No station transfers for unvaccinated airmen

Air Force coronavirus vaccination rate nearly 97% ahead of Dec. 2 deadline for National Guard and Reserve members

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Airmen who have not been fully vaccinated against the coronavirus will not be allowed to proceed to their next permanent duty station beginning Monday, according to a memo issued by the Air Force.

Compliance with the guidance, which was issued Tuesday by Lt. Gen. Brian Kelly, the Air Force’s deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services, is mandatory.

“Airmen who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19, including those awaiting final decision on a medical exemption or religious accommodation, are restricted from proceeding on existing [permanent change of station] orders, or selection for future PCS,” Kelly wrote in the memo, which was first reported by the Facebook page Air Force amn/nco/snco.

Phone calls from Stars and Stripes on Wednesday to the Department of the Air Force went unanswered.

In August, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered that all service members be vaccinated against the coronavirus but left the timeframe up to individual services.

The Air Force set a deadline of Nov. 2 for all active-duty airmen.

SEE AIRMEN ON PAGE 4

Soldiers, families in S. Korea enjoy bountiful feast

BY DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The “Super Bowl” of Thanksgiving meals for U.S. troops, which included 3,097 pounds of turkey, was served by a bipartisan U.S. congressional delegation in South Korea on Thursday.

In addition to the turkey, the lavish meal throughout U.S. bases in South Korea included 2,088 pounds of roast beef, 1,251 pounds of steamship beef, 654 pounds of rib-eye steak and 2,449 pounds of ham, according to the 2nd Infantry Division fact sheet.

Sixty Army culinary specialists and 298 contractors prepared the meal for the roughly 28,500 troops, civilian employees and their families with U.S. Forces Korea.

Ice sculptures and cakes greeted the line of U.S. and South Korean troops at the Spartan Warrior Restaurant, a dining facility at Camp Humphreys.

Culinary specialists went through extra lengths to decorate the dining facility because the “soldiers are away from their families,” according to Sgt. 1st Class Michael Hanspard, culinary specialist and restaurant manager.

“This is a culinary specialist’s Super Bowl every year.”

Sgt. Michael Hanspard, culinary specialist and restaurant manager

SEE FEAST ON PAGE 4

Soldiers from the 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division’s Quarantine Support Cell deliver Thanksgiving meals featuring a wide variety of dishes, from turkeys and grilled beef to salads, pies and fruits to soldiers and families in quarantine on Camp Humphreys.

KASE BOWERS/U.S. Army
Fed officials talk on resolving inflation risks

Associated Press
WASHINGTON — Federal Reserve officials in discussions earlier this month said the central bank “would not hesitate” to take appropriate actions to address inflation pressures that posed risks to the economy.

In minutes released Wednesday of the Fed’s Nov. 2-3 meeting, Fed officials maintained that the spike in inflation seen this year was still likely to be transitory while acknowledging that the rise in prices was greater than expected.

At the November meeting, the Fed approved reductions in the amount of Treasury bonds and mortgage-backed securities it had been purchasing to put downward pressure on long-term interest rates.

The committee approved reducing by $15 billion in November and another $15 billion cut in December in the $120 billion in monthly bond purchases it had been making.

The expectation was that these reductions would continue.

The Fed minutes showed a growing concern that the unwanted price pressures could last for a longer time and the Fed should be prepared to move to reduce bond purchases more quickly or even start raising the Fed’s benchmark interest rate sooner to make sure inflation did not get out of hand.

Inflation pressures that posed risks to the economy.

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FRIDAY IN EUROPE

SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC

EXCHANGE RATES

South Korea (Won) 1191.10
Switzerland (Franc) 0.9261
Thailand (Baht) 33.41
Turkey (NewLira) 11.9748

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

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate 2.25
Interest Rates Discount rate 0.75
Federbonds market rate 0.25
3-month bill 0.35
30-year bond 1.95

The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.
Hawaii groups want military fuel tanks shut down

By Audrey McAvoy
Stars and Stripes
HONOLULU — Citing threats to Honolulu’s drinking water, the Sierra Club of Hawaii and other groups on Wednesday called on President Joe Biden and military leaders to shut down fuel tanks that provide an important water reserve for U.S. forces in the Pacific.

“Enough is enough. We’ve lost all faith in the local Navy command,” said Wayne Tanaka, the director of the Sierra Club of Hawaii, at a rally and news conference.

The military built 20 fuel tanks, each the equivalent of 25 stories tall, during World War II near Pearl Harbor on top of an aquifer that supplies drinking water to one-quarter of Honolulu.

The call to shut them down comes after a series of recent revelations about fuel leaks associated with the Red Hill fuel tanks or Pearl Harbor. Tanaka called the tanks “an unacceptable threat to the drinking water supply for 400,000 Oahu residents.”

Navy Region Hawaii said in a statement that it is committed to safeguarding the environment and drinking water while protecting national security.

“We will closely monitor all aspects of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility to ensure the safety of our operations,” it said.

On Monday, the Navy said 14,000 gallons of a water and fuel mixture leaked into the Red Hill facility’s lower tunnel from a fire suppression system drain line. No fuel leaked into the environment.

Last month, Honolulu Civil Beat reported that officials waited months to report a January leak at Pearl Harbor to the state Department of Health “amid concerns it would stymie its ability to secure a state permit” for the Red Hill tanks.

Hawaii’s four-member congressional delegation has asked the Department of Defense’s inspector general to investigate the January leak, saying they want to know whether the Navy properly investigated and notified state authorities.

The state health department last month fined the Navy more than $325,000 for Red Hill operations and maintenance violations.

A 2014 fuel leak prompted the Navy to sign an agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the state Health Department to upgrade the tanks and better prevent and detect leaks.

Ex-Army officer who advocated for Iraqi, Afghan detainees dies

By Rose L. Thayer
Stars and Stripes
Ian Fishback, a former Army officer who in 2005 raised concerns about the treatment of detainees in the Global War on Terror, died Nov. 19 at an adult treatment facility in Michigan. He was 42 years old.

In a statement posted with Fishback’s obituary, the veteran’s family thanked his hometown community in Newbury, Mich., for the support provided Fishback in “recent difficult times.”

“He faced many challenges and many of us felt helpless. We tried to get him the help he needed. It appears the system failed him terribly and tragically. There are many questions surrounding his death and the official cause of death is unknown at this time. We can assure you that we will get to the bottom of this. We will seek justice for Ian, because justice is what mattered most to him,” according to the statement.

Fishback’s mental health had declined recently and he struggled to get access to medical and mental health care from Veterans Affairs, said his longtime friend Justin Ford.

For those who knew Fishback, his friend said that his actions regarding the inhumane treatment of detainees came as no surprise. He always had a strong moral and ethical compass and held tightly to those principles, Ford said.

“Standing up for what you believe in is never easy. And it wasn’t easy on him,” he said. “He paid a price.”

In 2005, while a captain in the 82nd Airborne Division, Fishback wrote to Sen. John McCain about his concerns over the treatment of detainees and whether the Geneva Convention applied to Iraq and Afghanistan. He wrote that he sought answers for 17 months, but found none.

“Instead of resolving my concerns, the approach for clarification process leaves me deeply troubled,” Fishback wrote. “I am certain that this confusion contributed to a wide range of abuses including death threats, beatings, broken bones, murder, exposure to elements, extreme forced physical exertion, hostage-taking, stripping, sleep deprivation and degrading treatment. I and troops under my command witnessed some of these abuses in both Afghanistan and Iraq.”

Later that year, the Senate passed legislation from McCain to prohibit inhumane treatment and Time magazine named Fishback to its list of the 100 most influential people in the world.

Fishback went on to serve with the Green Berets and later taught his alma mater, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He left the Army as a major and often spoke on panels about his decision to call attention to detainee treatment in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“He wanted to support his soldiers, he wanted to support the United States government and he wanted to call us to our better angels — both the U.S. government and the people that were leading that the soldiers,” Ford said.

Fishback is survived by his mother and father, his sister, his ex-wife and his daughter, he said. The veteran’s family will hold a memorial service this weekend, according to his obituary. The family has asked that those looking to honor Fishback’s life donate to the nonprofits, Human Rights Watch or Women for Women International.

Review: Federal sailors academy at fault for its range of problems found

By Ian Duncan
The Washington Post
A congressionally-ordered review of the federal sailors academy concluded the school was beset with problems ranging from aging facilities, a striking lack of diversity, and a curriculum that was failing to keep up with the needs of an evolving shipping industry.

The National Academy of Public Administration said that widespread problems at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy had fostered for years, with school leaders lacking the wherewithal to solve them. The school, the group said, had “lost its way.”

“The findings and recommendations of this report address long-standing issues that put the safety and health of the midshipmen and the entire USMMA community in peril,” wrote Teresa Gerton, the public administration academy’s chief executive.

Unlike the nation’s service academies that train military officers and are part of the Defense Department, the Merchant Marine school is part of the Department of Transportation. The review’s authors issued 67 recommendations and said it was up to Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg to launch a task force and overhaul the King’s Point, N.Y., school.

The findings are likely to only intensify scrutiny of the academy, which has been embroiled in a reckoning over sexual assault after a midshipman came forward in the fall and described being raped while training on a commercial ship. The new report, based on an investigation carried out between May 2020 and October 2021, says the school is failing too little to protect students from assaults and stamp out sexual harassment on campus and at sea, but makes clear its problems are far more widespread and affect almost every aspect of life there.

The Transportation Department said it has already taken steps to start modernizing facilities at the academy and to re- vamp sexual assault protections. The department said it was establishing the task force recommended by the reviewers.

“USMMA students are remarkable leaders committed to serving the nation and supporting positive change,” said Lucinda Lesley, the acting maritime administrator. “They deserve a modern, safe, and inclusive learning environment where they have the training and resources that will prepare them to succeed in the U.S. merchant marine and in our armed forces.”
By Dan Scanlan
The Florida Times-Union
JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Travis Hensley gave a final salute, then became the first to bound down the gangway of the USS The Sullivans on its homecoming, his seabag with him as he hit the pier at Naval Station Mayport.

Within seconds, the bag was replaced in his arms with 3-month-old Alexander, 1-year-old son and wife Bryanna, greeting them with hugs after returning from a 7-month world cruise with Britain’s Royal Navy.

“The boy wanted to see my new son and the rest of my family,” the chief petty officer said Wednesday just in time for Thanksgiving. “Alex is great and I missed him so much. He looks so cute in his sailor’s suit. It is perfect timing and I am grateful for the holidays.”

“We are just overwhelmed, so excited and feeling so blessed that he’s coming home,” his wife said. “He’s meeting his new baby too, so we are just so excited to have him home and get back to life. We are going to celebrate Thanksgiving and just spend time as a family.”

Further down the pier, Jessica Nelson and her children spotted husband/father Anthony Nelson on an upper deck. Minutes later, it was a hug-fest after a 7-month absence at sea.

“I am pretty happy to see everybody and glad to be home, especially this little one,” said Nelson, a logistics specialist, as he gazed at 9-month-old daughter Brynlee. “I am super happy for that and glad to be home for the holidays, be with the kids and eat lots of food, right guys?”

“Her second word was Dadda,” added Jessica, joined by their other children Blake and Bryce. “I am so excited for him to hear her say Dadda in person. She absolutely knows her daddy, doesn’t she?”

The 505-foot-long ship’s name honors the memories of the five Sullivan brothers who died when a Japanese torpedo sank their light cruiser 79 years ago.

The guided-missile destroyer is the second U.S. Navy vessel to honor George, Francis, Madison, Joseph and Albert Sullivan, all killed on Nov. 13, 1942, as the USS Juneau sank during the battle for Guadalcanal. The brothers served on the same ship despite a Navy wartime policy to separate family members.

