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50¢/Free to Deployed Areas

Military sees spike in aircraft accidents

BY KONSTANTIN TOROPIN
AND AARON KESSLER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of major accidents involving military aircraft spiked in 2024, internal Pentagon figures show, and a series of high-profile aviation mishaps with deaths and the loss of aircraft in 2025 suggest the disturbing trend may be continuing.

Across the military, the rate of severe accidents per 100,000 flight hours rose 55% in the 2024 budget year compared with four years earlier. The Marine Corps saw the highest increase, nearly tripling its rate over the same period.

The data, which was released by the Defense Department to Congress and provided exclusively to The Associated Press, tracks Class A mishaps — the most serious accidents, which result in death or a permanent full disability.

An aviation expert noted that broader worsening trends are unlikely the result of a single factor but rather a reflection of multiple smaller issues that accumulate to create an unsafe culture. These issues include increased operational demands, riskier aircraft like the V-22 Osprey and interruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to a significant curtailing of flying time across the military.

But the rising number of serious accidents has some in Congress looking for answers.

The data was released to Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Massachusetts Democrat, in January after her office asked for the figures after a spate of deadly mishaps involving the V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor

SEE SPIKE ON PAGE 8



PHOTOS BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN/Stars and Stripes

A soldier launches the Merops counter-drone system from the bed of a truck during testing and training on Tuesday at a Polish military training area in Nowa Deba. Poland and Romania each received their first Merops systems this month.

After drone breaches, NATO turns to Merops system for eastern flank defense

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

NOWA DEBA, Poland — U.S. soldiers are training alongside Polish and Romanian forces on a counter-drone system rushed to NATO's eastern flank after a recent spate of unmanned aerial incursions across Europe.

U.S. and NATO officials, drawing lessons from the war in Ukraine, have long argued that the alliance needs cheaper ways to counter drones, since firing traditional air-defense systems at them is too expensive and often impractical. That urgency grew after about 20 unmanned aircraft crossed into Polish airspace in September, followed days later by an incursion into Romania.

NATO blamed Russia for those violations, which proved to be the final push for Poland and Romania to purchase the U.S.-made Me-



A U.S. soldier prepares the U.S.-made Merops counter-drone system for testing.

rops counter-drone system. The system has been battle-tested in Ukraine, where local forces have used it to shoot down Russian-made Shahed drones and other incoming threats, according to U.S. military officials.

■ Trump sending top two
Army leaders to Ukraine
in effort to end the war
Page 5

Poland and Romania received their first Merops systems this month, and training alongside U.S. soldiers began here at one of Poland's largest military training areas a little over a week ago.

"It's very lethal, very effective, but the key piece here is that it's cost effective," said Brig. Gen. Curtis King, head of the 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command.

During a demonstration Tuesday, the Me-

SEE SYSTEM ON PAGE 4

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Cloudflare resolves outage that impacted ChatGPT, X, more

Associated Press

A widely used internet infrastructure company said that it has resolved an issue that led to outages impacting users of everything from ChatGPT and the online game, "League of Legends," to the New Jersey Transit system early Tuesday.

At 12:44 p.m. EST, Cloudflare said its engineers no longer saw some of the issues plaguing its customers but that they were continuing to monitor.

Others platforms that experi-

enced outages Tuesday included X, Shopify, Dropbox and the Moody's credit ratings service.

New Jersey Transit said parts of its digital services, including njtransit.com, may be temporarily unavailable or slow to load. And New York City Emergency Management said there are reports of city services being impacted.

Cloudflare, based in San Francisco, works behind the scenes to make the internet faster and safer, but when problems flare up "it results in massive digital gridlock"

for internet users, cybersecurity expert Mike Chapple said.

"When you access a website protected by Cloudflare, your computer doesn't connect directly to that site," Chapple said. "Instead, it connects to the nearest Cloudflare server, which might be very close to your home. That protects the website from a flood of traffic, and it provides you with a faster response. It's a win-win for everyone, until it fails, and 20% of the internet goes down at the same time."

