Trump impeachment heading to Senate

GOP appears poised to oppose House charge

Associated Press

WASHINGTON As the House prepares to bring the impeachment charge against Donald Trump to the Senate for trial, a growing number of Republican senators say they are opposed to the proceeding, dimming the chances that former president will be convicted on the charge that he incited the U.S. Capitol.

“I think the trial is stupid.”

Sen. Marco Rubio R-Fla.

House Democrats planned to carry the sole impeachment charge of “incitement of insurrection” across the Capitol late Monday evening, a rare and ceremonial walk to the Senate by the prosecutors who will argue their case. They are hoping that strong Republican denunciations of Trump after the Jan. 6 riot will translate into a conviction and a separate vote to bar Trump from holding office again.

But instead, GOP passions appear to have cooled since the insurrection. Now that Trump’s presidency is over, Republican

SEE SENATE ON PAGE 8

US moves to stop German taxation of troops’ income

By John Vanderw
Stars and Stripes
STUTTGART, Germany — The U.S. government has intervened to try to stop German finance offices from imposing income taxes on American forces in the country, a practice the military says violates a long-standing international treaty.

The Pentagon, along with State and Treasury departments, have put the U.S. Embassy in Berlin in charge of leading efforts to resolve the issue, which has caused financial devastation for some military families who have been hit with six-figure bills by local tax authorities.

“The German ministry of foreign affairs agreed to take the issue to the federal ministry of finance. We’re now waiting to hear back from them,” said Col. Joe Scrocca, U.S. Army Europe and Africa spokesman.

The problem came to light last year when Stars and Stripes investigated aggressive tactics used to force troops and military civilians to pay German income tax, despite a clause in the Status of Forces Agreement stating that they are exempt.

“The aim of this engagement, and any necessary follow-up engagements, is to secure the appropriate tax exemptions for U.S. personnel covered under the SOFA and its supplementary agreements,” former Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller wrote in a Jan. 7 letter to Rep. Mike Kelly, R-Pa.

SEE INCOME ON PAGE 4
DuPont, Chemours reach ‘forever chemicals’ deal

Associated Press
DOVER, Del. — The DuPont Co. and its spinoff business Chemours have agreed to resolve legal disputes over environmental liabilities for pollution related to man-made chemicals associated with an increased risk of cancer and other health problems.

The binding memorandum of understanding comes just over a month after Delaware’s Supreme Court upheld the dismissal of a lawsuit alleging that DuPont massively downplayed the cost of environmental liabilities imposed on Chemours when DuPont spun off its former performance chemicals unit in 2015.

The chemicals at issue are known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS. They include perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOA, which was used in the production of Teflon, and have also been used in firefighting foam. They sometimes are referred to as “forever chemicals” because of their longevity in the environment.

DuPont, Chemours and Corteva, an independent public company that was previously the agriculture division of DowDuPont, also have agreed to resolve legal disputes originating from the former performance chemicals unit in 2015.

The memorandum resolves legal disputes originating from the spinoff and establishes a cost-sharing arrangement and escrow account for potential future legacy PFAS liabilities arising out of pre-July 1, 2015, conduct.

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DuPont, Chemours and Corteva, an independent public company that was previously the agriculture division of DowDuPont, also have agreed to resolve about 95 pending cases, as well as other unfiled matters, in multidistrict PFOA litigation in Ohio.

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EXCHANGE RATES

TODAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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TODAY IN EUROPE

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WEATHER OUTLOOK

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

INTEREST RATES

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EXCHANGE RATES

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Taliban prisoners released in peace deal get arrested

By Phillip Walter Wellman
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Hundreds of Taliban prisoners released under last year’s U.S.-Taliban peace deal have been arrested after returning to the battlefield, a top Afghan security official said.

“Since the U.S. military expects the insurgents to intensify attacks as the year progresses, national security adviser Hanibal Mohib also told reporters Sunday.

“We have recaptured 600 of the freed individuals because they were fighting alongside the Taliban even though they promised they would not fight again,” Mohib said.

Other released prisoners were involved in making cars bombs and planning attacks on security forces, Mohib said, citing intelligence reports.

Over 5,000 Taliban prisoners were released last year in exchange for 1,000 Afghan security force personnel captured by the guerrillas. The prisoner exchange, which was a part of the U.S.-Taliban deal struck last February, was a precursor for the ongoing peace talks between the insurgents and the Afghan government.

The Kabul government — which did not participate in talks leading up to the agreement — was initially hesitant to free the prisoners, but eventually bowed to pressure from Washington. Many in Afghanistan criticized the move, saying it could worsen the security situation.

Intensified combat in southern Afghanistan is a direct result of the prisoners being released, Afghan army Chief of Staff Gen. Yasimziai said Sunday.

Mohib, who attended a security meeting, did not specify how many former prisoners besides those rearrested are believed to have rejoined the insurgency. All of the released prisoners signed a pledge that they would no longer fight.

Taliban officials insist none of the former detainees have returned to combat and rejected the claim that 600 had been recaptured. Only about 40 of the men are back in government custody and most of those were seized during raids on their homes and are innocent, spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid told Stars and Stripes on Monday.

The insurgents have continued to conduct attacks across Afghanistan since the agreement with the United States, the start of peace talks with the government in September and repeated calls for a cease-fire from Washington and Kabul. The relentless violence has led to doubts voiced by U.S. and Afghan government officials that the guerrillas aren’t serious about peace. All signs suggested the group is preparing to intensify attacks in the spring, when the traditional fighting season starts and just weeks before all international forces may pull out of the country, Mohib said.

Under the U.S.-Taliban deal, foreign forces could withdraw from Afghanistan by May if the Taliban live up to vague counter-terrorism promises.

“The Taliban does not want peace. Our intelligence … shows that the Taliban is preparing to fight. They think that they will win militarily,” Mohib said. “The obligation is on us to become fully prepared.”

The Biden administration announced Friday that it planned to review the deal and determine whether the Taliban are living up to their promises.

There are currently 2,500 American troops in the country, the lowest figure since the first months of the war nearly two decades ago, and down from roughly 13,000 this time last year.

Navy SEAL sentenced to 10 years in prison in Green Beret hazing death

The Virginian-Pilot
NORFOLK, Va. — A Navy SEAL convicted of involuntary manslaughter in the hazing death of an Army Green Beret in 2017 was sentenced this weekend to 10 years in prison.

SEAL Team 6 member Toney E. DeDolph was also demoted from chief petty officer to seaman and will be dishonorably discharged. He must forfeit pay.

DeDolph pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter earlier this month after admitting that he applied the chokehold that killed Army Staff Sgt. Logan Melgar while trying to haze him in 2017 in Mali, West Africa.

Two others previously convicted in the case, former Navy Chief Special Operator Adam Matthews and former Marine Staff Sgt. Kevin Maxwell Jr., were sentenced to one year and four years confinement, respectively. Both are also receiving bad conduct discharges.

Marine Gunnery Sgt. Mario Madera-Rodriguez has also been charged in Melgar’s death. A trial is set for later this year.

DeDolph intends to appeal the sentence, according to his attorney, Philip Stockhouse.

DeDolph pleaded guilty as part of a pretrial agreement in which the Navy dropped charges of felony murder and burglary. Under the agreement, he faced a maximum of 22 1/2 years in prison.

In addition to the manslaughter charge, he pleaded guilty to hazing, conspiracy and obstruction of justice. Officials said he cut an incision in Melgar’s neck normally used to open an emergency airway in order to hide injuries from the chokehold.

The chokehold DeDolph applied involves placing the front of a victim’s neck in the crook of one arm, while pressing with the other on the back of the neck. He told his court-martial that he had safely performed the hold many times in training.

DeDolph said he and the other three men broke into Melgar’s room intending to haze him.

Chinese fighters, bombers test Taiwan’s air defense

By Matthew M. Burke
Stars and Stripes

Chinese airplanes flew into Taiwan’s air defense identification zone two days in a row over the weekend, stepping up its show of force a day after President Joe Biden’s administration signaled support for the self-governing island.

Fifteen Chinese aircraft, including 12 fighters, two Y-8 anti-submarine aircraft and a technical reconnaissance plane, entered Taiwan’s southwest air defense identification zone Sunday, the island’s Military News Agency reported that day. They passed between Taiwan’s southern shores and the Taiwan-controlled Pratas Islands in the South China Sea, according to the report.

The aircraft traveled southeast, away from the Chinese mainland, before turning around and flying along virtually the same flight path, according to maps released online by Taiwan’s air force.

The incident came one day after China flew eight H-6K nuclear-capable bombers, a Y-8 anti-submarine aircraft and four fighters through the same area, the ministry’s website. “We on the department’s website. “We need to open an emergency airway in order to hide injuries from the chokehold.”

The Virginian-Pilot
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DeDolph said he and the other three men broke into Melgar’s room intending to haze him.
WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Monday ended the Pentagon’s ban on transgender men and women joining the military, fulfilling a campaign promise to undo one of President Donald Trump’s signature Pentago-
nal policies.

Biden issued an executive order Monday that allows all qualified Americans to serve in the mili-
tary, regardless of their gender identity.

“President Biden believes that all gender identity should not be a bar to military service, and that America’s strength is found in its diversity,” according to a White House statement. “Allowing all qualified Americans to serve their country in uniform is better for the military and better for the country because an inclusive force is a more effective force. Simply put, it’s the right thing to do and is in our national interest.”

The order directs the defense secretary and the Homeland Security secretary to implement it and make certain all regulations and policies follow the new executive order.

It also immediately stops invol-
untary separations, discharges, and denials of enlistment or continuation of service due to gen-
der identity, according to the statement. The order also starts a process to find and examine rec-
ords of personnel who were kicked out based on their gender identity and correct their military records.

An initial report is to be submit-
ted to Biden within 60 days on the progress of implementing the new directives and policy, accord-
ing to the statement.

The policy change was expect-
ed to essentially revert the Penta-
gon back to its 2016 policy, which

opened the door to most tran-
gender men and women near the end of former President Barack Obama’s administration. Biden, who backed that policy at that time, had pledged last year as a candidate to reverse the policy after he was re-elected.

“I fully support the President’s direction that all transgender indi-
viduals who wish to serve in the United States military can do so and will no longer be barred from service simply because of their gender identity,” he said.

Recruits might be able to serve in their self-identified gender when they meet the standards to join the military and all medically necessary transition related care allowed by law will be available to service members, according to the statement.