To honor them, the current ship flies a red-bordered white flag with five gold stars on it, flapping stiffly in the wind under the American flag on its main mast as it came in Wednesday.

This means everything to the crew to get home in time for Thanksgiving, the commander said.

“Seeing the skyline of Jacksonville as we were coming in was a little surreal, like ‘Oh yeah, this is the end and we’ve finished the deployment and coming home safe,’” he said. “Then seeing all the families on the pier, there were a lot of not-dry eyes on board as they started to cheer for us. I appreciate all the families coming out.”

Awaiting the arrival along with hundreds of family members on the sunny, chilly day was Garry Cohn, the Navy League of the United States liaison with this destroyer. He also served on the first USS The Sullivans just before it was decommissioned in 1965. So he is happy that the latest ship and its crew just had a historic deployment and made it home for Thanksgiving.

“I wish I could have been aboard that ship. It’s an opportunity of a lifetime: a world cruise,” he said. “I never had the opportunity. ... I am so proud of the men and women who serve aboard the ship.”

As the ship dove into view in the channel, family members cheered and waved as the crew lined every deck. One boy carried a sign with a list for his returning father: “Hug and kiss me, play with me, read to me, but first, kiss Mommy!”

Feast: US lawmakers travel to South Korea to serve troops meals

FROM PAGE 1

spend, a culinary specialist and restaurant manager.

“This is a culinary specialist’s Super Bowl every year,” Hanspurd told Stars and Stripes on Thursday. “This is what we want to throw down on. We really take pride in what we do, in terms of presentation and the taste of the food.”

A delegation of five House representatives — Democratic Reps. Mark Takano of California, Elissa Slotkin of Michigan, Colin Allred of Texas, Sara Jacobs of California and Republican Nancy Mace of South Carolina — also helped serve meals to the troops.

“Come get your vegetables,” Slotkin, a member of the House Armed Services Committee and a former CIA analyst, shouted as she served mixed vegetables to a line of service members.

“It was great to meet some of our service members,” Takano, chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, said to Stars and Stripes. “It’s always a great pleasure to take the Thanksgiving holiday with members of Congress, who give up time with their families, to come and be with our troops, who are away giving us time with their families.”

Mace, a member of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee and a graduate of The Citadel Military College of South Carolina, toured the facility and stopped to chat with fellow South Carolinians.

Airmen: Troops to remain restricted until vaccinated

FROM PAGE 1

and U.S. Space Force guardians to be fully vaccinated.

The deadline for full vaccination for Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve members is Dec. 2.

The Air Force’s PCS restriction will remain in force for any airman until that person either becomes fully vaccinated against COVID-19, which is the disease caused by the coronavirus, or receives an approved medical exemption or religious accommodation, Kelly wrote.

As of Tuesday, 96.6% of active-duty airmen had been fully vaccinated, leaving 7,874 airmen unvaccinated, according to the service’s statistics.

The Air Force has granted 1,254 medical exemptions for vaccination and none for religious reasons. The Air Force is currently processing 4,756 requests for religious exemption, according to the statistics.

Airmen not fully vaccinated and those awaiting exemption approval will be flagged in their personnel file to prevent them from being selected for future assignments, Kelly wrote.

“Airmen currently on assignment are not authorized to out-process and depart on PCS, with the exception of those who have out-processed and/or shipped household goods/vehicles on or prior to 29 November, who are permitted to proceed to their new duty location,” Kelly wrote.
Travelers emerge again in time for Thanksgiving

By David Koenig
Associated Press

DALLAS — Determined to reclaim Thanksgiving traditions that were put on pause last year by the pandemic, millions of Americans will be loading up their cars or piling onto planes to gather again with friends and family.

The number of air travelers this week is expected to approach or even exceed pre-pandemic levels, and auto club AAA predicts that 48.3 million people will travel at least 50 miles from home over the holiday period, an increase of nearly 4 million over last year despite sharply higher gasoline prices.

Many feel emboldened by the fact that nearly 200 million Americans are now fully vaccinated. But it also means brushing aside concerns about a resurgent virus at a time when the United States is now averaging nearly 100,000 new infections a day and hospitals in Michigan, Minnesota, Colorado and Arizona are seeing alarming increases in patients.

The seven-day daily average of reported cases has increased by nearly 30% in the last two weeks through Tuesday, according to figures from Johns Hopkins University. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said unvaccinated people should not travel, although it is unclear whether that recommendation is having any effect.

More than 2.2 million travelers streamed through airport checkpoints last Friday, the busiest day since the pandemic devastated travel early last year. From Friday through Tuesday, the number of people flying in the U.S. was more than double the same days last year and less than 9% lower than the same days in 2019.

For their part, airlines are hoping to avoid a repeat of the massive flight cancellations — more than 2,300 apiece — that dogged Southwest and American Airlines at different times last month.

The breakdowns started with bad weather in one part of the country and spun out of control. In the past, airlines had enough pilots, flight attendants and other workers to recover from many disruptions within a day or two. They are finding it harder to bounce back now, however, because they are stretched thin after pushing thousands of employees to quit when travel collapsed last year.

American, Southwest, Delta and United have all been hiring lately, which gives the airlines and industry observers hope that flights will stay on track this week.

“The airlines are prepared for the holidays,” said Helane Becker, an airlines analyst for financial-services firm Cowen. “They cut back the number of flights, the industry has enough pilots, they are putting more flight attendants through their (training) academies, and they are paying flight attendants a premium — what I’m going to call hazardous-duty pay — to encourage people not to blow off work.”

The airlines have little margin for error right now. American expected to fill more than 90% of its seats with paying customers on Tuesday. That’s a throwback to holiday travel before the pandemic.

“There is not a lot of room to put people on another flight if something goes wrong,” said Dennis Tajer, a pilot for the airline and a spokesman for the American pilots’ union.

Travelers look for seats as they board an Amtrak train ahead of the Thanksgiving Day holiday at 30th Street Station in Philadelphia on Wednesday.
EU authorizes Pfizer’s vaccine for kids 5-11

Associated Press
THE HAGUE, Netherlands — The European Union’s drug regulator on Thursday authorized Pfizer’s coronavirus vaccine for use on children from 5 to 11 years old, clearing the way for shots to be administered to millions of elementary school pupils amid a new wave of infections sweeping across the Continent.

It is the first time the European Medicines Agency has cleared a COVID-19 vaccine for use in young children.

The agency said it “recommend[ed] granting an extension of indication for the COVID-19 vaccine Comirnaty to include use in children aged 5 to 11.”

After evaluating a study of the vaccine in more than 2,000 children, the EMA estimated that the vaccine was about 90% effective in preventing symptomatic COVID-19 in young children and said the most common side effects were pain at the injection site, headaches, muscle pain and chills.

The agency said the two-dose regimen should be given to children three weeks apart.

At least one country facing spiking infections didn’t wait for the EMA approval. Authorities in the Austrian capital, Vienna, already have begun vaccinating the 5 to 11 age group. Europe is currently at the epicenter of the pandemic and the World Health Organization has warned the continent could see deaths top 2 million by the spring unless urgent measures are taken.

Earlier this week, Germany’s health minister Jens Spahn said shipping of vaccines for younger children in the EU would begin on Dec. 20.

The United States signed off on Pfizer’s kids-sized shots earlier this month, followed by other countries including Canada.

Pfizer tested a dose that is a third of the amount given to adults for elementary school-age children. Even with the smaller shot, children who are 5 to 11 years old developed coronavirus-fighting antibody levels just as strong as teenagers and young adults getting the regular-strength shots, Dr. Bill Gruber, a Pfizer senior vice president, told The Associated Press in September.

But the studies done on Pfizer’s vaccine in children haven’t been big enough to detect any rare side effects from the second dose, like the chest and heart inflammation that has been seen in mostly male older teens and young adults.

American officials noted that COVID-19 has caused more deaths in children in the 5 to 11 age group than some other diseases, such as chickenpox, did before children were routinely vaccinated.

People visit the illuminated Christmas Market in Rostock, Germany, on Monday.

BEINING WUESTNECK/AP

Europe’s Christmas markets warily open as COVID cases rise

Associated Press
FRANKFURT, Germany — The holiday tree is towering over the main square in this central German city, the chestnuts and sugar-coated almonds are roasted, and the merry-go-round just like they did before the pandemic. But a surge in coronavirus infections has left an uneasy feeling hanging over Frankfurt’s Christmas market.

To savour a mug of mulled wine — an uncomplicated rite of winter in pre-pandemic times — masked customers must pass through a one-way entrance to a fenced-off wine hut, stopping at the hand sanitiser station. Elsewhere, security officers check vaccination certificates before letting customers head for the steaming sausages and kebabs.

Despite the pandemic inconveniences, stall owners selling ornaments, roasted chestnuts and other holiday-themed items in Frankfurt and other European cities are relieved to be open at all for their first Christmas market in two years, especially with new restrictions taking effect in Germany, Austria and other countries as COVID-19 infections hit record highs.

Merchants who have opened are hoping for at least a fraction of the pre-pandemic holiday sales that can make or break their businesses.

Others aren’t so lucky. Many of the famous holiday events have been canceled in Germany and Austria. With the market closures goes the money that tourists would spend in restaurants, hotels and other businesses.

Jens Knauer, who crafts intricate, lighted Christmas-themed silhouettes that people can hang in windows, said his hope was simply that the Frankfurt market “stays open as long as possible.”

While Christmas is 40% of annual revenue for many retailers and restaurateurs, “with me, it’s 100%,” Knauer said. “If I can stay open for three weeks, I can make it through the year.”

Purveyors are on edge after other Christmas markets were abruptly shut down in Germany’s Bavaria region, which includes Nuremberg, home of one of the biggest and best-known markets. Stunned exhibitors in Dresden had to pack up their goods when authorities in the eastern Saxony region suddenly imposed new restrictions amid soaring infections. Austria’s markets closed as a 10-day lockdown began Monday, with many stall owners hoping they can reopen if it’s not extended.

Markets usually attract elbow-to-elbow crowds to row upon row of ornament and food sellers, foot traffic that spills over into revenue for surrounding hotels and restaurants. This year, the crowds at Frankfurt’s market were vastly thinned out, with the stalls spread out over a larger area.

Renate Roie, who runs a mulled wine hut in the shape of a wine barrel, said she’s assuming he will see half the business he had in 2019. A shutdown would cause “immense financial damage — it could lead to complete ruin since we haven’t made any income in two years, and at some point, the financial reserves are used up.”

But if people have a little discipline and observe the health measures, “I think we’ll manage it,” he said.

Next door, Bettina Roie’s guests are greeted with a sign asking them to show their vaccination certificates at her stand selling Swiss raclette, a popular melted cheese dish.

The market “has a good concept because what we need is space, room, to keep some distance from each other,” she said. “In contrast to a bricks-and-mortar restaurant, they have their building and their walls, but we can adjust ourselves to the circumstances.”

The extended Roie family is a fifth-generation exhibitor business that also operates the merry-go-round in Frankfurt’s central Roemerberg square, where the market opened Monday.

Roie said it was important to reopen “so that we can bring the people even during the pandemic a little joy — that’s what we do, we bring back joy.”

The latest spike in COVID-19 cases has unsettled prospects for Europe’s economic recovery, leading some economists to hedge their expectations for growth in the final months of the year.

Holger Schmieding, chief economist at Berenberg Bank in London, has cut his forecast for the last three months of the year in the 19 countries that use the euro from 0.7% to 0.5%. But he noted that the wave of infections is having less impact across the broad economy because vaccinations have reduced serious illnesses and many companies have learned to adjust.

That is cold comfort to Germany’s DEHOGA restaurant and hotel association, which warned of a “hail of cancellations” and said members were reporting every second Christmas party or other special event was being called off.