EXCHANGE RATES

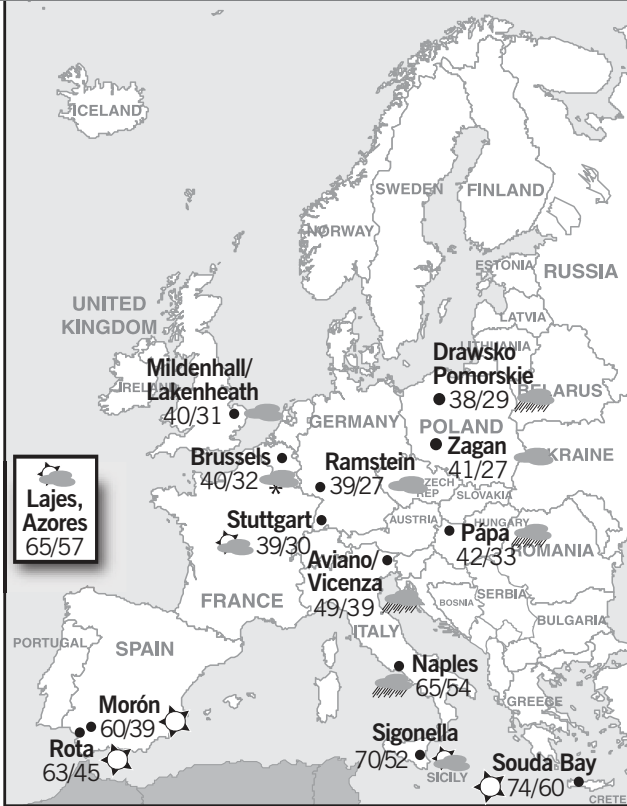
Military rates												
Euro costs (Nov. 20)	0.84	Switzerland (Franc)	0.8036									
British pound (Nov. 20)	\$1.28	Thailand (Baht)	32.416									
Japanese yen (Nov. 20)	151.00	Turkey (NewLira)	42.3568									
South Korean won (Nov. 20)	1427.00											
Commercial rates												
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3744	(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.) INTEREST RATES <table><tr><td>Prime rate</td><td>7.00</td></tr><tr><td>Interest Rates Discount rate</td><td>4.00</td></tr><tr><td>Federal funds market rate</td><td>3.88</td></tr><tr><td>3-month bill</td><td>3.87</td></tr><tr><td>30-year bond</td><td>4.74</td></tr></table>	Prime rate	7.00	Interest Rates Discount rate	4.00	Federal funds market rate	3.88	3-month bill	3.87	30-year bond	4.74
Prime rate	7.00											
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.00											
Federal funds market rate	3.88											
3-month bill	3.87											
30-year bond	4.74											
Britain (Pound)	1.3107											
Canada (Dollar)	1.4008											
China (Yuan)	7.1075											
Denmark (Krone)	6.4631											
Egypt (Pound)	47.2616											
Euro	0.8653											
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7868											
Hungary (Forint)	330.256											
Israel (Shekel)	3.2663											
Japan (Yen)	156.604											
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3067											
Norway (Krone)	10.1495											
Philippines (Peso)	58.963											
Poland (Zloty)	3.6547											
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7459											
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3048											
South Korea (Won)	1465.27											

WEATHER OUTLOOK

THURSDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



THURSDAY IN EUROPE



FRIDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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MILITARY

Possible microreactor project sites named

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Army on Tuesday named nine U.S. installations that could receive nuclear microreactors in the coming years as the service looks to the technology for increased and more resilient power production on its bases.

The locations that could receive microreactors by 2030 as part of the Army's new Janus Program are: Fort Benning, Ga.; Fort Bragg, N.C.; Fort Campbell, Ky.; Fort Drum, N.Y.; Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Wainwright, Alaska; Holston Army Ammunition Plant in Tennessee; Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.; and Redstone Arsenal in Alabama.

Army Secretary Dan Driscoll announced the Janus Program last month, pledging to partner with commercial industry to place the small nuclear power reactors on some of the Army's posts which will require more power access in the decades to come as the service increases its use of artificial intelligence capabilities and new-age weaponry. Driscoll and other officials last month declined to name what installations they were considering for the microreactors.

The nine sites were chosen after an evaluation of "mission critical installations,



ERIC KAYNE/Stars and Stripes

Secretary of the Army Dan Driscoll speaks at the opening ceremony of the AUSA last month in Washington.

energy requirements and resiliency gaps, power infrastructure, environmental and technical considerations," the service said in a news release Tuesday. Officials said it was possible that not all the named installations would receive microreactors in the coming years, but the Army envisions placing them at many more installations in the coming decades.

"These early site selections align with the Department of War's goal of accelerating

the pace of deploying on-site nuclear generation at our installations," Jordan Gillis, the Army's assistant secretary for installations, energy and environment, said in a prepared statement. "Through the use of the Army's unique nuclear regulatory authorities, we are deploying a resilient, secure and reliable energy supply for critical defense operations and in support of the most lethal land-based fighting force in the world."

Army officials said last month the Janus Program would be a public-private program in which commercial companies own and operate nuclear microreactors on Army installations and under the service's oversight.

Microreactors are nuclear reactors about 100 to 1,000 times smaller than conventional nuclear reactors, some of which can be small enough to be transported on a semi-truck's tractor-trailer, according to the Idaho National Laboratory, which oversees much of the Department of Energy's nuclear power research. The reactors can produce up to 50 megawatts of power and can function entirely independently of the traditional electric grid, according to the laboratory.

The Pentagon's Defense Innovation Unit has given commercial companies until Dec.

