Putin’s attack is forcing a rewrite of US defense plans

By John M. Donnelly
CQ-Roll Call
WASHINGTON — Russia’s invasion of Ukraine will trigger a revision of U.S. defense strategy and budgets, experts say.

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s attack is still underway, and its duration and dynamics remain in flux. The United States and its allies say they have no plans to get directly involved militarily in Ukraine, which is not a member of NATO.

Even if NATO stays out of the combat in Ukraine, if Putin has his eyes set on taking back any or all of the other former Soviet states, then the world changed even more dramatically last week than most people realize. No one knows for sure if Putin has such plans. But his track record makes it imperative that America and NATO assume the worst, a growing chorus of expert observers said last week.

The upshot is that U.S. defense budgets and America’s military posture will change, the analysts said. Pentagon spending in fiscal 2022, fiscal 2023 and beyond will probably grow more than it otherwise would, an uptick that could become apparent in the next couple of weeks. Within the higher topline, more money will go toward Eastern Europe: more weapons and training for NATO allies there, and more of a U.S. military presence. Whether that means slightly less of a U.S. military focus on the Indo-Pacific region is yet to be determined. Last week’s events may also precipitate a greater role for the U.S. Army in future Pentagon plans and programs.

Biden administration officials were getting close this month to finalizing a new National Defense Strategy and National Security Strategy. Then Putin invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. As a result, those documents — and the budgets that are supposed to follow

SEE REWRITE ON PAGE 6
Stocks up, fear down despite Ukraine invasion

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Wall Street capped a turbulent week of trading Friday with a broad rally for stocks as relief flowed through the market, even as deadly attacks raged in Ukraine. Oil fell and investors turned away from gold and other traditional havens they favor when fear is high.

The S&P 500 climbed 2.2% and notched its first weekly gain in three weeks. The benchmark index rose 95.95 points to 4,384.65. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 834.92 points, or 2.6%, to a gain of 1.5%. Stocks notched gains. The Russell 2000 index rose 44.92 points, or 2.3%, to 2,040.923.

Tuesday when it careened from a 2.6% loss to a gain of 1.5%. Stocks have swung sharply with uncertainty about how much Russia’s invasion will push up inflation, particularly oil and natural gas prices, and drag on the global economy.

Such big swings are likely to continue, with so much uncertainty not only about Ukraine but also about interest rates. The Federal Reserve is caught in a delicate dance where it has to raise interest rates enough to rein in high inflation but not so much as to cause a recession.

The S&P 500 rose 95.95 points to 4,384.65. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 834.92 points, or 2.6%, to 34,058.75. The Nasdaq composite gained 221.04 points, or 2.5%, to 9,125.95. The S&P 500 rose 95.95 points to 4,384.65. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 834.92 points, or 2.6%, to 34,058.75. The Nasdaq composite gained 221.04 points, or 2.5%, to 9,125.95.

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Kyiv residents take cover amid fighting

BY YURAS KARMALIAU, JIM HEINTZ, VLADIMIR ISACHEKOV AND JAMES LAPORTA

KYIV, Ukraine — Kyiv residents braced Saturday for another night sheltering underground, as Russian troops closed in on Ukraine's capital.

Zelenskyy vowed to continue fighting the Russian assault as he appealed for more outside help.

"The real fighting for Kyiv is on-going," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a video message in which he accused Russia of hitting infrastructure and civilian targets.

"We will win," he said.

Central Kyiv appeared quiet on Saturday, though sporadic gunfire could be heard. And fighting on the city's outskirts suggested that small Russian units were trying to clear a path for the main forces.

As Russian troops pressed their offensive with small groups of troops reported inside Kyiv, the city's mayor, Vitali Klitschko, extended an overnight curfew to run from 5 p.m. Saturday until 8 a.m. on Monday, saying any civilians out past curfew "will be considered members of the enemy's sabotage and reconnaissance groups."

Russia claims its assault on Ukraine is aimed only at military targets, but bridges, schools and residential neighborhoods have been hit since the invasion began Thursday with air and missile strikes and Russian troops entering Ukraine from the north, east and south.

Ukraine's health minister reported Saturday that 198 people, including civilians, had been killed and more than 1,000 others had been wounded during Europe's largest land war since World War II. It was unclear whether those figures included both military and civilian casualties.

In Kyiv, a missile struck a high-rise apartment building near the southwestern outskirts near one of the city's two passenger airports, leaving a jagged hole of ravaged apartments over several floors. A rescue worker said six civilians were injured.

The conflict has driven thousands of Ukrainians from their homes in search of safety. U.N. officials said more than 120,000 Ukrainians had left the country for Poland, Moldova and other neighboring nations.

Zelenskyy reiterated his openness to talks with Russia in a video message Saturday, saying he welcomed an offer from the leaders of Turkey and Azerbaijan to organize diplomatic efforts, which so far have faltered. A day earlier, Zelenskyy offered to negotiate a key Russian demand: to abandon its claim to Crimea and recognize Ukraine's 101st brigade reported destroyed the Russian military convoy was destroyed before dawn Saturday as it headed for the dam of the sprawling water reservoir that serves Kyiv, and Ukraine said a Russian military convoy was destroyed near the city early Saturday. Footage showed soldiers inspecting burned-out vehicles after Ukraine's 101st brigade declared itself and destroyed a column of two light vehicles, two trucks and a tank. The claim could not be verified.

Highways into Kyiv from the east were dotted with checkpoints manned by uniformed Ukrainian troops and young men in civilian clothes carrying automatic rifles. Low-flying planes patrolled the skies, though it was unclear if they were Russian or Ukrainian.

In addition to Kyiv, the Russian assault appeared to focus on Ukraine's coastline, which stretches from near the Black Sea port of Odessa in the west to beyond the Azov Sea port of Mariupol in the east.

If the Russian troops succeed, Ukraine would be cut off from access to all of its sea ports, which are vital for its economy. In Mariupol, Ukrainian soldiers guarded bridges and blocked people from the shoreline amid concerns the Russian navy could launch an assault from the sea.

Fighting also raged in two territories in eastern Ukraine that are controlled by pro-Russian separatists. Authorities in the city of Donetsk said hot water supplies to the city of about 900,000 were suspended because of damage to the system by Ukrainian shelling.

The U.S. government urged Zelenskyy early Saturday to evacuate Kyiv but he turned down the offer, according to a senior American intelligence official with direct knowledge of the conversation. Zelenskyy issued a defiant video recorded on a downtown Kyiv street early Saturday, saying he remained in the city.

"We aren't going to lay down our weapons. We will protect the country," the Ukrainian president said.

"Our weapon is our truth, and our truth is that it's our land, our country, our children. And we will defend all of that."

Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have been on the move, seeking safety in the west of the country or beyond. The U.N. estimated that up to 4 million could flee if the fighting escalates.

Refugees arriving in the Hungarian border town of Zakony said men between 18 and 60 were not being allowed to leave Ukraine.

"My son was not allowed to come. My heart is so sore, I'm shaking," said Vilma Sugar, 68.

Hungary and Poland both opened their borders to Ukrainians. At Poland's Medyka crossing, some said they had walked for 15 miles to reach the border.

They didn't have food, no tea, they were standing in the middle of a field, on the road, kids were freezing," said Iryna Wiiklenko as she waited on the Polish side for her grandchildren and her daughter-in-law to make it across.

Officials in Kyiv urged residents to seek shelter, to stay away from windows and to take precautions to avoid flying debris or bullets.

Many spent Friday night in basements, underground parking garages and subway stations, and prepared to do the same on Saturday.

Sheloves were thin at some Kyiv grocery stores and pharmacies, and some worried how long stockpiles of food and medicine might last.

The U.S. military announced $350 million in assistance to Ukraine to help it field more anti-tank weapons, body armor and small arms. Germany likewise said it would send missiles and anti-tank weapons.

The U.S. and its allies have beefed up troops on NATO's eastern flank but so far have ruled out deploying troops to fight Russian forces.

Instead, the U.S., the European Union and other countries have slapped wide-ranging sanctions on Russia.

Zelenskyy appealed for tougher sanctions, urging holdout countries in Europe to agree to cut Russia out of the SWIFT international payments system.

A senior Russian official on Saturday shrugged off the sanctions as a reflection of Western "political opportunism."

Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's Security Council, warned that Moscow could react to the sanctions by opting out of the last remaining nuclear arms pact, freezing Western assets and cutting diplomatic ties with nations in the West.

"We are not in any particular need in maintaining diplomatic relations," Medvedev said. "We may look at each other in binoculars and gun sights."
Some 120K Ukrainians are seeking refuge

Associated Press

MEDYKA, Poland — Dragoing suitcases and carrying children, tens of thousands of Ukrainians rushed to the borders Saturday as invading Russian troops pressed their advance into Ukraine, moving toward the country’s capital of Kyiv.

Nearly 120,000 people have so far fled Ukraine into Poland and other neighboring countries in the wake of the Russian invasion, the UN refugee agency said Saturday. Some walked many miles through the night while others fled by train, car or bus, forming lines miles long at border crossings. They were greeted by waiting relatives and friends or headed on their own to reception centers organized by neighboring governments.

“This may go up, it’s changing every minute,” said Shabia Mantoo, the spokeswoman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. “It’s very fluid and changing by the hour.”

The agency expects up to 4 million Ukrainians could flee if the situation deteriorates further.

Those arriving were mostly women, children and the elderly after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy banned men of military age from 18 to 60 from leaving. Some Ukrainian refugees walk along vehicles lining up to cross the border from Ukraine into Moldova, at Mayak-Udobe crossing border point near Udobe, Ukraine, on Saturday.

In contrast to other conflicts around the globe, Russia’s unprovoked attack on the Western-looking democracy has ignited a huge outpouring of support for the fleeing Ukrainians. This included an unconditional welcome from nations like Poland and Hungary that did not want to accept those fleeing conflict and poverty in the Middle East and Africa.

Regular people were also opening up their homes to refugees and volunteering at welcome centers. In Poland, a Facebook page was formed where people were offered rides in private cars from the border and other help.

Volunteers even came from elsewhere in Europe to pick up refugees, among them a German couple who were deployed missiles and bombers, and envisages sweeping on-site inspections to verify compliance. The pact, the last remaining U.S.-Russia arms control treaty, has been in effect since 2010 and is set to expire in February 2021 but Moscow and Washington extended it for another five years.

Russian official issues stark threats to West

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Moscow may respond to Western sanctions by opting out of the last nuclear arms deal with the U.S., cutting diplomatic ties with Western nations and freezing their assets, a senior Russian official warned Saturday as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine continues.

Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia’s Security Council chaired by President Vladimir Putin, also warned that Moscow could restore the death penalty after Western sanctions were removed from Europe’s top rights group—a chilling statement that shocked human rights activists in a country that hasn’t had capital punishment for a quarter-century.

The sanctions placed new tight restrictions on Russian financial operations, imposed a draconian ban on technology exports to Russia and froze the assets of Putin loyalists, a harsh response that dispersed Western restrictions. Washington and its allies say that even tougher sanctions are possible, including kicking Russia out of SWIFT, the dominant system for global financial transactions.

In sarcastic comments posted on a Russian social platform, Medvedev dismissed the sanctions as a show of Western “political impotence” that will only consolidate the Russian leadership and feed anti-Western feelings.

“We are being driven out of everywhere, punished and threatened, but we don’t feel scared,” he said, mocking the sanctions imposed by the U.S. and its allies as an attempt to vindicate their past “shameful decisions, like a cowardly retreat from Afghanistan.”

Medvedev, who is a former president in 2008-2012 when Putin had shifted to the prime minister’s seat because of term limits. He then let Putin reclaim the presidency and served as his prime minister for eight years.

During his tenure as president, Medvedev was widely seen as more liberal compared with Putin, but on Saturday he made a series of threats that even the most hawkish Kremlin figures haven’t mentioned to date.

Medvedev noted that the sanctions offer the Kremlin a pretext to completely review its ties with the West, suggesting Russia could opt out of the New START nuclear arms control treaty that limits the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals. The treaty, which Medvedev signed in 2010 with then-U.S. President Barack Obama, limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers, and envisages sweeping on-site inspections to verify compliance. The pact, the last remaining U.S.-Russia arms control treaty, has been in effect since 2010 and is set to expire in February 2021 but Moscow and Washington extended it for another five years.