Other European countries where the pandemic isn’t hitting as hard are returning to old ways. The traditional Christmas market in Madrid’s Plaza Mayor, in the heart of the Spanish capital, was slated to open Friday at the size it was before the pandemic.
DOJ to prioritize prosecuting violence on flights

Associated Press
WASHINGTON — Attorney General Merrick Garland directed U.S. attorneys across the country to swiftly prioritize prosecution of federal crimes that happen on commercial flights as federal officials face a historic number of investigations into passenger behavior.

Garland’s memo, issued Wednesday, emphasizes that the Justice Department is committed to aggressively prosecuting violent passengers who assault crew members or endanger the safety of other passengers. Federal law prohibits interfering with a flight crew, including assaulting, intimidating or threatening crew members.

In a statement, Garland said such passengers do more than harm employees. “They prevent the performance of critical duties that help ensure safe air travel. Similarly, when passengers commit violent acts against other passengers in the close confines of a commercial aircraft, the conduct endangers everyone aboard,” he said.

The memo also notes that dozens of incidents have been reported to the FBI by the Federal Aviation Administration — it investigates some flight disturbances and can issue civil fines to disruptive passengers — as part of an “information-sharing protocol” between the two agencies.

The FAA said earlier this month that it had launched 950 investigations into passenger behavior on flights this year. That is the highest total since the agency started keeping track in 1995. In the five years from 2016 through 2020, the agency averaged 136 investigations a year.

The agency also said that it had referred 37 cases involving unruly airline passengers to the FBI for possible criminal prosecution since the number of disruptions on flights began to spike in January.

“The unacceptable disruptive behavior that we’re seeing is a serious safety threat to flights, and we’re committed to our partnership with the DOJ to combat it,” FAA Administrator Steve Dickson said.

CIA director: ‘Consequences’ if Russia behind ‘Havana Syndrome’

The Washington Post
WASHINGTON — CIA Director William Burns delivered a confidential warning to Russia’s top intelligence services that they will face “consequences” if they are behind the string of mysterious health incidents known as “Havana Syndrome” afflicting U.S. diplomats and spies around the world, according to U.S. officials familiar with the exchange.

During a visit to Moscow earlier this month, Burns raised the issue with the leadership of Russia’s Federal Security Service, the FSB, and the country’s Foreign Intelligence Service, the SVR. He told them that causing U.S. personnel and their family members to suffer severe brain damage and other debilitating ailments would go beyond the bounds of acceptable behavior for a “professional intelligence service,” said the officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss highly sensitive conversations.

The warning did not assign blame for what U.S. officials are calling “anomalous health incidents,” or AHIs. The fact that Burns formulated the warning by saying “if” suggests that after four years of investigations across multiple administrations, the U.S. government remains unable to determine a cause of the unusual incidents. Nevertheless, the director’s decision to raise the possibility of Russian involvement directly to his counterparts in Moscow underscored the deep suspicion the CIA has of Kremlin culpability.

The CIA declined to comment on Burns’ warning to the Russians, which has not been previously reported. The Russian Embassy in Washington did not respond to requests for comment.

Moscow has previously denied any involvement in the Havana Syndrome incidents, a phenomenon named after the Cuban capital where U.S. diplomats and intelligence officers first reported unusual and varied symptoms — from headaches and vision problems to dizziness and brain injuries — that started in 2016.

The main purpose of Burns’ trip to Moscow was to put the Kremlin on notice that Washington was watching its troop buildup on the border of Ukraine and would not tolerate a military attack on the country, officials said.

Interior Department approves 2nd large offshore wind farm

Associated Press
The Biden administration approved an offshore wind farm off the coasts of Rhode Island and New York on Wednesday as part of a plan to deploy 30 gigawatts of offshore wind energy by 2030.

The U.S. Department of the Interior announced it approved the construction and operations of the South Fork Wind project, the department’s second approval of a commercial-scale, offshore wind energy project in the United States. Last week, the department marked the groundbreaking off the coast of Massachusetts for the first commercial-scale offshore wind project.

Seven major offshore wind farms would be developed on the east and west coasts of the U.S. and in the Gulf of Mexico under a plan announced last month by the Biden administration to build infrastructure, create jobs and address global warming. Deploying 30 gigawatts of offshore wind energy would generate enough electricity to power more than 10 million homes.

The South Fork Wind project will be located about 19 miles southeast of Block Island, R.I., and 35 miles east of Montauk Point, N.Y. It’s expected to provide roughly 130 megawatts, enough power for about 70,000 homes. Its transmission system will connect to the electric grid on Long Island, New York, making it the state’s first offshore wind farm and jump-starting the offshore wind industry there.

Related

NATION

Friday, November 26, 2021

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BRYNN ANDERSON/ASSOCIATED PRESS
A plane prepares for a flight at the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport on Tuesday.

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ASSOCIATED PRESS
Inflation lurks as consumer spending rises

By Martin Crutsinger
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Americans are doing the main thing that drives the U.S. economy — spending — but accelerating inflation is casting a pall.

A raft of economic data issued Wednesday showed the economy on solid footing, with Americans’ incomes rising and jobless claims falling to a level not seen since the Beatles were still together.

The spike in prices for everything from gas to rent, however, will likely be the chief economic indicator Americans discuss over Thanksgiving Day dinner.

The Commerce Department reported that U.S. consumer spending rebounced by 1.3% in October. That was despite inflation that over the past year has accelerated faster than it has at any point in more than three decades.

The jump in consumer spending last month was double the 0.6% gain in September. At the same time, consumer prices rose 5% compared with the same period last year, the fastest 12-month gain since the same stretch ending in November 1990.

“Although consumer confidence has declined in the fall because of high inflation, households continue to spend,” said Gus Faucher, chief economist at PNC Financial.

Personal incomes, which provide the fuel for future spending increases, rose 0.5% in October after having fallen 1% in September, which reflected a drop in government support payments.

Pay for Americans has been on the rise with companies desperate to attract and retain workers, and government stimulus checks earlier this year further padded their bank accounts.

That bodes well for a strong holiday season and major U.S. retailers say they’re ready after some companies, like Walmart and Target, went to extreme lengths to make sure their shelves are full despite widespread shortages.

Analysts said the solid increase in spending in October, the first month in the new quarter, was encouraging evidence that overall economic growth, which slowed to a modest annual rate of 2.1% in the July-September quarter, will post a sizable rebound in the current quarter. That is expected as long as the recent rise in COVID cases and concerns about inflation don’t dampen holiday shopping.

After experiencing one of the most severe economic shocks of the past century in 2020, the U.S. economy has displayed one of the most rapid recoveries in modern history in 2021,” Gregory Daco, chief U.S. economist for Oxford Economics, wrote in a note to clients. Daco predicts GDP in the current October-December period would rebound to a growth rate of 3.6%.

The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits, meanwhile, dropped last week by 71,000 to 199,000, the lowest since mid-November 1969. But seasonal adjustments around the Thanksgiving holiday contributed significantly to the bigger-than-expected drop. Unadjusted, claims actually ticked up by more than 18,000 to nearly 259,000.

In a cautionary note Wednesday, the University of Michigan reported that its consumer sentiment index fell 4.3 percentage points to a reading of 67.4 this month, its lowest level since November 2021, weighed down by inflation concerns.

And there are regions in the U.S. experiencing a surge in COVID-19 cases that could get worse as families travel the country for the Thanksgiving holiday.

President Joe Biden acted Tuesday to counter spiking gasoline prices by ordering a release from the nation’s strategic petroleum reserve, but economists expect that move to have only a minimal effect on the surge in gas prices.

The Fed seeks to conduct its interest-rate policies to achieve annual gains in its preferred price index of around 2%. However, over the past two decades, inflation has perennially failed to reach the Fed’s 2% inflation target.

Holiday season moves into high gear but challenges remain

By Anne D’Innocenzo
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Buoyed by solid hiring, healthy pay gains and substantial savings, shoppers are returning to stores and splurging on all types of items.

But the big question is: How much will supply shortages, higher prices and staffing issues dampen their mood this holiday season?

Americans, already fatigued with pandemic-induced social distancing policies, may get grumpy if they can’t check off items on their holiday wish lists, or they may feel disappointed by the skimpy holiday discounts. Exacerbating their foul moods is the fact that many frustrated workers called it quits ahead of the holidays, leaving businesses short-handed during their busiest time of the year.

Shoppers are expected to pay on average of between 5% to 17% more for toys, clothing, appliances, TVs and other purchases on Black Friday this year compared with last year, according to Aurelien Duthoit, senior sector adviser at Allianz Research. TVs will see the highest price spikes on average, up 17% from a year ago, according to the research firm.

That’s because whatever discounts available will be applied to goods that are already expensive.

Such frustrations could mute sales for the holiday season that are supposed to break records.

The National Retail Federation, the nation’s largest retail trade group, predicts holiday sales will increase between 8.5% and 10.5% compared with the 2020 holiday period when shoppers, locked down during the early part of the pandemic, spent their money on pajamas and home goods — mostly online. Holiday sales increased 8.2% in 2020.

“I think it is going to be a messy holiday season,” said Neil Saunders, managing director at GlobalData Retail. “It will be a bit frustrating for retailers, consumers and the workers. We are going to see long lines. We are going to see messier stores. We are going to see delays as you collect online orders.”

Jill Renslow, executive vice president of business development and marketing for Mall of America, the nation’s largest mall, expects customer counts on Black Friday to be close to the 2019 levels and said its store tenants are seeing “power shopping” earlier in the season. But she acknowledged the mall’s tenants have struggled with staffing and, as a result, the center will open two hours later and close one hour earlier on Black Friday.

“They (retailers) are doing everything they can to deliver a good guest experience,” Renslow said. “But consumers are going to need to be patient and know that the lines may be little bit longer.”

Still, don’t discount the resilience of shoppers who have shown signs they want to celebrate the holidays after muted celebrations last year.

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Macy’s Thanksgiving parade makes full return

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Crimped by the coronavirus pandemic last year, the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade returned Thursday in full, though with precautions.

Balloons, floats, marching bands, clowns and performers — and, of course, Santa Claus — once again began wending Thursday morning though 2½ miles of Manhattan streets, instead of being confined to one block or sometimes pretaped last year.

Spectators, shut out in 2020, lined the route again. High school and college marching bands from around the country were invited back to the lineup, most of last year’s performers were locally based to cut down on travel. The giant balloons, tethered to vehicles last year, got their costumed handlers back.

To President Joe Biden, the parade’s full-fledged return was a sign of renewal, and he called NBC broadcaster Al Roker on-air to say so.

“After two years, we’re back. America is back. There’s nothing we’re unable to overcome,” Biden said over the phone from Nantucket, Mass., where he was watching the broadcast with his family.

Biden on Thursday wished Americans a happy and closer-to-normal Thanksgiving, in remarks welcoming the resumption of holiday traditions in many homes.

“As we give thanks for what we have, we also keep in our hearts those who have been lost and those who have lost so much,” the president said in a video greeting recorded with first lady Jill Biden at the White House before their trip to Nantucket.

On Nantucket, the Bidens visited the Coast Guard station at Brant Point to meet virtually with U.S. servicemembers from around the world and chat with personnel at the station. “I’m thankful for these guys,” the president said when asked what he was thankful for, referring to the Coast Guard members standing ramrod straight in front of him on the grounds.

The Thanksgiving parade is the latest U.S. holiday event to make a comeback as vaccines, familiarity and sheer frustration made officials and some of the public more comfortable with big gatherings amid the ongoing pandemic.

Still, safety measures continued. Parade staffers and volunteers had to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and wear masks, though some singers and performers were allowed to shed them.