15 to submit prototyping bids for the microreactors to be placed at Army installations by the end of 2030. DIU wants the companies to build microreactors capable of producing up to 20 megawatts of power.

Army officials have described the latest generation of microreactors as a "significant technological advancement, in safety, security and waste management."

"They are safe by design, not by intervention protocols," according to the Army news release. Still, the DIU instructions to commercial bidders require that the microreactors include "passive safety features," limits on radiation output, and a mandate that operational controls be accessible only from "within the Army installation."

Army officials said last month they would work closely with the local communities surrounding the installations.

"The Army shares a commitment to public safety and transparency with our host communities and recognizes that the communities surrounding these installations have vested interest in their operations," the Tuesday statement read. "The Army is committed to providing transparent information throughout the planning process and welcomes public engagement and feedback."

Navy also honors 250 years of service with Army-Navy uniforms

BY MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

Sticking with the theme of this year's Army-Navy game — Dec. 13 in Baltimore — the Midshipmen on Tuesday revealed their uniforms that pay tribute to 250 years of service.

"The goal of this year's uniform was to tell a compelling story that seamlessly combines the history of the U.S. Navy, the (service's original) six frigates and the United States Naval Academy," Navy athletics said in a statement.

The Navy last month celebrated its 250th birthday, which traces its founding to an Oct. 13, 1775, resolution by the Second Continental Congress that "a swift sailing vessel to carry ten carriage guns" be established and dispatched to protect colonists' ships from British forces in the early days of the Revolutionary War.

The washed navy uniform color ties to the original uniforms issued by the Naval Committee to sailors at the time. The Navy woodwork and number font on the jersey are inspired by the typography found throughout the "Act to Provide Naval Armament" document, according to the Navy athletics announcement. The 1794 document authorized the construction of the original six frigates and marked a significant step in the development of the



United States Navy and its transition toward becoming a maritime power.

Embedded into the sleeves and collar of the jersey are six ropes, representing the original six frigates and mimicking the ornate detailing found throughout the USS Constitution's bow. Within these ropes, there are 250 knots to honor the 250th anniversary of the Navy.

The USS Constitution, officially



Photos courtesy of Navy Athletics

Navy's uniform for the 126th Army-Navy game on Dec. 13 in Baltimore will pay tribute to 250 years of service. The Navy woodwork and number font are derived from the typography in the historic "Act to Provide Naval Armament," the document that authorized the creation of the first fleet.

designated America's Ship of State, was launched in 1797 and played a crucial role in the Barbary Wars in the early 1800s and, famously, in the War of 1812 — earning its "Old Ironsides" nickname when British cannonballs were seen bouncing off the ship's wooden hull. It actively defended sea lanes from 1797 to 1855 and was undefeated in 33 at-sea engagements.

Navy's copper helmet color represents the copper-plated sheathing on the lower hull of the Constitution. The facemask and chinstrap colors are dark navy to

tie back to the ship's hull.

On the right side of the helmet, "USN" is in monogram copper and outlined in dark navy, which is present in the rotunda of the Naval Academy's Bancroft Hall. On the left side, the Constitution is hand painted on stone-colored parchment paper.

The 63 rope knots on the front of the helmet and the 63 on the rear signify that this is the 126th Army-Navy game. The number 63 also represents the wins Navy has over Army. The Midshipmen lead the Black Knights in the series, 63-55-7.

Army football announced last week it would be wearing uniforms honoring 250 years of service. The Black Knights' uniform features a marble base color for the jersey and pants, representing the marble headstones at Arlington National Cemetery.

Navy is currently 8-2 and sits atop the American Conference standings. Army is 5-4 with two more games before facing the Midshipmen.

Navy is looking to beat Army in consecutive years after defeating the Black Knights, 31-13, last year in Landover, Md.

EUROPE



CZAREK SOKOLOWSKI/AP

The American Merops drone system, deployed by Poland and Romania to defend against Russian drones, is tested in Nowa Deba, Poland, on Tuesday.

System: Drone capable of navigating using AI even if satellite, communications jammed

FROM PAGE 1

Merops system sat in the back of a midsize pickup truck. Once launched, its interceptor shot through the air at speeds officials said exceeded 150 mph, identifying drones and passing within feet of them in flight.

Officials said that in a real-life scenario, the interceptor would carry explosives and detonate to destroy its target. Each interceptor costs about \$15,000, and the system overall is roughly one-tenth the price of the Shahed drones Moscow builds and employs, they said.

That matters because, until now, responding to incursions often meant scrambling NATO fighter jets, which cost tens of thousands of dollars per flight. And in a conflict like the one playing out in Ukraine, large numbers of interceptors would be needed to counter repeated drone swarms.

Another advantage of Merops, made by the company Project Eagle, is its ability to use artificial intelligence to navigate even when satellite and electronic communications are jammed, according to the company.