Ukrainian men were heading back into Ukraine from Poland to take up arms against the Russian forces.
Fort Riley brigade’s rotation in Europe extended amid invasion

By John Vanderiver
Stars and Stripes

RZESZOW, Poland — A U.S. Army tank brigade’s nine-month rotation to central and eastern Europe that was slated to end within weeks has been extended, Army officials said Friday, in a decision that comes in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

The 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, based out of Fort Riley, Kan., is deployed in places such as Poland, Romania and Latvia on a mission to deter Russian aggression in the region.

“We can confirm that 1ABCT, 1ID has been extended,” U.S. Army Europe said in a brief statement.

The decision to extend soldiers at the tail end of an already lengthy deployment underscores how concerned U.S. military officials have become in connection with Russia’s war on Ukraine, where fighting has stretched across large swathes of the country.

While U.S. President Joe Biden has repeatedly said there is no military role for the U.S. inside Ukraine itself, forces are being added to reassure allies and send a signal of American resolve to Moscow.

The Pentagon already has moved about 5,000 U.S.-based troops to Europe. And in the days and weeks ahead, about 7,000 more U.S. service members will be dispatched to the Continent.

The largest contingent is coming from the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, Ga.

In addition to those crisis response deployments, the 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division from Fort Carson, Colo., is headed to Europe as part of a preplanned rotation in support of the Pentagon’s Atlantic Resolve Campaign, which is focused on deterring Russia.

The Fort Carson soldiers are the replacement unit for the 1st Armored Brigade out of Fort Riley.

Now that the unit’s mission has been extended, the Army could have three U.S.-based brigades on European soil simultaneously.

The idea of rotating tank brigades to Europe was developed in response to Russia’s initial intervention in Ukraine in 2014. At the time, the U.S. military had no tanks in Europe left — the last were sent back to the U.S. in 2013 as part of a long post-Cold War drawdown.

The Army gradually has reconstituted its forces in Europe, with added rotational forces, pre-positioned weapons stockpiles and more forward-based units.

New NATO battlegroup in Slovakia will include Patriot defense system

By John Vanderiver
Stars and Stripes

RZESZOW, Poland — A new NATO multinational battlegroup that includes the Patriot missile air defense system will be set up in Slovakia, officials announced Saturday.

The 1,200 troop-strong unit will include forces from several countries, including the U.S. and Germany, Peter Bator, Slovakia’s representative to NATO, said in a statement.

Poland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands also will join the battalion in Slovakia. Germany and the Netherlands will contribute troops and the Patriot air defense system, Bator said.

The move comes as NATO takes new steps to strengthen its position in central and southeastern Europe, where other battlegroups are also expected to be rolled out in the near future. France already has volunteered to lead a battlegroup in Romania.

The plans will resemble similar NATO military units that were set up in the Baltic states and Poland after Russia’s 2014 military intervention in Ukraine.

Moscow’s more recent buildup around Ukraine, and subsequent attack on the country launched earlier this week, has prompted NATO to take a wide range of steps in recent days to shore up defenses in Russia’s periphery.

On Friday, the alliance, for the first time in its history, activated elements of the NATO Response Force to reinforce member states in the east.

The administration official said there would also be $3.5 billion for the Defense Department but provided no detail. The sums could change based on events in Ukraine and the needs of allied countries, the people describing the phone call said.

All three people spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss it publicly.

The $6.4 billion was less than the “well above $10 billion” figure that Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., told reporters he expected earlier Friday.

Coons, chairman of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that controls foreign aid and State Department expenditures, had coached his figure by calling it “an initial guess.”

Coons said he expected the administration’s request to cover the costs of helping millions of Ukranian refugees who could flee to Poland and nearby NATO countries and supporting those nations’ armed forces.

He also seemed to suggest that U.S. aid to Ukraine could continue should it fall to Russian forces, saying there is “strong enthusiasm” for providing money to repay supply, train and “whatever other covert and overt support is necessary and appropriate for the Ukrainian resistance.”

Coons said the money would also cover the expenses of monitoring and enforcing U.S. sanctions against Russia and for the Pentagons’s bills for deploying the 7,000 additional American troops that President Joe Biden has ordered be sent to Europe.
Analysts expect more attention on Europe

FROM PAGE 1
from them — may be undergoing last-second changes.
Putin’s attack “definitely raises the importance of countering and deterring Russia in overall U.S. national security strategy,” said Todd Harrison, a defense budget expert with the Center for Strat- egic and International Studies, in an email. Experts have noted some rewriting going on for the NSS and NDS right now to reflect that real-

Portent of more war?
Putin in 2005 called the dissolu-
tion of the Soviet Union the “great-
est geopolitical catastrophe” of the 20th century. In a speech last week, he suggested Ukraine exists on historically Russian land. In be-
tween, he has seized at least part of the country that was formerly part of the Soviet empire.

President Joe Biden and mem-
bbers of Congress from both parties said last week that Putin, in fact, wants to recreate the Soviet Union by force. That’s true, then the in-
vasion of Ukraine is not Putin’s last move toward that end. In his crosshairs going forward, then, could be an arc of nations to Rus-
sia’s west — from the Baltic states down to Georgia.

“Put has much larger ambi-
tions than Ukraine,” Biden said on Feb. 24. “He wants to, in fact, rees-
tablish the former Soviet Union. That’s what this is about.”

And Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., chairman of the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee and a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, told reporters on Friday that “Pu-
tin’s aggression will not stop with Ukraine” and “there are other for-
mer Soviet republics that he will consider next, whether Moldova, Armenia or Georgia.”

Coons, who just returned from Eastern Europe, said Putin’s stated goal is “to reassemble as much of the Soviet Union as he can.”

Unmistakable trend
Barry Pavel, a former top offi-
cial in the Pentagon and National Security Council, said in an inter-
view that the world entered a more dangerous period of history sever-
al years ago, and last week’s events cast it in bold relief.
Pavel, now a top analyst with the Atlantic Council, cited Putin’s mil-
tary and political incursions over more than a decade in all or part of Georgia, Crimea, Ukraine’s Don-
bas region, Moldova, Belarus and

now the entirety of Ukraine.

“Is there a trend here we should step back and take a look at?” he asked sarcastically. “I do not have any confidence that we under-
stand the limits of Putin’s ambi-
tions.”

Andrea Kendall-Taylor, a for-
ter top Russia expert at the Office of the Director of National Intelli-
gence, believes Putin is focused for now on Ukraine, not other countries, but she said there is still a risk that his position could change — depending on how much the West pushes back.

“If this response is not suffi-
ciently strong, that could in time lead Putin to overestimate his ca-
pabilities, and the cycle could con-
tinue if we don’t put an end to the cycle now,” Kendall-Taylor said

Paratroopers of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, place their equipment inside a tent as they settle into their new location in southeastern Poland on Feb. 19.

Members of the 82nd Airborne Division clean weaponry ahead of a deployment to Poland from Fort Bragg, N.C., on Feb. 14.

The training will focus on Rus-

sia’s periphery, such as bom-
bers and cruise missiles, “I think we will see accelerated growth on the continental U.S.”

Perhaps the most lasting effect on Pentagon budgets will be politi-
cal, Harrison predicts. As a result of what is shaping up as the biggest war in Europe since World War II, support in Congress will grow for a higher Pentagon budget, he said. That may be seen in the coming weeks as the fiscal 2022 appropri-
ations are enacted and the fiscal 2023 budget is charted.

The forthcoming budgets will in-
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The training will focus on Rus-

sian operational tactics displayed in Ukraine, Harrison predicted.

The weapons will also flow, ex-

Now more than ever, there is still a risk that nearby NATO allies, if not the United States, could soon be ensured in the fight, some experts say.

If, for example, a country such as Poland were to harbor those supplying anti-Russian insurgents in Ukraine, then Poland, a NATO member, could become a Russian target and draw in other NATO nations, Kendall-Taylor said.

And the effects of Russian cyberattacks in Ukraine could be felt in neighboring NATO nations, she added.

“The spoiler question is a real one,” she said.

More NATO near Russia

The Pentagon and allied mili-
taries had already started to pre-
pare in recent years for this grow-

ing threat. The United States has, for example, appropriated nearly $1 billion since fiscal 2015 on the European Deterrence Initiative, helping to arm and train European allies and strengthening U.S. forces in the region. The Pentagon has fought another $3.7 billion for fiscal 2022. American military construction funds have been spent upgrading runways and other facilities in countries such as Estonia.

And last week, the Pentagon moved thousands of troops who had been in the United States or Western Europe to the territory of Eastern European NATO allies such as Poland. Alongside the per-
sonnel have come American ar-
mored vehicles, fighter jets, attack helicopters and other weapons.

Supplies of so-called lethal defen-
sive weaponry to Ukraine have al-
so grown in recent years.

More such support is coming,
experts predict. Lawmakers are still negotiating the fiscal 2022 de-

tence spending bill and Biden’s fis-

cal 2023 request is in the final stages of development. Like the strategy documents, revisions are no doubt being made in the bud-

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“I think we will see accelerated efforts to sell and transfer higher-
end equipment to our NATO allies on the eastern front, particularly when it comes to advanced mis-

siles and munitions,” Harrison said. “I would expect to see more

anti-tank, anti-ship, and anti-air-
craft missiles, as well as air and missile defense systems.”

Pavel, for his part, predicted more of an offensive bent to the weapons that NATO stations on Russia’s periphery, such as bom-
bers, cruise missiles, and new cruise missiles.

Putin “is going to get a lot more NATO close to his borders than he’s ever seen before,” Pavel said.

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Members of the 82nd Airborne Division clean weaponry ahead of a deployment to Poland from Fort Bragg, N.C., on Feb. 14.
**Calif. reps ask for new water study at Ford Ord**

By Martha Mendoza

SANTA CRUZ, Calif. — Two California congress members are asking the federal government to study whether there’s evidence that potential toxic contamination in the drinking water at Fort Ord can be tied to specific cancers and other diseases.

“Our nation owes a debt of gratitude to our servicemembers and their families,” said Reps. Katie Porter and Jimmy Panetta in a letter to the director of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. “By conducting a new study at Fort Ord, we may guarantee that those harmed while serving our country get the medical care they need.”

The request follows an Associated Press report last week about hundreds of people who lived and served near the Army base who are concerned that their health problems might be tied to chemicals there.

In 1990, four years before it began the process of closing as an active military training base, Fort Ord was added to the Environmental Protection Agency’s list of the most polluted places in the nation. Included in that pollution were dozens of chemicals, some now known to cause cancer, found in the base’s drinking water and soil.

The AP interviewed nearly two dozen of these veterans and reviewed thousands of pages of documents, and interviewed military, medical and environmental scientists.

There is rarely a way to directly connect toxic exposure to a specific individual’s medical condition. Indeed, the concentrations of the toxics are tiny, measured in parts per billion or trillion, far below the levels of an immediate poisoning.

Local utilities, the Defense Department and some in the Department of Veterans Affairs insist Fort Ord’s water is safe and always has been. But the VA’s own hazardous materials exposure website, along with scientists and doctors, agree that dangers do exist for military personnel exposed to contaminants.

Responding to AP’s report, a Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee spokesman said its chair, Montana Democrat Jon Tester, believes the “VA should take this and any potential toxic exposure among our military men and women seriously, and keep working to provide a fresh look at the possibility of toxic exposures at Fort Ord which may be causing adverse health effects in veterans.”

The problem is not just at Fort Ord. This is happening all over the U.S. and abroad, almost everywhere the military has set foot, and the federal government is still learning about the extent of both the pollution and the health effects of its toxic legacy.

AP found the Army knew that chemicals had been improperly dumped at Fort Ord for decades. Even after the contamination was documented, the Army downplayed the risks.

And ailing veterans are being denied benefits based on a 25-year-old health assessment, which Porter and Panetta Friday said needs an update. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry concluded in 1996 that there were no likely past, present or future risks from exposures at Fort Ord.

But that conclusion was made based on limited data, and before medical science understood the relationship between some of these chemicals and cancer.

Congress has been weighing legislation this month that would provide benefits to people harmed by impacts from some military toxic exposures, particularly burn pits. And the Wounded Warrior Project released findings from a survey of about 18,000 registered members that found 98% of wounded veterans reported exposure to hazardous toxic substances during military service.

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**Navy to court-martial sailor in Bonhomme Richard arson case**

By Andrew Dyer

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — A 28-year-old sailor will face a military trial on charges he deliberately set the fire that destroyed a $1.2 billion warship on the San Diego waterfront in 2020, the Navy announced Friday.