There was no inoculation requirement for spectators, but Macy’s and the city encouraged them to cover their faces. A popular spectacle before the parade — the inflation of the giant balloons — was limited to vaccinated viewers.

The Thanksgiving event also came days after an SUV driver plowed through a Christmas parade in suburban Milwaukee, killing six people and injuring over 60. Authorities said the driver, who had been charged with intentional homicide, was speeding away from police after a domestic dispute.

Thousands of police officers were assigned to the parade route, from streets to rooftops. Cars were blocked from the parade route with sand-filled garbage trucks, other heavy vehicles and approximately 360,000 pounds of concrete barriers.

Bomb-detecting dogs, bomb squad officers, heavy-weapons teams, radiation and chemical sensors and over 300 extra cameras also were dispatched to the parade route, NYPD Chief of Counterterrorism Martine Mata-rasso said.

Inside the barricades, the parade featured about 9,000 participants, four dozen balloons of varying sizes and two dozen floats.

New balloon giants joining the lineup include the title character from the Netflix series “Ada Twist, Scientist,” the Pokémon characters Pikachu and Eevee on a sled (Pikachu has appeared before, in different form), and Gro- gu, aka “Baby Yoda,” from the television show “The Mandalorian.” New floats are coming from entities ranging from condiment maker Heinz to NBCUniversal’s Peacock streaming service to the Louisiana Office of Tourism.

Native tribes mourn on Thanksgiving: ‘No reason to celebrate’

Associated Press

Members of Native American tribes from around New England are gathering in the seaside town where the Pilgrims settled to give thanks, but to mourn Indigenous people worldwide who’ve suffered centuries of racism and mistreatment.

Thursday’s solemn National Day of Mourning observance in downtown Plymouth, Mass., will recall the disease and oppression that European settlers brought to North America.

“We Native people have no reason to celebrate the arrival of the Pilgrims,” said Kisha James, a member of the Aquinnah Wampanoag and Oglala Lakota tribes and the granddaughter of Wamunutt Frank James, the event’s founder.

“We want to educate people so that they understand the stories we all learned in school about the first Thanksgiving are nothing but lies. Wampanoag and other Indigenous people have certainly not lived happily ever after since the arrival of the Pilgrims,” James said.

“To us, Thanksgiving is a day of mourning, because we remember the millions of our ancestors who were murdered by uninvited European colonists such as the Pilgrims. Today, we and many Indigenous people around the country say, ‘No Thanks, No Giving.’”

It’s the 52nd year that the United American Indians of New England have organized the event on Thanksgiving Day. The tradition began in 1970.

Indigenous people and their supporters planned to gather at noon in person on Cole’s Hill, a windswept mound overlooking Plymouth Rock, a memorial to the colonists’ arrival. Participants will beat drums, offer prayers and condemn what organizers describe as “the unjust system based on racism, settler colonialism, sexism, homophobia and the profit-driven destruction of the Earth” before marching through Plymouth’s historical district.

This year, they’ll also highlight the troubled legacy of federal boarding schools that sought to assimilate Indigenous youth into white society in the United States as well as in Canada, where hundreds of bodies have been discovered on the grounds of former residential schools for Indigenous children.

Brian Moskwetah Weeden, chairman of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Council, said on Boston Public Radio earlier this week that Americans owes his tribe a debt of gratitude for helping the Pilgrims survive their first brutal winter.

“The Pilgrims settlers were librarians and farmers and jewelers and we need to recognize what a debt that we owe to the First Peoples who lived here for millennia,” Weeden said.

“We need to understand that you need to be thankful each and every day — that was how our ancestors thought and navigated this world,” Weeden said. “Because we were thankful, we were willing to share and we had good intentions and a good heart.”

That wasn’t reciprocated over the long term, Weeden added.

“That’s why, 400 years later, we’re still sitting here fighting for what little bit of land that we still have, and trying to hold the commonwealth and the federal government accountable,” he said.

The Tom Turkey float waits along Central Park West before the start of the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade on Thursday in New York.

People enjoy the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade along Central Park West in New York.
**AMERICAN ROUNDPUP**

**$4M grant helps preserve Civil War battlefield**

**VA** WILLIAMSBURGH — The National Park Service announced that it has awarded the largest single grant in the history of its American Battlefield Protection Program to help preserve one of the nation’s lesser-known Civil War battlefields.

The $4.6 million grant will be used to purchase and preserve 250 acres of the Williamsburg Battlefield in York County, Va., which has sat on private land outside the city and former colonial capital.

The battle was part of what’s known as the Peninsula Campaign of 1862, when Union forces tried to capture Richmond from the southeast.

**Landlord fined for ‘horrific’ rental conditions**

**MN** MINNEAPOLIS — A Hennepin County district judge fined a north Minneapolis landlord $133,500 for what he called horrific conditions in his rental properties.

The Star Tribune reported that Judge Patrick Robben ruled that landlord Steven Meldahl operated in bad faith by telling tenants that they were not allowed to contact city inspectors, violating the rights of 267 families who rented his properties.

“Infestations suggestive of biblical plague proportions — squirrels, mice, rats, gnats,” the judge said.

Robben levied a fine of $500 per family. He also issued a permanent injunction preventing Meldahl from engaging in illegal and deceptive practices, and gave him until Dec. 15 to comply with all housing correction notices.

**Dempsey Challenge reaches $1.5M goal**

**ME** LEWISTON — The Dempsey Challenge has reached its $1.5 million fundraising goal, garnering $200,000 more than any previous year despite the coronavirus pandemic decreasing participation.

The bike-and-run fundraiser in September raised a record $1.5 million and additional fundraising from businesses and a virtual cycling event pushed the Dempsey Challenge past its fundraising goal, The Sun-Journal reported.

The challenge is the primary fundraiser for the Dempsey Center, a nonprofit organization founded by actor Patrick Dempsey that provides free services to cancer patients and their families. The Lewiston nonprofit had increased its fundraising goal in 2020 but the pandemic hit and the in-person Dempsey Challenge was canceled and replaced with a virtual event.

**Former art dealer pleads guilty in fraud case**

**NY** NEW YORK — A former London and Miami art dealer pleaded guilty to defrauding art buyers of over $86 million.

Inigo Philbrick, 34, a U.S. citizen who has also lived in London, entered the plea in Manhattan federal court.

He pleaded guilty to a single count of wire fraud after prosecutors said he conducted a scheme from 2016 through 2019 to defraud individuals and entities to finance his art business.

Prosecutors said he carried out the scheme by misrepresenting the ownership of certain artworks and by sometimes selling more than 100% ownership to multiple individuals and entities without their knowledge.

**Driver charged with desecrating cemetery**

**SC** RAVENEL — A driver was charged with desecration of a human burial ground after he drove over several gravestones and knocked over a headstone in a Charleston County cemetery as he tried to run from police, investigators said.

When deputies checking a suspicious vehicle near the Saint Paul United Methodist Church Cemetery turned on their blue lights, the 31-year-old driver sped off through the graveyard, the Charleston County Sheriff’s Office told news outlets.

The chase reached speeds of more than 110 mph on U.S. Highway 17 and state Highway 162, deputies said.

The driver hit a tree but kept going and at one point the chase went down roads so rough a sheriff’s patrol car had its bumper torn off, investigators said.

Deputies said the chase ended when the car got stuck in a mud hole.

**Masked suspects rob diner on restaurant patio**

**CA** COSTA MESA — A group of masked people dressed in black ran onto a Southern California restaurant patio, ordered everyone down, then stole a diner’s purse before fleeing, police said.

At least one of the suspects may have been armed with a handgun during the robbery at Seasons 52 restaurant at South Coast Plaza in Costa Mesa, police spokeswoman Roxy Fyad said.

Police are looking for three to five suspects, the Orange County Register reported.

**Fishpond restoration reveals century-old grave**

**HI** HONOLULU — Restoration of fishponds in Hawaii led to the discovery of a child’s grave from nearly 100 years ago.

A nonprofit group has been restoring the fishponds at Honolulu’s stream in Ewa Beach. Earlier this month, the group’s founder saw a gravestone hidden in the tall grass, Hawaii News Now reported.

“All I could see was the top of it,” said Anthony Chance. “When I pulled away the pickledweed, I noticed writing and what I know to be Japanese writing.”

He sent photographs to a friend who translated the inscription. It said a 1-year-old boy named Akira Matsuysa died in June 1927.

Through social media, Chance found members of the Matsuysa family who lived on the land in the 1900s.

Aileen Matsuysa Feldman said she remembers her grandparents’ home that once stood near the fishpond but doesn’t remember ever seeing the gravestone of a child who died 20 years before she was born.

**3M lottery prize is couple’s second big win**

**MO** POTOSI — An eastern Missouri couple recently won a $3 million lottery prize — and it wasn’t the first time they’ve claimed a big lottery win.

The Missouri Lottery said the couple from Washington County, who asked not to be identified, purchased the winning ticket for the “Big Riches” scratcher game in Potosi while recently picking up groceries. They scratched off the ticket inside the store and celebrated with a hug.

Winning never gets old. The couple won $250,000 in June.
Russian coal mine fire kills at least 11

Associated Press

MOSCOW — A fire at a coal mine in Russia’s Siberia killed 11 people and injured more than 40 on Thursday, with dozens of others remaining trapped, authorities said.

Efforts to rescue those trapped in the mine were halted on Thursday afternoon because of an explosion threat, and rescuers were rushed out of the mine, administrators of the mine told the Interfax news agency.

The blaze broke out in the Kemerovo region in southwestern Siberia. Russia’s state Tass news agency reported, citing an unnamed emergency official, that coal dust caught fire, and smoke quickly filled the Listvyazhnaya mine through the ventilation system.

A total of 285 people were in the mine at the time of the incident, Kemerovo Governor Sergei Tsivilyov said on his page on the messaging app Telegram. He said 35 miners remained trapped underground, and their exact location was unknown.

The Russian leader on Thursday afternoon sat down for talks with his Serbian counterpart Aleksandar Vucic in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi, during which Vucic also offered condolences to the families of the victims. Putin noted that the situation at the mine, “unfortunately, is not getting easier.”

“And there is a danger to the life of the rescuers. Let’s hope that (they) will manage to save as many people as possible,” Putin said.

In 2016, 36 miners were killed in a series of methane explosions in a coal mine in Russia’s far north. In the wake of the incident, authorities analyzed the safety of the country’s 58 coal mines and declared 20 of them, or 34%, potentially unsafe.

Sadat Osman, who said he was explaining a lesson to students when the blast occurred, “We were disoriented and we were covered with dust and smoke.”

Police spokesman Abdifatah Adam Hassan said eight people were killed and 17 others wounded.

“This is a tragedy,” said Abdul-kadir Adan of the Amin ambulance service, which rushed people to a hospital.

The casualties were fewer than might have occurred since Thursday is part of the weekend in Somalia, an overwhelmingly Muslim nation.

Al-Shabab attack outside school in Somali capital leaves at least 8 dead

The latest inspection of the mine in the wake of the incident, authorities said 44 miners have been hospitalized with injuries. The difference in injury tolls reported by different officials couldn’t be immediately reconciled.

Russia’s Investigative Committee has launched a criminal probe into the fire on charges of violating safety regulations that led to deaths.

President Vladimir Putin extended his condolences to the families of the victims. Putin noted that the situation at the mine, “unfortunately, is not getting easier.”

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Al-Shabab in a statement carried by its Andalus radio said it targeted Western officials being escorted by the African Union peacekeeping convoy.

But a witness, Hassan Ali, told the AP that a private security company was escorting the officials and he said he saw four of the security personnel wounded.