It was not immediately clear
Monday how long the Pentagon
would need before it would start accepting new transgender ser-
vice members. Experts said last summer that the Pentagon could
reverse the policy in just 30 days. The ban’s end could result in a
rush to recruiting offices through-
out the country for transgender men
and women who have long sought to serve, said Nicolas Tal-
bott, a transgender gay man who
was among the first military hopefuls to
file a lawsuit against Trump and the federal government to end the policy.

“We are all very excited we are
very eager,” Talbott said last week.

Talbott plans to re-enter ROTC
training, which he was forced to leave in 2019 after the ban was
implemented and hopes to serve as an Army or Air Force intelligence officer.

“1’m thrilled and relieved that I
and other transgender Americans can now be evaluated solely on our
ability to meet military standards. I look forward to becoming the
best service member I can be,” Talbott said in a statement after the ban was lifted.

The Pentagon’s ban on trans-
gender men and women enlist-
ing in the military went into effect in April 2019, a decision Trump said was supported after trump’s surprise July 2017 Twit-
ter announcement that he would no longer allow transgender per-
service to serve in the military “in any capacity.”

That announcement, which caught the Pentagon, including all
the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff off guard, resulted months later in the Defense Department policy — known as the “Mattis
plan” for former Defense Secreta-
ry Jim Mattis, who crafted it. The
plan effectively barred nearly all
transgender men and women cause harm to the mil-
itary.

That plan was long delayed as
transgender service members and military hopefuls filed a series of lawsuits that resulted in prelim-
inary injunctions halting the Pen-
tagon from implementing its plan. In January 2019, a 5-4 Supreme Court decision removed those preliminary injunctions, allowing the Defense Department to
im
plement its ban.

The Pentagon long insisted its policy was not a blanket ban be-
cause of its protections for those
transgender service members who came out after the 2016 policy and a waiver process that could al-

Income: DOD employees in Germany targeted by tax collectors

FROM PAGE 1

“We believe that some German tax authorities have adopted an incorrect interpretation of the NATO Status of Forces Agree-
ment (SOFA), resulting in the im-
just their military job.

Germany for reasons other than
authorities that SOFA tax protec-
the claim by some German au-

The uniformed leaders of all the
military services in recent years have said there was no evidence that transgender service members disrupted unit co-
hesion, one of the Pentagon’s pri-
mary justifications for imple-
menting the ban, and military stan-
dard officials claimed to have data confirming that assertion, however, they have never made it
public.

One of the lawyers involved in
the lawsuits seeking to end the
transgender ban said last week
that too had never seen any supporting evidence. The Pentagon that transgender men and women cause harm to the mil-
itary.

The Defense Department policy allows people who identify as transgen-
eral protections for those
people said Monday that ending the
ban was the right thing to do and is in our national interest.”

The Pentagon under Trump al-
so so labeled needed health care for
transgender men and women too costly. The Pentagon said last year that it spent about $8 million on
health care for transgender ser-
vice members between 2016 and
2019 from its about $50 billion an-
nual budget.

It remains unclear precisely how many service members on active duty identify as transgen-
er. A 2016 Defense Department survey, which was anonymous, found about 9,000 service mem-
bers identified themselves as transgender men or women, but slightly more than 1,000 between 2016 and 2019 took the steps to openly serve in the preferred gen-
er, officials said.

Gay and transgender advocates are hopeful that the policy can be reverted very quickly. Aaron Bel-
kin, director of the Palm Center, a research institute that studies LGBTQ inclusion in the military, has said the Mattis plan left the groundwork for the Pentagon to completely end its ban within one month.

But the policy barred nearly all
people diagnosed with gender dysphoria — described by the American Psychiatric Association as “a conflict between a person’s physical or assigned gender and the gender with which he/she/ they identify.” It did allow people to enlist with a diagnosis of gender dysphoria who had doctor certifi-
cation that they had remained sta-
ble in their biological sex for 36
months. It disqualified all people who had medically transitioned their sex.

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**VIRUS OUTBREAK**

**Group warns of huge economic gap from virus**

**By Pan Pylas**
Associated Press

LONDON — Anti-poverty campaigner Oxfam warned Monday that the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic will lead to the biggest increase in global inequality on record unless governments radically rejig their economies.

In a report geared to inform discussions at the World Economic Forum’s online panels of political and business leaders this week, Oxfam said the richest 1,000 people have already managed to recoup the losses they recorded in the early days of the pandemic because of the bounce back in stock markets. By contrast, Oxfam said it could take more than a decade for the world’s poorest to recover their losses.

“Rigged economies are funneling wealth to a rich elite who are riding out the pandemic in luxury, while those on the frontline of the pandemic — shop assistants, healthcare workers, and market vendors — are struggling to pay the bills and put food on the table,” said Gabriela Bucher, executive director of Oxfam International.

Using figures from Forbes’ 2020 Billionaire List, Oxfam said the world’s 10 richest people, including the likes of Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg and Warren Buffett, saw their fortunes increase by half a trillion dollars since the crisis began.

Meanwhile, using data specially provided by the World Bank, Oxfam said that in a worst-case scenario global poverty levels would be higher in 2030 than they were before the pandemic struck, with 3.4 billion people still living in less than $5.50 a day.

Bucher said women and marginalized racial and ethnic groups are bearing the brunt of this crisis and are “more likely to be pushed into poverty, more likely to go hungry, and more likely to be excluded from healthcare.”

While urging governments to ensure that everyone has access to a coronavirus vaccine and financial support if they lose their job, Bucher said policies in a post-coronavirus world should focus on ending poverty and protecting the planet.

“They must invest in public services and low carbon sectors to create millions of new jobs and ensure everyone has access to decent education, health, and social care, and they must ensure the richest individuals and corporations contribute their fair share of tax to pay for it,” she said.

“These measures must not be band-aid solutions for desperate times but a ‘new normal’ in economies that work for the benefit of all people, not just the privileged few,” she added.

Oxfam has traditionally sought to inspire debate at the World Economic Forum’s annual gathering of business and political elites in the Swiss ski resort of Davos. However, the pandemic means there won’t be any trek up the mountains this week, organizers are putting on a virtual event.

Leaders including Chinese President Xi Jinping, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa are all set to take part in the meetings from Jan. 25-29. Joining them will be a host of chief executives and campaigning organizations, including Oxfam and the likes of Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg.

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**Mexican president tests positive, has mild symptoms**

**By Christopher Sherman**
Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said he has tested positive for COVID-19, an announcement that comes as his country registers the highest levels of infections and deaths to date.

López Obrador, who has been criticized for his handling of Mexico’s pandemic and for not setting an example of prevention in public, said Sunday on his official Twitter account that his symptoms are mild and he is under medical treatment.

“I regret to inform you that I am infected with COVID-19,” he tweeted. “The symptoms are mild but I am already under medical treatment. As always, I am optimistic. We will all move forward.”

José Luis Alomía Ze- garra, Mexico’s director of epidemiology, said the 67-year-old López Obrador had a “light” case of COVID-19 and was “isolating at home.”

Mexico’s president said that while he recovered, Interior Secretary Olga Sánchez Cordero would be taking over for him in his daily news conferences, at which he usually speaks for two hours without breaks each weekday.

Despite his age and high blood pressure, López Obrador has not received a vaccine shot even though Mexico has already received a batch of Pfizer-BioNTech doses.

He has said that health workers would be the first ones to get them. Under the government plan, people over 60 will start being vaccinated in February.

López Obrador has rarely been seen wearing a mask and continued to keep up a busy travel schedule, taking commercial flights.

He has also resisted locking down the economy, noting the devastating effect it would have on so many Mexicans who live day to day, despite that the country has registered nearly 150,000 COVID-19 deaths and more than 1 million infections.

In November, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the World Health Organization, urged Mexico’s leaders be serious about the virus and set examples for its citizens, saying that “Mexico is in bad shape.”

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**Paramedics, EMTs endure virus fears amid daily responsibilities**

**By Stefanie Dazio**
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — It’s crowded in the back of the ambulance.

Two emergency medical techni- cians, the patient, the gurney — and an unseen and un- welcome passenger lurking in the air.

For EMTs Thomas Hoang and Joshua Hammond, the coronavirus is constantly close. COVID-19 has become their biggest fear during 24-hour shifts in California’s Orange County, riding with them from 911 call to 911 call, from patient to patient.

They and other EMTs, para- medics and 911 dispatchers in Southern California have been thrust into the front lines of the national epicenter of the pandemic. They are scrambling to help those in need as hospitals burst with a surge of patients after the holidays, ambulances are sitting outside hospitals for hours until beds become available, oxygen tanks are in alarmingly short supply and the vaccine rollout has been slow.

EMTs and paramedics have always dealt with life and death — they make split-second decisions about patient care, which hospital to race to, the best and fastest way to save someone — and now they’re just a breath away from becoming the patient themselves.

They gown up, mask up and glove up, “but you can only be so safe,” Hammond said. “We don’t have the luxury of being 6 feet apart from the patient.”

Statistics on COVID-19 cases and deaths among EMTs and paramedics — especially ones employed by private companies — are hard to find. They are considered essential health care workers but rarely receive the pay and protections given to doctors and nurses.

Hammond and Hoang work for Emergency Ambulance Service Inc., a private ambulance company in Southern California. They, like so many others, have long fostered goals of becoming first responders to serve their communities.

Hoang is attending nursing school. Hammond is one test away from becoming a paramedic.

Yet as COVID-19 infections surge and the risks increase, wonder: Is it worth risking your life — and the lives of your loved ones at home — for a small paycheck and a dream?

“It’s really hard to justify it beyond ‘I really want to help people,’” said Hammond, 25. “Is that worth the risk?”

For now, yes.

“I do want to do my part in helping people get better, in a sense,” said Hoang, 29.

Ashley Cortez, Adreanna More- no and Jaime Hopper work 12- hour shifts as dispatchers for Care Ambulance Service Inc. If the EMTs are the front lines, these women are the scouts.

Their greatest fear is what’s called a “level zero” — when there are no ambulances left to send to an emergency. In Los Angeles County, one of the nation’s hardest-hit counties during the pandemic, the fear becomes a regular reality.

