that we did."

That physical and mental getaway, she said, opened her up to changing up the musical style on "Straits" to a more kaleidoscopic sound. It also brought more of a "letting go" element to the album's lyrics.

The making of "Straits" paralleled the unpacking of many memories during the writing of her personal book. In it, she recounts the struggles of making it in Nashville and the pain of having one of her twin sons die from a genetic heart condition two weeks after he was born. (She and Ivey have since welcomed a daughter to the family, too.)

"Straits" also followed a rather serious run-in with COVID-19 at home. All of which also led to her choosing to give up alcohol and start going to therapy.

"Jeremy had nearly died from COVID, he was that sick," Price said. "We were strictly isolated for almost 100 days with young children and no one else there. It was very intense."

"From the very first time I embarked on a (psychedelic mushroom) journey, it has changed the course of my life. I was going to college in the Midwest and was just going to get a job in advertising, do what was expected of me — get the steady job, get the 401(k). Anybody that decides they want to be an artist instead of that has to follow a strange path.

"Mushrooms really kind of opened me up to the idea that I could follow that path, I could just do what I wanted to do."

In the more recent case of making the new album, she said, "I was wondering: 'Are people going to like me if I don't make strictly country albums?' 'Are fans going to say I betrayed them or I sold out?' But ultimately I wanted to follow my muse and go wherever my inspiration took me."

Price said she was mostly thinking of her physical well-being when she decided to quit drinking alcohol.

"I didn't need to check into rehab out of emergency, didn't drink every day, any-



Alyse Gafkjen

Margo Price's new album, "Straits," was inspired by psychedelic mushrooms and by the experience of writing her recent memoir, "Maybe We'll Make It."

thing like that," she said. "I went out and read a lot of books, got a lot of information and studied the science behind what alcohol is doing to my brain. It's kind of like cigarettes: It's a carcinogen, and it damages your body over time."

Of course, Price had one of her heroes and now friends and his well-known remedy for stress and alcoholism to thank for encouragement: Willie Nelson, who has long cited his marijuana use as a life savior. She's

even followed Nelson's lead and launched her own line of cannabis, Mom Grass, after widely advocating for its benefits.

Between the book, the new album and the long career ascent — and those occasional psychedelic excursions, too — Price has found a pretty clear message to pass along.

"I just want to be out here telling people you can absolutely change your life. You don't have to do the same things as everybody else. You can be different."

New this week: Hanks, Lambert, 'Bruiser' and 'Snowfall'

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

Adult dramas have generally had a hard time in theaters in recent months, but one notable exception has been "A Man Called Otto." The film stars Tom Hanks as a despondent and ornery widower whose suicide plans keep getting foiled by the needs of his neighbors. After having made nearly \$100 million in ticket sales worldwide, "A Man Called Otto" arrived on video on demand Tuesday. Marc Forster's adaptation of Fredrik Backman's bestseller and a remake of the 2016 Swedish film "A Man Called Ove," "A Man Called Otto" is well tailored to Hanks' screen presence while subtly tweaking it.

Since its prize-winning debut at the Cannes Film Festival last May, Polish filmmaking legend Jerzy Skolimowski's "EO" has been moving audiences like few other recent films. Skolimowski made "EO,"



"EO," which is nominated for an Oscar, is available for digital rental.

nominated for best international film at the Academy Awards, from the perspective of a circus donkey on a spiritual journey as it experiences cruelty and kindness while traveling through Poland and Italy. "The idea was from the very beginning that we don't want to tell the story about the donkey, but that we want the audience to feel like it is a donkey," Ewa Piaskowska, Skolimowski's wife and co-writer, told AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr. "EO" began streaming Tuesday on the Criterion Channel and is also available for digital rental.

Director Miles Warren makes a compelling directorial debut in "Bruiser," a tender coming-of-age tale streaming Friday on Hulu. "Till" actor Jayln Hall stars as 14-year-old Darius. Set during his summer between 7th and 8th grade, the quiet Darius, back from boarding school, is adjusting to life with his working parents (Shinelle

Azoroh, Shamier Anderson) and the friends he's drifted apart from. With Trevante Rhodes, of "Moonlight."

— AP Film Writer Jake Coyle

Music

Adam Lambert offers takes on some great past pop songs with "High Drama," an album of covers of such hitmakers as Duran Duran, Bonnie Tyler and Culture Club. The frontman for Queen takes on Sia's "Chandelier," Kings of Leon's "Sex on Fire" and even Noël Coward's "Mad About the Boy." His version of Tyler's "Holding Out For a Hero" is a showcase for Lambert's vocal fireworks, while he turns Duran Duran's "Ordinary World" into a lush, moody ballad and he turns in a glam rendition of Billie Eilish's "Getting Older." It drops Friday.

After writing and recording two albums over the past four years that he later scrapped, Dierks Bentley is poised to release a third, one he says he "had to get right." The 14-track "Gravel & Gold," out Friday, has songs featuring Ashley McBryde and Billy Strings. The single "Gold" is all about freedom, with the lyrics:

"I got some rust on my Chevy but it's ready to roll / I got a rhinestone sky and a song in my soul." Bentley promises a diverse album, "from the arena shaker to the bar-room weeper to the bluegrass fireballer."

— Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy

Television

FX's critically-acclaimed series "Snowfall," about the crack cocaine boom in Los Angeles in the 1980s, kicks off its sixth and final season on Thursday. The final episodes hold high stakes for all the characters, including Damson Idris as Franklin Saint, who rose to drug kingpin status throughout the series and had declared war on everyone around him.

Netflix's "Outer Banks" returns for its third season on Thursday and JJ, Sarah and the gang have discovered a deserted island they've named Poguelandia. If we've learned anything from "Lord of the Flies" and "Yellowjackets," teens on a deserted island equals trouble. And that's just how the third season begins, promising more action, romance and, of course, hidden treasures.

— Alicia Rancilio

SCOREBOARD/OLYMPICS

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. Houston (48)	25-2	1534	2
2. Alabama (7)	23-4	1448	1
3. Kansas (7)	22-5	1409	5
4. UCLA	23-4	1363	4
5. Purdue	24-4	1294	3
6. Virginia	21-4	1228	7
7. Arizona	24-4	1213	8
8. Texas	21-6	1083	6
9. Baylor	20-7	1013	9
10. Marquette	21-6	968	11
11. Tennessee	20-7	887	10
12. Gonzaga	23-5	856	13
13. Miami	22-5	833	15
14. Kansas St.	20-7	666	12
15. Saint Mary's	24-5	650	17
16. Xavier	20-7	563	16
17. Indiana	19-8	539	14
18. UConn	20-7	440	20
19. Creighton	18-9	361	18
20. Providence	20-7	350	24
21. Northwestern	20-7	349	—
22. San Diego St.	21-5	336	21
23. Iowa St.	17-9	309	19
24. TCU	18-9	162	22
25. Texas A&M	20-7	125	—