The attack occurred as Somalia faces major questions about its political and security future. The AU peacekeeping force was meant to withdraw from the country, but its mission could be extended amid concerns that Somali forces are not ready to assume responsibility for security.
The Washington Post

South Korea said Thursday that it will launch a task force to consider outlawing dog meat consumption after the country's president offered to look into ending the centuries-old practice.

Restaurants that serve dog meat are dwindling in South Korea as younger people find dog meat a less appetizing dining option and pets are growing in popularity. Recent surveys indicate more people oppose banning dog meat, even if many don’t eat it.

In a statement, seven government offices including the Agriculture Ministry said they decided to launch the group comprising of officials, civilian experts and people from related organizations to deliver recommendations on possibly outlawing dog meat consumption. It said authorities will gather information on dog farms, restaurants and other facilities while examining public opinion.

The statement noted that “public awareness of their basic rights and animal rights issues are tangled in a complicated manner” when it comes to dog meat consumption. Public opinion suggests “people have negative views both about eating dogs and legally banning it,” it added.

The government said the initiative, the first of its kind, doesn’t necessarily guarantee the banning of dog meat. The seemingly vague stance drew protests from both dog farmers and animal rights activists.

Farmers said the task force’s launch is nothing but a formality to shut down their farms and dog meat restaurants, while activists argued the government’s announcement lacks resolve to outlaw dog meat consumption.

Sweden’s Finance Minister and Social Democratic Party leader Magdalena Andersson holds flowers after a vote appointing her as Sweden’s new prime minister in the Swedish parliament Riksdagen in Stockholm on Wednesday.

S. Korea to launch task force on potentially banning dog meat

The Washington Post

Sweden on Wednesday confirmed Magdalena Andersson as its first female leader, nearly 100 years after the Scandinavian country extended women the right to vote.

Hours after assuming office, Andersson resigned from the post when a member of the ruling coalition, the center-left Swedish Green party, quit the government in protest after lawmakers passed a budget bill backed by three right-wing parties. Andersson’s Social Democratic Party had put forward an alternative budget proposal that failed to pass.

Andersson had briefly joined the ranks of around two dozen current female heads of state and government, according to U.N. Women, the United Nations agency focused on gender equality. Around half of those women head European countries.

Sweden was the last of its Nordic neighbors — Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland — to elect a woman to their highest offices. Scandinavian countries have a reputation for some of the world’s most progressive gender policies.

Andersson was Sweden’s finance minister before her brief foray as prime minister, which is also a rarity. Women ministers are most commonly assigned portfolios that concern issues such as family, children, social issues, employment and women’s affairs.

Sweden’s 1st female PM resigns just hours after being sworn in

The Washington Post

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Mirren makes regal bow as Potter quiz show host

By LYNN ELBER
Associated Press

Helen Mirren is oddly absent from the Harry Potter film franchise that proved close to a full-employment act for Britain's acting greats. But she's found her own path into its magical world.

Dame Helen, as the Oscar, Emmy and Tony-winning actor is properly addressed, makes her debut as a quiz host with “Harry Potter: Hogwarts Tournament of Houses.” The weekly, four-part series begins Sunday stateside on TBS and Cartoon Network.

In episode one, contestants representing the Gryffindor and Hufflepuff houses field trivia questions about J.K. Rowling's novels-turned-films in a bid to claim a championship trophy and prizes.

Mirren left the cramming to the players and is unworried about being a novice game show emcee.

"I can certainly play a strict host," she said, droolly.

Mirren's willingness to take on something different shouldn't surprise. She's celebrated for her regal roles — including “The Queen,” “Elizabeth I” and “Catherine the Great” — but also counts the Fast & the Furious movie franchise among her credits.

Her return to a comic book-based project is upcoming: She plays a mythological goddess in “Shazam! Fury of the Gods." Mirren's baptism in the genre came with the film "Red" and its sequel.

In an interview with The Associated Press, she discussed her admiration of the Potter canon, making a TV fashion statement, and female bonding on the set of the DC Comics-based film. Remarks have been edited for length and clarity.

AP: You've had an eclectic acting career, and now you're adding your first game show to the résumé.

Mirren: Absolutely, which is why I signed up for it. I'm always up for a bit of an adventure. Also, of course, it's a wonderful subject and at a great moment, the 20th anniversary (of "The Sorcerer's Stone," the first Potter film). And the very fact I was never in any Harry Potter movies — much to my chagrin, I might add. It was a great way to be able to participate in the whole extraordinary phenomena that is Harry Potter.

Are you a fan of the stories?

What I remember very clearly was when the whole world of Harry Potter started rising. The most magical thing is the way the books were passed from hand to hand amongst kids, and adults sort of didn't know anything about it. It wasn't like it was published with great fanfare. A lot of the people who'll be competing (on the show), they will be in their 20s, 30s, 40s, but they will have past experience with Harry Potter as a kid.

Have you watched any TV competition shows for tips or sought advice on hosting?

I thought I'd just play it by ear and be as natural as I could. I'm personally very excited about it, so hopefully I'll communicate that. I'll be probably as nervous as the contestants themselves, and I'll try to hide that.

You aren't playing a role with the costume dictated by your character, but was there a certain look you wanted as a host?

That's an interesting question. The set, as you will see, it's so extraordinary, it's a beautiful, beautiful Harry Potter world that they've constructed. So I did want what I wore to reflect a slight costume feeling.

And in a way, I'm playing a kind of a character. So, yes, I wanted it to be a sense of costume and presentation. It's got a slight sense of vintage about it, and a sense of belonging in that world.

In the sequel to "Shazam!" you play Hespera, daughter of Atlas. Is she a hero or villain?

I'm not going to tell you the answer to that. You're going to have to ascertain for yourself. I'm a member of three goddesses: Lucy Liu as Kalypsos and the third goddess played by Rachel Zegler, who will be a huge star in a very short space of time.

There are three of us together, and that was really a great experience because it's so infrequent that you get to spend a whole of a movie with two other women. So often you're the only woman in the cast. Here we were a trio, and that was great. I loved it.

Despite having no part in the movie series, Helen Mirren hosts the quiz show "Harry Potter: Hogwarts Tournament of Houses." The four-part series debuts Sunday stateside on TBS and Cartoon Network.

Batiste: From bandleader to Grammy nominations

By AUGUST BROWN
Los Angeles Times

Best known as the bandleader and music director for “The Late Show with Stephen Colbert,” 35-year-old jazz-R&B composer Jon Batiste would never have been predicted to earn the most Grammy nominations of any act this year.

He earned his Grammy-leading 11 nominations across seven categories that span genre, composition and medium, the Jan. 31 ceremony could end up being Batiste's very own variety show.

The pianist and singer scored nominations for album and record of the year, for his “We Are” LP and its brassy, exultant single “Freedom,” both of which will compete against splashy, big-budget releases from the likes of Olivia Rodrigo, Justin Bieber and Lil Nas X. (“We Are” spent just one week on the Billboard 200 upon its April release, peaking at No. 86.)

“The We Are” is also nominated for R&B album, and three more songs from “We Are” have nominations in different genre categories: “I Need You” for traditional R&B performance; “Movement 11” for contemporary classical composition; and “Cry” for American roots performance and American roots song.

After two years of protests and deep introspection about the sanctity of Black life and art in America, “Cry” hit a plaintive note about upheaval: “Who do you love when push comes to shove?” he sings. “How does it feel when it's getting too real?”

Meanwhile, Batiste’s music for the animated Pixar film “Soul” earned nominations for improved jazz solo, jazz instrumental album and score soundtrack for visual medium.

“Freedom” was also nominated for music video.

Batiste has already enjoyed a fruitful year at awards shows, pulling down a Golden Globe and an Oscar for “Soul,” which he shared with Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross. His work on the film, which follows a Black jazz pianist through the afterlife and reincarnation, made him the second Black composer to win the Academy Award for original score, after jazz legend Herbie Hancock.

Like Hancock, who won album of the year in 2008, or Esperanza Spalding, the jazz bassist who beat out Justin Bieber for new artist in 2011, Batiste is the kind of consummate instrumentalist that Record Academy voters have reward(ed) in the past, sometimes to the be[wilderment] of popular music fans and TV viewers.

The scion of a legendary New Orleans jazz family, Batiste has released eight studio albums and five live albums, and collaborated with acts ranging from Stevie Wonder to Willie Nelson to Ed Sheeran. He joined “The Late Show with Stephen Colbert” as bandleader and music director in 2012.

“You know what’s deep is God gave us 12 notes, it’s the same 12 notes that Duke Ellington had, that Bach had, Nina Simone,” he said after winning his Oscar. “I’m thankful to God for those 12 notes.”

The 64th Grammy Awards will take place on Jan. 31 in Los Angeles.

'General Hospital' actor Burton quits rather than get vaccine

New York Daily News

“General Hospital” star Steve Burton is the second actor to walk off the long-running soap set over the mandate.

“I know there’s been a lot of rumour mill and speculation and outright fear,” Burton said in an Instagram video late Tuesday. “Unfortunately, ‘General Hospital’ has let me go because of the vaccine mandate. I applied for my medical and religious exemptions, and both of those were denied, which, you know, hurts.”

Representatives for the ABC daytime soap opera did not immediately return a request Wednesday to confirm that Burton had applied for exemptions.

Burton has played Jason Morgan on and off since 1991. On the most recent episode, his character was buried in a collapsed tunnel after a shootout in Greece, drawing suspicion from fans that he was being written off the show. It’s also possible that Burton will simply be replaced by another actor, as has been done previously.

In mid-August, he tested positive for COVID-19, saying he’d been “exposed at work,” but never specified that it was at “General Hospital.”

“Maybe one day if these mandates are lifted, I can return and finish my career as Jason Morgan. That would be an honor,” Burton said Tuesday.

Burton's co-star Ingo Rademacher, who frequently posts anti-vax sentiments online, also recently quit the show over the mandate.
Expensive enthusiasms will cost Dems at polls

BY GEORGE F. WILL
Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden has been ever a subject for 2020, 2021, and, at least one can deduce from the fact that either congressional chamber would extinguish Biden’s legislative agenda. So, as the Democrats’ kamikaze catapults a properly scored $4 trillion-plus Build Back Better gusher to punctuate a year that has seen the highest inflation in 31 years, thisicus should ponder some data: Biden’s agenda for swollen government resembles Franklin D. Roosevelt’s in 1933 and Lyndon B. Johnson’s in 1965. The stark differences are the popular-vote margins that put the three into the presidency: FDR, 17 percentage points; LBJ, 23 points; Biden, 4.5 points. So, in 1933, there were 59 Democratic senators (out of 96) and 313 Democratic representatives. In 1965, there were 68 Democratic senators and 295 Democratic representatives. The number then for 220 and 211. Analyst Charlie Cook says of 2020: “The presidential race came down to 125,049 votes spread across Georgia, Arizona, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. A flip of just 62,543 votes and Donald Trump would now be [well] into a second term. In the Senate, the Georgia seat that put Democrats over the top was a matter of Jon Ossoff winning just 59,944 more votes than Donald Perdue. The margin in the House was 31,751 votes across five districts.”

In 2020, five states — Georgia, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Colorado — were won by margins of 1.5 percentage points or less. Biden won all but North Carolina. If Trump had won the three that Biden carried by less than 1 point — Georgia, Wisconsin, Arizona — he would be president.

The 2012 presidential election was the most recent one in which the Democratic President was not elected by a sizable margin of whites without college educations. Today, according to David Shor, a Democratic consultant, “If you look inside the Democratic Party, there are three times more moderate or conservative nonwhite people than very liberal white people, but very liberal white people are infinitely more represented” (emphasis added). And between 2016 and 2020, Trump increased his success with non-white working-class voters. Biden won a smaller share of both the white and non-white working class vote than Barack Obama received in 2012.