"This is one of many capabilities that NATO nations are going to have to look to employ to defeat the drones," King said, adding that the war in Ukraine shows how quickly modern warfare evolves and how weapons development must keep pace.

U.S. Army Europe and Africa says Merops is the first system fielded since the announcement of the Eastern Flank Deterrence Line, a concept unveiled earlier this year by commander Gen. Christopher Donahue. The plan envisions a mix of manned and ro-



PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN/Stars and Stripes

A Merops interceptor sits on the ground before being shot into the air during a demonstration of the system's capabilities.

botic forces linked by a shared data network to repel any attack on NATO territory.

Under the concept, low-cost, easily replaceable hardware and software feed live targeting data to front-line robotic platforms, which can strike enemy drones and ground forces while absorbing the first wave of an assault. The goal is to deter an attack or blunt one long enough for NATO's manned units to regain the initiative and launch a counteroffensive.

Army officials say the approach is meant to be scalable and repeatable across the eastern flank, using rapidly deployable technologies that can overwhelm an adversary and deny key terrain.

It's one of several efforts being pushed in Europe to counter future drone attacks, as the U.S. and its allies scramble to find effective, affordable solutions.

Speaking on the sidelines of the training Tuesday, Lt. Gen. Stanislaw Czosnek, deputy chief of the general staff of the Polish armed forces, said Poland plans eventually to field its own domestically

built counter-drone systems but needed a quick solution to fill an immediate capability gap.

"The airspace violation we witnessed recently forced us to accelerate," Czosnek said. "We want to be safer than we are now. This is a gap filler."

Merops' success on the battlefield in Ukraine was a major reason why Poland selected the platform, Czosnek said.

According to King, Merops has been responsible for up to 40% of the Shahed drones shot down by Ukrainian forces. He added that other counter-drone systems are being developed across the alliance that rely on similar radar, with the goal of allowing partners to operate different systems interchangeably.

Sgt. 1st Class Corey Myers, a platoon sergeant with Germany-based 1st Battalion, 57th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, said he and his soldiers found the system intuitive.

"It's a simple system to understand," Myers said. "If you're good with an Xbox controller, you're good."

The U.S. military does not currently field Merops, but U.S. Army Europe and Africa sent troops to the roughly two-week training event in Poland so they can help train partner forces who adopt it in the future.

Denmark, which also reported drone sightings in September, is planning to purchase Merops technology, The Associated Press reported this month.

"It feels extremely important being here," said Sgt. Riley Hiner, another member of 1-57. "With all the Shaheds Russia is flying, I think this is the way forward."

Germany allows shoot down of unknown drones

By MICHAEL NIENABER
Bloomberg News

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's Cabinet approved legislation that enables the Bundeswehr armed forces to shoot down unidentified drones suspected of spying on military bases, industrial facilities and other critical infrastructure.

The draft amendment to the Aviation Security Act will allow the military to use force against unmanned aerial vehicles if asked by local police, Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt told reporters Wednesday in Berlin. Authorities previously relied on jamming to disable drones, but certain recent models appear to be resistant to such technology.

Defense Minister Boris Pistorius, a senior member of the co-governing Social Democrats, pushed for the measure after a growing number of drones were spotted in restricted airspace near energy, telecommunications, transport and industrial facilities across the country in recent months.

"Drones are sighted in German airspace almost daily," Merz said in a post on X. "The principle is: we must be able to defend ourselves so that we don't have to defend ourselves."

The government in Berlin suspects the drones are likely being deployed by a state actor for purposes of sabotage and possibly terrorism. The draft amendment stops short of naming a specific country, but officials believe that Russia and China are the main culprits.

To disable suspect drones, Germany's armed forces will be allowed to use weapons or other equipment such as jammers—devices that interrupt contact between the UAV and its remote control.

However, such measures should only be taken if there are no other ways to avert the threat and if it can be assumed that human lives are at risk or that an important facility might be destroyed.

The final decision on whether to shoot down a drone lies with the defense minister in order to shorten the line of command, according to a government spokesman.

The law has drawn objections from opposition lawmakers, who point to constitutional rules that forbid the Bundeswehr from acting within Germany's borders.

The rules only allow for such a deployment in peacetime in clearly defined exceptional cases.

UK tells Russia it's ready to deal with any incursions

Associated Press

LONDON — Britain warned Russia on Wednesday that it was ready to deal with any incursions into its territory after the spy ship Yantar was detected on the edge of U.K. waters north of Scotland.

Defense Secretary John Healey said on Wednesday that the Russian vessel had directed lasers at pilots of surveillance aircraft monitoring its activities.

"My message to Russia and to Putin is this: We see you. We know what you're doing. And if the Yantar travels south this week, we are ready," Healey said during a speech in London.