Seaman Recruit Ryan Sawyer Mays, a former seaman on the amphibious assault ship Bonhomme Richard, is charged with aggravated arson and the willful hazarding of a vessel in connection with the four-day fire that destroyed most of the ship. Vice Adm. Steve Koehler, the commander of the San Diego-based U.S. 3rd Fleet, issued the order to send the case to trial on Wednesday, according to court documents.

“After careful review of the preliminary hearing report, (Koehler) referred charges” against Mays, said Cmdr. Sean Robertson, a 3rd Fleet spokesman. “Charg- es were brought in response to evidence found during the criminal investigation into the fire that started on the former USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) on July 12, 2020.”

Mays was notified Friday, said Gary Barthel, Mays’ San Diego-based civilian lawyer. Mays de-

nies the charges against him, Barthel told the Union-Tribune in an interview. “He maintains his innocence — always has,” Barthel said when reached by phone Friday. “He’s not happy to be going to court-martial but he’s determined to prove his innocence.”

The notification of trial came as a surprise to Mays, Barthel said, because a military judge recommended against proceeding to trial.

At a preliminary Article 32 hearing at Naval Base San Diego in December, Navy prosecutors made their case against Mays in front of a hearing officer, Capt. Angela Tang, a Navy judge. During the three-day hearing, witnesses for both the prosecution and defense testified about the fire and about comments Mays allegedly made in the days and weeks afterward.

In the military justice system, Article 32 hearings fill the role that in the civilian system, that eviden-
tiary standard is elevated to the stricter “beyond a reasonable doubt.”

According to Barthel, Tang’s report recommended against going to trial over concerns about the evidence.

“She put a lot of time and consideration into her report,” Barthel said. “She was meticulous in her preliminary hearing and considered the evidence. She not only listened to witnesses but took time to question them. Her recommenda-
tion to the Navy was that the case not refer to trial based on issues with evidence.”

In the military system, legal matters fall under a single “convening authority” who makes the final decisions on whether to send a case to trial and even whether a guilty verdict is upheld. In this case, that authority is the 3rd Fleet admiral, Koehler.

Koehler’s spokesman declined to comment on Tang’s recom-
men-
dation and, citing the in-
tegrity of the legal process, de-
clined to comment on Barthel’s as-
sertion that he was concerned about the strength of the evidence against Mays. Both the Navy and Barthel also declined to provide the Union-Tribune with a copy of Tang’s report.

Robertson, Koehler’s spokesman, said only that the admiral’s decision came after “thoroughly reviewing the enti-
ty of the hearing officer’s report.”

Sailors first reported seeing smoke on board the Bonhomme Richard’s trial preparation mission was to transport Marines and de-

liver them to a beachhead in am-

phibious vehicles and aircraft — at 8 a.m. on Sunday, July 12, 2020, near the ramp down to its lower vehicle storage area, or “lower V.” The ship was nearing the end of an almost two-year, $250 million upgrade to accommodate Marine Corps F-35B fighters. A Navy investigation found the ship and its crew ill-prepared to battle the blaze, with sailors slow to re-
spond and shipboard fire stations missing equipment or out of com-
mision that morning.

Two hours passed before fire-
fighters from the San Diego Fire- Rescue Department first put wa-
ter on the flames. By then, it was too late, and the ship burned more than four days before the fire was extin-

guished. Everything from the waterline up was destroyed. In De-

cember 2020, citing potential re-

sources, the Navy announced the 22-year-old ship would be scrapped.

It was decommissioned and towed out of San Diego in April.
Swing votes key in court fight

By Mary Clare Jalonick
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden and Senate Democrats say they have passed a tipping point of swing votes to confirm Ketanji Brown Jackson to the Supreme Court.

That won't be easy, but some Republicans have expressed an openness to voting for Biden's nominee, who currently sits on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit and would be the first Black woman on the Supreme Court. Republican Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina voted last year to confirm Jackson for her current position.

As senators review Jackson's record, some Republicans may drop hints about whether they are willing to vote for Jackson, who would replace liberal Justice Stephen Breyer. But senators in both parties often withhold their support until after they meet with the nominee and confirmation hearings are held.

Democrats will also keep an eye on their own moderate flank. Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona. Neither has indicated, so far, that they would vote against Biden's choice, and they have voted for all his other nominees.

Senators to watch as the confirmation process begins:

■ Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine
Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Chuck Grassley announced one of his first calls to Collins after Justice Stephen Breyer announced in January that he will retire this summer. The Maine senator, who voted against Justice Amy Coney Barrett, former President Donald Trump's nominee for Supreme Court in 2020, is perhaps Democrats' best chance for a Republican crossover vote.

■ Asked about Jackson before she was nominated, Collins said she would "certainly give her every consideration" but she had not met her personally and would have to look at her more recently. On Friday, Collins said she would conduct a "thorough vetting" and meet with the nominee in the coming weeks.

■ Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. — Graham pushed Biden to pick a South Carolinian — federal court judge J. Michelle Childs. While the White House said Childs was under consideration, the president eventually picked the more experienced Jackson instead.

Unlike almost all of his current colleagues, the mercurial Graham has long said the Senate should confirm a president's nominees, no matter the party. But he said earlier this month that if the nominee wasn't Childs, whom he considers more moderate than Jackson, his vote would be more "problematic."

■ Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska — Along with Collins, Murkowski is one of the most moderate Republican members of the Senate and has expressed concerns about whether the court could overturn the landmark Roe v. Wade decision guaranteeing a right to an abortion. But she is up for reelection this year in her conservative state, and she has signaled she may not be inclined to cross party lines.

In a statement Friday, she said she looks forward to meeting with Jackson but "I've been clear that previously voting to confirm an individual to a lower court does not signal how I will vote for a Supreme Court justice."

■ Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa — Grassley, the top Republican on the Judiciary panel, is a longtime member of the committee and oversaw the confirmation of two of Trump's three picks as the then-chairman. He will almost certainly vote against Jackson's nomination, but his role will nonetheless be important as Republicans strategize over how much to criticize her and whether to throw up procedural hurdles to slow the nomination.

While some Democrats have speculated that Judiciary committee Republicans may boycott a committee vote, a move that could delay the confirmation, Grassley said he intends to "show up and do the job that Iowans pay me to do."

■ Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz. — Manchin and Sinema drew the ire of liberal groups, and many of their fellow Democrats, after they helped block a wide-ranging package of Biden's signature policy goals. But that opposition has not carried over to Biden's judicial nominees, as both senators have voted for every single one of them.

Neither has given any indication they will oppose his Supreme Court pick. Manchin said on a West Virginia radio show last month that "It would be the character of the person" that matters, even if the nominee is more liberal than he is.

Sinema said in a statement that Jackson's nomination "represents a historic milestone for our country" and she will consider it based on whether she is "professionally qualified, believes in the role of an independent judiciary, and can be trusted to faithfully interpret and uphold the rule of law."

Top GOP on Senate Armed Services Committee retiring

By Svetlana Shkolnikova
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Sen. Jim Inhofe, the top Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, announced Friday that he will retire at the end of the current congressional session after decades in office.

The 87-year-old Oklahoma legislator will step down on Jan. 3, four years before the end of a six-year term he won in 2020. He was first elected to Congress as a member of the House of Representatives in 1987 and became a senator in 1994.

"Today's announcement is not the end of the road," Inhofe said in a statement. "I have work yet to do for Oklahomans over these next nine months, including passing the National Defense Authorization Act and holding the Biden administration accountable."

Inhofe's retirement will leave a Republican leadership vacancy on the powerful Senate committee overseeing military affairs, where he has long held sway over Department of Defense policies. Inhofe succeeded the late Sen. John McCain as chairman of the committee in 2017 but lost the post when Democrats took control of the Senate in January 2021.

Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., is in line to succeed Inhofe as the ranking Republican on the committee and could become chair if the GOP retakes the Senate in November mid-term elections. An Army veteran, Inhofe is among the Senate's most conservative members. He advocated for a strong U.S. military presence around the world and pressed for robust spending on defense.

Inhofe endorsed his chief of staff, Luke Holland, to replace him in a special election in November to "continue my legacy of a strong national defense," according to a letter Inhofe sent to the Oklahoma legislature.

Treasury: Most COVID rental aid went to low-income residents

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More than 80% of the billions of dollars in federal rental assistance aimed at keeping families in their homes during the pandemic went to low-income tenants, the Treasury Department said.

It also concluded Thursday that the last round of tenants receiving pandemic aid were Black followed by female-led households. In the fourth quarter of 2021, Treasury found that more than 40% of tenants getting help were Black and two-thirds of recipients were female-headed households. The data was consistent with what Treasury saw through the year.

"This is money that flows from Treasury to every state and territory in the country, and we really have seen a real focus on getting these dollars," said Noel Andries Poyo, the deputy assistant secretary for Community Economic Development at Treasury.

"It has been encouraging from my point of view to see states that are very diverse and to see these agencies lean into something really hard, it was really tough to stand up these programs, this data reflects where the need was."

According to the Eviction Lab at Princeton University, those most likely to face eviction are low-income women, especially women of color. Domestic violence victims and families with children are also at high risk for eviction.

"It's really encouraging to see so much of the rental assistance reaching those most in need: women, Black renters, and low-income households in particular," Peter Hepburn, a research fellow at the Eviction Lab, said. "These are the groups that face highest risk of eviction and who were most severely affected by the economic impacts of the pandemic. They're the ones that this money was meant to help."

Lawmakers approved $46.5 billion in Emergency Rental Assistance last year. After early challenges getting the funds out, the pace of distribution has picked up significantly in recent months. Throughout 2021, over $25 billion has been spent and obligated. That represents 3.8 million payments to households, Treasury said Thursday.

The agency's findings on beneficiaries showed their efforts to reach low income communities the past year had paid off.
By Curt Anderson and Lindsay Whitehurst  

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — The “stand your ground” self-defense law had been in effect in Florida for more than six years when it became part of the national vocabulary with the death of Trayvon Martin in 2012. When the 17-year-old was shot on the streets of Osceola County, just south of Orlando, it was still one of the few states with the law that removes the duty to retreat before using deadly force in the face of danger.

Now, upward of 30 states have some form of the law and recent research indicates they are associated with more deaths — as many as 700 additional firearm killings each year, according to a study published last week in the journal JAMA Network Open.

The study found that stand your ground laws in those states could be associated with a national increase of up to 11% in homicide rates per month between 1999 and 2017. The increase was greatest in Southern states including Alabama, Florida, Georgia and Louisiana, the study found.

“These findings suggest that adoption of (‘stand your ground’) laws across the U.S. was associated with increases in violent deaths, deaths that could potentially have been avoided,” the study’s authors said.

Advocates for the laws, especially the National Rifle Association, have argued they act as a deterrent to murder by self-appointed neighborhood watchmen and white father and Hispanic mother.

The initial police report said Zimmerman called authorities to report a suspicious person, a guy who, he said, “looks like he’s up to no good.” He followed Martin despite instructions not to do so.

In the confrontation that followed, Zimmerman would tell authorities, Martin attacked him, forcing him to use his gun to save himself. Zimmerman was allowed to go free.

Martin’s parents questioned Zimmerman’s version of events and eventually the news media followed, deaths that could potentially have been avoided,” the study’s authors concluded.

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Zimmerman’s lawyers opted not to pursue a “stand your ground” claim before trial, which could have resulted in the dismissal of the murder charges against him and immunity from prosecution. But the law was essentially used as his self-defense argument during the trial, which resulted in his acquittal.

Civil rights attorney Ben Crump, who was involved in the Martin case, called the Florida law a “virtual get-out-of-jail-free card that is essentially a license to kill.”

Today the battle rages. Gun rights supporters argue people should not have to try to retreat before defending themselves, said Alan Gottlieb, founder of the Second Amendment Foundation.

He pointed to a Florida homeowner who recently shot and killed a man suspected of shooting a police officer as the man tried to break into his house.

While that case could have been covered by other self-defense laws, Gottlieb said “stand your ground” laws offer “realistic.”

“It’s made a very big difference in self-defense situations,” he said.

Three new states passed laws last year moving the duty to retreat: Ohio, Arkansas and North Dakota, where its sponsor said the legislation “ensures someone will have the ability to run away prior to protecting themselves or their family.”

Six more loosened requirements to carry guns in public by removing the requirement to get a permit, the largest number of any single year. More than 20 states now allow permitless carry.

The U.S. Supreme Court also is expected to issue a ruling this session on whether New York’s restrictive gun permitting law violates the Second Amendment right to “keep and bear arms.” The law’s defenders have said striking it down would lead to more guns on the streets of cities including New York and Los Angeles.