This is one reason Trump is the first incumbent president to increase his vote total — he did by 10 million — while failing to win reelection. Another reason is that just 10% of the voters who voted for Trump and Biden in 2016 voted for Biden in 2020.

Ticket-splitting has declined: In 2020, only 16 of 435 congressional districts were won by the president and his party. A House candidate of the other party ran for election. In 2008, about 71% of Senate elections were won by the party whose presidential candidate carried the state. In 2020, the figure was 95.6%, the same as with House districts. But the three states Biden carried by the largest margins (Maryland, 33.2 points; Massachusetts, 33.5, Vermont, 35.4) have Republican governors.

In the 2021-22 post-census redrawing of congressional districts, Republicans control legislatures in states with 187 districts, and Democrats have complete control in states with just 75. Furthermore, House races are susceptible to national waves, and since World War II, average midterm House losses for the president’s party are slightly worse in presidents’ first terms (23) than on average (22). Also, the most recent president to escape a first-term contraction of his party’s Senate caucus in midterm elections was John F. Kennedy in 1962.

So, Biden could become the fifth consecutive president to see his party lose control of both the House and the Senate during his tenure. He could even lose both in the first midterm elections of his tenure. This most recently happened not recently — in 1994 and 1994, during Bill Clinton’s and Dwight D. Eisenhower’s first terms, respectively.

Today’s polarization is not unprecedented. When a 1936 Gallup poll asked, “Do you believe the acts and policies of the Roosevelt Administration may lead to a dictatorship?” the Gallup respondents said yes, 83% of Republican respondents and 39% of Democrats said yes. Today, however, there is broad agreement among Americans about something. Last week’s Post-ABC News poll revealed that a landside 59% are concerned that Biden would “do too much to increase the size and role of government.”

Now, about that Build Back Batcher gusher...
**Eugene Sheffer Crossword**

**ACROSS**
1. Blond shade
4. Rocky outcrop
8. Gunk
12. -- Beta Kappa
13. Seized wheels
14. Leak slowly
15. Zero refinement
17. Stir up
18. Veer
19. Droop
21. Granola grain
22. Wedding parties?
26. Influence
29. Tibetan bovine
30. Conceit
31. Intimate
32. Garden area
33. Wound cover
34. Soul, to Sartre
35. Napkin’s place
36. Short jackets
37. Act charitably
38. Sheep call
39. Sheep call
40. Train alternative
41. Cornell’s home
45. South Pacific nation
48. Remorseful words
50. Nantes notion
51. Mutt’s warning
52. 401(k) alternative
53. Oodles
54. Inquisitive
55. Quarterback Brady

**DOWN**
1. LAPD alerts
2. “Pygmalion” writer
3. Conceal
4. Necktie
5. Bowling-lane button
6. Suitable
7. Spoils
8. Welsh pooch
9. Kanga’s kid
10. Submachine gun
11. Singer Lana --- Rey
16. Lake denizen
19. Noah’s vessel
20. 1920s art style
21. 2000s art style
22. “Manhattan Beach” author Jennifer
23. Trouble omen
24. Troubling omen
25. Weeps
26. Ballot dangler
27. Prom rental
28. Blood type, for short
29. “Uh-huh”
30. Troubling omen
32. Troubling omen
33. Lesley of “60 Minutes”
34. Brock of baseball
35. 30. Surfboard
36. Bistro, for one
37. Theater awards
38. Actor Aniston, to friends
49. To and ---

**Answer to Previous Puzzle**

11-26

CRYPTOQUIP


Yesterday’s Cryptoquip: REMARKABLE BASEBALL TEAM WHOSE PLAYERS HAVE AMAZING HIGH OPERATIC VOICES: THE NEW YORK MEZZOS.

Today’s Cryptoquip Clue: L equals N
Kuznetsov, Caps whip Canadians

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Evgeny Kuznetsov scored seven goals and added an assist, Alex Ovechkin had three assists in a game for the first time in nearly four years, and the Washington Capitals cruised to a 6-3 win over the Montreal Canadiens on Wednesday night.

Dmitry Orlov, John Carlson and Nicklas Backstrom each had a goal and an assist as Washington won its seventh out of nine in its return from a four-game West Coast trip. Michael Sgarbossa scored his first career goal for the Capitals.

Tom Wilson completed Ovechkin’s three-assist night when he scored on a one-timer off his feed, bringing Ovechkin’s season assist total to 18.

Ilya Samsonov made 25 saves while winning his seventh game in eight starts, despite seeing his shutout streak snapped at 170 minutes, 13 seconds.

Artturi Lehkonen and Jake Evans each had a goal and an assist for Montreal, which lost its fifth game out of six.

Rangers 4, Islanders 1: Chris Kreider and Connor McDavid each scored twice, and the visiting New York Rangers beat the New York Islanders for the second time in seven games.

Igor Shesterkin made 22 saves and visiting Minnesota beat Arizona for its sixth consecutive defeat.

The surge has coincided with the team’s emergence from a COVID-19 outbreak and Jarry’s spectacular play.

The game was delayed 24 minutes and 11 seconds and was stopped 18 seconds later.

Vegas center Chandler Stephenson had a goal and an assist against the Predators during Wednesday’s 5-2 win in Nashville, Tenn.

Avancio 5, Ducks 2: Nazem Kadri kept up his scoring tear with a goal and an assist to lift Colorado over Anaheim for its sixth straight victory.

Kadri extended his point streak to 10 games, the longest current run in the NHL. He has six goals and 15 assists during that span.

Red Wings 4, Blues 2: Adam Erne scored the go-ahead goal early in the third period, streaking rookie Lucas Raymond got his eighth of the season and host Detroit beat St. Louis.

Dylan Larkin and Robby Fabbri also scored for the Red Wings.

Alex Nedeljkovic finished with 35 saves as Detroit snapped a four-game losing streak and improved to 5-2-2 at home.

Wild 3, Devils 2 (SO): Kevin Fiala scored the lone goal in a shootout, Cam Talbot made 42 saves and visiting Minnesota beat New Jersey after arriving late to the arena because of traffic.

The game was delayed 24 minutes after the Wild got stuck in a holiday traffic jam in Manhattan with the Holland Tunnel closed. The team bus did not arrive until 6:26 p.m. and the start was pushed back to 7:33 p.m.

Bruins 5, Sabres 1: Patrice Bergeron, David Pastrnak and Charlie Coyle each had a goal and an assist to lead visiting Boston over Buffalo.

Mike Reilly and Taylor Hall added a fifth straight goal in their own blowout victory. Toronto scored four goals in a 12½-minute span of the second, and Boudreau added a fifth straight goal in the third.

Kreider and Kevin Rooney each had three assists in a game for the Rangers, who won the second consecutive set for Carolina after losing to San Jose in overtime Monday night.

Sharks 6, Senators 3: Timo Meier scored the go-ahead goal with 8:42 remaining and added two assists as host San Jose hand- ed Ottawa its third straight loss.

Matt Nieto, Tomas Hertl, Nick Bonino, Logan Couture and Jacob Middleton also scored for the Sharks, who won their second consecutive game. James Reimer made 26 saves to earn his sixth win.

Wednesday’s games

N.Y. Rangers 4, N.Y. Islanders 1

Florida 2, Philadelphia 1, OT

Pittsburgh 4, Vancouver 1

Vegas 20 12 8 4 2 36 94 69

Western Conference

Minnesota 19 12 6 3 8 39 85 70

Nashville 19 10 6 1 2 28 52 34

St. Louis 19 9 7 2 3 28 48 23

Colorado 19 9 6 2 4 26 43 29

Los Angeles 19 8 8 1 2 28 44 23

Tampa Bay 19 8 7 2 2 24 46 24

Vegas 20 12 8 4 2 38 94 69
**Scoreboard**

**Eastern Conference**

**Atlantic Division**

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**Western Conference**

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**Northwest Division**

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**Thursday’s games**

- Miami 108, Milwaukee 111
- New York 106, L.A. Lakers 100
- Indiana 115, Denver 106
- Dallas 112, L.A. Clippers 104
- Tuesday’s games
  - Charlotte 106, Orlando 99
  - Phoenix 110, Cleveland 115
  - L.A. Lakers 124, Indiana 116
  - Brooklyn 123, Boston 104
  - Milwaukee 114, Detroit 93
  - Utah 110, Philadelphia 107
  - Toronto 116, Miami 119
  - Houston 118, Chicago 111
  - New Orleans 127, Washington 102
  - Atlanta 123, San Antonio 109
  - Golden State 116, Philadelphia 96
  - Sacramento 114, Portland 121

**Thursday’s games**

No games scheduled.

**Friday’s games**

- Detroit at L.A. Clippers
- Chicago at Orlando
- Minnesota at Charlotte
- Phoenix at New York
- Atlanta at Memphis
- Toronto at Indiana
- Washington at Oklahoma City
- Boston at San Antonio
- New Orleans at Los Angeles
- New York at Utah
- Portland at Cleveland
- Sacramento at L.A. Lakers

**Saturday’s games**

- Minnesota at Philadelphia
- New York at Atlanta
- Charlotte at Miami
- Chicago at Orlando
- Grizzlies at Washington
- Dallas at New Orleans
- Utah at L.A. Lakers

**Sunday’s games**

- Golden State at L.A. Clippers
- Milwaukee at Indiana
- Sacramento at Memphis
- Detroit at L.A.

**Calendar 2022**

- Jan. 6 – 10-day contracts may now be signed
- Jan. 10 – All Standard contracts are guaranteed for the remainder of the season
- Jan. 20 – All Two-Way Contracts are guaranteed for the remainder of the season
- Feb. 18-19 – All-Star 2022 (Cleveland)
- Feb. 18-20 – All-Star break

**Associated Press**

**CLEVELAND** — With the Suns’ long winning streak in serious danger, Devin Booker and Chris Paul knew exactly what had to be done.

Phoenix’s season is still rising.

Booker scored 35 points, had 12 assists and made four free throws in the final 8.8 seconds, and the Suns extended their winning streak to 14 games by holding off the Cleveland Cavaliers 120-115 on Wednesday.

Phoenix’s streak started with a win at home over Cleveland on Oct. 30, came after a 1-3 opening to the season for the defending Western Conference champions. The surge has also corresponded with allegations of racism and misogyny surfacing against Suns owner Robert Sarver.

“That’s just coincidence,” Paul said of the timing. “Our plan wasn’t to start out 1-3. We’ve got a great team, a great locker room. I’ve never seen anything like it.”

For nearly a month, the Suns have won in a variety of ways and Wednesday they improved the NBA’s best road record to 7-1.

It wasn’t easy.

The young Cavs gave the Suns everything they could handle, and if not for Paul, a couple of calls that could have gone either way and Cleveland’s Ricky Rubio missing three free throws in the final seconds, the streak might have ended.

The win was also the 100th for the Suns for coach Monty Williams, who is in his third season with the club.

“We didn’t get this far by playing well. You can win ugly games, Williams said. “We know we can win slug outs. I wish we could win by 30 every night. But they have a really good team. We’re just finding ways to win.”

**Lakers 124, Pacers 116:**

LeBron James made the tiebreaking three-pointer in overtime and followed with a back-breaking three in his return from the first suspension of his career to help visiting Los Angeles beat Indiana.

James finished with 39 points on 13-for-29 shooting and had six assists and five rebounds, with the Pacers playing without Anthony Davis because of flu-like symptoms.

On Sunday night in a victory at Detroit, James was ejected for striking Pistons center Isaiah Stewart in the face and drawing blood. The NBA suspended him 17 games for动手 before the arc in the second quarter.

Kevin Porter Jr. had 14 points, six assists and nine assists after missing three games because of a bruised left thigh. Second overall pick Jalen Green scored 11 points in the first quarter before exiting with a left leg injury.