The Russian embassy in a statement accused the British government of being "Russophobic" and "whipping up militaristic hysteria," adding that Moscow has no interest in undermining the U.K.'s security.

Healey issued the warning as he

made the case for increased defense spending a week before the government releases its new budget. While Prime Minister Keir Starmer has pledged big increases in military spending in the face of threats from Russia, China and Iran, the government is facing tough choices as it eyes tax increases and spending cuts to close a multi-billion pound shortfall in its finances.

Healey also announced plans to build at least six new munitions factories at sites from Scotland to Wales.

British officials said the Yantar is part of the Russian navy, designed to conduct surveillance in peacetime and sabotage during times of war.

Because of this, the U.K. and its allies track the ship and work to deter its operations whenever it approaches British territorial waters.

WAR IN UKRAINE

Trump sending Pentagon officials to Ukraine

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The U.S. Army's top two leaders will arrive in Ukraine this week for unannounced high-level talks expected to focus on boosting efforts to negotiate an end to the country's war with Russia.

President Donald Trump dispatched Army Secretary Dan Driscoll and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George to Ukraine, where discussions on hastening an end to the 3-year-old conflict were expected to get underway Wednesday, The Wall Street Journal and Politico reported.

The top Army leaders also were expected to discuss how to move forward with a potential deal on exchanging drone technology with Ukraine, which has become an innovator of such weapons systems during the war, the news organizations reported Tuesday, citing unidentified U.S. officials.

The meeting in Kyiv comes at a critical time for Ukraine, which

has faced an onslaught of Russian drone and aerial bombardment attacks in recent weeks.

Ukraine also has been scrambling to deal with a growing manpower crisis as more military-aged men flee to the West to avoid fighting.

"We have huge problems with soldiers, with human resources," Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko told Politico last week.

Although Trump has called for an end to the war, there has been little indication that Russia is prepared to end the conflict. However, the administration has quietly been negotiating with Moscow, Washington-based news organization Axios reported Tuesday.

A 28-point peace plan is being drafted, Axios said, citing U.S. and Russian officials. The proposal is said to involve security guarantees for Ukraine, but it's unclear how territorial control of eastern Ukraine would be handled.

The U.S. has begun briefing Ukrainian and European officials

about the concept, the report said.

Separately, there are other signs of cooperation between the U.S. and Ukraine.

On Tuesday, the State Department cleared a potential sale of Patriot air defense system sustainment gear to Ukraine for an estimated \$105 million.

Ukraine has requested the equipment, which includes upgraded launchers, to strengthen its ability to defend against Russian attacks.

The U.S. is also poised to bolster gas supplies to Ukraine, which has faced repeated attacks on its energy infrastructure.

The American Embassy in Vilnius, Lithuania, said Tuesday that a shipment of liquefied natural gas from the U.S. had arrived this week in the country, where it will be processed for onward movement.

"This will mark the first Ukraine-bound shipment of natural gas to come through Lithuania," the embassy said.



ALEXANDER KUBITZA/U.S. Navy
Army Secretary Dan Driscoll and Army Chief Gen. Randy George appear on the television program "Fox and Friends," speaking from Washington on May 1.

Deadly barrage in Ukraine city; Zelenskyy holds talks in Turkey

By ILLIA NOVIKOV
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — A large Russian drone and missile barrage on Ukraine's western city of Ternopil killed at least 25 people, including three children, authorities said Wednesday, as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy went to Turkey in search of diplomatic support for his fight against Russia's invasion.

The nighttime attack hit two nine-story apartment blocks in Ternopil, located around 120 miles from the Polish border, according to Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko. At least 73 people, including 15 children, were injured, emergency services said.

At least 19 among those killed were burned alive, including three children aged 5, 7 and 16, Klymenko said. Two dozen people are still unaccounted for, he said on national television, and rescuers expect to work at least two more days to complete the search of rubble.

Russia fired 476 strike and decoy drones, as well as 48 missiles of various types, at Ukrainian targets overnight, Ukraine's air force said. The bombardment included 47 cruise missiles, with air defenses intercepting all but six of them, the air force said. Western-supplied F-16 and Mirage-2000 jets intercepted at least 10 cruise missiles, it said.

"Every brazen attack against ordinary life indicates that the pressure on Russia (to stop the war) is insufficient," Zelenskyy



ROSTYSLAV KOVALCHUK/AP
Rescue workers put out a fire of a residential building which was damaged by a Russian strike on Ternopil, Ukraine, on Wednesday.

wrote on the messaging app Telegram.

Zelenskyy met with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara later Wednesday as part of his efforts to diplomatically isolate Russian President Vladimir Putin and bring more international pressure to bear on him. Putin has so far resisted making compromises, despite U.S. pressure.