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**Emergency medical technician Thomas Hoang, left, of Emergency Ambulance Service, and paramedic Trenton Amaro prepare to unload a COVID-19 patient from an ambulance in Placentia, Calif., on Jan. 8.**

Jae C. Hong/Reuters
VIRUS OUTBREAK ROUNDPUP

Calif. lifts curfew, stay-at-home orders statewide

Associated Press
Sacramento, Calif. — California lifted regional stay-at-home orders across the state Monday in response to improving coronavirus conditions, returning the state to a system of county-by-county restrictions, state health officials announced.

The order had been in place in the San Francisco Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley and Southern California, covering the majority of the state’s counties. The change will allow businesses such as restaurants to resume outdoor operations in many areas, though local officials could choose to continue stricter rules. The state is also lifting a 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew.

“Together, we changed our activities knowing our short-term sacrifices would lead to longer-term gains. COVID-19 is still here and still deadly, so our work is not over, but it’s important to recognize our collective actions saved lives and we are turning a critical corner,” Dr. Tomas Aragon, the state’s public health director, said in a statement.

The decision comes with improving trends in the rate of infections, hospitalizations and intensive care unit capacity as well as vaccinations.

During the weekend, San Francisco Bay Area ICU capacity surged to 23% while the San Joaquin Valley increased to 33%, its highest level ever.

As of the weekend, California has had more than 3.1 million confirmed COVID-19 cases and 36,790 deaths, according to the state’s public health website.

Alaska

Juneau — Alaska held the envious position of having the highest rate of coronavirus vaccinations per capita in the nation as of last week, the state’s top health official said.

Alaska Chief Medical Officer Anne Zink said Thursday that the progress was the result of community efforts to quickly distribute vaccinations and additional allotments for federal agencies within the state, KTUU-FM reported.

Zink told the Greater Juneau Chamber of Commerce on Thursday that Alaska received more doses of vaccine because of allowances above the state’s share for the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Indian Health Service.

“We have the highest veterans per capita population. We have a large military presence. And we have a large Indigenous population with over 229 sovereign tribes,” Zink said. “And so, because of those reasons, we did get some additional vaccine in the state via those federal partnerships.”

Arizona

WINDOW ROCK — Navajo Nation health officials are reporting 133 new COVID-19 cases and seven more deaths as a revised public health order is set to take effect.

The latest figures released Sunday bring the total reported coronavirus cases in the reservation to 27,484 with 973 known deaths.

Beginning Monday, the tribe extended its stay-at-home order with a revised nightly curfew to limit the spread of COVID-19. The Navajo Nation is also lifting weekend lockdowns to allow more vaccination events.

The actions in the latest public health emergency order will run through at least Feb. 15.

The curfew will run daily from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.

Connecticut

HARTFORD — Local health officials ordered a Connecticut home for retired nuns closed to visitors and the public because of a coronavirus outbreak that has infected nearly half of the more than 70 residents there as vaccinations were underway.

The restrictions on the School Sisters of Notre Dame home in Wilton were ordered by town Director of Health Barrington Bolger, and state health officials were expected to visit the property Monday to help with the outbreak, First Selectwoman Lynee Vanderslice said in a statement.

Vanderslice said 30 residents recently tested positive for COVID-19, as did a number of staff members. Health officials are doing contact tracing in Wilton as well as in the communities where staff members live.

Fifteen retired nuns recently received COVID-19 vaccinations under state guidelines, which allow vaccinations for people 75 years or older.

The remaining residents and staff were scheduled to be vaccinated Monday, after town officials obtained permission to administer the vaccine to non-eligible residents and staff, Vanderslice said.

Hawaii

HONOLULU — About half of Hawaii’s supply of 186,000 doses of the coronavirus vaccine had been distributed through last week, officials said.

The state has more than 40 distribution sites for the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, KITV-TV reported.

Democratic Lt. Gov. Josh Green said state leaders have Pressed the federal government to continue supplying the state with doses.

“We now have another 50 or 60,000 scheduled appointments for people getting their either first shot or second shot,” Green said. “We didn’t want to leave people in the lurch.”

More than 5,500 people were scheduled to receive vaccine shots at Honolulu’s Blaisdell Center mass vaccination site Monday.

Massachusetts

BOSTON — Massachusetts relaxed some coronavirus restrictions Monday as several key metrics used to measure the spread of the pandemic trend in the right direction.

Restaurants, movie theaters and many other businesses will now be allowed to remain open past 9:30 p.m. Also, a rule that required people to stay at home from 10 p.m. until 5 p.m. except for work or other essential travel has been lifted.

The restrictions were adopted in November as new cases surged. The latest seven-day average positivity rate in Massachusetts has dropped to 4.83% as of Sunday, down from 7.2% on Jan. 10.

The seven-day rolling average of daily new cases in Massachusetts is also on the decline, at more than 4,200 on Sunday, down from at least 6,400 on Jan. 10, according to The COVID Tracking Project.

Hospitalizations are also falling.

South Dakota

RAPID CITY — Organizers of South Dakota’s annual point-in-time count for the state’s unsheltered homeless population have canceled the effort this year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Sara Hornick, Rapid City-area coordinator of homeless services for Volunteers of America, said the count was called off mainly because of a shortage of volunteers, lack of personal protective equipment and concerns about the spread of COVID-19. She said the vulnerable homeless population is quite large, but the Department of Housing and Urban Development decided against the count, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Hornick said she’s not sure how the cancellation will affect federal funding because of all the allowances in place this year because of the virus.

The state Department of Health on Sunday reported 185 new COVID-19 cases in the last day, increasing the total to 107,148 positive tests. The update listed nine new deaths, lifting the total number of fatalities to 1,705 since the start of the pandemic.

West Virginia

CHARLESTON — West Virginia is debating an online portal for residents to register for coronavirus vaccine appointments.

Gov. Jim Justice says the new system that will help streamline vaccination efforts statewide launched Monday at www.vacci-
China pushes fringe theories on pandemic origins, vaccine harm.

Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan — Chinese state media have played up questions about Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine and whether it could be lethal to the very old. A government spokesperson suggests the coronavirus could have emerged from a U.S. military lab.

As the ruling Communist Party faces growing questioning about China’s vaccines and renewed criticism of its early COVID response, it is hitting back by encouraging fringe theories that some experts say could cause harm.

State media and officials are sowing doubts about Western vaccines and the origin of the coronavirus in an apparent bid to deflect the attacks. Both issues are in the spotlight because of the ongoing rollout of vaccines globally and the recent arrival of a WHO team in Wuhan, China, to investigate the origins of the virus.

While fringe theories may raise eyebrows overseas, the efforts also target a more receptive domestic audience. The social media hashtag “American’s Ft. Detrick,” started by the Communist Youth League, was viewed at least 1.4 billion times last week after a Foreign Ministry spokesperson called for a WHO investigation of the biological weapons lab in Maryland.

“Its purpose is to shift the blame from mishandling by (the) Chinese government in the pandemic’s early days to conspiracy by the U.S.,” said Fang Shimin, a now-U.S.-based writer known for exposing faked degrees and other fraud in Chinese science. “The tactic is quite successful because of widespread anti-American sentiment in China.”

Tokyo sees drop in cases; US commands in S. Korea, Japan report 26 infections

By Joseph Ditzler
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Japan’s capital city reported 618 new coronavirus patients Monday, a decline of more than 50% in new cases over the previous four days.

Totals early in the week are typically low because many testing facilities are closed over the weekend, but Monday’s figures represent the first tally below 700 since Dec. 28 and below 1,000 since Jan. 12, according to public broadcaster NHK and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

U.S. military bases across Japan reported that nine people tested positive between 6:30 p.m. Friday and 6 a.m. Monday. Meanwhile, U.S. Forces Korea announced 17 cases, most them new arrivals to the peninsula between Jan. 8 and Wednesday, according to two news releases.

Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni over the weekend reported that seven people tested positive for COVID-19, the coronavirus respiratory disease, according to Facebook posts.

Four tested positive but were not in quarantine when they were discovered, according to the base on separate posts Saturday and Sunday. They were immediately isolated, according to the air base, which provided no further information.

Three others, new arrivals to Japan, tested positive on the test required to exit quarantine, according to a Sunday release.

The Marine Corps also reported one new case Monday at Camp Foster on Okinawa, but provided no further information.

Kubasaki High School at Foster reopened Monday, nearly a week after it closed Jan. 19, to permit contact tracing and testing. Three people at the school had become infected, but subsequent tests of staff and students came back negative, according to principal James Strait in a message to families and employees Monday.

Naval Air Facility Atsugi, about 25 miles southwest of central Tokyo, had one person test positive while in quarantine, base spokesman Sam Samuelson said Monday.

In South Korea, a shelter-in-place, or lockdown, order at Yongdam Garrison in Seoul and for certain units at Camp Humphreys 55 miles to the south was extended to midnight Wednesday, USFK announced Monday.

On Sunday, Humphreys commander Col. Mike Tremblay closed the post exchange for a thorough cleaning after someone who tested positive stopped there, according to Tremblay’s remarks on a Facebook Live broadcast that morning. The exchange opened later that afternoon.

USFK reported that five individuals tested positive at Kunsan Air Base and at Humphreys over the weekend.

Three service members at Kunsan who quarantined Wednesday after contact with another infected individual tested positive Friday, according to a news release.

At Humphreys, a Defense Department civilian employee tested positive Friday after developing symptoms; the other turned up Saturday.

USFK reported that 12 people tested positive after arrival in South Korea over a two-week period.

One service member landed at Osan Air Base on the Patriot Express, a government-chartered air passenger service, on Jan. 18. Nine service members and two dependents arrived on commercial flights at Incheon International Airport on Jan. 8-10, Jan. 18 and Wednesday, according to the Sunday release.

Five people tested positive upon arrival and seven were positive on the test required before exiting the mandatory two-week quarantine.

South Korea reported 437 newly infected people nationwide Sunday, according to the Central Disease Control Headquarters. Seoul accounted for 91 of those, and Gyeonggi province, where Humphreys is located, reported 72.

Japan report 26 infections

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Stars and Stripes reporter Yeo Kyong Chang contributed to this report.

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FROM PAGE 1

senators who will serve as jurors in the trial are rallying to his legal defense, as they did during his first impeachment trial last year. “I think the trial is stupid, I think it’s counterproductive,” said Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla. He said that “the first chance I get to vote to end this trial, I’ll do it” because he believes it would be bad for the country and further inflame parti-

s

san divisions.