Others receiving votes: NC State 54, Pittsburgh 34, Oral Roberts 14, Maryland 14, Kentucky 12, Boise St. 12, FAU 6, Arkansas 6, Coll of Charleston 4, Missouri 3, Duke 3, Southern Miss 3, Illinois 2, Kent St. 2, Oklahoma St. 1, Nevada 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. Houston (24)	25-2	791	2
2. Alabama (6)	23-4	753	1
3. UCLA	23-4	716	4
4. Kansas (1)	22-5	693	7
5. Purdue	24-4	669	3
6. Virginia (1)	21-4	638	6
7. Arizona	24-4	607	8
8. Texas	21-6	588	5
9. Marquette	21-6	515	10
10. Baylor	20-7	512	9
11. Miami (Fla.)	22-5	437	13
12. Gonzaga	23-5	431	12
13. Tennessee	20-7	398	11
14. Saint Mary's	24-5	349	17
15. Xavier	20-7	309	16
16. Kansas St.	20-7	299	14
17. Indiana	19-8	288	15
18. Providence	20-7	226	21
19. Creighton	18-9	225	19
20. San Diego St.	21-5	180	20
21. Iowa State	17-9	174	18
22. Northwestern	20-7	148	26
23. Connecticut	20-7	128	23
24. North Carolina St.	21-7	93	22
25. Texas A&M	20-7	87	25

Dropped out: No. 24 TCU (18-9).
Others receiving votes: TCU (18-9) 64; Florida Atlantic (24-3) 14; Duke (19-8) 13; Pittsburgh (19-8) 13; Maryland (18-9) 10; Kentucky (18-9) 8; Boise State (21-6) 6; Oral Roberts (25-4) 6; Iowa (17-10) 4; Texas Tech (15-12) 4; Auburn (18-9) 2; Oklahoma State (16-11) 1; Rutgers (17-10) 1.

Monday's men's scores

EAST	
Delaware St. 69, SC State 68	
Morgan St. 89, Howard 76	
NC Central 68, Md.-Eastern Shore 63	
West Virginia 85, Oklahoma St. 67	
SOUTH	
Bethune-Cookman 70, Alabama St. 65	
Coppin St. 69, Norfolk St. 62	
Duke 79, Louisville 62	
Florida A&M 77, Alabama A&M 71	
Texas A&M Commerce 72, Nicholls 71	
MIDWEST	
Illinois 78, Minnesota 69	
SOUTHWEST	
Kansas 63, TCU 58	
Prairie View 67, MVSU 65	
Texas Southern 64, Ark.-Pine Bluff 59	
FAR WEST	
Cal St.-Fullerton 74, UC Santa Barbara 60	
Hawaii 61, CS Bakersfield 50	
Texas Rio Grande Valley 113, SW Assemblies 65	
UC Davis 76, UC San Diego 66	
UC Irvine 59, Cal Poly 56	
UC Riverside 96, CS Northridge 76	

Men's AP Top 25 schedule

Wednesday's games	
No. 1 Houston vs. Tulane	
No. 2 Alabama at South Carolina	
No. 6 Virginia at Boston College	
No. 18 UConn vs. No. 20 Providence	

Thursday's games

No. 4 UCLA at Utah	
No. 12 Gonzaga vs. San Diego	
No. 15 Saint Mary's (Cal.) vs. Pacific	
No. 21 Northwestern at Illinois	
Friday's games	
No. 16 Xavier at Seton Hall	
Saturday's games	
No. 1 Houston at East Carolina	
No. 2 Alabama vs. Arkansas	
No. 3 Kansas vs. West Virginia	
No. 5 Purdue vs. No. 17 Indiana	
No. 6 Virginia at North Carolina	
No. 7 Arizona vs. Arizona St.	
No. 8 Texas at No. 9 Baylor	
No. 10 Marquette vs. DePaul	
No. 11 Tennessee vs. South Carolina	
No. 12 Gonzaga vs. No. 15 Saint Mary's (Cal.)	
No. 13 Miami vs. Florida St.	
No. 14 Kansas St. at Oklahoma St.	
No. 18 UConn vs. St. John's at New York	
No. 19 Creighton at Villanova	
No. 22 San Diego St. at New Mexico	
No. 23 Iowa St. vs. Oklahoma	
No. 24 Texas A&M at Mississippi St.	
No. 25 TCU at Texas Tech	

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 (27)	27-0	699	1
2. Indiana (1)	26-1	672	2
3. Stanford	25-3	634	3
4. UConn	24-4	585	6
5. LSU	25-1	573	5
6. Iowa	22-5	567	7
7. Maryland	22-5	522	8
8. Utah	23-3	507	4
9. Virginia Tech	22-4	488	11
10. Notre Dame	22-4	464	10
11. Duke	23-4	416	9
12. Michigan	20-6	340	12
13. Oklahoma	22-4	336	15
14. Arizona	21-6	322	18
15. Villanova	23-5	296	14
16. Ohio St.	22-5	291	13
17. UCLA	21-6	279	16
18. Gonzaga	25-3	206	20
19. Texas	21-7	186	17
20. Iowa St.	17-7	167	22
21. Colorado	21-6	113	21
22. North Carolina	19-8	100	19
23. Florida St.	22-7	96	24
24. UNLV	25-2	78	23
25. Middle Tennessee	22-4	29	—
25. Illinois	20-7	29	—

Others receiving votes: South Florida 25, Oklahoma St. 18, Creighton 14, NC State 13, Louisville 7, Tennessee 7, Florida Gulf Coast 7, Cleveland St. 3, Marquette 3, South Dakota St. 2, Southern Cal 1, Mississippi 1, Toledo 1, UMass 1, Illinois St. 1, Columbia 1.

Monday's women's scores

EAST	
Delaware St. 50, SC State 49	
Md.-Eastern Shore 92, NC Central 74	
SOUTH	
Alabama A&M 77, Florida A&M 65	
Alabama St. 74, Bethune-Cookman 71	
30T Howard 64, Morgan St. 56	
Norfolk St. 47, Coppin St. 36	
Texas A&M Commerce 77, Nicholls 70	
MIDWEST	
Oakland 66, Detroit 65	
Ohio St. 74, Michigan 61	
Wisconsin 88, Rutgers 62	
SOUTHWEST	
Ark.-Pine Bluff 83, Texas Southern 53	
Missouri 61, Texas A&M 35	
Prairie View 72, MVSU 51	
UTSA 68, North Texas 67, OT	
FAR WEST	
CS Northridge 48, UC Riverside 44	
Hawaii 65, CS Bakersfield 52	
Stanford 71, UCLA 66	
UC Davis 72, UC San Diego 49	
UC Santa Barbara 74, Cal St.-Fullerton 58	

Women's AP Top 25 schedule

Wednesday's games	
No. 20 Iowa St. at Oklahoma St.	
No. 25 Illinois vs. Nebraska	
Thursday's games	
No. 1 South Carolina at Tennessee	
No. 3 Stanford at No. 21 Colorado	
No. 5 LSU at Vanderbilt	
No. 8 Utah vs. California	
No. 9 Virginia Tech at No. 22 North Carolina	
No. 10 Notre Dame vs. Georgia Tech	
No. 11 Duke vs. NC State	
No. 12 Michigan vs. Rutgers	
No. 14 Arizona at Oregon	
No. 17 UCLA vs. Washington St.	
No. 18 Gonzaga at San Diego	
No. 23 Florida St. at Wake Forest	
No. 24 UNLV vs. Utah St.	
Friday's games	
No. 7 Maryland at No. 16 Ohio St.	
No. 15 Villanova vs. Providence	
Saturday's games	
No. 3 Stanford at No. 8 Utah	
No. 4 UConn at DePaul	
No. 13 Oklahoma vs. No. 19 Texas	
No. 14 Arizona at Oregon St.	
No. 17 UCLA vs. Washington	
No. 18 Gonzaga at BYU	
No. 20 Iowa St. vs. TCU	
No. 21 Colorado vs. California	
No. 24 UNLV vs. San Diego St.	