Houston shot 50% from the field and made 17 of 36 three-pointers, going 8-for-11 from behind the arc in the third quarter.

Marcus Smart had 20 points and eight assists for Boston.

**Bucks 114, Pistons 93:**

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 33 points. He also added 11-22 assists to help the Warriors improve their winning streak to two.

**Rockets 118, Bulls 113:**

Rudy Gobert had 15 points and 17 rebounds.

**Bucks 114, Pistons 93:**

Marcus Smart had 20 points and eight assists for Boston.

**Bucks 114, Pistons 93:**

Bucks 114, Pistons 93:

Marcus Smart had 20 points and eight assists for Boston.

That is tied for the third-longest current winning streak by one NBA team over another.

**Jazz 110, Thunder 104:**

Donovan Mitchell scored six straight points in the final minute and visiting Utah held off Oklahoma City. Mitchell had a rough shooting night before the final surge, hitting just four of his first 14 shots. He finished with 13 points.

Jordon Clarkson scored 20 points off the bench to lead Utah.

**Kings 125, Trail Blazers 121:**

De’Aaron Fox scored 21 points before being ejected in the fourth quarter. Marvin Bagley III made a clutch three-pointer with 30 seconds remaining and host Sacramento held off Portland.

**Timberwolves 173, Heat 119:**

Malik Beasley scored a season-high 32 points, and on Wednesday night.

Boston beat Orlando.

**Raptors 126, Grizzlies 120:**

Brandon Ingram scored 26 points, and on Wednesday night.

- Mo Bamba had 18 points and 12 rebounds for Orlando.
- Raptors 126, Grizzlies 120:
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- Mo Bamba had 18 points and 12 rebounds for Orlando.
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- Brandon Ingram scored 26 points, and on Wednesday night.
- Mo Bamba had 18 points and 12 rebounds for Orlando.
2-game skid has Stafford, Rams adjusting again

By Greg Beacham  
Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. — At least until the past two games, Matthew Stafford had smoothly handled just about every aspect of the enormous adjustment in moving from the Detroit Lions to the Los Angeles Rams.

This week, he faces another new challenge: A Thanksgiving without a football game to play.

“I loved playing on Thanksgiving,” Stafford said after practice on a 77-degree Wednesday with the Rams (7-3), who travel to Green Bay on Sunday. “For the tradition, for the game, for all of that, but also ... because I was back in my house at 5, 5:30. Could have a normal Thanksgiving meal, watch some football with your family. Almost felt like a fan for a little while. And then it was fun having the next couple of days off so you could eat leftovers.”

Stafford grew to enjoy the Lions’ annual fixture of a holiday game on a short week, but he’s got plenty of work to do this week with the Rams, who are on the first losing streak of his tenure.

Back-to-back defeats heading into their bye week have forced the Rams to take stock of themselves after an eight-game start in which Stafford appeared to be capable of leading this team to the postseason.

His play in a new offensive system this eight-game stretch of his tenure.

“Fixing those problems at Lambeau Field is a particularly difficult task, as the quarterback knows well. Stafford faced the Packers 20 times during his dozen seasons with Detroit, going 7-13 into their bye week have forced the Rams to take stock of themselves after an eight-game start in which Stafford appeared to be capable of leading this team to the postseason. Stafford and Aaron Rodgers went head-to-head 16 times, with the Packers winning 12 of those.

“It’s one of my favorite places to play in the NFL,” Stafford said. “Got to do it a bunch of times. Played some fun snow games. I loved playing in the snow there. That’s what you dream about as a kid, is getting to play the Packers at Lambeau Field in the snow.”

Don’t think it’s going to snow this week, but it’s going to be nice and chilly this week, which is always fun.

Offensive coordinator Kevin O’Connell repeatedly pointed out fundamental areas for improvement in the past two games, most related to winning the turnover battle and not falling into early deficits.

“We’ve got to get off to better starts, even early downs and be efficient,” O’Connell said. “I think we can kind of, as a group, coaches included, we can all get into a rhythm early and figure out how we want to attack opponents.”

Rams quarterback Matthew Stafford, left, and teammates sit on the bench during the second half of a loss to San Francisco on Nov. 15.

By Aaron Beard  
Associated Press

PARADISE ISLAND, Bahamas — For once, Dan and Bobby Hurley are together for Thanksgiving — sort of.

The brothers are coaching in the Battle 4 Atlantis this week. Dan’s No. 22 UConn has advanced into the winners’ bracket while Bobby’s Arizona State team is playing in the consolation rounds. That ensures they won’t have the Hurley-vs.-Hurley matchup both dreaded in this eight-team tournament, and instead can now try to squeeze in a few conversations or maybe a brief get-together while bouncing between the locker room, arena and hotel towers around the Atlantis resort.

“I’m thankful that I’m going to see him and that he’s here and usually we’re always playing somewhere generally over Thanksgiving, and we don’t get to see each other,” Bobby said in an interview with The Associated Press. “So it’s just a blessing to see him, I think more so than (having a Thanksgiving) meal and things.”

The brothers said their first encounter here came as they happened to pass by each other while walking through the casino Tuesday.

“Good to see big brother,” Dan said with a chuckle.

They hadn’t seen each other since the summer recruiting season, and that followed more than a year of being separated amid the COVID-19 pandemic while leading programs on different sides of the country.

Both said the goal in the Bahamas was figuring out when there might be opportunities to connect throughout their stay for the three-day tournament, even though that would take some work.

“We’ve got practice times that are different times, we’re watching film with our teams at different times,” Bobby said. “We all have our own kind of schedules.

“It’s always better if we can do it before we start playing because then if things don’t go well for either one of us, then you really go into hiding a little bit more and you’re not as accessible for each other. That’s usually how it works for us: one guy loses and then that guy needs a little time to decompress.”

A day later, Dan’s Huskies survived a wild double-overtime win against No. 19 Auburn to earn a Thanksgiving Day matchup with Michigan State. Those extra sessions pushed back the rest of the first-round schedule, meaning Bobby’s Sun Devils ultimately ended up meeting sixth-ranked and reigning national champion Baylor in Wednesday’s final game about 45 minutes later than scheduled.

Arizona State lost that one, sending it into Thursday’s final matchup against Syracuse in the consolation bracket.

That meant the sons of legendary New Jersey high school coach Bob Hurley Sr. would continue to avoid having to coach against each other a little longer. Their only time competing in college basketball came in a 1992 matchup as players in the NCAA Tournament’s Sweet 16: Bobby with Duke on its way to a repeat championship, Dan with Seton Hall.

Bobby got his coaching start as an assistant under Dan, first at Wagner and then at Rhode Island before becoming head coach at Buffalo. He’s now in his seventh season with the Sun Devils, while Dan is in his fourth with the Huskies.

“I just think a lot of times as you get older, you give yourself maybe a couple of minutes a day where you do appreciate our journey and how this all began for us,” Dan said, “as like little kids growing up in Jersey City and playing basketball in the park. ... Now we both end up here at big-time programs, having a lot of success. Sometimes you mind drifto, like, ‘It’s been a hell of a journey.’

Hurley brothers get a chance to connect at Battle 4 Atlantis

Scoreboard

Top 25 Fared

Wednesday

No. 1 Gonzaga (6-0) did not play. Next: vs. St. Mary’s, Thursday.
No. 2 UCLA (5-1) did not play. Next: at UNLV, Saturday.
No. 3 Purdue (5-0) did not play. Next: vs. Illinois, Friday.
No. 4 Kansas (3-0) did not play. Next: vs. VCU, Thursday.
No. 5 Villanova (3-2) did not play. Next: vs. La Salle, Sunday.
No. 6 Texas (4-2) beat California Baptist 68-44. Next: vs. Sam Houston, Monday.
No. 7 Villanova (3-2) did not play. Next: vs. Iowa State, Thursday.
No. 8 Arizona (4-0) did not play. Next: vs. Arizona State, Thursday.
No. 9 Memphis (5-0) beat Virginia Tech 69-63. Next: vs. UNLV, Saturday.
No. 10 Kentucky (4-1) did not play. Next: vs. North Carolina, Friday.
No. 12 Houston (5-1) beat Oregon State 74-49. Next: vs. Florida, Saturday.
No. 13 Arkansas (5-0) did not play. Next: vs. Penn State, Sunday.
No. 14 Illinois (3-2) did not play. Next: vs. Ohio State, Saturday.
No. 15 Texas (3-1) did not play. Next: vs. Tennessee Tech, Friday.
No. 16Washington State (5-0) did not play. Next: vs. Nevada, Saturday.
No. 17 Arizona (5-0) did not play. Next: vs. Sacramento St., Saturday.
No. 18 BYU (5-0) beat Texas Southern 81-64. Next: at Utah, Saturday.
No. 19 Auburn (5-0) lost to No. 22 UConn 115-109, 2OT. Next: vs. Loyola of Chicago, Thursday.
No. 21 Seton Hall (4-2) beat Tarleton St. 96-54. Next: at North Carolina, Wednesday.
No. 22 UConn (5-0) lost No. 19 Auburn 110-109, 2OT. Next: vs. Michigan St., Thursday.
No. 23 Florida (5-0) beat Ohio St. 71-68. Next: vs. TCU, Sunday.
No. 24 Southern Cal (4-2) did not play. Next: vs. Arizona St., Thursday.
No. 25 Xavier (4-3) lost to Iowa St. 82-70. Next: vs. Virginia Tech, Friday.

Tim Aylen/Bahamas Visual Services/AP

Connecticut forward Tyler Polley is congratulated by coach Dan Hurley after making a three-point basket against Auburn during the second overtime of their game Wednesday at Paradise Island, Bahamas.
**Game:** Harbaugh winless against Ohio State as Wolverines’ coach

FROM PAGE 24

“We’ve just been preparing for that team all winter, all summer,” Ohio State senior defensive end Tyreke Smith said. “Got that game always on our minds.”

For the 24th time, The Game will be a top-10 matchup.

The Buckeyes (10-1, 8-0 Big Ten, No. 4 CFP) have dominated the series of late, winning the last eight matchups and 15 of the last 16.

Ohio State also has won the last four Big Ten championship games. The Wolverines (10-1, 7-1, No. 6 CFP) are looking for their first-ever appearance in the Big Ten title game, which was first ten Ohio State in five tries as the Wolverines’ coach.

This may be Harbaugh’s best team and best chance yet. The Michigan defense is among the top 10 in the FBS and might have a chance to slow down the Buckeyes and the nation’s most prolific offense (560 yards, 47.2 points per game).

Redshirt freshman quarterback C.J. Stroud was 32-for-35 for 432 yards and a school record-tying six touchdowns — all in the first half — in last Saturday’s 56-7 rout of Michigan State, a week after he threw for five TDs in a blowout of Purdue.

The Ohio State defense had one of its best games of the season, neutralizing Michigan State’s Heisman hopeful running back Kenneth Walker III, who gained just 26 yards.

The Buckeyes’ loss to Oregon in Week 2 is a distant memory. “The chemistry has been built on the field,” Ohio State defensive tackle Haskell Garrett said. “Each week we’ve gotten better.”

Michigan also enters the game on a high note. Cade McNamara threw for two touchdowns and Hassan Haskins ran for two in the Wolverines’ 59-18 win over Maryland last Saturday.

“We’re a confident team. We know what we’re capable of,” McNamara said. “We’re fired up and we’re ready. This is the week.”

The only blemish on the Michigan record is a 37-33 loss to Michigan State on Oct. 30.

“This year’s edition of The Game could come down to how well the revamped defense of No. 6 Michigan can slow down the prolific scoring march of quarterback C.J. Stroud and the No. 2 Buckeyes,” Ohio State coach Ryan Day said. “But, everything that was planned, built for, all the energy that was put in since way back in early 2021 — January, February — all the things that the guys have done, the coaches have done, has put us in this position,” Harbaugh said.