Trump is the first former presi-
dent to face impeachment trial, and it will test his grip on the Repub-
clic Party as well as the lega-
cy of his tenure, which came to a close as a mob of loyal supporters heeded his rally cry by storming the Capitol and trying to overturn Joe Biden’s election. The proceed-
ings will also force Democrats, who have a full sweep of party control of the White House and Congress, to balance their prom-
ise to hold the former president accountable while also rushing to deliver on Biden’s priorities.

Arguments in the Senate trial will begin the week of Feb. 8. Leaders in both parties agreed to the short delay to give Trump’s team and House prosecutors time to prepare and the Senate the chance to confirm some of Biden’s Cabinet nominees. Democrats say the extra days will allow for more evidence to come out about the rioting by Trump supporters, while Republicans hope to craft a unified defense for Trump.

Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., said in an interview with The Associated Press on Sunday that he hopes that evolving clarity on the details of what happened Jan. 6 “will make it clearer to my colleagues and the American people that we need some accountability.”

Coons questioned how his col-

leaders were in the Capitol that day could see the inauguration as anything other than a “stunning violation” of tradition of peaceful transfers of power.

“It is a critical moment in American history, and we have to look at it and look at it hard,” Coons said.

An early vote to dismiss the trial probably would not succeed, giv-

en that Democrats now control the Senate. Still, the mounting Repub-
ican opposition indicates that many GOP senators would eventu-
ally vote to acquit Trump. Demo-
crats would need the support of 17 Republicans — a high bar — to convict him.

When the House impeached Trump on Jan. 13, exactly one week after the siege, Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., said he didn’t be-

lieve the Senate had the constitu-
tional authority to convict Trump after he had left office. On Sunday, Cotton said “the more I talk to oth-
er Republican senators, the more they’re beginning to line up” be-

hind that argument.

“I think a lot of Americans are going to think it’s strange that the Senate is spending its time trying to convict and remove from office a man who left office a week ago,” Cotton said.

Democrats reject that argu-

ment, pointing to a 1876 impeach-
ment of a secretary of war who had already resigned and to opin-
ions by many legal scholars. Dem-
ocrats also say that a reckoning of the first invasion of the Capitol since the War of 1812, perpetrated by rioters egged on by a president who told them to “fight like hell” against election results that were being counted at the time, is nec-

essary so the country can move forward and ensure such a siege never happens again.

A few GOP senators have agreed with Democrats, though not close to the number that will be needed to convict Trump.

Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, said he believes there is a “preponder-
ance of opinion” that an impeach-
ment trial is appropriate after some leaves office.

“I believe that what is being al-
leged and what we saw, which is incitement to insurrection, is an impeachable offense,” Romney said. “If not, what is?”

But Romney, the lone Repub-
lie to vote to convict Trump when the Senate acquitted the then-
president in last year’s trial, ap-
pears to be an outlier.

Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Da-
Kota, said he believes a trial is a “moot point” after a president’s term is over, and “I think it’s one that they would have a very diffi-
cult time in trying to get done within the Senate.”

On Friday, GOP Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a close Trump ally who has been helping him build a legal team, urged the Senate to reject the idea of a post-
presidency trial — potentially with a vote to dismiss the charge — and suggested Republicans will scrutinize whether Trump’s words on Jan. 6 were legally “in-
citement.”

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, who said last week that Trump “provoked” his supporters before the riot, has not said how he will vote or argued any legal strategies. The Ken-
tucky senator has told his GOP colleagues that it will be a vote of conscience.

Lawmakers receive threats ahead of impeachment trial

BY MICHAEL BALSAMO

WASHINGTON — Federal law-
enforcement officials are examin-
ing a number of threats aimed at members of Congress as the impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump nears, including ominous chatter about killing legislators or attacking them outside of the U.S. Capitol, a U.S. official said Thursday.

The threats, and concerns that armed protesters could return to the Capitol after the Senate trial, prompted the U.S. Capitol Police and other federal law enforce-
ment to insist thousands of Na-
tional Guard troops remain in Washington as the Senate moves forward with plans for Trump’s trial, the official said Sunday.

The shocking insurrection at the Capitol by a pro-Trump mob prompted federal officials to rethink security in and around its landmarks, resulting in an un-
precedented lockdown for Bi-
den’s inauguration. Though the event went off without any prob-
lems and armed protests around the country did not end up mate-
rizing, the threats to lawmakers ahead of Trump’s trial exem-
plified the continued potential for danger.

Similar to those that were in-
tercepted by investigators ahead of Biden’s inauguration, the threats, and concerns that law enforce-
ment agents are tracking vary in speci-

fity and credibility, said the of-

icial, who had been briefed on the matter. Mainly posted online and in chat groups, the messages have included plots to attack members of Congress during travel to and from the Capitol complex during the trial, accord-
ing to the official.

The official was not authorized to discuss an ongoing investiga-
tion publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Law enforcement officials are already starting to plan for the possibility of armed protesters returning to the nation’s capital when Trump’s Senate trial on a charge of inciting a violent insur-
rection begins the week of Feb. 8. It would be the first impeach-
ment trial of a former U.S. presi-
dent.

Thousands of Trump’s sup-
porters descended on the Capitol on Jan. 6 as Congress met to cer-

Then when Trump’s Senate trial on a charge of inciting a violent insur-
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ment trial of a former U.S. presi-
dent.

More than 130 people have been charged by federal prose-
cutors for their roles in the riot. In recent weeks, others have been arrested after posting threats against members of Congress.

They include a Proud Boys supporter who authorities said threatened to deploy “three cars full of armed patriots” to Wash-
ington, threatened harm against Sen. Raphael Warnock, D-Ga., and who is accused of stockpiling military-style combat knives and more than 1,000 rifle rounds in his New York home. A Texas man was arrested this week for taking a picture of the Capitol and for posting violent threats, including a call to assassi-

nate Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-
Cortez, D-N.Y.

Violent rioters, loyal to President Donald Trump, storm the Capitol on Jan. 6 in Washington, D.C.
Fight over rules brings Senate to halt

The Washington Post
WASHINGTON — When President Joe Biden took office last week, he promised sweeping, bipartisan legislation to solve the coronavirus pandemic, fix the economy and overhaul immigration.

Just days later, the Senate ground to a halt as Democrats and Republicans unable to agree on even basic rules for how the evenly divided body should operate.

Meanwhile, key Republicans have quickly signaled discomfort with — or outright dismissal of — the cornerstone of Biden’s early legislative agenda, a $1.9 trillion pandemic relief plan that includes measures including $1,400 stimulus checks, vaccine distribution funding and at least $15 minimum wage.

On top of that, senators are preparing for a wrenching second impeachment trial for former President Donald Trump, set to begin Feb. 9, which could nuke all other Senate business and further obliterate any hopes of cross-party cooperation.

“Taken together, this gridlock could imperil Biden’s entire early presidency, making it impossible for him to deliver on key promises as he contends with dual crises,” said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York.

“Much of the current conflict over the Senate rules comes courtesy of veto-resistant Republican Sens. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who transitioned to minority leader Wednesday after six years as majority leader,” reported the Associated Press.

But for five Seattle officers the outcome is less clear. Their identities still secret, two are on leave and three continue to work while a police watchdog investigates whether their actions in the nation’s capital on Jan. 6 crossed the line from protected political speech to lawbreaking.

The contrasting cases highlight the dilemma faced by police departments nationwide as they review the behavior of officers who were in Washington the day of the riot by supporters of President Donald Trump. Officials and experts agree that officers who were involved in the melee should be fired and charged for their role.

But what about those officers who attend-
ed only the Trump rally before the riot? How does a department balance an officer’s free speech rights with the blow to public trust that comes from the attendance of law enforcement at an event with far-right militants?

An Associated Press survey of law enforcement agencies nationwide found that at least 31 officers in 12 states are being scrutinized by their supervisors for their behavior in the District of Columbia or face criminal charges for participating in the riot.

Officials are looking into whether the officers violated any laws or policies or participated in the violence while in Washington. A Capitol Police officer died after he was hit in the head with a fire extinguisher as rioters descended on the building and many other officers were injured. A woman was shot to death by Capitol Police and three other people died after medical emergencies during the chaos.

Most of the officers have not been publicly identified; only a few have been charged. Some were identified by online sleuths. Others were reported by their colleagues or turned themselves in.

“If they were off-duty, it’s totally free speech,” said Will Aitchison, a lawyer in Portland, Ore., who represents law enforcement officers. “People have the right to express their political views regardless of who’s standing next to them. You just don’t get guilt by association.”

But Ayeshia Bell Hardaway, a professor at Case Western Reserve University law school who followed the law enforcement officers’ prosecution, said the process creates a credibility issue as law enforcement agencies work to repair community trust, especially after last summer’s protests against police brutality sparked by the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.

Police weigh discipline in rally, Capitol riot

Tenn. man with zip ties at Capitol could face charges

By Spencer S. Hsu
The Washington Post
WASHINGTON — A Tennessee man photographed holding white plastic handcuffs and a stun gun in the Senate gallery could face charges of sedition and other felonies in what prosecutors on Sunday called the “insurrection” and “occupation” of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6.

“The evidence amassed so far subjects the defendant,” Erik Munchel of Nashville, Tenn., to additional felonies, “including obstructing officers in the discharge of their duties in travel in furtherance of rioting activity, sedition and other offenses,” federal prosecutors wrote in a court filing.

Within minutes of the government filing, Chief U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell stayed a lower court’s conditional release of Munchel, and ordered his transfer from Tennessee to Washington for hearing.

Howell did not elaborate in a pair of one-page orders. However, prosecutors argued for Munchel’s detention, saying that he is a danger to the community, that he posed a flight risk because of previous attempts to evade police, and that he posed a potential prison time.

Munchel has not entered a plea. His attorney previously told a judge that he picked up the plastic zip ties or “flex cuffs” to keep them from being misuse. He was “trying to keep a rein on” and “protect” his mother, who is also facing prosecution, according to Nashville Assistant Federal Defender Caryll Alpert.

On Friday, U.S. Magistrate Judge Jeffery Frensley of Nashville released Munchel to strict confinement at home or with a friend, saying that his motive was “not clear” and that there was “no evidence” that Munchel engaged in violence. Frensley gave the governo the option to appeal to the chief federal district judge in Washington.