In brief statements to the press, Zelenskyy and Erdogan expressed their commitment to finding a peaceful settlement. Turkey is a key broker in the Black Sea re-

gion, preserving relations with both Ukraine and Russia.

"We count on the strength of Turkish diplomacy, on (how) it's understood in Moscow," Zelenskyy said.

A senior Turkish official initially said that U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff would join Zelenskyy in Turkey, but backtracked later in the day and said Witkoff wouldn't be coming. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity Tuesday because he wasn't permitted to speak publicly about the arrangements.

Several arrested over railway blast in Poland

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — Polish authorities have arrested several people in connection with a blast that damaged a rail line linking Warsaw to the Ukrainian border over the weekend, state media reported Wednesday.

Jacek Dobrzynski, the spokesman for Poland's secret services minister, said the suspects were being questioned but did not provide details on how many were detained, according to the Polish Press Agency, or PAP.

Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk has described the explosion as an "unprecedented act of sabotage." Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski said it was "an act of state terror."

The blast damaged tracks near Mika, about 60 miles southeast of Warsaw. No one was hurt.

In a separate weekend incident, power lines were destroyed in the area of Pulawy, about 30 miles from Lublin in eastern Poland.

On Tuesday, Tusk told the Polish parliament that authorities suspect two Ukrainian citizens of blowing up the rail line. He alleged that the suspects had been collaborating with the Russian secret services for a long time. He said their identities were known but could not be revealed to the public because of the ongoing investigation and that the pair had already left Poland, crossing into Belarus.

Sikorski said Wednesday that he will order the closure of the last

Russian consulate still operating in the country in response to the attack.

"In connection with this, though it will not be our full response, I have decided to withdraw consent for the operation of the last Russian consulate in Gdansk," he said.

Two other consulates, in Krakow and Poznan, had been closed in recent years. The Russian embassy in Warsaw remains open.

In response, Moscow will "reduce Poland's diplomatic and consular presence in Russia," the state news agency RIA Novosti cited Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova as saying.

Asked about Sikorski's comments, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Russia's "relations with Poland have deteriorated completely."

"This is probably a manifestation of this degradation, of the desire of the Polish authorities to reduce to zero any possibility of consular or diplomatic ties. In this case, one can only express regret," Peskov told reporters during his daily conference call.

Western officials have accused Russia and its proxies of staging dozens of attacks and other incidents across Europe since the invasion of Ukraine more than three years ago, according to data collected by The Associated Press. Moscow's goal, Western officials say, is to undermine support for Ukraine, spark fear and divide European societies.

MILITARY

Wikoff takes helm of Navy in Europe, Africa

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — A hard-charging fighter pilot who led the Navy in the Middle East took the helm of the service's top job in Europe and Africa this week from a submariner credited with helping to reshape the way the U.S. military fights wars.

Adm. George Wikoff took command of U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa and Joint Force Command Naples from Adm. Stuart Munsch on Wednesday during a ceremony at the NATO installation in Naples.

Wikoff most recently led U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. 5th Fleet, coming into the role in February 2024 as tensions soared in the Middle East and Navy forces in the Red Sea came under fire from Iranian-back Houthi militants in Yemen.

Gen. Alexis Grynkewich, the head of U.S. European Command and NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and Gen. Dagvin Anderson, commander of U.S. Africa Command, presided over Wednesday's ceremony, which was attended by NATO allies, Italian and other European officials and U.S. service members.

With war raging in Ukraine, Russian threats in the High North and China's increasing activity in



Incoming commander of U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa and Joint Force Command Naples, Adm. George Wikoff, left, shakes hands with the outgoing commander, Adm. Stuart Munsch, on Wednesday in Italy.

the Arctic, Wikoff assumes command of Naval Forces Europe at a time when U.S. and NATO adversaries are working together in ways unimaginable just a few years ago, Grynkewich said during the ceremony.

"You have my full trust and confidence as well as that of all the military units from across the 32 nations of our alliance," he said,

addressing Wikoff.

Anderson also delivered remarks at the ceremony, telling all of Wikoff's shipmates to "strap in."

"Your new commander will move fast and has little tolerance for inaction," Anderson said.

Wikoff's Navy career spans more than three decades, including stints in fighter squadrons

VF-102 and VF-154 aboard the aircraft carriers USS America and USS Kitty Hawk, respectively, according to his service biography.

He also served on the joint staff as deputy director for operations and as vice director, among numerous leadership roles.

His predecessor, Munsch, addressed the changing character of war by helping to shape a U.S. mil-

itary strategy that came to fruition during his leadership in Europe and Africa, Anderson said Wednesday.

"As you brought these insights here, innovating, experimenting, you quickly reorganized the headquarters and met the changing challenges of war," Anderson said to Munsch, who took command in June 2022 and has served in the Navy for 40 years.

Anderson noted that Munsch's push for innovation and experimentation included the establishment of a task force focused on integrating robotic and autonomous systems into fleet operations.