“That’s the position we wanted to be in, and we want to finish it.”

**Michigan defense braces for high-octane Buckeyes**

BY MITCH STACY
Associated Press

**COLUMBUS, Ohio —** Ohio State’s dazzling offensive stars are about to run into one of the best defenses they’ve seen this season.

This year’s edition of The Game could come down to how well the revamped defense of No. 6 Michigan can slow down the prolific scoring march of quarterback C.J. Stroud and the No. 2 Buckeyes.

The Wolverines have held opponents this season to an average of 16.3 points per game. Ohio State scored 49 last week — in the first half.

Something’s got to give Saturday in the Big House.

“I think that’s something that all the coaches and players on both teams are trying to figure out right now,” said Jim Harbaugh, who is 0-5 against Ohio State as the Michigan head coach. “Been spending weeks, spending every minute they can to answer that same question.”

There are huge implications. The winner moves on to the Big Ten championship game on Dec. 4 and stays in contention for the College Football Playoff. The loser drops out of the spotlight.

Stroud, a Heisman Trophy hopeful, has the Buckeyes (10-1, 8-0 Big Ten) roaring. They’re averaging an FBS-leading 560 yards and 47.2 points per game.

The redshirt freshman, who threw his first pass in a college football game less than three months ago, tied a school record-tying six touchdowns — all in the first half — as Ohio State rolled up a season-high 665 yards in last week’s blowout of then-No. 7 Michigan State. He’s averaging 345.8 passing yards.

Receivers Chris Olave, Garrett Wilson and Jaxon Smith-Njigba have combined for nearly 3,000 yards and 30 touchdowns.

“Their route-running ability, their catching ability, their speed to all parts of the field — really outstanding,” Harbaugh said.

True freshman running back TreVeyon Henderson’s average carry of 7.32 yards is second-best in the nation.

“We’ve been confident the whole year, but being able to click on all cylinders these past few weeks has boosted our confidence a lot more,” Olave said. “I feel like we’re having a lot more fun, spreading the ball around.”

Said Buckeyes tackle Nicholas Petit-Frere: “The only thing that can stop us is ourselves.”

Michigan made changes at the top after last season’s pandemic-shortened 2-4 season, replacing defensive coordinator Don Brown with Mike Macdonald, the 34-year-old former Baltimore Ravens linebakers coach.

Macdonald has leaned on a pair of top-notch edge rushers, Aidan Hutchinson and David Ojabo, and linebacker Josh Ross to help contain the run and Daxton Hill to lead the secondary.

The Buckeyes have not faced a better pass defense this season. The Wolverines (10-1, 7-1) have limited eight of their 11 opponents to fewer than 200 passing yards.

After allowing a season-high 293 to Washington in Week 2, Michigan’s opponents have managed an average of just 164 through the air.

“It’s going to be a big challenge for our guys in protection and for (Stroud) and everybody,” Ohio State coach Ryan Day said. “But, it’s also going to be the receivers, to make sure they’re getting open with separation. It’s everybody across the board. It’s the running backs picking up things. Very, very talented (defense). Very powerful on the edge. They mix up their rushes — big challenge.”
Defense brought Cowboys to first Big 12 title game

By Stephen Hawkins  
Associated Press

LUBBOCK, Texas — Mike Gundy was an Oklahoma State quarterback who handed the ball off to Barry Sanders and Thurman Thomas. As the Big 12’s longest-tenured coach, he has overseen many big-play and high-scoring offenses led by other All-Americans.

Now Gundy is just trying to stay out of the way with the seventh-ranked Cowboys being defensive-minded and headed to their first Big 12 championship game.

“It’s just important that we stay the course,” Gundy said. “I just let everybody do their job, not mess with them.”

The Cowboys (10-1, 7-1 Big 12) have a suffocating defense that is demoralizing opposing teams and their quarterbacks, allowing 164.3 yards per game and only one offensive touchdown over their past four games. The latest was a 23-0 win over a Texas Tech team that hadn’t been shut out at home since 1987 — when Gundy, now the 17th-year coach, was still quarterback for the Cowboys playing in a different league.

Asked if he could sense on the sideline how much the defense wanted a shutout Saturday night, when the Cowboys locked up their title game spot, Gundy responded, “I stay as far away as I can, so I don’t mess them up.”

Before playing in the Big 12 championship game, Oklahoma State hosts Bedlam at home in what could be the first of two games in two weeks against 10th-ranked Oklahoma (10-1, 7-1). The six-time defending Big 12 champion Sooners get into the Dec. 4 title game with a win over the Cowboys on Saturday night, or a loss by ninth-ranked Baylor (9-2, 6-2) earlier that day to Texas Tech.

“This is why I came back ... to get a Big 12 championship, and honestly beat OU,” said linebacker Devin Harper, one of Oklahoma State’s super seniors.

For these Cowboys, who haven’t beaten Oklahoma since 2014 or won a conference title since 2011 when there wasn’t a Big 12 championship game, there could be even bigger things this season.

Oklahoma State moved up from ninth to seventh in the latest College Football Playoff rankings this week after lopsided losses Saturday by Oregon and Michigan State once each over the Sooners and Baylor, which would have to get its ninth to seventh in the latest College Football Playoff rankings this week after lopsided losses Saturday by Oregon and Michigan State once each over the Sooners and Baylor, which would have to get its ninth to seventh in the latest College Football Playoff rankings.

“We take it game by game. We’ve been in the water forever, we see land and we’ve just got to keep pushing,” Harper said. “We’ve got to beat OU, and whoever we play in the Big 12 beat them, and talk about the playoff then.”

Texas Tech, which had scored in 302 consecutive games since a shutout loss at Nebraska in 1997, a decade after last being held scoreless at home, didn’t even reach 100 yards in total offense until a 25-yard pass on the final drive.

Parity comes at a price: no CFP appearance for ACC

By Will Graves  
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Pat Narduzzi still can’t make up his mind.

Back in July, the longtime Pittsburgh coach thought the College Football Playoff should stand pat at four teams. Now, with the 20th-ranked Panthers assured of a spot in the ACC title game after wrapping up the Coastal Division title, he’s not so sure.

“I’ve gone back and forth,” Narduzzi said.

With good reason. For the first time since the College Football Playoff was introduced in 2014, the ACC will be on the outside looking in when the final four is unveiled on Dec. 5 regardless of who walks off the field in Charlotte the night before with the league’s championship trophy in tow, regardless of whether it’s the Panthers, Wake Forest, Clemson or N.C. State.

All four enter the final weekend of the regular season with at least two losses. All four are well outside the CFP’s top 10 with just two weeks to go.

While the wide-open nature of the ACC in 2021 may be good for the league over the long term — the ability for coaches to go into a recruit’s living room and pitch the idea of playing in a league where a championship isn’t Clemson’s birthright but a realistic, tangible goal for multiple schools — in the short term, parity comes at a price. Literally and figuratively.

The ACC will take a modest $2 million hit for not placing a team in the CFP. It also won’t reap the benefits of the weeks-long hype machine that leads up to the two semi-finals on New Year’s Eve and now must battle the perception that it’s either in the midst of a “down” year or simply not that good in general, something that’s dogged the wildly uneven Pac-12 for much of the CFP’s existence.

Expanding the playoff to at least eight teams, with the winners of each of the Power Five’s conferences receiving an automatic bid regardless of their record, would make the hand-wringing over the ACC’s status moot.

“I think (expansion) opens up for other teams to have an opportunity to be in that (playoff) conversation for sure,” he said.

A conversation that — for this year at least — has largely gone on with the ACC failing to get a word in edgeways.

Clemson’s early season struggles knocked it all the way out of the Top 25 for the first time in seven years. Wake Forest’s flirtation with a perfect season has come crashing back to earth following losses to North Carolina and North Carolina State’s Brendon Evers sacks Texas Tech’s Donovan Smith.

The Cowboys shut out the Red Raiders for the first time since 1999, a stretch of 302 consecutive games with at least one score.

AP Sports Writers Aaron Beard, Hank Kurz Jr., Charles ODum, John Kolins and Pete Iacobelli contributed to this report.
Iron Bowl grades out as top rivalry

Writers pick Alabama-Auburn ahead of Ohio State-Michigan

By Ralph D. Russo  
Associated Press

The best college football rivalries can change over time depending on the state of the programs involved.

Go back 25 or 30 years and Miami-Florida probably would have been near the top of most lists. Nowadays, while still heated and entertaining, ‘Canes-`Noles just doesn’t capture the attention of the nation the way it did when at least one those two was at the top of the sport.

Of course, some rivalries have just gone away altogether. For decades, Nebraska-Ohio had been a lock to be one of the biggest games of the season. Texas-Texas A&M, too. Conference realignment has relegated those to the history books.

The Associated Press asked 42 sports writers and broadcasters to rank the five best rivalries in college football, with points given on a sliding scale (five for a first-place vote, four points for second, etc.).

Four longstanding series separated themselves from the rest according to the results released Tuesday. The top two, as it happens, will be renewed this weekend, with high stakes on the line for three of the four teams involved.

Auburn 165 points, 18 first-place votes  
Nickname: Iron Bowl  
Trophy: Iron Bowl  
Significant moment: No. 2 Auburn defeated No. 1 Alabama 21-20 on a drive that took 2:50 and covered 75 yards. Quarterback Bo Nix connected with wide receiver Anthony Schwartz for the winning touchdown with 1:20 left in the game.

Florida-Georgia 117 points, 12 first-place votes  
Nickname (unofficial): Golden Egg Trophy

Meetings: 117, Florida leads 63-48-6.

Signature moment: No. 7 Auburn beat No. 2 Georgia 23-20 on the final drive of the game. Quarterback Bo Nix connected with wide receiver Anthony Schwartz for the winning touchdown with 1:20 left in the game.

Signature moment: No. 1 Ohio State and No. 4 Michigan played to a 10-10 tie in Ann Arbor in 1973, creating a deadlocked atop the Big Ten standings. The game was picked by both teams.

Signature moment: In 1960, the Buckeyes entered the season finale No. 1 in the country and unbeaten, with eyes on a national title. They were knocked off by a Michigan team that came in 7-2. This game kicked off what is known as The Ten Year War in the rivalry between Schembechler and Ohio State coach Woody Hayes.

Auburn cornerbacks Chris Davis returns a missed field-goal attempt 100-plus yards to score the winning touchdown against No. 1 Alabama as time expires on Nov. 30, 2013 in Auburn, Ala.

The Associated Press
High-stakes Game

More than bragging rights on the line between rivals No. 2 Ohio State and No. 6 Michigan

By Mitch Stacy
Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — This year’s version of The Game could hardly be bigger.
The annual clash between Ohio State and Michigan, held this year on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, is already juiced by a century of tradition, mutual hatred and fanaticism.
A lot more than bragging rights are at stake this year in Ann Arbor for the No. 2 Buckeyes and No. 6 Wolverines.
The winner clinches the Big Ten East and advances to the conference championship game Dec. 4 — and stays alive for the College Football Playoff.
The loser picks up a second loss and will consider the season ruined.

SEE GAME ON PAGE 21

INSIDE
Wolverines’ defense will be tested by Buckeyes, Heisman-contending QB Stroud  

Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud was 32 of 35 for 432 yards and school record-tying six touchdowns — all in the first half — in last Saturday’s 56-7 rout of Michigan State, a week after he threw for five TDs in a blowout of Purdue.

Defensive end Aidan Hutchinson and the rest of the Michigan defense, rated among the top 10 in the FBS, match up against Ohio State, the nation’s most prolific offense at 560 yards and 47.2 points per game, on Saturday.