TENNIS

Rio Open

Monday
At Jockey Club Brasileiro
Rio de Janeiro
Purse: \$2,013,940
Surface: Red clay
Men's Singles
Round of 32
 Hugo Dellien, Bolivia, def. Joao Sousa, Portugal, 6-0, 6-2.
 Alex Molcan (9), Slovakia, def. Joao Fonseca, Brazil, 6-0, 6-3.
 Pedro Martinez, Spain, def. Cristian Garin, Chile, 7-6 (0), 6-4.
 Laslo Djere, Serbia, def. Facundo Bagnis, Argentina, 6-2, 3-2, ret.
 Thiago Monteiro, Brazil, def. Dominic Thiem, Austria, 6-1, 3-6, 7-6 (2).
 Nicolas Jarry, Chile, def. Lorenzo Musetti (3), Italy, 6-4, 6-1.

Men's Doubles

Round of 16
 Diego Schwartzman and Tomas Martin Etcheverry, Argentina, def. Pedro Cachin and Francisco Cerundolo, Argentina, 6-2, 6-4.
 Nathaniel Lammons and Jackson Withrow, United States, def. Albert Ramos-Vinolas, Spain, and Sebastian Baez, Argentina, 7-5, 4-6, 10-6.

Merida Open Akron

Monday
At Yucatan Country Club
Merida, Mexico
Purse: \$259,303
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Women's Singles
Round of 32
 Ysaline Bonaventure, Belgium, def. Simona Waltert, Switzerland, 4-6, 7-5, 6-1.
 Nuria Parrizas Diaz, Spain, def. Ana Konjuh, Croatia, 6-4, 6-7 (2), 6-2.
 Caty McNally, United States, def. Zhu Lin (3), China, 7-6 (3), 6-7 (5), 6-1.
 Katie Volynets, United States, def. Lucia Bronzetti, Italy, 4-6, 6-2, 6-1.
 Wang Xiyu, China, def. Alison Riske-Amritraj (8), United States, 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (1).
 Camila Giorgi, Italy, def. Mayar Sherif (6), Egypt, 6-4, 6-2.
 Kimberley Birrell, Australia, def. Anna Bondar, Hungary, 7-6 (8), 6-1.
 Elisabetta Cocciaretto (7), Italy, def. Viktorija Golubic, Switzerland, 6-0, 6-3.

Women's Doubles

Round of 16
 Fang-Hsien Wu, Taiwan, and Wang Xinyu, China, def. Sloane Stephens and Alycia Parks, United States, 7-6 (3), 7-6 (2).
 Eri Hozumi, Japan, and Anastasia Detiuc (3), Czech Republic, def. Jesika Maleckova, Czech Republic, and Estelle Cascino, France, 7-6 (7), 3-6, 10-8.

Provence 13

Monday
At Palais des Sports
Marseille, France
Purse: Euro 707,510
Surface: Hardcourt indoor
Men's Singles
Qualification
 Lukas Klein (2), Slovakia, def. Zsombor Piros, Hungary, 7-5, 6-1.
 Alexander Ritschard, Switzerland, def. Antoine Bellier, Switzerland, 6-3, 7-6.
 Gijs Brouwer (5), Netherlands, def. Raul Brancaccio (1), Italy, 6-1, 6-4.
 Laurent Lokoli (8), France, def. Filip Misolic (3), Austria, 6-4, 6-3.
Round of 32
 Alexander Bublik, Kazakhstan, def. Filip Krajinovic, Serbia, 5-7, 6-3, 6-4.
 Benjamin Bonzi, France, def. Luca van Assche, France, 7-5, 7-5.
 Stan Wawrinka, Switzerland, def. Zizou Bergs, Belgium, 6-4, 6-7 (6), 6-4.
Men's Doubles
Round of 16
 Petros Tsitsipas, Greece, and Luca Sanchez, France, def. Albano Olivetti and Gregoire Barrere, France, 6-1, 7-6 (1).
 Romain Arneodo, Monaco, and Tristan-

Samuel Weissborn, Austria, def. David Pel and Sander Arends (5), Netherlands, 6-3, 6-3.

Qatar ExxonMobil Open

Monday
At Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex
Doha, Qatar
Purse: \$1,377,025
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Men's Singles
Round of 32
 Jason Kubler, Australia, def. Aslan Karatsev, Russia, 7-6 (4), 1-0, ret.
 Christopher O'Connell, Australia, def. Fernando Verdasco, Spain, 6-1, 3-6, 6-0.
 Liam Broady, Britain, def. Oleksii Krut'kyh, Ukraine, 6-0, 4-6, 7-6 (2).
 Andy Murray, Britain, def. Lorenzo Sonego, Italy, 4-6, 6-1, 7-6 (4).
 Alejandro Davidovich Fokina (7), Spain, def. Constant Leschene, France, 6-4, 6-3.

Men's Doubles

Round of 16
 Daniel Evans and Jonny O'Mara, Britain, def. Ilya Ivashka, Belarus, and Andrey Rublev, Russia, 6-7 (5), 7-5, 10-7.
 Patrik Niklas-Salminen and Emil Ruusuvuori, Finland, def. Nikola Mektic and Mate Pavic (1), Croatia, 6-2, 7-6 (5).
 Hugo Nys, Monaco, and Jan Zielinski (2), Poland, def. Roman Jebavy and Adam Pavlasek, Czech Republic, 6-4, 7-6 (4).

Dubai Duty Free Championships

Monday
At Aviation Club Tennis Centre
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Purse: \$2,788,468
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Women's Singles
Round of 64
 Ana Bogdan, Romania, def. Laura Siegemund, Germany, 7-5, 6-3.
 Anhelina Kalinina, Ukraine, def. Veronika Kudermetova (10), Russia, 6-3, 5-7, 7-5.
 Sorana Cirstea, Romania, def. Beatriz Haddad Maia (11), Brazil, 4-6, 7-6 (7), 7-5.
 Karolina Muchova, Czech Republic, def. Bernarda Pera, United States, 6-1, 6-4.
 Karolina Pliskova, Czech Republic, def. Marketa Vondrousova, Czech Republic, 6-3, 6-4.
 Lauren Davis, United States, def. Jil Teichmann, Switzerland, 6-4, 4-6, 6-3.
 Aliaksandra Sasnovich, Belarus, def. Rebeka Masarova, Spain, 2-6, 6-4, 6-4.
 Victoria Azarenka (15), Belarus, def. Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, Russia, 6-3, 7-5.
 Yulia Putintseva, Kazakhstan, def. Petra Martic, Croatia, 6-4, 0-6, 6-2.
 Jelena Ostapenko (13), Latvia, def. Katarina Zavatska, Ukraine, 6-1, 6-4.
 Shelby Rogers, United States, def. Claire Liu, United States, 6-4, 6-4.
 Elena Rybakina (9), Kazakhstan, def. Bianca Andreescu, Canada, 6-3, 6-4.