Gun control activists say the increasing presence of guns and laws like “stand your ground” are a deadly combination.

“Laws like ‘stand your ground,’ or shoot first laws, give people like Jordan’s killer, my son’s killer, the idea that you can shoot first and ask questions later,” said Rep. Lucy McBath, who entered politics after her son Jordan Davis was slain at a Florida gas station in 2012 by a white man who was angry over the loud music the Black teenager and his friends had been playing in their car. Michael Dunn ultimately was convicted of a second-degree murder charge in his defense, but was convicted and is serving a life sentence.

Likewise, Rovina Billingslea’s family has never been the same. Her cousin Jasmine McAllee, a mother of two, was killed at the hands of an intimate partner near Orlando about four years ago. The shooting was later acquitted under “stand your ground” law, leaving her family reeling.

“There was no justice, no closure for my family,” McAllee said.

There are new efforts to push back against the backdrop of rising gun violence: Lawmakers from 19 states have signed on to a new task force aimed at amending or repealing the laws, especially in Georgia, Kansas and Pennsylvania, as well as Florida.

The push is backed by Everytown for Gun Safety and Moms Demand Action, whose founder Shannon Watts said they should be called “shoot first laws” since they differ significantly from other self-defense laws already on the books.

Since the Martin slaying, Florida amended its “stand your ground” law to shift the burden of proof from the person claiming self-defense to the prosecutor handling the case.

Prosecutors and many police organizations have opposed the laws, contending they can protect criminals and hinder the police from bringing justice to fatal shootings.

“Stand your ground’ laws provide safe harbors for criminals and prevent prosecutors from bringing cases against those who claim self-defense after unnecessarily killing or injuring others,” said David LeBahn, president and CEO of the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, in testimony to Congress.

Retired officer acquitted in shooting over cell phone spat

Associated Press

A Florida jury on Friday acquitted a retired police SWAT commander of murder for fatally shooting a fellow moviegoer during an argument over cell phone use.

Retired Tampa police Capt. Curtis Reeves, now 79, had been charged with second-degree murder for killing Chad Oulson during an altercation at a suburban movie theater on Jan. 13, 2014.

During closing arguments, defense attorney Richard Escobar said that Oulson, 43, made Reeves, then 71, reasonably believe his life was in danger by turning, yelling and reaching toward him. He said Reeves made the decision to shoot based on his nearly 30 years in law enforcement and hours of training on the justifiable use of deadly force.

Reeves didn’t have to wait until he was hit before defending himself, Escobar said.

Reeves “had more knowledge, more experience, more study in that area than anyone in this courtroom,” Escobar said. “It’s a dangerous world.”

But prosecutor Scott Rosenwasser countered that Reeves killed Oulson because he threw popcorn in his face, angering him because it violated his self-image as an “alpha male.”

“Did he have anything?” Rosenwasser said.

No one disputes most of the basic facts. Reeves and Oulson did not know each other. They had gone with their wives to see a matinee showing of the Afghan War movie “Lone Survivor,” the Reeveses taking seats in the back row, the Oulsons one row in front of them, slightly to the right.

As the previews began and despite an announcement to turn off cell phones, Oulson continued texting his 22-month-old daughter’s day care. Reeves leaned over and told him to stop — Reeves says politely, Oulson’s widow and others say it sounded like an order. After Oulson bluntly refused, perhaps with profanity, Reeves went to complain to the manager.

When Reeves returned, seeing Oulson grabbing Reeves’ popcorn bag, tossing it at him and Reeves away, he told Oulson that if he intended he could not have defended himself.

Reeves testified Thursday that in his entire law enforcement career he had never encountered someone so out of control and he feared he was about to be killed.

Given his training in self-defense situations, he said it was physical “fragile egg” despite having just come back from a hunting trip and Oulson being out of control. He said he never fired his gun as he moved through the robbery/homicide bureau, fugitive apprehension and SWAT, yet somehow this movie theater argument over a cellphone escalated to the point where Reeves faced the most out-of-control, scariest person he ever faced and had to shoot.

“In his entire career that is the most he has ever been scared? Absolutely unreal,” Rosenwasser said.

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Biden’s speech will come amid crises, setbacks

Associated Press
WASHINGTON — The last time President Joe Biden addressed a joint session of Congress, he said the country was “ready for takeoff” after a period of plague and strife. It’s been a more turbulent flight than expected. Biden is scheduled to deliver his first State of the Union speech on Tuesday night at a moment when he’s struggled to deliver on many of his original promises and as he is being forced to confront new crises.

The gap between the two major speeches — the first one was last April — is the story of a presidency that has repeatedly needed to recalibrate its ambitions.

Although Biden reached a bipartisan deal on an infrastructure plan, many of his other proposals have been jettisoned or left languishing with no clear path to becoming reality. He followed through on his pledge to remove U.S. forces from Afghanistan, but the chaotic withdrawal left the Taliban in control and a looming humanitarian crisis. Meanwhile, the coronavirus evolved into new, more contagious variants that increased the pandemic’s death toll despite the widespread availability of vaccines.

And most recently, Russian President Vladimir Putin has expanded his invasion of Ukraine, plunging Europe into war and hijacking Biden’s foreign policy agenda.

“These speeches go through many, many drafts,” said Michael Waldman, president of the Brennan Center for Justice and a former chief speechwriter for President Bill Clinton. “And I would bet they’re starting some new drafts right now.”

He added: “Two weeks ago the speechwriters probably thought they knew what was in the speech. Vladimir Putin had other ideas.”

Traditionally, State of the Union speeches focus on domestic issues. But Waldman said this one is a chance for Biden to outline the stakes of the crisis in Ukraine, especially as Americans remain wary of becoming involved in foreign conflicts and worry that economic ripple effects could drive up gas prices.

“This is a really important opportunity for the president to talk about Russia’s appalling attack and to put it in the context of why it matters,” Waldman said.

Biden is preparing his speech during one of the most consequential stretches of his presidency. In addition to the expanding invasion of Ukraine, on Friday he announced Ketanji Brown Jackson as his nominee for the Supreme Court seat being vacated by Justice Stephen Breyer, who is retiring.

Jackson, a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, would be the first Black woman to serve on the nation’s highest court if she is confirmed by the Senate.

The nomination kicks off a closely watched process in the Senate, where Democrats have a slim majority.

Michael Beschloss, a presidential historian, said that for Biden, the State of the Union speech is “going to be one of the largest audiences he has, and it happens at the confluence of historic moments.”

“One is really an opportunity for a president to lift his voice above the noise,” Beschloss said. “He doesn’t have very many of those opportunities.”

J&J and 3 distributors finalize $26 billion landmark opioid settlement

Associated Press
CAMDEN, N.J. — Drugmaker Johnson & Johnson and three major distributors finalized nationwide settlements over their role in the opioid addiction crisis Friday, an announcement that clears the way for $26 billion to flow to nearly every state and local government in the U.S.

Tapped together, the settlements are the largest to date among the many opioid-related cases that have been playing out across the country. They’re expected to provide a significant boost to efforts aimed at reversing the crisis in places that have been devastated by it, including many parts of rural America.

Johnson & Johnson, AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health and McKesson announced the settlement plan last year, but the deal was contingent on getting participation from a critical mass of state and local governments.

Friday was the deadline for the companies to announce whether they felt enough governments had committed to participate in the settlement and relinquish the right to sue. The four companies notified lawyers for the governments in the case that their thresholds were met, meaning money could start flowing to communities by April.

“We’re never going to have enough money to immediately cure this problem,” said Joe Rice, one of the lead lawyers who represented local governments in the litigation that led to the settlement. “What we’re trying to do is give a lot of small communities a chance to try to change some of their problems.

While none of the settlement money will go directly to victims of opioid addiction or their survivors, the vast majority of it is required to be used to deal with the epidemic.

The need for the funding runs deep. Kathleen Noonan, CEO of the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers, said a portion of the settlement money should be used to provide housing to people with addictions who are homeless.

“We have clients who have a hard time staying clean to make it in a shelter,” she said. “We would like to stabilize them so we can help them recover.”

GOP tests midterm message not focused on Trump’s grievances

Associated Press
ORLANDO, Fla. — The Republi- can Party’s leading conservatives have spent several days in Florida focused on the issues they believe will help the GOP retake control of Congress this fall — and perhaps the White House soon thereafter.

Largely unmentioned? Former President Donald Trump and his chief grievances.

Lies about election fraud, the focus of last year’s Conservative Pol- itical Action Conference, have been an afterthought for the open- ing days of this year’s four-day af- fair. Some high-profile speakers distanced themselves from Trump’s approving rhetoric toward Russian President Vladimir Putin, who launched an invasion of Ukraine shortly before the gather- ing. Some didn’t mention Trump’s name.

Instead, those most likely to seek the Republican Party’s presiden- tial nomination in 2024 rallied in favor of more parental control of schools, rallied against any mention of systemic racism and rejected pandemic-related mandates.

The unified message from more than a half-dozen top elected offi- cials, delivered to thousands of mostly white activists at an annual event ever not known for moderation, will be tested when Trump delivers the keynote address Satur- day night. But with momentum heading toward the 2022 midterms, Republicans are increasingly opti- mistic they have found a forward- looking strategy to expand the GOP’s appeal and win back women and independents who fled the par- ty during Trump’s presidency.

“There are people that perhaps have never voted the same way any of you have in a presidential race and they’re really angry,” Florida Sen. Marco Rubio told conservative activists Friday. “And that’s why I believe that for all the negative we’ve heard, the pendulum is swinging.”

Democrats have reason to be concerned if Republicans can stay focused.

The party is clinging to paper- thin majorities in the House and Senate, and voter sentiment has swung in an ominous direction for Democrats since President Joe Bi- den took office. In an AP-NORC poll conducted Feb. 18-21, 70% of Americans said the country was headed in the wrong direction. As few as 44% said the same in April 2021.

And as public opinion shifts, the GOP is drawing on the same playbook that Virginia’s Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin used last fall to win in a state Trump lost by 10 points a year earlier. Youngkin avoided Trump and his biggest grievances, including the false rota- tion that the 2020 presidential elec- tion was plagued by mass voter fraud.

It was much the same this week in Florida.

Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley, who tried to block the certification of Bi- den’s electoral victory after the Jan. 6 Capitol attack, sidestepped a question about whether he would challenge Trump in a 2024 pro- spective matchup.

“I’ve said I’m not planning to run for president,” Hawley told report- ers before his speech, which fo- cused on Biden’s foreign policy challenges and the teaching of sys- temic racism.

Hawley also declined to say whether he wants Trump to run again in 2024: “I never give him ad- vice, including on this.”

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference Friday in Orlando, Fla.
NC  LENOIR — Police in North Carolina have arrested a man who they say attempted to rob a convenience store using a lighter and a can of spray de-icer.

Lenoir police said in a news release that a man entered a store and handed the cashier a note demanding money, the Hickory Daily Record reported. The cashier refused and the man sprayed the de-icer and ignited it with the cigarette lighter, causing a small fire near the cash register that was quickly extinguished, the news release said. No injuries were reported.

Logan Ryan Jones, 29, of Lenoir, was arrested at his home by Caldwell County sheriff’s deputies, the news release said. Jones, who had an outstanding warrant for accessory to a felony, was also charged with attempted robbery with a dangerous weapon and burning certain buildings.

IA  DES MOINES — The parents of a newborn child who was fed and changed by a stranger at a Des Moines hospital is suing the hospital and the man.

Police have said the man, Adam Wedig, entered the neonatal intensive care unit at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center on Dec. 27 and fed the child and changed a diaper before leaving. He got into the NICU through a secure door when a nurse was leaving, according to the criminal complaint.

Wedig was charged in February with misdemeanor trespassing. He has a history of legal trouble related to substance abuse, according to court records.

The suit accuses MercyOne of not having adequate security measures and not complying with existing security measures. The lawsuit also names the Des Moines Police Department, the Des Moines Register, the nonprofit's inaugural #BeTheGift Challenge, with individuals and organizations challenging others to become organ donors, according to a news release. The success of the campaign came during a record-breaking year. More than 400 Tennesseans donated organs in 2021, and nearly 2,500 donated tissue. But at least 3,000 Tennesseans are still waiting for transplants.

Man accidentally sets self on fire aboard bus

NE  YORKTOWN — Authorities in southeastern Nebraska say a man trying to smoke drugs in a bus bathroom accidentally set himself and the bus on fire.