Prosecutors on Sunday argued that Munchel was not inspired to commit civil disobedience but to direct a message of “fear, intimidation, and violence … at law enforcement, elected public officials, and the entire country.”

They cited a new allegation from a man who has said he was harassed by a group of Trump supporters at the Grand Hyatt hotel in Washington the night of Jan. 6, and who identified Munchel as one who “put his hands on me.”

The man said the group verbally called him “antifa,” referring to a far-left anti-fascist movement whose adherents sometimes engage in violent clashes with right-wing extremists.

Prosecutors said a video Munchel recorded of himself showed that he entered the Capitol dressed in combat attire from head to toe, armed with a stun gun and apparently a more dangerous weapon he stashed outside the building, and searched for lawmakers whom he believed had committed “treason.”

A search of Munchel’s home turned up two tactical vests; 15 firearms, including assault rifles, a sniper rifle and tripod, other rifles, shotguns, and pistols; and a drum-style magazine, other magazines and ammunition — an “arsenal” that prosecutors said indicates the continued capacity to carry out the sort of fear and intimidation campaign in which he partook on January 6.”
States eye allowing concealed carry of guns without a permit

By Lindsay Whitehurst
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Republican lawmakers in several more states want to loosen gun restrictions by allowing people to carry concealed firearms without having to get a permit, continuing a trend that gun control advocates call dangerous.

Fifteen states already allow concealed carry without a permit, and lawmakers in nine others have proposed allowing or expanding the practice. GOP governors are backing the changes in Utah and Tennessee. Another bill expanding permitless carry in Montana has passed the state House.

Most states require people to do things like get weapons training and undergo a background check to get a permit to carry a gun hidden by a jacket or inside a purse. Groups like the National Rifle Association and state lawmakers who support gun rights argue those requirements are ineffective and undermine Second Amendment protections.

The proposed changes come after gun sales hit historic levels last summer — reflected in FBI background checks — amid uncertainty and safety concerns about the coronavirus pandemic, the struggling economy and protests over racial injustice. Since then, a violent mobstormed the U.S. Capitol. Against that backdrop, the efforts to loosen concealed carry requirements are a frightening trend for Shannon Watts, founder of the gun control group Moms Demand Action.

“It is dangerous to allow people to carry hidden, loaded handguns possibly without a background check or any training,” she said, adding that the annual rate of aggravated assaults with a firearm has increased 71% in Alaska since the state became the first to allow concealed carry without a permit in 2003.

The proposal in Utah would allow any U.S. citizen 21 and older to carry a concealed weapon without the now-required background check or weapons course. The bill does allow gun owners who want to carry a concealed weapon out of state to get a permit to do so after a background check and safety course.

Newly elected GOP Gov. Spencer Cox has said he supports the idea, in contrast to his predecessor and fellow Republican Gary Herbert, who vetoed a similar bill in 2013.

Supporters of the change argue that other state laws against such things as felons having guns and anyone carrying a firearm while intoxicated are enough to ensure guns are used safely.

“I have that right to protect myself, the Constitution says we have the right. Why are we putting a barrier for law-abiding citizens?” said Rep. Walt Brooks, the Republican lawmaker sponsoring the bill, that got an early nod of approval from a House committee Friday.

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Hiker rescued after falling down cliff

OR CASCADE LOCKS — A hiker was rescued in Oregon, apparently three days after he fell down a 50-foot cliff in the Columbia River Gorge.

The Coast Guard and the Hood River County Sheriff’s Office said they got the 43-year-old to safety after he was discovered by two other hikers at the base of the cliff, about a mile from the start of the Gorton Creek Trail.

He was conscious but injured, disoriented and possibly hypothermic, and authorities said he likely would not have survived the night.

The first responders who arrived were unable to transport the man to safety due to the difficult terrain, but a Coast Guard helicopter crew extracted him and brought him to a Portland hospital in stable condition.

Teen charged with gun possession for 2nd time

MA SPRINGFIELD — A 15-year-old Massachusetts boy already wearing a court-ordered monitoring device on his ankle after a previous arrest was arrested again for allegedly being in possession of a gun, police said.

The Springfield youth was taken into custody after police obtained a search warrant for his home. Springfield police spokesman Ryan Walsh told Masslive.com.

Detectives had developed information that the suspect had an illegal firearm. Upon arrival at the home, police knocked and announced themselves but saw someone inside running “frantically” around the house apparently trying to hide evidence, police said.

After several minutes, the suspect tried to escape but officers were waiting. During the subsequent search, officers found a loaded handgun, Walsh said.

Woman sentenced to 18 months in medical hoax

IL EAST ST. LOUIS — A 36-year-old southern Illinois woman was sentenced to 18 months in federal prison in a medical hoax that tricked people who gave her money and other benefits.

Sarah Delashmit of Highland pleaded guilty in October to multiple fraud charges after authorities claimed she defrauded nonprofit organizations by pretending to have muscular dystrophy and breast cancer.

She must pay a $1,250 fine, for her release, she must serve three years of probation.

Woman sentenced to 18 months in medical hoax

Walking in a winter wonderland

Arabella Bothwell and her best friend, Anna Miller, of Avon, Colo., check out the village's art installations in Beaver Creek, Colo. The village has installed art pieces throughout the season.

Massive fire at potato plant forces evacuations

WA WARREN — A massive fire at a potato plant in Warren brought fears of an exploding ammonia tank, forcing the evacuation of nearly a third of the town for several hours.

The fire broke out at the Washington Potato Plant in eastern Washington in one of the dehydrators, according to Kyle Foreman with the Grant County Sheriff's Office, KOMO-TV reported. Employees in the building made it out safely as the flames spread, eventually engulfing much of the plant.

Among the items in the burning building was a large ammonia tank that firefighters worried could explode and send a toxic cloud over the region, and officials issued an urgent immediate evacuation notice for the surrounding area.

The fears of explosion subsided the next morning and residents were allowed back into their homes, Foreman said.

Man wins lifetime license for hunting and fishing

VT MONTPELIER — A Massachusetts man won a lottery to hunt and fish in Vermont for free for the rest of his life.

Robert Hubbard, 57, of Warwick, Mass., was drawn as the winner from more than 19,400 tickets bought in 2020, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department said.

Sales of the $2 tickets brought net sales of almost $39,000 to the department, which can be leveraged with federal funds to produce more than $155,000 to support fish and wildlife conservation in Vermont, officials said. The lottery is open to residents and out-of-state.

“These funds help us to manage the state’s sportfish and game animals, protect threatened and endangered species and conserve important habitat for wildlife,” Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter said.

4 people stole unmarked police car and stripped it

NY NEW YORK — Police are seeking four people who stole an unmarked police car in the Bronx, drove it to a nearby parking lot and stripped it for parts, authorities said.

It’s not clear how the bandits stole the parked police car, police said.

The thieves drove the car to a parking lot near Crotona Park, where they stripped it down. Surveillance images show three of the four people who are being sought in the heist. One, a woman, is carrying a bag and a drill.

Man fied police, found dead in flooded quarry

PA READING — A man fleeing police in eastern Pennsylvania after a shoplifting report went into the water of a nearby flooded quarry, disappeared and was found dead a day later, authorities said.

Police in Muhlenberg Township said the suspect ran from officers who were investigating a shoplifting report at a Target store. He got into the fenced-off former Berks Products Quarry in the township and went missing in the frigid water, police said. A search was called off due to darkness.

The Berks County coroner’s office said the body of Joshua Fontaine-Rodriguez, 25, of Minersville was recovered by divers the next day.

THE CENSUS

22 The number of years the peregrine falcon has been on Missouri’s endangered species list after being removed from the federal list, but that may change soon. State officials are moving to remove the birds from the list, as the Missouri Conservation Commission gave initial approval to the removal. The plan, however, calls for keeping the falcon as a species of concern. Peregrine falcon populations plummeted nationwide during the 1940s through the 1960s due to the widespread use of pesticides such as dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethylene in their food chain, the Missouri Department of Conservation said in a news release.

A man because his car had Vermont license plates.

The suspects yelled at the victim and told him that he shouldn’t be in Maine, then assaulted him, police said.

They damaged his car and tried to pull him out, police said. The victim, whose name was not made public, was not seriously hurt.

Police responding to calls from witnesses found that the suspects had fled by the time they arrived, but both were arrested a short time later.

Nathaniel Glavin, 41, and Vanessa Lazaro, 22, both faced assault and drug charges.

Auto shop pays $2,033 for school lunch debts

MI SUTTONS BAY — An auto repair shop turned up the lunch accounts at a northern Michigan school district.

To celebrate five years in business, the owners of Mr. Hoxie’s Garage wrote a check for $2,033.99 to cover unpaid student lunch debts in Suttons Bay, near Traverse City, the Record-Eagle reported.

Kris Hoxie said the couple usually supports school arts and sports, but COVID-19 disrupted those programs.

Kris Hoxie said she has talked to other business owners in the Leelanau County community about making a five-year pledge to the school lunch program.

4 people stole unmarked police car and stripped it

Man fied police, found dead in flooded quarry

From the Associated Press
EU considers response to Navalny arrest, crackdown

Associated Press

BRUSSELS—European Union foreign ministers Monday debated the 27-nation bloc’s response to the arrest of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny and a weekend police crackdown that saw thousands taken into custody during protests in support of President Vladimir Putin’s most well-known critic.

“This wave of detention is something that worries us a lot, as well as the detention of Mr. Navalny,” EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said as he arrived to chair the ministerial meeting in Brussels. More than 3,500 people were reportedly taken into custody during the nationwide protests.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said that “under the Russian constitution, everyone in Russia has the right to express their opinion and to demonstrate. That must be possible. The principles of the rule of law must apply there, too — Russia has always committed itself to that.”

He and other ministers called for the immediate release of the protesters.

The U.S. embassy spokeswoman in Moscow, Rebecca Ross, said on Twitter that the United States “supports the right of all people to peaceful protest, freedom of expression. Steps being taken by Russian authorities are suppressing those rights.”

The embassy also tweeted a State Department statement calling for Navalny’s release.

Putin’s spokesman said the statements interfered in the country’s domestic affairs and encouraged Russians to break the law.

Judge orders freedom for Uganda’s Bobi Wine

KAMPALA, Uganda — A judge ruled Monday that Ugandan security forces cannot detain presidential challenger Bobi Wine in his home, rebuking authorities for holding him under house arrest following a disputed election.