Women's Doubles

Round of 32
 Latisha Chan and Hao-Ching Chan, Taiwan, def. Alexandra Panova, Russia, and Oksana Kalashnikova, Georgia, 6-1, 7-6 (10).
 Shuko Aoyama and Makoto Ninomiya, Japan, def. Ekaterina Yashina, Russia, and Sofia Kenin, United States, 6-1, 2-6, 10-5.
 Bethanie Mattek-Sands, United States, and Leylah Annie Fernandez, Canada, def. Anna Danilina, Kazakhstan, and Luisa Stefani (6), Brazil, 1-6, 6-3, 11-9.
 Vera Zvonareva, Russia, and Zhaoxuan Yang (7), China, def. Beatriz Haddad Maia, Brazil, and Marie Bouzkova, Czech Republic, 6-1, 6-1.
 Monica Niculescu, Romania, and Kimberley Zimmerman, Belgium, def. Kaia Kanepi, Estonia, and Linda Fruhvirtova, Czech Republic, 3-6, 6-4, 11-9.
Round of 16
 Jessica Pegula and Coco Gauff (1), United States, def. Aldila Sutjiadi, Indonesia, and Miyu Kato, Japan, 4-6, 7-6 (5), 10-2.

DEALS

Monday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League
CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Agreed to terms with INF Elvis Andrus on a one-year contract. Designated LHP Bennett Sousa for assignment.
National League
CHICAGO CUBS — Agreed to terms with RHP Michael Fulmer on a one-year contract. Placed RHP Codi Heuer on the 60-day IL.
CINCINNATI REDS — Agreed to terms with RHP Chase Anderson on a minor league contract.
BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
UTAH JAZZ — Waived G Russell Westbrook.
Women's National Basketball Association
SEATTLE STORM — Signed G Jade Melbourne to a rookie scale contract.
FOOTBALL
National Football League
CAROLINA PANTHERS — Re-signed LS J.J. Jansen to a one-year contract.
HOCKEY
National Hockey League
DALLAS STARS — Recalled C Fredrik Karlstrom and LW Fredrik Olofsson from Texas (AHL).

Valieva remains in limbo

Associated Press

MONTREAL — The World Anti-Doping Agency has appealed Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva's doping case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport and said Tuesday it is seeking a four-year ban.

WADA is objecting to a finding by a Russian tribunal that Valieva bore "no fault or negligence" in the case, which overshadowed last year's Beijing Olympics. WADA wants a four-year ban and for Valieva's results to be disqualified from the date she gave the sample, Dec. 25, 2021. That would include the Olympics.



Valieva

A year after the Beijing Games finished, no medal ceremony has taken place for the team competition because of the uncertainty.

WADA said the Russian decision was "wrong under the terms of the World Anti-Doping Code in this case," without giving further detail.

The Russian skater, who was then 15, won Olympic gold in the team competition in February before it was announced that a sample she gave two months before tested positive for a banned substance.

Another CAS panel granted an emergency request for Valieva to be allowed to skate in the women's competition at the Olympics, in part because of her age. Valieva was favored for the gold medal but falls in her free skate left her in fourth. She left the venue in tears.

After the Olympics finished, the Russian anti-doping agency took several months to carry out its own investigation and hold hearings. WADA tried to refer the case to CAS in November because of the delays before the Russian agency eventually produced a verdict, which it has not made public.

WADA, which has received a copy, said the Russian tribunal didn't impose a ban and only disqualified Valieva from one day of the 2021 Russian national championships, where the sample was taken.

U.S. Figure Skating said this month that it and its skaters, who placed second behind the Russians in the team event, were "deeply frustrated by the lack of a final decision" on the competition results.

NBA

BRIEFS

Report: Westbrook joining Clippers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Russell Westbrook was waived by the Utah Jazz on Monday and the nine-time All-Star is expected to sign with the Los Angeles Clippers, according to a published report.

The 34-year-old guard was acquired by the Jazz from the Los Angeles Lakers on Feb. 10. He averaged 15.9 points, 7.4 rebounds and 7.1 assists in 28.7 minutes per game in a rocky tenure with the Lakers.

ESPN reported that Westbrook's agent, Jeff Schwartz of Excel Sports, told the outlet he will sign with the Clippers after completing a contract buyout on the remaining \$47 million he's owed on his expiring deal.

Schwartz did not immediately respond to messages from The Associated Press. The Clippers had no comment.

The move would reunite Westbrook with Paul George, his former teammate in Oklahoma City. It also allows Westbrook to stay in Los Angeles. He is from the area and starred at UCLA.

George had lobbied recently for the Clippers to land Westbrook, who won the MVP in 2017 with the Thunder.

"I'm a big believer and a fan of what Russ' work is, having one of my best seasons in my career alongside of him. I've seen what he can do night in and night out," George said. "I really think he can improve the team. He's such a big talent. He rebounds, he finds guys, he makes the game easy for everyone. I think he will come in, he will mesh and he'll figure out how we play and he'll adjust to it."

Westbrook would join a Clippers team that is fourth in the Western Conference at 33-28 coming out of the All-Star break.



MARK J. TERRILL/AP

Former Lakers guard Russell Westbrook, left, is expected to sign with the Clippers after being released Monday by the Utah Jazz.

The Lakers traded Westbrook and a 2027 first-round draft pick to the Jazz as part of a three-team deal.

Love signs with Heat after clearing waivers

Kevin Love wasted no time. He's officially a member of the Miami Heat.

The five-time All-Star and 15-year NBA veteran cleared waivers on Monday afternoon, then signed a contract to join the Heat for the

remainder of the season not long afterward. The now-former Cleveland forward was in Miami for the signing, with plans to start working out at his new team facility right away.

Love's first official practice with Miami is scheduled for Thursday when the team returns from its All-Star break, and he could make his Heat debut as early as Friday at Milwaukee.

Love is an NBA champion, an Olympic champion and a FIBA

World Cup champion. He's 42nd on the NBA's three-pointers made list with 1,536, which ranks 19th among players currently in the league.

Source: Leonard gets chance to resume career

MIAMI — Meyers Leonard is getting another chance at the NBA, nearly two years after he used an anti-Semitic slur while playing a video game that was being livestreamed.

A person with knowledge of the negotiations said Leonard and the Milwaukee Bucks have agreed on a 10-day contract, opening the door for the 7-foot center to play in an NBA game for the first time since January 2021. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the deal had not been announced.