The incident happened aboard a Burlington Trailways bus on Interstate 80 in York County, the York News-Times reported.

Firefighters put out the fire in the bus bathroom with a fire extinguisher, officials said.

Investigators said the fire was started by a 33-year-old man from Brunswick, Ga., who suffered upper body burns in the fire and was taken to a York hospital for treatment. He was later arrested on suspicion of arson and possession of a controlled substance.

NE  YORKTOWN — The driver of a party bus ends in crash

ME  PORTLAND — An 18-year-old charged with having homemade explosive devices in his backpack discussed plans to travel to Chicago to attack a mosque and other houses of worship, federal prosecutors said.

Xavier Pelkey, of Waterville, Maine, was in communication with two juveniles about his plans to attack a mosque, and possibly a synagogue, prosecutors said.

Federal agents discovered three improvised devices in Pelkey’s backpack during a search of his Waterville apartment on Feb. 11, according to documents filed in U.S. District Court.

The devices were made of firework bundles together with staples, pins and thumb tacks to create shrapnel if detonated, an FBI agent wrote.

Pelkey is charged with possession of an unregistered destructive device, a felony that carries a potential penalty of 20 years in prison.

Man gets 4 years for stealing checks from mailboxes

ND  BISMARCK — The father of a 4-year-old boy who fired a gun at police told investigators the child had gotten ahold of the weapon before, according to police documents.

The child stuck the gun out of a car window as police arrested his father, who had brandished his gun at McDonald’s workers over an incorrect order, police said.

An officer spotted the gun and instinctively swept it away, sending the shot into the side of the building in Midvale, Utah, said Sgt. Melody Cutler with Unified Police of Greater Salt Lake.

Both the boy and a 3-year-old sibling were taken into the care of child-welfare workers and will be interviewed as part of the investigation. Their father, a 27-year-old recent transplant from Georgia, is being held without bail on suspicion of felony child abuse and threat with a deadly weapon.

He acknowledged that “this was not the first time his son had gotten ahold of his gun,” investigators wrote.
**Spoon returns with a ‘great rock ’n’ roll record’**

by Mark Kennedy

Associated Press

The band Spoon has taken a sonic fork in the road and, appropriately enough, the first single from their new album mentions another piece of silverware—a knife.

“The Hardest Cut” — complete with the line “we live on a knife” — roars with a dark, grunge-meets-'70s guitar energy, a signal of what’s to come from the Texas-based band on their 10th album, “Lucifer on the Sofa.”

“We wanted to make a rock ‘n’ roll record, a great rock ‘n’ roll record,” frontman Britt Daniel said. “I just don’t feel like there’s enough great rock ‘n’ roll records being made these days.”

“Lucifer on the Sofa,” released Feb. 11 via Matador Records, is a turn toward muscular, minimalist classic rock, more aggressive and rehearsed than the band’s previous album, “Hot Thoughts,” on which synths were prominent and songs constructed on the fly.

“We always tend to want to react a bit against the record we just did. That last record was more of a pieced together record, a produced record. It was a record where a lot of times we started recording and we didn’t know what the song really was,” Daniel said.

For “Lucifer on the Sofa,” drummer Jim Eno said Spoon tried to lean into Texas rock and early ZZ Top, using more real instruments than effects.

“The stuff that sounds like a band playing in a room has always been the kind of records that we grew up listening to. So it was trying to capture some of that,” Eno said.

Daniel estimates the new album was two-thirds done when the pandemic hit in March 2020. “I found myself with a lot of alone time and I wrote a lot more songs. That was the thing that kind of made me feel normal during the harshest part of lockdown,” he said.

While some songs the band had been kicking around for a few years, several were informed by the pandemic, including “The Devil & Mister Jones” about a bad dude and “Wild,” about the drudgery of life.

“We like to challenge ourselves and not repeat ourselves,” Eno said. “I feel like some bands may just have the exact same formula over and over again, and I feel like we try not to do that.”

The album starts with a cover of Smog’s “Hold” and chugs along in a rock vein until getting spacey with “Astral Jacket” and “Satellite,” before taking a weird, cool detour with the title track.

“The Lucifer on the sofa is me,” Daniel said. “It’s the character that I can become when I’m at my worst. And I think a lot of people have that same kind of character. Nobody is the same person at all times, and at times of distress, bad things tend to come out.

“Whenever I recognize that person come out, I try to get past it. My way of trying to get past it in this song is to get up off that sofa.”

Members of Spoon have lately returned to Austin full-time and Daniel said he’s most enjoying listening to live music again.

“It’s a town where it’s all about live performances and bands that are doing it because it’s fun and not doing it with an eye on the music industry,” he said. “It’s the life I like.”

Spoon is getting great reviews for the new album; Paste called it “the sound of a band in peak form who are pushing to get better, go further and resist any temptation to slack off.”

That’s a far cry from the days when Spoon were dropped by Elektra Records and had difficulty convincing anyone to put out their “Girls Can Tell” album.

Daniel was advised to change the band’s name. It was considered damaged goods.

“Maybe that would have been the smart thing to do, but we didn’t do it that way,” he said. “We somehow found an audience and then labels were more welcome to putting out our records.”

The band plans to tour, starting April 6 in Boston.

Daniel and Eno are eager to play live again and happy how “Lucifer on the Sofa” ended up. “I think Britt’s writing the best songs that he’s ever written,” Eno said. “When you’re in a band with a great songwriter, everything can fall together a lot more easily.”
Vedder’s new album
a star-studded delight

By MICHAEL RIETMULDER
The Seattle Times

Two years ago, Eddie Vedder stood in a lounge-y Hollywood event space, packed with industry types and high-end speakers, to premiere Pearl Jam’s 11th studio album, “Gigaton.” With a twinkle in his eye, Vedder hinted, as modestly as possible, he felt the band captured “a little sort of magic” in what is arguably the Seattle giants’ best album in the latter half of their career.

Whatever sparked that magic or pixie dust Vedder brought to the “Gigaton” table may have helped ignite his new solo album, “Earthling.” While it’s a completely different record than “Gigaton,” Vedder’s first solo album in 11 years, released last week, is equally inspired, its twists and turns more cohesive with fewer songwriting heads coming together.

Touring in support of the album, Vedder assembled an all-star band, The Earthlings, featuring Red Hot Chili Peppers drummer Chad Smith, ex-Chili-turned-PJ touring member Josh Klinghoffer and producer/guitarist Andrew Watt, who all feature heavily on “Earthling.” Joining the core four on the road are Jane’s Addiction bassist Chris Chaney and Vedder’s singer-songwriter bud Glen Hansard, who’s also opening the shows.

Here are five things to know about “Earthling.”

Producer Andrew Watt is a Pearl Jam superfan

At first glance, the Vedder-Watt connection that sparked “Earthling” seems like a serious odd couple. What common ground would the 57-year-old rock great who helped upend popular music in the ’90s have with a 31-year-old pop producer whose résumé highlights involve working with Justin Bieber, Miley Cyrus and Post Malone? Turns out Watt is a die-hard PJ fan, who told Variety he’s seen the band 40-plus times, despite being in diapers.

Producer Andrew Watt

Vedder recruited some serious star power

Presumably, one of the cooler aspects of being a famous rock guy is having a famous rock guy’s Rolodex. Even beyond the all-star band, those connections were put to good use on “Earthling,” with Vedder at times leaning into sounds more associated with his collaborators. A jumping piano rocker duet with Elton John (“Picture”) has the Rocket Man squarely in his element, sounding like he wants to bust out one of his old piano handstands.

Elsewhere, the Tom Petty-channeling “Long Way” appropriately features Heartbreakers keyboardist Benmont Tench on the organ.

And living Beatle Ringo Starr hops behind the kit on the playfully regal “Mrs. Mills,” with its strings and horns giving off slight “Sgt. Pepper” vibes by the end. The title’s a nod to a fabled 1965 upright piano once used by British pianist Gladys Mills, which the Beatles and others later recorded with at Abbey Road Studios.

Stevie Wonder plays harmonica on a punk song

On the other end of the spectrum, the album’s splashiest guest, Stevie Wonder, takes a walk on Vedder’s punk side, coloring “Try” — a rambunctious, full-sprint bop — with country-blues harmonica licks. The airtight ripper is possibly the first Stevie Wonder song one could legitimately mosh to, which is kinda weird and unexpectedly satisfying.

“Try” is a highlight among a trio of up-tempo rockers — including the mealy “Good and Evil” and “Rose of Jericho” — in the album’s back half.

Vedder’s late biological father sings on ‘On My Way’

Vedder never met his biological father, a well-known piece of his childhood that inspired Pearl Jam smash “Alive.” But in a roundabout connection through former Chicago Cubs player and trumpeter Carmen Fanzone, Vedder got his hands on a CD of his father, an amateur musician, singing a handful of songs. Clips of his father’s sampled voice lace the album’s beautifully haunting coda, “On My Way.”

‘Brother the Cloud’ speculation

Last month, Vedder released one of the album’s most poignant tracks, “Brother the Cloud,” as a single, its lyrics prompting speculation among fans that the mournful, midtempo rocker is about the loss of Chris Cornell and/or Vedder’s half-brother who died in a climbing accident in 2016. Thus far, Vedder’s declined to detail the song’s inspiration, telling The New York Times only that he’d “rather leave it interpretive.” But the lyrics certainly seem to deal with grief and anger spurred by an unexpected loss of a loved one.

Eddie Vedder performs Feb. 3 with The Earthlings at the Beacon Theatre in New York.
True-crime OBSESSION

There’s a reason for fascination with cold cases, serial killers and the worst in human nature

By Martha Ross
The Mercury News

One day in 2007, I found myself in the basement of the Contra Costa County Superior Courthouse in Martinez, Calif., staring at a partial bloody footprint on the lid of a plastic bin. The footprint looked markedly similar to the tread on the bottom of the teenage boy’s shoe I held in my hand. I had fallen down a true-crime rabbit hole. Somehow I had hoped that seeing the shoe and footprint in person would help me make sense of a gruesome murder I’d covered as a reporter. A teenager who had gone to my high school had been convicted of bludgeoning his 52-year-old female neighbor to death.

Even after the boy’s conviction, I scour public records, hit up my plum book of uncorroborated theories on mid-2000s message boards. And, yes, my curiosity led me into a courthouse basement to search through boxes of crime scene evidence. Fifteen years later, I don’t have more clarity on this case, but I know I’m not alone in going down a rabbit hole in a high-profile crime, even when the results are elusive.

In her 2018 New York Times bestseller, “I’ll Be Gone in the Dark,” the late author Michelle McNamara wrote about her obsession with uncovering the identity of the Golden State Killer, before the arrest of Joseph DeAngelo. And retired cops and amateurs have spent decades trying to name the Zodiac, the terrorizing figure linked to five Bay Area murders in the late 1960s.

More casual consumers of true crime feed a genre that sprawls across TV networks, streaming services, podcasts, movies, Facebook and Reddit groups and the annual CrimeCon convention. Fans of murder and missing-person narratives consistently push crime documentaries to No. 1 spots on Netflix. And last fall, so-called web sleuths feverishly tracked the ill-fated road trip of Gabby Petito and Brian Laundrie, making the 22-year-old womanseeks a national sensation.

Petito and Brian Laundrie, making the 22-year-old womanseeks a national sensation.

Petito and Brian Laundrie, making the 22-year-old womanseeks a national sensation.

But beyond the satisfaction of playing detective, people are hard-wired for empathy. It’s in our nature to want to understand why people do terrible things, especially people who could be our neighbors, classmates or co-workers, said David Schmid, an associate professor of English at the University of Buffalo. “I think the more confusing and complicated and frustrating the world around us is, the stronger that desire is to have something make sense. I think that’s a big part of the fascination with mystery and cold cases,” Schmid said.

Crime stories appeal to our visceral instincts and fears for our safety, said Scott Bonn, a criminologist and author of “Why We Love Serial Killers: The Curious Appeal of the World’s Most Savage Murderers.” Like Greek tragedies, horror movies and roller coaster rides, these stories allow us to experience terror in a controlled way — the adrenaline rush followed by catharsis. Bonn noted that producers arrange their true-crime shows accordingly. The shows allow people to live in the “nightmare” of a crime but end with a resolution — police finding a body or arresting the criminal.

“They are like little morality plays,” he said, “and in the end, justice prevails.”

Indeed, a concern for justice is part of the attraction of true-crime cases for people avidly following a case in the media or for an investigative writer such as McNamara, who wanted the victims of the Golden State Killer to find relief with his arrest.