Wine, 38, whose real name is Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, has been unable to leave his home since Jan. 14, when Ugandans voted in an election in which the singer-turned-politician was the main challenger to President Yoweri Museveni, 76. But the judge ruled Wine’s home is not a proper detention facility and noted that authorities should criminally charge him if he threatens public order.
Heavy fighting erupts in Somali town near Kenya

Associated Press
MOGADISHU, Somalia — Heavy fighting has broken out in a Somali town near the Kenyan border between Somali forces and those from the state of Jubbaland, as Somalia's election troubles spill over into violence. Somalia's information ministry in a statement early Monday accused Kenya-funded rebels of crossing into the town of Bulo Hawo and attacking Somali forces. But the Jubbaland vice president, Mohamud Sayid Adan, told reporters that Jubbaland forces stationed outside the town were attacked by what he called forces recently deployed to the region by the government in the capital, Mogadishu. Both sides have claimed victory, but people in the town said that fighting continued and some people have begun to flee. The information ministry asserted that Somali forces were in control of the town. There were no immediate details available on casualties.

9 workers found dead in China mine explosion; toll now at 10

Associated Press
BEIJING — Chinese rescuers found the bodies of nine workers in a mine explosion, raising the death toll to 10, officials said Monday.
Eleven others were rescued a day earlier after being trapped underground for two weeks at the gold mine in Shandong province. One person was still missing.
The cause of the accident at the mine, which was under construction, is under investigation. The explosion on Jan. 10 released 70 tons of debris that blocked a shaft, disabling elevators and trapping workers underground.
Rescuers drilled parallel shafts to send down food and nutrients and eventually bring up the survivors Sunday.
Search efforts will continue for the remaining miner until he is found, said Chen Fei, the mayor of Yantai city, where the mine is located.
“Until this worker is found, we will not give up,” he said at a news conference.

WORLD
On homers and fans, Aaron’s touched ‘em all

By David Von Drehle

The Washington Post

Long before the television impresario Ted Turner marketed the Atlanta Braves as “America’s Team,” Atlanta had no big league team at all. There was no Major League ballpark anywhere in the Deep South as of 1964, the year three disappeared civil rights workers were found bound and beaten in a cotton field in Mississippi. The city dangled a new stadium, lavish TV rights, parking receipts and the generous patronage of Coca-Cola to attract a franchise.

The Braves of Milwaukee took the bait, which meant that Henry Aaron of Mobile, Ala., was headed back to the South. I’m going to call him Henry in this column because that was the name he preferred, as opposed to “Hank,” a nickname attached to him by a PR man who thought white fans might find it firfriendlier. A giant on and off the field, Aaron died Friday, a few weeks shy of his 87th birthday. How did he feel about the move? As you might expect: “I have lived in the South, and I don’t want to live there again,” Aaron said in an appreciation of the Braves’ 1966 debut in Atlanta.

But Henry Aaron won over Atlanta and retired as the greatest player in franchise history — the franchise marketed as a team for the whole nation. His hero, Jackie Robinson, broke through baseball’s wall of segregation, but even he didn’t do it in Dixie. Aaron finished the job in large part because he was both supremely talented and incredibly adaptable.

There is a very exclusive club whose members hit a baseball well enough to compile a career batting average above .300, who hit hard enough to accumulate 300 or more home runs and who played long enough to hit safely at least 3,000 times. Club roster: Henry Aaron, Willie Mays, Stan Musial and George Brett. The club got even bigger in 2015 when Robinson’s most valuable player 19 seasons in a row.

I

By James Downie

The Washington Post

In the wake of the Donald Trump-incitement of the January 6 insurrection, Braves President Lake F. (Chip)per John and Braves Chief Operating Officer运用 the Press” on Sunday. “For right now, I think there are other things that we’d rather be working on instead.” Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., echoed the sentiment in a Fox News Sunday interview. “We never had any presentation in court where we actually looked at the evidence,” he said. “Most of the cases were thrown out for lack of standing, which is a procedural way of not actually hearing the question.”

At this point, Chipper John and Steve Cohen have made it clear that they are not going to hold the organization to the standards of its history and to open a way for the future.

There is no question that what happened was a huge blunder. But as weak as Rubio and Rounds’ arguments were, they were more defensible than Sen. Rand Paul’s, R-Ky., on ABC’s “This Week.” Host George Stephanopoulos pointed that even Paul said “most,” not all — and recipient of the prestigious title of “America’s Most Perilous Year” and “Triangle: The Fire That Changed America.”

Republicans are going all in with Trumpism

The irony is that it’s not impeachment that needs to happen. It’s the future.

It’s unclear what value ABC viewers got out of Paul’s distortions. But Paul achieved his goal of turning around a former supporter that he’s fighting the liberal media on behalf of the man he once called a “fake conserv- robust” Rubio got to demonstrate his loyalty to Trump, and it’s especially important for the senator from Florida given rumors that he may face Ivanka Trump in a 2022 primary. (“You sound like you’re in campaign form,” said Fox News host Chris Wallace.) With the former president making noises about going after his GOP critics or even starting a third party, Rubio, Paul and Rounds once again put loyalty to Trump over honor and the country.

“The irony is that it’s not impeachment that needs to happen. It’s the future.”

James Downie is The Washington Post’s Digital Politics Editor. He previously wrote for The New Republic and Foreign Policy magazine.
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stripes.com/newsletters
Eugene Sheffer Crossword

ACROSS
1 Ancient Brit
5 Six-pack muscles
8 Pepper dispenser
12 Hideaway
13 Used a chair
14 Exotic berry
... Sheffer Crossword
Frazz
Dilbert
Pearls Before Swine
Non Sequitur
Candorville
Carpe Diem

DOWN
1 Applaud
2 — of Sandwich
3 Stead
4 Dire
5 Colorado ski resort
6 Hairy no more
7 Disco guy on “The Simpsons”
8 Large champagne bottle
9 “Law & Order: SVU” actor
10 Yuri Zhivago’s love
11 Speak like Sylvester
12 Swiss peak
13 Sixth sense
14 Like Abner
15 Region
16 Clog-busting tools
17 Celebrity chef Matsuhisa
18 Advertised insistently
20 Available
21 Charged bit
22 “Aladdin” monkey
23 Put in office
24 Bird’s feathers
25 Pitcher Nolan
26 Bird’s feathers
27 Stringy stuff
28 “Shoo!”
29 Clean air org.
30 Caesar or Vicious
31 Microwave
32 Sass
33 Used tweezers
34 Musical set in Argentina
35 Ray of McDonald’s
36 Water (Fr.)
37 Poughkeepsie college
38 Tramcar contents
39 Motorist’s org.
40 Bridge
41 Crossword hint
42 In pain
43 Tree-lined rte.
44 Grand Ole —
45 “The Lion King” lion
46 Harrow rival
47 Fruity dessert
48 “You’ve got mail” co.
49 Lovers’ quarrel
50 Mystique
51 Possess
52 Guthrie of folk
53 Tennis barriers
54 Caustic cleaner
55 Guthrie of folk

Answer to Previous Puzzle

I-26

CRYPTOQUIP

MT NHANXH FLH ATTHLHC
BARH TAAC OAZ LHTDDBH MZ
BQA LKTDXG, ZIHG RPMIZ
OH BNDI KMKP QFXALMHB.Yesterday’s Cryptocup: OLD-TIME SINGING SUPERSTAR WHO HAD A GREAT MANY PASTIMES HE WOULD ENGAGE IN: HOBBY DARIN.
Today’s Cryptocup Clue: T equals F
**APPRECIATION**

In defense of the dumb questions

Beloved talk show host Larry King’s style helped rewrite cultural history

LARRY KING

The Washington Post

Larry King’s vintage microphone, the RCA Type 77-D that referenced his rise as a radio man, was a prop that worked as a powerful symbol of both past and present in a relentlessly evolving media age. The microphone was a security blanket for everyone involved: for King, for his 60,000 interview subjects, and for the viewers of his nightly CNBC talk show, once dubbed by the network to number a billion or so worldwide.

The microphone indicated that King — who died Jan. 23 at age 87, having lived most of his life as a person more than a person — wanted the whole world to hear what his guests had to say. The microphone didn’t stand for posterity or nostalgia so much as a visual representation of the major media moment, the heat of notoriety in its full and often fleeting flash. The microphone acknowledged the need to ask and answer the great mysteries of life — the scandals, the personal struggles, the rises and the falls, the regrets in real time.

Mostly, the microphone stood for an increasingly rare virtue: listening. (Listening, and its nearly extinct counterpart: a genuine, unflagging curiosity about someone other than yourself.)

Some of King’s guests were better than others, of course. Not every night could have Marlon Brando; not every night could feature Israel’s Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat and Jordan’s King Hussein historically united on the same show in 1995. Not every night could be Vladimir Putin or Ronald Reagan, Lady Gaga or Muhammad Ali, Miss Piggy and Kermit, Paul and Ringo. But his show was invariably, relentlessly topical. It was broad in a time of wondrous breadth, before the disrupting rise of the niche market.

To be sitting at the table on CNN’s “Larry King Live” — just you, him and the big old mic — was proof that one had truly arrived. The suspenders. The odd questions. Why, King wanted to know. His favorite question, because that’s all any of us ever really want to know: Why?

During his 25-year reign on CNN, “Larry King Live” was a necessary and vital stop on the way to one’s public judgment. More than one celebrity used his show as a form of recompense, coming to him dirty and damaged with the hope of leaving clean. Others used it as an opportunity to appear vulnerable. Most used him as a means to project a persona.

No matter what brought them to “Larry King Live,” it was understood that the questions would be coming from a place of genuine wonder, rather than showy intellect. King was a singular personality; a mutation of the common man, a New Yorker unafraid to just ask the question. The effect was a successful mixing of the daft with the deft. When news of his death spread over the weekend, much of the immediate tribute came in the form of defense of King’s mastery of the “dumb question,” and rightly so.

Mike Wallace in 1992, King seemed fixated on the idea that we are but mere “blips” in the universe. Where do we go when we die? King was never sure, often telling people he relied on the maybe-maybe-not existentialist tendencies of his Jewish background.

Still, it’s fitting to imagine him loosed in that great cocktail party in the sky, reacquainted with so many of the boldface names he’d interviewed in this realm. Asking dumb questions after dumb question, with all eternity to get the answers.