ESPN first reported the agreement between Leonard and the Bucks.

Leonard's career was jeopardized and his reputation was seriously damaged on March 8, 2021 when it was discovered that he used a slur while playing an online game as others watched on a livestream. The Heat told him to stay away from the team indefinitely, NBA Commissioner Adam Silver fined him \$50,000 and Miami eventually traded him to Oklahoma City.

Leonard said then that he knew he'd used a bad term, but was unaware of the term's meaning. In an apology, he said "my ignorance about its history and how offensive it is to the Jewish community is absolutely not an excuse and I was just wrong." He immediately began scheduling meetings with Holocaust survivors, rabbis in South Florida and other community leaders.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	42	17	.712	—
Philadelphia	38	19	.667	3
Brooklyn	34	24	.586	7½
New York	33	27	.550	9½
Toronto	28	31	.475	14

Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	32	27	.542	—
Atlanta	29	30	.492	3
Washington	28	30	.483	3½
Orlando	24	35	.407	8
Charlotte	17	43	.283	15½

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	41	17	.707	—
Cleveland	38	23	.623	4½
Chicago	26	33	.441	15½
Indiana	26	34	.433	16
Detroit	15	44	.254	26½

Western Conference

Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	35	22	.614	—
Dallas	31	29	.517	5½
New Orleans	30	29	.508	6
San Antonio	14	45	.237	22
Houston	13	45	.224	22½

Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Denver	41	18	.695	—
Minnesota	31	30	.508	11
Oklahoma City	28	29	.491	12
Portland	28	30	.483	12½
Utah	29	31	.483	12½

Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Sacramento	32	25	.561	—
L.A. Clippers	33	28	.541	1
Phoenix	32	28	.533	1½
Golden State	29	29	.500	3½
L.A. Lakers	27	32	.458	6

Sunday's games

2023 All-Star Game

Team 184, Team 175

Monday's games

No games scheduled.

Tuesday's games

No games scheduled.

Wednesday's games

No games scheduled.

Thursday's games

Boston at Indiana
Denver at Cleveland
Detroit at Orlando
Memphis at Philadelphia
New Orleans at Toronto
San Antonio at Dallas
Oklahoma City at Utah
Golden State at L.A. Lakers
Portland at Sacramento

Break: Reducing number of regular-season games would hurt profits

FROM PAGE 24

It used to not be so uncommon for players to play every game, or at least almost every game. A decade ago, in 2012-23, there were 28 players making 82 appearances. A decade before that, it was 46. John Stockton played in 82 games 16 times for Utah and missed 22 games in 19 seasons; A.C. Green played 82 games 14 times in his career. Among players currently active, nobody has logged more than five 82-game seasons.

Antetokounmpo doesn't want change: "I think 82 games is perfect," he said.

Minnesota guard Anthony Edwards said seeing players sometimes take a game to rest is the thing he dislikes most about the league. His rationale: Somebody

16

Number of times former Utah Jazz guard John Stockton played in all 82 regular-season games. He missed only 22 games during his 19-year career.

SOURCE: Associated Press

might have bought a ticket to just that one game, and feelings can be hurt if the player they want to see most takes the night off.

"Just play, man. If you're 80%, you've got to play," said Edwards, 21, a first-time All-Star. "I don't like all the sitting, missing games and stuff. These people might have enough money to come to one game. And that might be the game they come to and you're sitting out. I take pride in trying to play

every game because I don't know, it might be one fan that has never seen me play, and I'm trying to play."

Kerr is a proponent of a 72-game season, and has said so this year after some games where the reigning champion Warriors have given their stars — the Stephen Curry, Klay Thompson, Draymond Green types — a night off because the team feels it was in the best interest of their health.

He also knows a 72-game season would come with a price. Literally, a big price. Shaving 12% of games from the schedule would, in theory, shave 12% of revenue opportunities. And while it's not likely owners would embrace making less money, players probably wouldn't go for that, either.

"I feel terrible for fans who buy tickets who are expecting to see someone play and they don't get to see that person play," Kerr said. "It's a brutal part of the business. That's why I'm going to continue to advocate for 72-game seasons. And I know that means less revenue, but at some point, I think there just needs to be an awareness from everybody involved."

One potential tweak that some prefer is the idea of not squeezing 82 games into 170 days, which basically means a game every other day. Building even another week into the schedule could allow for more multiday breaks.

The NFL and NHL have bye weeks. Minnesota coach Chris Finch wonders if the NBA should do the same.

"I think what we need to do as a league is remove all the obstacles for guys not playing," Finch said. "Back-to-backs seem to be a big one. They've done a really good job over the last years of trying to limit back-to-backs, make them more intelligent if you will. It doesn't seem to me that we're that far off of being able to eliminate them altogether, whether that's fewer games or, heck, the season's so long right now anyway, what's another week or two?"

The NBA and the National Basketball Players Association are currently in talks on a new collective bargaining agreement, with both sides hopeful that it'll get done by next month — which hardly guarantees anything, but it's a reason for optimism.

MLB



AARON DOSTER/AP

Steven Kwan was a rookie surprise for the Guardians in 2022. He batted .298 with 52 RBIs while helping the team win the AL Central.

Steady approach key for Kwan in second year with Guardians

By JAY COHEN
Associated Press

GOODYEAR, Ariz. — Steven Kwan is among several chess players on the Cleveland Guardians. He went over some moves with Bo Naylor on Sunday, and then watched Naylor take on Hunter Gaddis.

Kwan has been playing for a couple of years, both in person and on a chess app. Asked who is the best player on the team, Kwan said he heard Josh Bell is pretty good.

“But I would say, I think you have to assume that you’re the best,” he continued.

That’s the mentality that took Kwan from a fifth-round pick in the 2018 amateur draft out of Oregon State to a surprising rookie season with Cleveland a year ago. The outfielder hit .298 with 52 RBIs, 19 steals and a .373 on-base percentage, helping the Guardians to the AL Central title.

This spring training is a much different feeling for the 25-year-old Kwan, who counted Ichiro Suzuki as one of his favorite players while growing up in Northern California.

“Not feeling like you’re walking on pins and needles is definitely a much better place to be,” he said.

If Kwan is feeling any more pressure after breaking out last season, it’s hard to tell. He said he looks at every year in the majors as a challenge.

“I make it a big point to never stay too high or too low. Just stay kind of right in the middle, stay neutral,” he said. “I think that’s going to be really important because I think once that I accept that oh, I’m this big leaguer, I’ve made it already, blah, blah, blah, then things start getting too comfortable and then things start slipping.”

That mindset helped Kwan stay focused after he got off to a historic start last year. He reached base

18 times in his first five games, the most for a player in that span since 1901. He also went 116 pitches before he swung and missed, the most of any player to start a career since at least 2000, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

After struggling in May, batting just .173 in 21 games, Kwan hit .341 in June, .314 in July, .296 in August and .325 in September, showing impressive consistency for a rookie. He scored 89 runs in 147 games and finished with more walks (62) than strikeouts (60).