“The look for me was that the case seemed solvable,” McNamara wrote.

Sadly, McNamara died in 2016, two years before authorities identified the Golden State Killer as DeAngelo, an ex-police officer living in Citrus Heights, Calif. Paul Holes, the former Contra Costa County criminalist who helped find the DNA link between a relative of DeAngelo’s and one of the crime scenes, credited McNamara with uncovering details that weren’t in the original case files.

When questions about a case linger, public interest grows. It’s that need for “a story” for why a crime happened, said Jennifer Buckholtz, a Los Gatos, Calif.-reared criminal justice professor at the American Military Institute, who investigates cold cases as a volunteer.

Buckholtz is gratified that she helped provide that “story” for people following the long-unsolved 2004 murder of 22-year-old Rebekah Gould, an Arkansas college student. Buckholz’s work helped police identify a suspect, news that also provided answers for Gould’s family.

“(Rebekah’s dad) told me countless times, I just want the guy involved, ‘I want the story,’” Buckholtz said.

Experts chart Americans’ fascination with true crime back to the sensationalist media coverage on both sides of the Atlantic of Jack the Ripper, who murdered and mutilated women in London in the late 1880s. Throughout the 20th century, the American public devoured lurid, dime-store crime novels, gangster movies, high-minded non-fiction like Truman Capote’s “In Cold Blood” and the circus-like coverage of cases from the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby to the trial of O.J. Simpson.

Schmid believes the fascination with true crime went “mainstream” in the late 1980s or ’90s. “Before, someone’s fascination might be their dirty secret,” he said. But he noticed the shift during the 1992 Academy Awards when “The Silence of the Lambs,” the thriller about FBI profiling of serial killers, went so far as to win best picture.

Schmid argues that our enduring fascination with the world of crime can serve another important human need: to create “a more just and equal society.”

Thoughtfully crafted narratives can bring attention to policing, the court system, human behavior and social policy, he said. More recently, the genre has made room for magazine articles, documentaries and podcasts about wrongful convictions and police abuses.

“This form of popular culture has so much potential to be exploitative and problematic,” Schmid said, “yet I also think it has the potential to do good.”
Spam texts increased 57% in 2021, most likely because scammers realize people are becoming more familiar with spammy phone calls. While they are annoying, there are ways to deal with them before they can mess with your accounts, devices and wallet.

Rules of engagement

Expert tips for stopping those annoying spam texts

**By Tatum Hunter**

*The Washington Post*

Spam texts are a strange mix of predatory, nonsensical and too good to be true. I get a dozen texts every week filled with weight-loss psychobabble, while my husband is dogged by technically-legal-but-still-not-awesome political outreach and fearmongering.

First, the bad news: These texts aren’t going away any time soon. A report from spam-blocking app RoboKiller found that spam texts increased 58 percent in 2021 from 2020. That’s a big jump, and it’s likely because scammers are realizing that people are too familiar with phone scams to fall for them at the same rate, RoboKiller vice president Giulia Porter said.

Now, the good news: You can take steps to receive fewer spam texts, and if you do fall for one, there are ways to pump the brakes before scammers further mess with your accounts, devices or wallet.

**Don’t open links.** Links in spam texts usually usher you to the next step in the scam, like entering a username and password. Clicking a link also signals to the scammer that you’re interested, and they may follow up with more texts or calls.

**Don’t reply “STOP.”** Legitimate businesses are required by law to stop texting you if you opt out, usually by texting “stop.” But scammers don’t care. Replying “stop” just lets them know there’s a real person on the other end of their outreach.

**Whenever possible, don’t share your phone number.** I want that 15% discount at ASOS as much as the next girl, but once you share your phone number with a company, it’s hard to know where it goes afterward. The fast-and-loose data market makes it easy for scammers to get their hands on names and phone numbers. To combat that, you can always provide burner phone numbers generated by an app like Google Voice or DoNotPay. Take a minute to make your phone number private on your Facebook account, Porter suggested, and Google your number to see where it may be publicly listed.

Keep in mind, though, that even if you guard your phone number with your life, scammers still punch in numbers randomly.

**Block the sender.** Blocking each spam sender is an annoying game of whack-a-mole, but at least it keeps them from texting you again. On an iPhone, open the conversation (without clicking any links in their message) and tap the phone number at the top of the chat. Then, tap “info,” and select “block this caller” at the bottom of the screen. On my Android phone, I opened the conversation, tapped the three little dots at the top right, selected “details,” then tapped “block & report spam.”

**Report spam texts to your carrier.** If you’ve got the time and desire, copy the offending text by opening the conversation (without clicking any links in their message, and send it to the number 7726 (it spells “spam”). When prompted, copy and paste the spammer’s number and send that, as well.

**Report scams to the Federal Trade Commission.** This won’t reduce scam texts in the moment, but it helps the FTC keep tabs on shady characters. If you fall for a text scam, it’s not the end of the world, Bauinger said. Most scams involve multiple steps, so clicking one link is unlikely to lead to your downfall, he noted.

Nevertheless, engaging with a text scam makes you vulnerable, so if you talked on the phone with a bad actor or provided any personal information on a fake log-in page, it’s good to call your bank and credit card providers and let them know what happened. They can turn on alerts and keep an eye out for suspicious account activity.

Other helpful steps are resetting your online passwords (I highly recommend a password manager) and restoring your device to a backed-up version from before the scammer got access. That second tip may require some IT help — we recommend finding a local trusted computer shop with good reviews on Google or Yelp that offers tech support and house calls.

Hubs provide additional connectivity for Macbooks

**By Gregg Ellman**

*Tribune News Service*

Users of the new Apple MacBook laptops, which tend to have limited USB-C ports, know how essential it is to add a USB-C hub so as to increase the capacity of connections. USB-C hubs expand the number of USB-C ports for important functions such as power delivery and Ethernet, and also include memory card ports and USB-A ports for accessories.

Satechi has been listening to customer needs, offering versatile USB-C hubs and adapters. The latest is the Satechi plug-and-play USB-C Pro Hub Mini. The new devices do not need any drivers or installation software.

The USB-C Pro Hub Mini becomes an extension of the existing built-in USB-C hubs by plugging into those computer ports, giving users a secure connection.

In addition to a pair of USB-C hubs (one has power delivery) to compensate for the two it takes up with its mounting connection, you get two USB-A ports, a port for a network Gigabit Ethernet cable and a 3.5mm audio connection.

My hub testing was with a 2020 MacBook Pro M1, which does not have the audio port on the same side as the USB-C ports. Satechi anticipated this scenario. The 3.5mm connection goes on the same side of the hub with the USB-C computer connections, and those who do not need the audio port can fold it in.

Some specs of the Pro Hub Mini ($69.99) include a USB4 port (USB-C) to support up to 6K 60HZ display output and up to 40 Gbps of data transfer. The other USB-C data port supports up to 5 Gbps. The USB-A data also accommodates up to 5 Gbps. It measures 3.97-by-1.5-by-0.47 inches and is available in Apple-matching silver or space gray.

When using the USB-C Pro Hub Mini as power delivery, it provides 96W of charging power, so check the requirements of your computer.

Satechi has also launched the Thunderbolt 4 Dock ($299.99) and USB-C Multiport MX ($179.99), and USB-C Multimedia M1 ($149.99) adapters for more optimized and efficient desktop workspaces. An AC adapter is included to give the Thunderbolt 4 an external power boost to run any high-powered peripherals. The other ports include three Thunderbolt 4, four USB-A, a 3.5mm audio jack port, Gigabit Ethernet and UHS-II card readers. It can support power delivery of up to 96W, dual 4K HDMI video and up to 40 Gbps data transfer.

The Satechi USB-C Multiport MX adapter has dual HDMI monitor connections for a 4K HDMI display to support up to 60Hz on one and 30Hz on the other. The other ports provided are Gigabit Ethernet, dual USB-C (with 100W power delivery), dual USB-A 3.0, a 3.5mm audio port and micro/SD card readers. The Multiport MX adapter has a built-in USB-C cable for connecting to a computer.

The USB-C Multimedia M1 adapter has six ports, including dual USB-C, dual HDMI 4K HDMI ports (60Hz/30Hz) and two USB-A 3.0 data ports. One USB-C supports PD charging up to 85W, and the other data port is rated up to 5 Gbps. The adapter connects to a computer’s USB-C port through its built-in cable.

Online: satechi.net
Russia's cyber campaign of chaos should fail

By Pammy Olson

B y the time the shells started falling, the assault in cyberspace had already arrived.

At close to 5 p.m. local time on Wednesday in Ukraine, and within hours of a military invasion by Russia, a new form of destruction was already wreaking its havoc. Government websites were offline in regional capitals within minutes of the conflict beginning, and news organizations quickly reported widespread attacks.

The benefit is that Ukraine's commercial and public sectors have become better prepared for cyber attacks. After Wednesday day's attack, military and banking websites reportedly recovered quickly thanks to their preparedness and swift work to mitigate the damage. Kyiv Post's website, at the time of this writing, was up and running.

The latest cyberattack is nothing like a targeted strike against a major system, like the Stuxnet worm that disrupted Iran's nuclear program in the early 2000s. Russia's goal is to sow chaos, confusion and fear, not just in Ukraine but among its Western allies.

It shouldn't work. Western governments contemplating harsh sanctions against Russia are weighing up the potential cyber blowback, with the global damage caused by NotPetya a fresh memory. But Russia looks unlikely to deploy its full cyber arsenal against Ukraine, and its potential targets look better prepared thanks to years of experience.

The United Kingdom, for example, has built up a formidable cyber defense force aimed at deterring action from aggressors like Russia. U.S. Cyber Command, run by National Security Agency Director Paul Nakasone, has a similar stance on deterrence and has no doubt carried out its own offensive in Russian cyberspace, too.

Then there are the limits on Russia's own capabilities. The NSA's Nakasone has said he directs a cyber defense workforce of roughly 100,000 with an eye toward creating new kinds of hybrid warfare. The ombudsman and questions from readers, and monitors coverage for fairness, accuracy, timeliness and balance. The ombudsman email at ombudsman@stripes.com, or by phone at +1 202 886 0003. During the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003: "Tell "What we have seen since 2013 have been largely harassment-type attacks, low level. Some had effects which lasted some months but most were relatively short-lived," Austin added. Russia's military intervention during the Syrian civil war in 2015, for instance, saw surprisingly little use of offensive cyber operations by Russia. That raises questions not only about the resources of Russia's military intelligence division, the GRU, but the "imagination" of senior leaders in the Kremlin for launching cyber attacks, according to Austin.

"What we have seen so far is that they are no more likely to succeed than I believe that an impact part of Russia's assault on Ukraine will continue to be digital. But if it continues to be as limited and chaotic as some cybersecurity experts expect, that should give Western allies the confidence they need to bring down sanctions, and bring them down hard."

Despite past success, this invasion is Putin's riskiest

By Max Boot

Spezial to The Washington Post

There are no certainties in war.

I am impatient with both President Biden and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin. Austin's stance that Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine is a stroke of "genius" and those who insist it is a historic blunder. The truth is somewhere in between.

Putin's invasion began with a successful attack on Chechnya in 1999. Russian forces besieged the capital, Grozny, killing thousands, and soon took control of the entire breakaway republic. While Chechnya was never fully annexed, Putin, after being finalessed by the United States for the first time, was able to establish control by installing a mini-dictator, first Akhmad Kadyrov, then his son Ramzan Kadyrov. Putin in 2021, when he came to power, promised to combat terrorism, which remain under Kremlin control. Geor- gia, in 2008. Just in five days, the Russians drove out of the outskirts of Tbilisi but did not take the capital. Instead, the invaders secured Rus- sia's borders with Ukraine, and they continue to occupy territory which remain under Kremlin control. Georgia's ambitions to join NATO lay shattered.

In 2014, after the overthrow of a pro-Russian ruler in Kyiv, Putin launched his first in- vestigation in Moldova. "What's going on, "— Le., Russia troops in uniforms without insignia — took control of Crimea. Meanwhile, Russian-backed separatists launched a war in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine that has continued to the present day and now serves as a pre- test for a wider invasion of Ukraine.