Grynkewich said Munsch brought sensibility, intellect and a keen understanding of adversaries to his role.

He referred to Munsch as "someone who thought deeply about the future of warfare, the human side of conflict and understood the geopolitical undertones of the world we (are) facing today."

"Seldom have I met a more capable, humble officer," Grynkewich added.

During the ceremony, Munsch was awarded the NATO Meritorious Medal, the U.S. Legion of Merit and Italian Meritorious Medal.

It wasn't clear Wednesday what his next assignment is.

Man tried for attempt to give China data obtained at US base

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Prosecution began Wednesday in a German court for an American accused of trying to give China confidential data acquired while he was working for a private company that provided services to a U.S. base.

The man, identified only as Martin D. in accordance with German privacy laws, is charged with one count of declaring willingness to provide information to a foreign intelligence service, according to his indictment. German media reports have said he's in his late 30s.

Between 2017 and the spring of 2023, Martin D. worked for a Defense Department civilian contractor and in 2020 was stationed at an unspecified base in Hesse, according to the indictment.

The state hosts U.S. Army Garrison Wiesbaden, which encompasses three bases: Clay Kaserne and Mainz-Kastel in Wiesbaden and the Dagger Complex in Darmstadt.

In the summer of 2024, he allegedly contacted Chinese govern-

ment agencies repeatedly, offering to pass on sensitive U.S. defense information he obtained through his work with the U.S. Army, according to German prosecutors and court documents.

Proceedings at the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz are being held behind closed doors to protect Germany's security interests, German news organization Stern.de reported Wednesday.

Koblenz is in the neighboring state of Rheinland-Pfalz. At the time of his arrest in late 2024, Martin D. was living in the state capital of Mainz, German news agency dpa reported last year.

The court has not disclosed what kind of information authorities say Martin D. sought to provide.

He was arrested at Frankfurt Airport before managing to transfer any data, according to dpa.

The trial is expected to last until mid-January, the Koblenz court said in a statement.

Stars and Stripes reporter Marcus Kloeckner contributed to this article.

Okinawa police accuse US Navy sailor of inappropriately touching teenage girl

By BRIAN MCELHINEY AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

Police have accused a U.S. Navy sailor on Okinawa of inappropriately touching a Japanese girl over the summer, adding to a string of offenses that have roiled the island community the past two years.

The sailor — an unidentified man in his 20s — is accused of carrying out nonconsensual indecent acts against a teenage girl in June, a spokeswoman for Okinawa prefecture's Military Base Affairs Division said by phone Wednesday.

Police sent the case to the Naha Public Prosecutors Office and notified the prefecture on Nov. 7, she added. Prosecutors, not police, decide charges under Japan's legal system.

The girl is younger than 17, an Okinawa Prefectural Police spokesman said by phone Wednesday.

The sailor, assigned to Fleet Activities Okinawa, was issued an alleged offense notice by Kadena police on Nov. 7, U.S. Naval Forces Japan spokesman Cmdr. Paul Macapagal said by email Wednesday.

The sailor is currently in U.S. custody, Macapagal said later by

phone.

He declined further comment in the email "due to Japanese legal proceedings."

Police allege the sailor touched the girl outdoors somewhere on Okinawa. She reported the incident to police that day, the spokesman said.

The case emerges as Okinawa continues to grapple with a series of high-profile sexual assault investigations involving U.S. troops. Japanese prosecutors have indicted four U.S. service members over the past two years.

In December, the Naha District Court convicted Senior Airman Brennon Washington of kidnapping and sexually assaulting a minor.

In June, the court convicted Marine Lance Cpl. Jamel Clayton of strangling and attempting to sexually assault a woman. Both men have appealed.

On Tuesday, Marine Pfc. Austin Wedington pleaded not guilty to sexually assaulting a Japanese woman on Camp Foster in March but admitted to injuring another woman.

A fourth case, against Marine Lance Cpl. Michael Hofmaster, is still pending.

Those cases — along with at least one other that was later dropped — triggered public backlash.

The governments of Japan and Okinawa, along with Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki, lodged formal protests with the U.S. military and government.

Okinawa has also pressed Tokyo to revise the status of forces agreement governing U.S. troops in Japan.

In response, U.S. Forces Japan imposed stricter liberty rules in October 2024, including a ban on off-base drinking between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. and police patrols of nightlife districts in Naha and Okinawa city.

On Nov. 10, the prefecture's base affairs division responded to the June incident by requesting additional measures from the Navy, the Okinawa Defense Bureau and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Okinawa Liaison Office, the division spokeswoman said.

The incident was "extremely regrettable," she said, adding that the division asked for stronger preventative steps, including "a review of the content of training provided by the U.S. military and thorough education."