“He’s got a lot of ways to impact us winning,” manager Terry Francona said. “Whether it’s his legs, his defense, occasional home run, he’s got a lot of ways to help us win.”

Whether it’s Kwan or any of Cleveland’s young players that had a hand in the team’s 2022 division title, Francona doesn’t buy the idea that duplicating its success last year will be any more difficult than what it accomplished last season.

“I think if you put pressure on yourself, it can become harder,” he said. “Try to tell our guys all the time, man, don’t chase numbers. ... If you’re a good player, show up and try to do something every day to help us win. You look up at the end of the year, you’ll be where you’re supposed to be.”

In many ways, Kwan’s first big league season looked a lot like what he accomplished in college and in the minors. He batted .328 and scored 96 runs in 156 games for Oregon State. After the 2020 minor league season was canceled because of COVID-19, he hit .328 with 12 homers and 44 RBIs over two minor league stops in 2021.

He can hit, and he doesn’t see any reason why that would change anytime soon.

“I think just understanding where I come from, kind of my mindset last year, and continuing it forward,” he said.

Teams certain to search for edge within new rules

By JAY COHEN
Associated Press

PHOENIX — It’s a brand new day in the major leagues — potentially an even brighter one for base-stealers like Trea Turner and Ronald Acuña Jr., and most definitely a change of pace for veteran aces like Gerrit Cole or Yu Darvish.

The bases are bigger, and the pickoff rules are different. The pitch clock has arrived, and infield shifts are gone.

Sorry, Shohei Ohtani, you took too long to throw that pitch. Bryce Harper, get back in the batter’s box. Xander Bogaerts, can’t stand there when Mookie Betts is hitting.

Only one thing is certain to stay the same: Everyone will try to find an edge, aiming to take advantage of baseball’s dramatic alterations.

“I think the one thing we know about our industry is to the extent there’s an advantage to be gained, every team is going to be doing everything possible to try to exploit that advantage to the best of its ability,” said Chris Antonetti, president of baseball operations for the Cleveland Guardians.

Those are the conversations that are dominating spring training this year after Major League Baseball approved a series of changes in September in an effort to make the sport more appealing to a younger generation turned off by its lack of action and leisurely tempo.

As players reported to camps in Florida and Arizona to ramp up their preparation for the season, Commissioner Rob Manfred expressed confidence that the changes would work — after what could be an occasionally bumpy transition period.

“I think you’re going to see a game that moves along with more pace,” Manfred said. “I think you’re going to see more balls in play. I think that you’re going to look at the field and see players positioned the way that most of us grew up seeing them positioned. And I really think that (you’re) going to see a movement toward the very best form of our game.”

The size of the bases has been increased to 18-inch squares from 15. The new pitch clock is 15 seconds with no runners on base and 20 seconds with runners. The increasingly frequent infield shift has been eliminated, and there is a limit of two of what MLB calls disengagements — pickoff attempts or steps off the rubber — per plate appearance.

“I think the pitch clock will be the most impactful for sure,” Milwaukee Brewers manager Craig



JEFF ROBERSON/AP

Mets pitcher Max Scherzer throws batting practice during spring training. Pitchers and batters alike will have an adjustment this season with a pitch clock. Pitchers also face limited pickoff attempts.

“Every team is going to be doing everything possible to try to exploit that advantage to the best of its ability.”

Chris Antonetti
Guardians president

Counsell said. “I mean I’m hoping that’s the one that’s most impactful. I hope fans notice a real improvement in the pace of the game.”

A catcher is required to be in the catcher’s box with nine seconds left on the clock and a hitter in the batter’s box and focused on the pitcher with eight seconds remaining.

Penalties for violations will be a ball called against a pitcher and a strike called against a batter. And there almost assuredly will be some violations through the start of the season as players get used to the clock.

“I’m not worried about it,” Chicago White Sox pitcher Lance Lynn said. “The hitters are going to hate it.”

Under the new rules on defensive positioning, two infielders will be required to be on either side of second and all infielders to be within the outer boundary of

the infield when the pitcher is on the rubber.

With the elimination of the shift, major league teams could get more creative with their outfielders. It’s not hard to imagine a scenario where a corner outfielder could move into a spot that a shifted infielder used to fill.

The bigger bases are intended to help reduce injuries and increase stolen bases — due to their size, the bases are closer together by a few inches. There were 3,297 steal attempts in the majors last year, according to Sportradar.

All those bang-bang plays on the bases just got a little more interesting.

But the most intriguing change just might be the limit on disengagements. A balk is called for a third step off or pickoff unless there is an out, and the limit is reset if a runner advances.

What pitchers do with their disengagements — which ones keep one in their back pocket, which ones use all of them and which ones are willing to risk a balk with a throw over — will be closely scouted at the start of the season as teams look for a baserunning edge.

“There’s a lot of gamesmanship here,” Chicago Cubs general manager Carter Hawkins said. “So try to figure out how to best play it. I’m sure there’ll be some cat-and-mouse games going on, and different pitchers will come up with different plans that we’ll have to adjust to, and baserunners as well.”

“I think that’s exciting to be able to watch and some chances for some competitive advantages.”

NHL/COLLEGE FOOTBALL

NHL ROUNDUP

Bruins, Pastrnak win 4th straight

Associated Press

BOSTON — David Pastrnak had already scored twice, and with the Senators' net empty, a third was within reach.

The Bruins forward passed up the chance at a hat trick — and the league lead in goals — and fed the puck to teammate David Krejci, whose family was at the game for a celebration honoring his 1,000th career NHL game.

"That was my only goal," said Pastrnak, who scored twice to lead Boston to a 3-1 victory over the Ottawa Senators on Monday. "I was looking for him all game."

Linus Ullmark stopped 30 shots in the Bruins' fourth straight victory. Jake DeBrusk also scored for Boston — the second straight time he has opened the scoring in two games since returning from an injury.

Pastrnak broke a second-period tie to pass the 40-goal plateau for the third time in his career, and added another goal in the third for No. 41. Edmonton's Connor McDavid leads the league with 42 goals.

With the Bruins in the Ottawa zone and no goalie in net in the final minute, Pastrnak was looking for Krejci.

"It just says a lot about the character that (Pastrnak) has as a human being, and understanding it was a big night for Krech," said DeBrusk, who returned Saturday after missing 17 games with a broken leg. "He's in position to get a hat trick and he still dishes it to Krech. It's pretty cool."

Flyers 4, Flames 3: Wade Allison scored the game-winner and fellow rookie Samuel Ersson



MICHAEL DWYER/AP

The Bruins' David Pastrnak scores on Ottawa Senators goaltender Kevin Mandolese during the second period Monday in Boston. The Bruins won 3-1 as Pastrnak passed 40 goals for the season.

made 32 saves to maintain his perfect record as visiting Philadelphia beat Calgary.

Travis Konecny and Tony DeAngelo each had a goal and an assist for Philadelphia. Nicolas Deslauriers also scored as the Flyers snapped a four-game losing streak. Ersson, 23, is the eighth goaltender in NHL history to start his career 6-0-0.