Then came the 2015 Russian intervention in Syria. With Russia's ally Bashar Assad on the verge of being toppled, Putin sent in the Russian air force and a number of other mercenary and special forces to rescue him. With indiscriminate bombing of urban areas and even hospitals, the Russians killed thou- sands of civilians — but they did help save a regime that would otherwise have been a murderous regime. Putin defended predictions from then-President Barack Obama that Syria would turn out to be a Vietnam-style "quag- mire" for Russia. Instead, it turned into a train- ing ground for the kind of high-tech war that Putin is now unleashing on Ukraine.

It is easy to see how this long record of mil- itary success can lead Putin, who has ruled un- challenged for more than two decades, to imagine that he can now turn Ukraine into a satrapy. But the war he just unleashed on Ukraine is considerably more challenging than the ones he has previously waged.

Ukraine's military, while inferior to Rus- sia's, is superior to those of all the other foes Russia has fought over the past two decades. Russia's military aggression has been met by Ukrainians more nationalistic and pro-West- ern. One poll shows that support for Ukraine in joining NATO has risen from 34% in 2013 to 62% today.

Russia is in the early stages of an offensive that Putin says is designed for the "demilitarization and denazification" of Ukraine — a country with a Jewish president. The re- sponse has been to plug Ukrainian cyber attacks. But then what? As Gen. David Petraeus said during the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003: "Tell me how this ends."

The 190,000 troops that Putin has assem- bled to invade Ukraine are sufficient to effect regime change — but, as Petraeus recently noted, they are completely insufficient to control a country of more than 43 million people. What has Russia done to prepare for this? The sand Russia could use to fix it. Russia has already shunted[c] offline hundreds of Ukrainian computers, according to researchers at cybersecurity firm ESET. Time stamps on the malware suggested the attack had been in preparation for almost two months. Government, bank- ing and media websites were shuttered offline in distributed denial of service attacks. Kyiv Post, a popular English-language news site in Ukraine, said Thursday morning that its website was under constant attack.

But Ukraine has been here before. For years, it was the world's punching bag for Russian cyber aggression. Its citizens suffered blackouts from disruptions to its electricity grid in 2015 and 2016, and Ukraine's government and financial system were crippled by cyber attacks in 2017. The NotPetya virus went on to spill into Ukraine and cause an estimated $10 billion in damage to companies and organizations across the U.S. Europe and other parts of the world.

U.S. Homeland Security Advisor Tom Bossert once said, "It was the equivalent of using a nuclear bomb to achieve a small, tactical victory." Attribution is never 100% certain, but cy- bersecurity researchers widely agree that Russia was the likely culprit of those attacks.

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**Norway bans Russian skiers from competing**

**Associated Press**

GENEVA — Russian skiers are not welcome to compete in Norway because of “violations of international and cross-country skiing norms from the Ukrainian people,” the Nordic country’s ski federation said Saturday.

Norway’s call directly contradicts International Ski Federation (FIS) policy announced late Friday and comes days after the winter sport powered the Beijing Olympics medal table with a record 16 golds. The final men’s medal awarded in Beijing saw Russian and Norwegian cross-country skiers sharing the podium in the Bird’s Nest Stadium.

The Norwegian plea was also made days before Kvitfjell and Oslo host World Cup races in Alp- nine and cross-country skiing next weekend and while the country co-hosts the junior world championships in Nordic ski disciplines.

“The Norwegian Ski Federation’s message to Russia and Russian skiers is crystal clear: We do not want your participation,” it said in a statement.

Russia’s military invasion of Ukraine since Thursday requires “international condemnation and sanctions,” the Norwegian federation said.

“Sport is not detached from this and cannot remain passive to what is happening now,” the statement said, promising to lobby the sport’s world governing body.

On Friday, FIS pulled its remaining events from the season from Russia but later allowed Russians to carry on competing.

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**Tennis**

**By Eric Olson**

Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Tony Perkins scored 15 of his career-high 20 points in the second half, Kee- ghan Murray had 15 points and 11 rebounds, and No. 25 Iowa beat the Cornhuskers 88-76 Friday night.

The Hawkeyes (20-8, 10-7 Big Ten) won for the sixth time in seven games and posted their first victory in Lincoln since 2015. The Cornhuskers (7-21, 1-16) lost their fourth straight, all by double digits.

No. 25 Iowa tops Nebraska...
Landeskog, Avs rally past Jets

DENVER — Gabriel Landeskog was a captain of few words in the dressing room, not need- ing to say much after Colorado’s forgettable first period on Friday night.

His scoring showed the way. By halftime, he and Nathan MacKinnon added two more and the Avalanche stormed back from a three-goal deficit to beat the Winnipeg Jets 6-3. It was Landeskog’s second hat trick this season against the Jets, and he was mobbed by teammates along the boards after his third goal gave Colorado a comfortable 6-3 advantage. The Avalanche scored six straight goals after falling behind 3-0 following a sluggish opening period.

“The difference I see in him in growing over the years is the bigger the game and knowing we need to get something going like a night like tonight ... he takes a lot of that weight and puts it on his shoulders,” Avalanche coach Jared Bednar said. “He’s showing up at the right times.”

Even with the offense flowing smoothly late in Bednar took the opportunity to change up the line combinations, all part of an eye toward the playoffs. He wants his players comfortable — no matter the lineup.

It took a period, but they quickly got in a rhythm.

Quick became the fourth Ameri- can-born goat to settle on a line that included Valeri Nichushkin and Nazem Kadri. He scored twice down low in the second period, pushing the puck past Hellebuyck to get the Avs started and then tied it up at 3 apiece when he tipped it past the Jets goaltender. In between, MacKinnon scored in his return after missing a game due to a lower-body ailment.

“Sometimes it goes in,” Landeskog said, “sometimes it doesn’t. Tonight it did.”

Kyle Connor, Evgeny Svechni- kov and Adam Lowry scored for the Jets, who fell to 0-2-1 on their four-game trip. They were cruis- ing along after Lowry’s short-handed goal made it 3-0 with 3:34 remaining in the first peri-

Hurricanes pepper, blank Blue Jackets

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Jordan Staal got Carolina on the board with a de- termined second-period sequence, then the Hurricanes broke it open with two quick third-period goals to stop the Columbus Blue Jackets 4-0 on Friday night.

The Metropolitan Division-lead- ing Hurricanes finished with a sea- son-high 59 shots, leaving netmin- der Frederik Andersen with a rela- tively quiet night in earning his third shutout this season on 19 saves. Teuvo Teravainen scored late in the second for a 2-0 lead, then Nicklas Bäckstrom and Vincent Tro- nter scored 56 seconds into the final period.

It was Teravainen’s first goal since Jan. 14. For that, he credited his new haircut.

“Time for a change and it worked out,” Burakovksy joked. Landeskog didn’t take long to settle in on a line that included Valeri Nichushkin and Nazem Kadri. He scored twice down low in the second period, pushing the puck past Hellebuyck to get the Avs started and then tied it up at 3 apiece when he tipped it past the Jets goaltender. In between, MacKinnon scored in his return after missing a game due to a lower-body ailment.

“Sometimes it goes in,” Landeskog said, “sometimes it doesn’t. Tonight it did.”

Kyle Connor, Evgeny Svechni- kov and Adam Lowry scored for the Jets, who fell to 0-2-1 on their four-game trip. They were cruis- ing along after Lowry’s short-handed goal made it 3-0 with 3:34 remaining in the first peri-

The Carolina Hurricanes’ Steven Lorentz tries to shoot the puck past Columbus Blue Jackets goaltender J-F Berube, left, with the Blue Jackets’ Brendan Gaunce, right, nearby during the first period of Friday’s game in Raleigh, N.C. The Hurricanes won 4-0.

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76ers rout T-wolves in Harden’s debut

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — James Harden had just hit a stepback three-pointer while being fouled, a move seen countless times from the 10-time All-Star and 2018 MVP. Joel Embiid, his new teammate, raised both hands and met up with Harden at midcourt for a hug. Philadelphia liked seeing Harden’s three-and-ones finally help the 76ers, and they enjoyed the first exposure of general manager Daryl Morey’s experiment to put the two stars together.

Harden had 27 points, 12 assists and eight rebounds in his 76ers debut, Joel Embiid added 34 points and 10 rebounds and Philadelphia routed the Minnesota Timberwolves 133-102 on Friday night.

“We’re unsuited, we just want to win,” Harden said. “We’ve got guys, from top to bottom, that feels that way on the court. Great things are going to happen more times than not. My job is to come in and add to each individual on his team.”

The wait proved worth it after Harden missed his first two games with the 76ers following the trade from Brooklyn with a hamstring injury. The results were promising, particularly where Embiid and Harden thrive — at the free-throw line.

Embidi, who had 21 free throws in a double-overtime loss to Minnesota in November, was 11-for-13 from the line. Harden was 8-for-9 as the 76ers went 30-for-36 overall.

“That’s what I expected,” said Embidi, smiling wide as the two shared a post-game press conference table. “I’ve never been wide open like this in my life. Seriously, the passing, like I wasn’t even expecting it and it was just coming.”

Karl-Anthony Towns led Minnesota with 25 points, and D’Angelo Russell had 21. But the Timberwolves couldn’t replicate the dramatic win in Philadelphia earlier this season.

“The most costly thing tonight, and it might not be on the stat sheet, was that we were looking for shortcuts all night long,” Minnesota coach Chris Finch said. “We come down, one pass, try to make a home run play on offense. And more than anything it was our offense that let us down, really.”

Harden, the 2018 MVP, hadn’t played since Feb. 2 due to the injury, delaying his pairing with Embidi. Philadelphia believes it finally has the top-level duo, and a strong third piece in Tobias Harris, to break through in the Eastern Conference.

Clippers edge Lakers for 6th straight rivalry win

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Terance Mann had 19 points and 10 rebounds, Anurag Coeffey added 12 of his 14 in the fourth quarter and the Los Angeles Clippers returned to the Air-Split with a 105-102 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Friday night.

Luke Kennard scored 18 points as the Clippers earned their sixth consecutive victory over the Lakers in the latest meeting between Los Angeles’ two underachieving, injury-plagued NBA franchises while they begin the next push to salvage their seasons.

The Clippers also moved one game ahead of the Lakers in the loss column while clinching the season series victory in this local derby. Both advantages could be important at playoff time for teams that appear headed for the play-in tournaments if they make the postseason at all.

Kyle Lowry added 19 points in the Heat’s first game after the All-Star break.

Spurs 157, Wizards 153 (2OT):
Jody-Murray had 31 points, 14 assists and 13 rebounds and visiting San Antonio outlasted Washington in double overtime in the highest-scoring game in the NBA this season.

Kyle Kuzma matched his season high with 36 points for the Wizards. The Wizards fell to 3-3 since losing star Bradley Beal to season-ending left wrist surgery.

Pelicans 117, Suns 102: C.J. McCollum continued his scoring start with New Orleans, scoring 32 points to help the visiting Pelicans beat NBA-leading Phoenix.

McCollum is averaging about 30 points over six games since joining the Pelicans in a trade from Portland. The 6-foot-3 guard made 11 of 18 shots from the field.

It was a rare loss for the Suns, who are still adjusting to life without injured All-Star guard Chris Paul. They had won eight straight and 19 of 20.

Jazz 114, Mavericks 109: Donovan Mitchell hit a career-high three-pointers and scored 33 points to help host Utah beat Dallas.

Luka Doncic had 23 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds for the Mavericks.

Thunder 129, Pacers 125 (OT):
Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 36 points and made the decisive three-point play with 20.4 seconds left in overtime to lift visiting Oklahoma City past Indiana.

Trey Mann finished added 22 points to help Oklahoma City snap a two-game losing streak and a five-game skid in the series. The Thunder lost at home to NBA-leading Phoenix the night before.

Hornets 125, Raptors 93: Terry Rozier and Kelly Oubre Jr. each scored 23 points and host Charlotte emerged from the All-Star break looking reenergized against Toronto.

Scottie Barnes had a career-high 28 points for the Raptors.

Magic 119, Rockets 111: Chu Okeke scored a career-high 26 points and Orlando beat visiting Houston in a matchup of the worst teams in each conference.

Jalen Green led Houston with 23 points. The Rockets have lost eight straight.
AUTO RACING

Legacy: Penske drivers do well in St. Petersburg

FROM PAGE 24
Penske drivers have won six of the last 10 races on the temporary street course that runs through downtown and along the Tampa Bay.

IndyCar has 26 full-time entries this season, the most in a decade. Penske will look at IndyCar’s teams for 2022.

Andretti Autosports

Michael Andretti overhauled his lineup this year with a pair of new IndyCar drivers. Romain Grosjean moved into Ryan Hunter-Reay’s seat and committed to run the full season after skipping three of the four ovals last year. Devlin DeFrancesco was promoted to replace James Hinchcliffe, who moved to the NBC Sports broadcast team.