By Hank Stuever

![Larry King](https://www.cnn.com/content/dam/images/2021/01/23/larry-kings-first-ap.png)

Larry King, shown on the “Larry King Live” set on CNN in Washington, D.C., in 1994, put guests at ease with his suspenders, Coke-bottle glasses, vintage microphone and casual demeanor. King died Jan. 23 at age 87.

Venerable NBC anchor Tom Brokaw retiring from 55-year career

From wire reports

One-time NBC News anchor Tom Brokaw, a presence in America’s living rooms for more than two decades and the longtime face of the network, retired Jan. 22 after an award-winning 55-year career.

Brokaw, who turns 81 next month, came to the network’s 30 Rockefeller Plaza headquarters in 1976 as host of the “Today” show before moving to the anchor chair in 1982. He shared the job with co-anchor Roger Mudd before taking over by chair in 1982. He shared the job with co-anchor Mike Wallace in 1992, King seemed fixated on the idea that we are but mere “blips” in the universe. Where do we go when we die? King was never sure, often telling people he relied on the maybe-maybe-not existentialist tendencies of his Jewish background.

Still, it’s fitting to imagine him loosed in that great cocktail party in the sky, reacquainted with so many of the boldface names he’d interviewed in this realm. Asking dumb questions after dumb question, with all eternity to get the answers.

The son of South Dakota became one of television news’ most trusted sources, and he collected many awards for his work: The Edward R. Murrow Lifetime Achievement Award, a dozen Emmys, two Peabody Awards. In each of his last four years at the anchor desk, the “NBC Nightly News” was honored with the Murrow Award for Best Newscast.

The globe-trotting journalist reported from Normandy Beach on the 60th anniversary of D-Day, traveled to Afghanistan for a piece on al-Qaida, and was the only network correspondent covering the Berlin Wall fall.

Screenwriter Walter Bernstein dies at 101

Screenwriter Walter Bernstein, among the last survivors of Hollywood’s anti-Communist blacklist whose Oscar-nominated script for “The Front” drew upon his years of being unable to work under his own name, died Jan. 23. He was 101. The cause was pneumonia, according to his wife, the literary agent Gloria Loomis.

Bernstein found employment through the use of “frosts,” people willing to lend their names (and receive part of the proceeds) of A-list film “Something’s Gotta Give.” Seinfeld replied. “Do you know who I am? ... Seventy-five-million viewers on the last episode.”

It’s telling that CNN was never quite able to find the world’s next Larry King after he left the network in 2010. There’s no room anymore for a seasoned personality who blunders his or her way around and through the zeitgeist, on behalf of an audience that blunders a bit, too.

King was afraid of dying. Or at least desperately curious. Being interviewed by Mike Wallace in 1992, King seemed fixated on the idea that we are but mere “blips” in the universe. Where do we go when we die? King was never sure, often telling people he relied on the maybe-maybe-not existentialist tendencies of his Jewish background.

Still, it’s fitting to imagine him loosed in that great cocktail party in the sky, reacquainted with so many of the boldface names he’d interviewed in this realm. Asking dumb questions after dumb question, with all eternity to get the answers.

The blacklist ended for Bernstein in 1959 with “That Roman Spring.” The blacklist continued for Bernstein throughout his career, with many being unable to work under their own names. In 1997, Bernstein was able to use his story for his most acclaimed memoir, “This Changes Everything.”

That concludes our selection of interesting and informative documents. If you have any questions or need further assistance, feel free to ask!
Nicolas Hague from the minor league taxi squad. 

Merkley from the minor league taxi squad. 

Pittsburgh Pirates announced the hiring of D’Anton Lynn as defensive backs coach.

Hiring of D’Anton Lynn as defensive backs coach.

Nate Oats center, works with his team during a game Saturday against Mississippi State in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Briefly

Alabama men rise to No. 9 in AP poll

Associated Press

Gonzaga, Baylor and Villanova remained atop The Associated Press men's college basketball poll Monday, with ninth-ranked Alabama climbing to its highest ranking in 14 years.

In other college basketball news:

- Lonnie Grayson had 19 points and made 5 of 6 free throws in the final minute of overtime and Army ended Navy's nine-game winning streak 87-78 on Sunday in Annapolis, Md. Jalenucker added a career-high 15 points for the Black Knights.

- The Court of Arbitration for Sport last month ruled that Russia's name, flag and anthem would be barred from the next two Olympics after backing the World Anti-Doping Agency's finding that doping data was manipulated. However, CAS halved the duration of the sanctions from four years and allowed them to keep wearing their team colors.

Russia says it won't appeal sanctions

Russian basketball officials said Monday that it will not file an appeal to further loosen restrictions on its teams at the Olympics and other major sporting events.

American head coach Nate Oats, center, works with his team during a game Saturday against Mississippi State in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Kim wins by one shot at The American Express

Siu Woo Kim birdied the fifth and eighth holes for a 32-under 262 to win Sunday at PGA West in La Quinta, Calif., for his first career victory on the PGA Tour. His 28-under 264 matches the lowest score ever by a player 30 or older in a major championship.

Austria's Kriechmayr wins Super G at Kitzbühel

Austrian skier Vincent Kriechmayr bounced back from two disappointing results in downhill in downhill in the World Cup to win a men’s World Cup Super-G on Monday in Kitzbühel, Austria.

Kriechmayr didn't have a clean run but he charged all the way down the Streif downhill course and beat Marco Odermatt of Switzerland by 0.12 seconds.

AP SportLight

Jan. 26

1913 – Jim Thorpe gives up his track meet scoring record in 1912 after the result of his having been a professional. - Thorpe had scored 190 points in his track meet scoring record in 1912.


1995 – Edmonton's Wayne Gretzky scores his 50th goal in the 49th game of his season.

2011 – The Detroit Tigers have obtained the rights to new left-handed reliever. - The Detroit Tigers have obtained the rights to new left-handed reliever.

AFC Tournament of Champions

At Toyota Park in Chicago

Sunday: 1245: 1200 Pacific Time (PDT)

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Ullmark lifts Sabres over Capitals

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Linus Ullmark stopped 28 shots in regulation and overtime and three more in the shootout to help the Buffalo Sabres beat the Washington Capitals 4-3 on Sunday for just their second victory in six games this season.

Ullmark picked up his first win of the season six days after learning of the death of his father at age 63. It was Ullmark’s second consecutive start after taking some time away from playing hockey, and the Sabres needed him with goaltender Carter Hutton injured.

“It’s been rough, definitely,” Ullmark said. “There’s a lot of emotions and thoughts that had to be processed. I’m trying to take it day by day. Try to be happy when I’m happy, try to be sad when I’m sad and right now I’m utterly grateful for getting a win.”

Captain Jack Eichel scored in the shootout and Colin Miller, Victor Olofsson and Eric Staal each scored on the power play for Buffalo, which snapped a two-game skid. The Sabres outshot the Capitals 48-31 and beat them for the first time in four meetings.

Justin Schultz scored his first goal with Washington and mainstays T.J. Oshie and Nicklas Backstrom each had a power-play goal. The Capitals were playing without five prominent players: captain Alex Ovechkin, center Evgeny Kuznetsov, defenseman Dmitry Orlov and goalies Ilya Samsonov and Vitek Vanecek.

The Sabres beat the Washington Capitals 4-3 Sunday at the Capital One Arena.

Sharks 5, Wild 3: Brent Burns scored with 1:48 remaining to snap a tie and lead visiting San Jose over Minnesota.

Burns corralled a loose puck in the right circle, cut to the middle between three Wild defenders, shifted from his forehand to backhand and beat Kaapo Kahkonen on the far side for the winner.

Maple Leafs 3, Flames 2: Morgan Reilly had three assists and goalie Ilya Samsonov stopped 28 shots as the Toronto Maple Leafs defeated the Calgary Flames 3-2 on Sunday.

Andrew Copp scored with less than a second left in regulation, Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 16 shots for the Flames.

Edmonton 4, Winnipeg 3: Matt Benning scored in overtime as the Edmonton Oilers edged the Winnipeg Jets 4-3 on Sunday.

Connor McDavid scored on the power play with 1:48 left in regulation and the Oilers (26-12-8-1) held on for their fourth straight victory.

Colorado 6, Sharks 3: Matt Nieto scored twice and0 and the Colorado Avalanche defeated the San Jose Sharks 6-3 on Sunday.

Cale Makar had three assists and Philipp Grubauer made 35 saves for Colorado.

NHL Roundup

WASHINGTON — Linus Ullmark
delivered a shut-out win on Sunday for the
Buffalo Sabres, who beat the Washington
Capitals 4-3. The Sabres improved to 2-4-0 in their last six games.

Ullmark, who stopped 28 shots in regulation and overtime, finished the day with three more saves in the shootout. He is the first Sabres goalie to win back-to-back starts since February 2018.

The Sabres scored twice in the third period to take the lead and held off a Capitals rally, which included an empty-net goal by Garnet Hathaway with 3:36 left in the game.

The Sabres face the Anaheim Ducks on Monday night.

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Leonard, Clippers win 7th straight

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Kawhi Leonard scored 34 points and the Los Angeles Clippers beat Oklahoma City 108-101 on Sunday for their seventh consecutive victory and second straight over the Thunder. Serge Ibaka added 17 points. At 13-4, the Clippers are tied with the NBA.

Boston cruised past Cleveland to Jaylen Brown scored 20 of his 33 points for the Celtics. Brown played just 19 minutes, finishing two shy of a triple-double. Bobby Portis added 21 points, and Khris Middleton had 13. The Bucks beat Atlanta to snap a two-game losing streak. It was the sixth postponement for the Grizzlies this season as the league continues to deal with a spike in virus-related issues.

The Grizzlies won’t play until at least Saturday against his former team, and George Hill added 22 points. Oklahoma City has lost three in a row and was without scoring leader Trae Young (back spasms) and center Brook Lopez.

The Grizzlies' home game against Chicago that was scheduled for Wednesday is off as well. Earlier this week, the NBA and National Basketball Players Association are expected to consider whether the stiffer protocols put in place Jan. 12 can be loosened in some way. They were originally put in place in an effort to curb travel to anywhere except games, practices and workouts as the league’s number of virus-related issues started climbing.

Leonard, Clippers forward Kawhi Leonard had 34 points and nine rebounds in a 108-101 win Sunday over the Oklahoma City Thunder in Los Angeles.