Mikael Backlund and Andrew Mangiapane had a goal an assist each for Calgary while Tyler Tofoli notched his team-leading 23rd.

Islanders 4, Penguins 2: Bo Horvat and Anders Lee scored less than 2 minutes apart in the third period to spark visiting New York over Pittsburgh — the Islanders' second late comeback over the Penguins in three days.

Horvat beat Tristan Jarry to the short side with 11:26 remaining to tie it, then Jarry turned it over behind the Pittsburgh net to kick-start a sequence that ended with Lee's goal. Brock Nelson's second goal of the game, an empty-netter with 25 seconds left, sealed it for the Islanders.

Panthers 4, Ducks 3 (OT): Carter Verhaeghe scored 1:42 into overtime to lead host Florida past Anaheim.

Florida has won six of its past nine games. Anaheim has lost its last five.

Jets 4, Rangers 1: Mark Scheifele scored twice and Connor Hellebuyck made 50 saves for visiting Winnipeg in its win over New York.

Kyle Connor and Pierre-Luc Dubois also scored for the Jets, who are 6-3-0 in their past nine visits to Madison Square Garden.

NHL scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Boston	56	43	8	5	91	210	118
Toronto	57	34	15	8	76	194	153
Tampa Bay	55	35	17	3	73	195	162
Florida	60	29	25	6	64	209	210
Buffalo	54	28	22	4	60	201	187
Detroit	55	26	21	8	60	172	179
Ottawa	56	27	25	4	58	172	179
Montreal	56	23	29	4	50	151	205

Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Carolina	55	37	10	8	82	188	147
New Jersey	56	37	14	5	79	195	149
N.Y. Rangers	57	33	15	9	75	192	156
N.Y. Islanders	60	29	24	7	65	175	170
Pittsburgh	56	27	20	9	63	180	178
Washington	58	28	24	6	62	175	170
Philadelphia	58	23	25	10	56	157	186
Columbus	57	18	34	5	41	146	212

Western Conference

Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Dallas	57	30	15	12	72	185	148
Winnipeg	57	35	21	1	71	180	148
Colorado	55	31	19	5	67	173	155
Minnesota	56	30	21	5	65	167	161
Nashville	54	26	22	6	58	152	163
St. Louis	56	26	27	3	55	175	205
Arizona	57	20	28	9	49	155	199
Chicago	55	18	32	5	41	136	201

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	56	34	18	4	72	184	157
Los Angeles	57	32	18	7	71	196	193
Seattle	57	32	19	6	70	197	178
Edmonton	57	30	19	8	68	214	192
Calgary	57	26	20	11	63	180	176
Vancouver	56	22	30	4	48	192	229
San Jose	58	18	29	11	47	174	213
Anaheim	57	17	33	7	41	144	240

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss.

Monday's games

Florida 4, Anaheim 3
Boston 3, Ottawa 1
Philadelphia 4, Calgary 3
San Jose 4, Seattle 0
N.Y. Islanders 4, Pittsburgh 2
Winnipeg 4, N.Y. Rangers 1

Tuesday's games

Anaheim at Tampa Bay
Detroit at Washington
Montreal at New Jersey
St. Louis at Carolina
Toronto at Buffalo
Los Angeles at Minnesota
Vancouver at Nashville
Vegas at Chicago
Philadelphia at Edmonton

Duggan prepping for future, not reflecting on TCU career

By STEPHEN HAWKINS

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Max Duggan really hasn't had time to reflect on his career at TCU, where the four-year starting quarterback's final snap came in the national championship game. The Heisman Trophy runner-up hasn't even stopped throwing while getting ready for the NFL combine and draft.

The beloved TCU quarterback, who has been in Southern California training since a few days after the national title game loss, was back in Fort Worth on Monday night for the presentation of the Davey O'Brien Award — whose namesake is the school's only Heisman Trophy winner, when leading the Horned Frogs to an undefeated season and their only AP national title in 1938.

"It means so much to our program, for TCU, because we ob-

viously understand what Davey O'Brien did for TCU, what he did for just college football," said Duggan, the first TCU player to win the award given annually to a top quarterback. "There's so much pride for what he did for our program, and building it up and setting a milestone for TCU programs to strive for."

While Duggan and the Horned Frogs lost a lopsided national championship game to Georgia, they tied a school record with 13 wins by beating Michigan in the College Football Playoff semifinal Fiesta Bowl.

"I probably haven't even done a whole time of reflecting on what happened this season," he said. "Obviously we're disappointed what happened in the national championship game. ... But that doesn't take away from the special season that we had as a program, to be able to share that with



LM OTERO/AP

TCU quarterback Max Duggan smiles for photos with the Davey O'Brien Award at a news conference in Fort Worth, Texas, on Monday.

players, coaching staff, our fans, the city of Fort Worth and TCU. People are going to remember this season for a long time."

Even though he still had another season of eligibility available after starting 43 games for TCU, Duggan decided after extended con-

versations with his family and coach Sonny Dykes that it was the right time to make himself available for the NFL Draft. He graduated from TCU's business school in December.

Duggan was at the Senior Bowl and is now among several draft prospects working in California with former NFL quarterback Jordan Palmer. The NFL combine starts next week, before TCU's pro day at the end of March and the draft in late April.

Most draft projections have Duggan being a late-round pick on the third and final day. That doesn't bother him.

"You've just got to have one team that, you know, falls in love with you, that likes your game, likes you as a person, what you do on and off the field. And I think that's what really matters in my eyes," he said. "I understand I'm not one of the top guys."

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

No. 3 Kansas tops TCU for 5th win in row

By STEPHEN HAWKINS

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Big 12 scoring leader Jalen Wilson was struggling with his shot for third-ranked Kansas, and standout freshman Gradey Dick didn't score again after reaching 19 points only two minutes into the second half.

The Jayhawks, in pursuit of their 21st Big 12 regular-season title, still never trailed after half-time and extended the league's longest active winning streak to five in a row, beating 24th-ranked TCU 63-58 on Monday night.

"I've said all along, we've got five guys that can all go out there and play and take over the game. And that's the beauty of our team," said Wilson, who had 13 rebounds while making only 3 of 11 shots for seven points, more than 13 below his season average. "We're all going to have some type of effort to win. ... That's part of a championship team."

Damion Baugh missed a potential tying three-pointer with five seconds left for TCU (18-10, 7-8 Big 12). Shahada Wells missed a follow-up layup before Kevin McCullar, who finished with 15 points, was fouled and made two free throws to seal it for the Jayhawks (23-5, 11-4).

Kansas began the night tied with idle eighth-ranked Texas for the



TONY GUTIERREZ/AP

Kansas forward K.J. Adams Jr. defends against TCU guard Mike Miles Jr. during the second half Monday in Fort Worth, Texas. Miles had 13 points, but the Jayhawks held on for their fifth straight win.

conference lead. Coach Bill Self's reigning national champions have won seven of eight games since a three-game losing streak that included a 23-point home loss to the Horned Frogs.