Herta returns amidst speculation Andretti will move the 21-year-old to Formula One should Andretti land a team, and Alexander Rossi enters the final season of his contract seeking to end a nearly three-year losing streak. Marco Andretti will be in a fifth car for the team at Indianapolis in May.

Arrow McLaren SP

McLaren is now the majority owner of Sam Schmidt’s race team and calling the shots as it looks to expand to three cars later this year.

The team this year will field a car for Pato O’Ward for the third consecutive season, and McLaren is expected to use the Mexican as a reserve driver during select F1 weekends. Felix Rosenqvist of Sweden returns for a second season. Juan Pablo Montoya will run the Indy 500 and on the IMS road course for the second year in row for McLaren. The team wants to have a full-time third car next season and hopes the effort is up and running before the end of this season.

Chip Ganassi Racing

Ganassi won another IndyCar title last year when Alex Palou surprised the grid with an unbelievably consistent season.

The 24-year-old Spaniard dethroned six-time IndyCar champion Scott Dixon and proved to be the most complete teammate to Dixon since Dario Franchitti’s retirement in 2013.

Marcus Ericsson had a breakthrough season last year with two victories and expects to be a title contender. Jimmie Johnson has committed to run the full season, including the Indianapolis 500. Ganassi will field a fifth car at Indy for Tony Kanaan.

Ed Carpenter Racing

Conor Daly likely saved his career during his 30th birthday celebration in Las Vegas. He stunningly landed a full-season sponsor during the December weekend and reached an agreement with BitNile Holdings.

The sponsorship not only allowed Daly to retain a seat driving for Ed Carpenter, but he can run a full season with one team. Daly split his time between two teams the last two seasons. Rinus VeeKay is back for a third year and the Dutchman showed promise last season until he broke his collarbone in a cycling accident. He missed two races and wasn’t the same when he returned.

Carpenter will race the Indianapolis Grand Prix and work on adding to the other entries to his schedule.

Dale Coyne Racing

Coyne’s organization has been overhauled for 2022.

Two-time Indy 500 winner Takuma Sato filled the seat vacated by Grosjean after just one season.

Sato will be paired with 20-year-old David Malukas, who moved up from Indy Lights with financial backing from his father’s company.

Coyne also potentially enter a third car at Indianapolis.

AJ. Foyt Racing

Foyt’s team has expanded this year and will field a car for Tatiana Calderon, the only female driver in the IndyCar field. The Colombian has driven in a variety of series but makes her IndyCar debut Sunday.

Dalton Kellett has returned for a second full season, and Kyle Kirkwood landed a seat with Foyt after winning the Indy Lights title last season. Kirkwood won the Lights race at St. Pete last year.

Juncos Hollinger Racing

Ricardo Juncos has sporadically entered IndyCar races and its feeder series but this year has committed to a full schedule.

Juncos brought in Brad Hollinger, a 23-year-old Brit who was the reserve driver last season and McLaren is expected to use the Mexican as a reserve driver during select F1 weekends. Felix Rosenqvist of Sweden returns for a second season. Juan Pablo Montoya will run the Indy 500 and on the IMS road course for the second year in row for McLaren. The team wants to have a full-time third car next season and hopes the effort is up and running before the end of this season.

Meyer Shank Racing

Michael Shank’s team has exploded over the last year when he began expanding to a full-season effort in 2021.

Helio Castroneves celebrates in Victory Lane after winning the Rolex 24 at Daytona International Speedway on Jan. 30, in Daytona Beach, Fla. It was the second straight year Castroneves won the race.

He’s back: Castroneves a full-time driver again

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Helio Castroneves climbed the fence three times in 12 starts on the downtown streets of St. Petersburg and it is one of his favorite events on the IndyCar schedule.

Unless, of course, he was at the popular IndyCar season-opening race as a spectator. Castroneves didn’t care for that at all the last four seasons.

“It was absolutely horrible,” the Brazilian said.

Phased out of IndyCar after the 2017 season to help launch Team Penske’s sports car program, Castroneves didn’t exactly exit the series on his own terms. When St. Pete officials asked him to be the grand marshal in 2018, his first year out of IndyCar, Castroneves told anyone who would listen that he’d be back in the series some day.

“Everyone said when I was the grand marshal, ‘Man, you should be (racing).’ I was like, ‘Yeah, thanks. That doesn’t help,’” Castroneves said. “But now we’re back.”

Indeed he is back, and perhaps performing at the highest level of his long career.

Castroneves has raced his way back into a full-time IndyCar ride with Meyer Shank Racing, the team that hired him run the Indianapolis 500 last season as it began its expansion to two cars. Castroneves went out and won the race — his record-tying fourth Indianapolis 500 victory — and was hired to drive the No. 06 for the full 2022 season.

He’s 46 now and a quarter century removed from his debut in American open-wheel racing but undoubtedly ready to contend for wins and maybe even the championship. He never won an IndyCar title driving for Roger Penske, and his only professional championship was in 2020 when he won the IMSA sports car title in the final year of that program.

Castroneves opened 2021 with a win in the Rolex 24 at Daytona, followed it with his victory at Indy in May and closed the year with a full-time ride. Shank used him in the Rolex lineup last month and guess what? Castroneves won a second consecutive watch.

He now has four Indy 500 rings and a pair of Rolexes — achievements that former boss Roger Penske finds “just wonderful.”

“I kid him a bunch and tell him, ‘You know, three of those races, you won with us. Don’t forget your old buddy,’” said Penske, who is now also the owner of IndyCar.

“He’s just so exciting, and so much energy, and the fans love him. It’s terrific to have him back in the series and the passion he brings to his new team — now Meyer Shank is another really solid team for IndyCar.”

The Indy 500 victory by Castroneves legitimized Shank’s organization, and when Penske tried to combine five Indy 500 victories to form a team that hired him to run the Indianapolis 500 last season as it began its expansion to two cars. Castroneves and the paddock knows the potential Meyer Shank has each race weekend.
A soldier's helmet with a bullet hole sits near debris of burning military trucks Saturday on a street in Kyiv, Ukraine. Russian troops stormed toward Ukraine's capital Saturday, and street fighting broke out as city officials urged residents to take shelter.

Citing Ukraine, Poland refuses to play Russia in Cup qualifier

WARSAW, Poland — Poland is refusing to play its World Cup qualifier against Russia next month in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Polish soccer federation president said Saturday.

Cezary Kulesza made the announcement on Twitter and indicated Poland was in talks with other federations to present a unified position to FIFA, which is responsible for the March 24 game in Moscow.

"No more words, time to act!" Kulesza wrote, saying the move was prompted by the "escalation of the aggression."

Poland striker Robert Lewandowski, the nation's all-time leading scorer and winner of FIFA's best-player award for the past two years, immediately responded to say it's the "right decision!"

"I can't imagine playing a match with the Russian National Team in a situation when armed aggression in Ukraine continues," the Bayern Munich star said on Twitter. "Russian footballers and fans are not responsible for this, but we can't pretend that nothing is happening."

FIFA has yet to take a clear position on Russia hosting or even playing against Poland.

European soccer body UEFA said Friday that in its competitions all Russian and Ukrainian teams must now move their home games to play in other countries.

A potential precedent for action is from 1992. Both FIFA and UEFA removed Yugoslavia from their competitions following sanctions imposed by the United Nations at the outbreak of war there.

Previously, Poland had only said it did not want to play the qualifying playoff semifinal in Moscow.

The winner is due to host Sweden or the Czech Republic on March 29 for a place in the World Cup that will be played in Qatar from Nov. 21-Dec. 18.

The head of Sweden's federation, Karl-Erik Nilsson, is also first vice president at UEFA, which has stripped Russia of hosting the Champions League final in St. Petersburg in May. UEFA decided Friday to move that game to Paris.

Russian troops pressed toward Ukraine's capital Saturday, after a night of explosions and street fighting that sent Kyiv residents seeking shelter underground.

It was not immediately clear how far Russian troops had advanced. Ukrainian officials reported some success in fending off assaults, but fighting persisted near the capital.

Manfred joins in as lockout talks appear to gain momentum

By Ronald Blum

Associated Press

JUPITER, Fla. — Baseball players and owners took a first step toward salvaging opening day, nearing agreement Friday on an amateur draft lottery following lockout negotiations that included a surprise one-on-one meeting between Commissioner Rob Manfred and union head Tony Clark.

While an agreement on the draft was not complete, the talks gained momentum for the first time as Major League Baseball's end of Monday deadline approached for a deal that would preserve opening day on March 31 and a 162-game schedule.

Talks continued Saturday, the 87th day of baseball's first work stoppage since 1995. The sides remain far apart on the big-money issues of the competitive balance tax thresholds and rates, salary arbitration eligibility, the size of a bonus pool for pre-arbitration-eligible players and the minimum salary.

In another sign of the disruption caused by baseball's ninth work stoppage, MLB canceled three more days of spring training games through March 7. Exhibition games were to have begun Saturday.

But for the first time all week, both sides expressed a feeling they had moved in a positive direction.

The day included three negotiating sessions, a high for any day this week.

In an effort to address the union's claim that teams are gaining up on winning in an effort to gain a top pick in the amateur draft, MLB had proposed the top selections be determined by a lottery, such as the NBA began in 1985 and the NHL a decade later.

MLB has offered to have the first four picks determined by a lottery in which the teams with the lowest losing percentages would have the best chances of getting the top pick. The union asked for the first seven selections to be sorted by lottery.

The sides exchanged proposals Friday on the number of lottery picks, adjustments and penalties, moving closer to agreement on a format. For the first time in months of negotiations, there was immediate back and forth: MLB made a proposal, the union caucused and countered, and management was to respond Saturday.

Discussions also covered other areas and were described as spirited and at times emotional.

Players have not accepted Monday as a deadline and have suggested any missed games could be made up as part of doubleheaders, a method MLB said it will not agree to.

Once Monday passes, the length of the schedule would become yet another issue in the dispute along with possible lost pay and service time.

The union has told MLB if games are missed and salaries are lost, clubs should not expect players to agree to management's proposals to expand the postseason and to allow advertisements on uniforms and helmets.

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Looking to add to his legacy

After winning Daytona 500, Penske sets sights on Indy 500

By Jenna Fryer
Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Roger Penske celebrated his 85th birthday in victory lane with the Daytona 500 trophy. He skipped the post-race hamburger party with winner Austin Cindric to get back to Detroit for a regularly scheduled global call with Penske associates, and then finally it was on to St. Petersburg for the IndyCar season opener.

The Captain will have you know he’s feeling just fine.

“I’m doing well. I’m still getting up every morning and I feel great,” Penske said in an interview with The Associated Press. “You always feel good after a big win like this past weekend. It gives you a few more years, you know!”

Cindric’s victory Sunday at Daytona International Speedway was the third Daytona 500 win for Penske, who also holds the record with 18 victories in the Indianapolis 500. Penske even collected both trophies in the same calendar year in 2015, when Joey Logano won Daytona and Juan Pablo Montoya won Indianapolis.

Now that Cindric got him “The Great American Race” to open the year, Penske has his sights on collecting a 19th Baby Borg this May.

“I’d say that’s a quiet personal goal for this year,” Penske allowed. “The first leg of the stool is done.”

The IndyCar season begins Sunday on the downtown streets of St. Petersburg. Penske has scaled his organization down to three cars. Simon Pagenaud left rather than move from IndyCar to IMSA sports cars, so Team Penske this year consists of Josef Newgarden, Will Power and Scott McLaughlin, who is entering his second season.

Team Penske will not field a fourth entry at Indy, Penske said.

Penske drivers combined for only three wins last season — they were contenders but bad breaks kept them out of victory lane until July — and they weren’t particularly competitive at Indianapolis.

Colton Herta is the defending race winner and his victory snapped a two-year winning streak by Newgarden. In fact, Penske drivers combined for only three wins last season — they were contenders but bad breaks kept them out of victory lane until July — and they weren’t particularly competitive at Indianapolis.

Colton Herta won last year’s season opener in St. Petersburg, Fla., ending Josef Newgarden’s two-year winning streak.

Alex Gallardo/AP

Poland refuses to play Russia in World Cup qualifier

Sunday, February 27, 2022

Debut with Philadelphia

Harden scores 27 points, has 12 assists in first game with Sixers

TEAM PACER/ASSOCIATED PRESS

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