We get to play again and that’s the bottom line. It’s been a long time. We missed it. It’s good to be back,” Brooks said.

The Wizards still had six players ineligible, and Washington faded down the stretch as the Grizzlies' game against Chicago that was scheduled for Wednesday is off as well. Later this week, the NBA and National Basketball Players Association are expected to consider whether the stiffer protocols put in place Jan. 12 can be loosened in some way. They were originally put in place in an effort to curb travel to anywhere except games, practices and workouts as the league’s number of virus-related issues started climbing.

Thursday’s games

Charlotte at Orlando

L.A. Clippers at Atlanta

Washington at Houston

NBA leaders

Bucks win 12th in a row, 129-115 over Hawks

L.A. Clippers beat Oklahoma City for best record in the West

Bucks 129, Hawks 115: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 27 points and 14 rebounds and host Milwaukee beat Atlanta to snap a three-game losing streak. Antetokounmpo had eight assists, finishing two shy of a triple-double. Bobby Portis added 21 points, and Khris Middleton had 13. The Bucks beat Atlanta to snap a two-game losing streak. It was the sixth postponement for the Grizzlies this season as the league continues to deal with a spike in virus-related issues.

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Chiefs dump Bills in AFC championship

Mahomes returns to KC lineup, leads defending champs back to Super Bowl

By DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — It took the Kansas City Chiefs five frustrating defeats to make their third Super Bowl appearance.

Now, the defending champs are headed there for the second consecutive year, showing no lingering effects from his concussion, Patrick Mahomes sliced up Buffalo’s secondary with ruthless efficiency Sunday night, helping the Chiefs roll to a 38-24 victory over Josh Allen and the Bills in the AFC championship game.

The reigning Super Bowl MVP finished with 325 yards passing and three touchdowns, most of it to favorite targets Travis Kelce and Tyreek Hill, who combined their star quarterback with a record-setting setting.

The Chiefs will face a familiar foe — Tom Brady — and the NFC champ Buccaneers in two weeks in Tampa, Fla.

“It was just trusting each other. The best thing about this team is we believe in each other,” said Mahomes, who was also dealing with a toe injury. “But the job’s not finished. We’re going to Tampa; we’re trying to run it back.”

Kelce finished with 13 catches for 118 yards and two touchdowns, and Hill added nine catches for 172 yards and two touchdowns, most of it to a sticky-tack it got. I’m disappointed with how chippy and face in resentment. Offensive line-

Obviously a lot of emotion,” Allen said. “Any time you don’t finish the season with a win, that’s the type of emotion you’re going to have. The way it ended doesn’t sit right with me with how chippy andicky-tack it got. I’m disappointed in myself. I let my emotions get to utes that you’re supposed to play football.”

It capped a bitter night for the Bills, who had reached their first AFC title game since beating Kansas City at home on Jan. 1, 1994. They were hardly rattled; the Chiefs, after all, rallied from double-digits in each of their postseason wins last season, including their Super Bowl triumph over San Francisco.

Buffalo comes up short in breakout season

By JOHN WAWROW
Associated Press

Josh Allen played a huge role in getting the Buffalo Bills to their first AFC championship game in 27 years.

The third-year starter was the first to acknowledge he needs to be much better for the Bills to take the next step.

“It’s going to fuel me. I have no doubt in my mind that we will be back,” Allen said after the Bills were outclassed in a 38-24 loss to the Kansas City Chiefs.

“We’re still young, and we’re only going to get better,” he added. “That’s the one thing I take from this. We’re close.”

Hardly close enough.

In a season that started with 5-0-1 and 125 points, they finished 8-3 and 40 points below their win total of 2019. The Bills had five losses of 10 points or more.

Allen suffered a concussion last week, had 325 yards passing and 3 TDs.

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“I feel like I was playing my best football,” Allen said. “I felt like there were a lot of things I could have done differently.

“I might have to do it over again I wouldn’t have done for one of them,” he said. “We were having trouble coming up with points. I wanted to have at least have something to show for it going into the half.”

Buffalo’s defense didn’t help, unable to solve the Chiefs for a second time this season. In Week 6, the Bills were trampled in a 26-17 loss in Week 6.

Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes celebrates after throwing a touchdown pass to Travis Kelce during the second half of the AFC title game Sunday in Kansas City, Mo. Mahomes, who suffered a concussion last week, had 325 yards passing and 3 TDs.

It stings to get this far,” said Bills coach Sean McDermott, who once worked under Chiefs counterpart Andy Reid in Philadelphia. “Sometimes the further you go, the harder it is to lose. It’s a learning ex-

experience for us as an organization.”

The Chiefs actually spotted the Bills a 9-0 lead, thanks in large part to Mecole Hardman’s muffed punt inside their 5 that gifted Buffalo a touchdown. The reigning champs were hardly rattled; the Chiefs, after all, rallied from double-digits in each of their postseason wins last season, including their Super Bowl triumph over San Francisco.

As for the Chiefs, they were hardly rattled, even as they overcame the struggles of 34-year-old Allen, who suffered a concussion in Week 6.

“Coach (Chiefs chairman Clark Hunt, who was also dealing with a toe injury. “But the job’s not finished. We’re going to Tampa; we’re trying to run it back.”

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Packagers’ LaFleur kicking himself over FG decision

By Josh Dubow
Associated Press

Matt LaFleur put the game in the hands of his defense instead of All-Pro quarterback Aaron Rodgers in a decision that will be questioned in Green Bay for years.

With a spot in the Super Bowl on the line, LaFleur opted for a field goal on fourth-and-goal from the 8 when trailing by eight points with just over two minutes remaining in the NFC championship game.

Rodgers never got the ball back in his fourth straight title game loss as Tom Brady and Tampa Bay ran out the clock in a 31-26 win Sunday.

“The way our defense was playing, it felt like the right decision to do,” LaFleur said. “It just didn’t work out.”

The key moment came after Green Bay rallied from 18 points down in the second half to get into position to send the game into overtime late in regulation.

The Packers drove down to the 8-yard line with 2:22 to play before Rodgers threw an incomplete pass to Allen Lazard followed by two more to Davante Adams.

That left LaFleur with a decision to make with 2:09 to play and he went with the field goal instead of another shot into the end zone for a possible TD and 2-point conversion to tie the game.

“Any time it doesn’t work out, you always regret it,” LaFleur said. “It was the circumstances of having three shots and coming away with no yards and knowing that not only you need the touchdown, but you need the 2-point (conversion). We essentially had four timeouts with the two-minute warning. We knew we needed to get a stop.”

Rodgers never had a chance to lobby his coach to go for it as soon as he saw the field-goal team run on the field.

“I didn’t have a decision on that one,” Rodgers said before pausing.

“That wasn’t my decision, but I understand the thinking, above two minutes with all of our timeouts, but it wasn’t my decision.”

The analytics were against the move with EdjSports win probability model saying LaFleur’s decision reduced Green Bay’s chances of winning the game from 10.8% to 7.8%. LaFleur had been one of the best coaches when it comes to decision-making by EdjSports model, ranking third best this season.

The decision was extremely rare as no team had attempted a field goal in the final three minutes of a game when trailing by between four and eight points since the Falcons in 2015. LaFleur was an assistant on Dan Quinn’s staff in Atlanta for that game.

“I couldn’t believe it, honestly, because there’s no guarantee they’re going to make it back down there again,” Buccaneers edge rusher Shaquil Barrett said.

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“Mason Crosby made the field goal, but the Packers couldn’t get the defensive stop they needed,” Matt LaFleur, Green Bay coach.
By Dave Campbell

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Aaron Rodgers was lamenting the sudden end of a remarkable season he’ll treasure long after he’s retired, running through a list of Green Bay Packers teammates he’s grown the closest to.

“There’s a lot of guys’ futures that are uncertain, myself included,” Rodgers said, managing a slight laugh as if to momentarily soften this harsh reality in the immediate aftermath of the loss to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in the NFC championship game. “That’s what sad about it most.”

The 37-year-old produced by most measures in 2020 the finest performance of his brilliant career, making him a leading contender for a third NFL MVP award.

The Packers went 13-3 for the top seed in the NFC, cruising past the Los Angeles Rams in the divisional round and finally giving Rodgers a home game to play for a spot in the Super Bowl. His other four shots at it as the starter, including the win at Chicago (2010 season) that preceded his only championship, were on the road. They lost in the semifinals at San Francisco (2019), Atlanta (2016) and Seattle (2014).

Ten years and counting since the Packers won it all with Rodgers, this 31-26 loss to Brady and the Bucs will sting for awhile. Especially considering what had happened last spring, when Green Bay drafted quarterback Jordan Love in the first round. Rodgers is signed through 2023, but that sure doesn’t guarantee he’ll stay that long — or that he’d want to.

“I’m going to have to take some time away for sure and clear my head and just kind of see what’s going on with everything, but it’s pretty tough right now,” Rodgers said. He later added: “It’s a grind to get to this point, and that makes the finality of it all kind of hit you like a ton of bricks.”

Rodgers went 33-48-4 for 346 yards and three touchdowns, but this wasn’t exactly his best. He had one interception that Tampa Bay used to set up a last-minute field goal.

And that guy is the most challenging obstacle to get past.
The belief he gave everybody in this organization, that this could be done... It only took one man.

Bruce Arians
Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach, on quarterback Tom Brady

Consider that there has been no repeat NFL champion since the 2004 season, clearly some major obstructions have gotten in the way.

For the Chiefs, that hurdle wears a No. 12 jersey and is the last guy to pull off the feat.

After demolishing Buffalo for the AFC title, the Chiefs head to Tampa looking to complete the double. It’s been done eight times, twice by the Steelers. But there’s never been such a gap for a repeat winner, and after winning its first Super Bowl in a half-century last year, Kansas City seems primed to end that string of failures.

Except for that massive roadblock named Tom Brady.

“The job’s not finished,” Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes acknowledges. “We’re going to Tampa, we’re trying to run it back.”

To do so, young Mr. Mahomes, you’ll need to beat that old man and his penchant for collecting trophies and rings.

“We’ve just got to be ourselves,” added Mahomes, at 25 a mere 18 years younger than Brady. ( Heck, Mahomes’ father is only 50 years old.) “I trust my guys over anybody.”

The rest of the world has learned to trust Brady over most anybody.

Bruce Arians
Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach, on quarterback Tom Brady