"We haven't accomplished jack, but we've put ourselves in a favorable position to maybe do something," Self said. "Everybody talked about our sky's falling when

we lost three in a row. In this league, that can happen easily. But we've recovered pretty good since then."

Not even an appearance from Heisman Trophy runner-up Max Duggan could get the Frogs over the hump. They were within 56-53 with 6:07 left when the four-year starting quarterback, still in his tuxedo after receiving the Davey

O'Brien Award in a ceremony about four miles from campus, waved the crowd into a frenzy while going to a courtside seat.

"He looked good tonight with the tux on," Self said. "I'm just glad he didn't get here any earlier."

Neither team made a field goal in the final 4:19. TCU missed its last six shots in that span, while the Jayhawks were 0-for-4 in the final

4:45.

The Frogs tied the game at 48 with 10:13 left when Jakobe Coles made a tough leaner while being fouled, but missed the free throw that would have put them ahead.

Mike Miles Jr. had 13 points for TCU, which has lost five of its last six games. The first four of those losses came when the guard was out with a hyperextended right knee. Coles added 12 points and Baugh had 11.

It was only the second game Miles and big man Eddie Lampkin played together for the Frogs since their 83-60 win at Allen Fieldhouse on Jan. 21. That was the second-worst home loss for Kansas in Self's 20 seasons.

With both of them starting again, TCU beat Oklahoma State 100-75 at home Saturday to end a four-game losing streak while hitting the century mark in a Big 12 game for the first time. Lampkin, who missed four of six games after a high left ankle sprain in the first meeting against the Jayhawks, had two points and eight rebounds in the rematch.

"It's disappointing how we played and how we executed and how we handled the situation," TCU coach Jamie Dixon said. "Obviously played good in our last game, excited about having our guys back. But we just didn't carry it over."

TOP 25 THIS WEEK

Gonzaga, Saint Mary's on collision course for big game

By DAVE SKRETTA

Associated Press

The challenge that faces Gonzaga coach Mark Few is the same one facing Saint Mary's counterpart Randy Bennett this week: Avoid looking past must-win mid-week games to their showdown on Saturday night in Spokane, Wash.

The Bulldogs first have to play San Diego on Thursday night; the Gaels take on Pacific an hour earlier.

"I hope we're feeling that this thing is winding down and we're getting closer," Few said. "We've got three games left."

None bigger than that one Saturday, though.

No. 12 Gonzaga (23-5, 12-2) is a game in back of No. 15 Saint Mary's (24-5, 13-1) in what is shaping up to be one of the most hotly contested races in the West Coast Conference in years. It will be the 11th time the two teams have played when both were ranked; the Gaels got the better of the last meeting with a 78-70 overtime victory earlier this month.

The Bulldogs have won six straight regular-season titles since sharing with Saint Mary's in



GODOFREDO A. VASQUEZ/AP

Saint Mary's guard Logan Johnson reacts after scoring against BYU on Saturday. The Gaels lead the West Coast Conference by a game over Gonzaga with a showdown with the Bulldogs on Saturday.

2016. But assuming the Gaels get past the Tigers on Senior Night, they will have an opportunity to not only sweep Gonzaga but clinch their first outright conference

championship since 2012, when they went on to beat the Bulldogs for the league tournament title.

"It's all about compartmentalizing," the Gaels' Logan Johnson

said. "We talked about it a lot last year — we had BYU, San Francisco, San Diego, Gonzaga to finish at home. That's a tough stretch. And this is no different here. It's all about taking it piece by piece, possession by possession. You can't think about the next game or what's around the corner."

The first matchup between Gonzaga and Saint Mary's this season was epic: The Bulldogs led by eight at halftime, Mitchell Saxen's layup for the Gaels with 8 seconds left forced overtime, and freshman phenom Aidan Mahaney dominated the extra session as Saint Mary's pulled away for its 10th win over its rival since the 2009-10 season.

"We are making this a thing now where we want to be able to rival with them every time," Mahaney said afterward. "This isn't an upset or anything like that. We're not going to just talk about it. We're going to put in the work."

Big games in the Big 12

The Big 12 has been the toughest league in the country by almost any metric this season. Six teams are in the Top 25 this week, and ac-

cording to various projections, anywhere from seven to nine teams could land NCAA Tournament bids.

Third-ranked Kansas beat No. 24 TCU on Monday night to kick off another brutal week in the Big 12. Ninth-ranked Baylor visited No. 14 Kansas State and No. 23 Iowa State visited No. 8 Texas on Tuesday night. Then on Saturday, Texas and Baylor highlight a slate that includes bubble teams playing ranked opponents in an attempt to improve their résumés.

Big East business

The toughest race besides the Big 12 might be in the Big East, where No. 10 Marquette has one-game lead on No. 16 Xavier, No. 19 Creighton and No. 20 Providence. The Golden Eagles-Bluejays matchup on Tuesday night in Milwaukee could go a long way toward determining the champion.

The Friars have a tough game Wednesday night against No. 18 UConn, which has fallen four games behind Marquette and will try to play spoiler down the stretch. Xavier plays Villanova and Seton Hall this week.

SPORTS



Adding to their streak

League-leading Bruins top Senators to win fourth straight » **NHL, Page 22**

NBA



Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo lies by the basket after injuring his wrist on Feb. 16 in Chicago. Antetokounmpo doesn't want the NBA regular season reduced from 82 games.

CHARLES REX ARBOGAST/AP



ABBIE PARR/AP

Minnesota Timberwolves guard Anthony Edwards says players should play as many games as their health will allow because fans come to see them play.

Give 'em a break?

Opinions vary on how to provide additional rest for players

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
Associated Press

Golden State coach Steve Kerr wants a shorter NBA season. Milwaukee All-Star Giannis Antetokounmpo does not. NBA Commissioner Adam Silver isn't sure what the right answer is.

Such is the conundrum with the NBA's ongoing battle with load management — often the fancy way of saying resting — and finding ways to optimize player health, performance and availability. While there is a consensus that the league has problems, there is no consensus on how to solve those problems.

Over the last week, The Associated Press asked a cross section of 48 players, coaches, owners and executives if the NBA should abandon its 82-game, 170-day blueprint of a



Kerr

regular season for something with either fewer games or more days in the season to allow for more rest.

The results were as muddled as the issue itself: 40% said they would simply go along with whatever the league decides is best, 35% said they don't want the current format changed, and the remaining 25% want changes.

How fans will be affected is one concern. Money is another.

"I think if you want to get the best player availability, shortening the season may be in the best interest of everybody involved," Denver coach Michael Malone said. "But that's also a lot of money being lost — TV

INSIDE

Report says Westbrook set to sign with Clippers

Page 20

games, money. Let's not forget: This is a business."

With the All-Star Weekend in the books and regular-season play resuming Thursday, there are still 19 players with a chance to play in 82 games this season. There were only five who did it last season, 11 who played every game in a 72-game 2020-21 season and 14 who played all possible games in the COVID-19-interrupted 2019-20 season.

SEE BREAK ON PAGE 20

No. 3 Kansas stays hot, wins 5th in row » College basketball, Page 23