MILITARY

Soldiers, airmen airdrop gear to drills

Commander says parachutes fastest way for delivery in Hawaiian exercise

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — In just four days, an Army aerial delivery unit from Alaska packed more than 160 tons of gear onto parachute-rigged pallets to be dropped over Hawaii's Big Island — a logistical surge at the heart of one of the service's largest Pacific combat exercises.

The 4th Quartermaster Theater Aerial Delivery Company, based at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, underpins airdrop operations for U.S. forces across the Indo-Pacific, especially in remote spots where parachuting supplies is the only lifeline.

"The uniqueness of the Pacific area is that it's vast," Capt. Cody Poos, the company's commander, said Nov. 6 as about 60 soldiers prepared pallets inside a joint base hangar.

During the 15-day Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center exercise, which ended Monday, the company loaded everything from Humvees to barrels of water onto specialized 8-, 12- and 16-foot steel pallets.

Each pallet was rigged with an elaborate system of parachutes, the first of which pulls the load out the back of an Air Force C-17 Globemaster III followed by additional chutes that carry it safely to the ground.

The pallets were dropped from about 1,000 feet onto the Pohakuloa Training Area, a sprawling expanse on Hawaii Island used heavily by the 25th Infantry Division during the drills. The unit later recovered the pallets for reuse.



SAMARION HICKS/U.S. Army

A cargo pallet is parachuted from a C-17 Globemaster III over Pohakuloa Training Area, Hawaii, on Nov. 8, as part of Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center combat training.



WYATT OLSON/Stars and Stripes

Soldiers strap a Humvee onto a steel pallet at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, on Nov. 6.

"So if you need something quick, yes, barges can move, and boats can move, but it's not going to be quick," Poos said. "Yes, they can go to seaports, but there's many islands, many locations, that

just don't have a deep enough draft or deep enough port. So aerial delivery gives that option. You can reach farther, you can reach faster, you can reach more precisely."



U.S. ARMY

Supply pallets parachute onto the Pohakuloa Training Area, on Nov. 8.

Guam's new 3D-printing hub aims to cut months off repairs

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

A Navy-backed 3D-printing lab under construction on Guam aims to slash the monthlong wait for ship and infrastructure parts on the island by producing them locally.

The Guam Additive Manufacturing and Materials Accelerator, or GAMMA, held a ceremonial groundbreaking on Nov. 7 for its 8,000-square-foot site in Dededo's Pacific Industrial Park. The \$40 million project is led by the Applied Science & Technology Research Organization of America, or ASTRO America.

Once complete, the facility will house equipment for measuring, testing and designing metal and plastic industrial components. Although the building is now only a concrete shell, the Maryland-based research institute hopes to have it operating as early as spring, said GAMMA general manager Alex Benham.

"It might not be full-scale manufacturing, but we can produce parts" by March or April, he said.

Despite its cost and planned capabilities — including a \$5 million investment with another \$12 million expected — the lab is not intended to design new components.

"They just want to be able to get parts now. They don't need to be better than the past ones — they just need to be as good," Benham said. "The problems we're solving with additive [manufacturing] is entirely a logistical problem."

Benham said GAMMA's primary customer will be the Navy, particularly the five nuclear-powered fast-attack vessels in Submarine Squadron 15 at Naval Base Guam. Among the most in-demand items are pump impellers — fan-like parts that move fluid through pumps.

"It's a common part that is classically hard to design and hard to

manufacture, but [additive manufacturing] comes in and kind of solves all that," he said.

The Air Force and Marine Corps are also evaluating the lab's potential, especially for producing ground-vehicle components that corrode quickly in Guam's tropical climate, Benham said. Civilian infrastructure operators, including power, water and emergency services, may also benefit from the ability to reverse-engineer and reproduce parts in weeks rather than months.

GAMMA employs Benham, one local staff member and five interns. He expects the workforce to

grow to around 15 within the next two years and to roughly 100 within six years.

That ramp-up includes academic support. ASTRO America is working with the University of Guam to establish a mechanical engineering program linked to the Colorado School of Mines. Students would complete two years of general engineering on Guam and two years of specialized study in Colorado.

"Of course, the hope is we can hire a bunch of those students coming out of the program with the Colorado School of Mines to work in the facility," Benham said.

MILITARY

US immigration crackdown in NC expands to Raleigh

By GARY D. ROBERTSON
AND TIM SULLIVAN
Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Federal agents expanded their North Carolina immigration crackdown to the area around the state capital of Raleigh on Tuesday, with fear spreading in at least one immigrant-heavy suburb where restaurants closed and many people stayed home.

The North Carolina operation began over the weekend in the state's largest city, Charlotte, where officials said more than 250 people have been arrested.

Speaking at a Raleigh City Council meeting, Mayor Janet Cowell said there had been "confirmed sightings" of Border Patrol officers operating in Wake County, which includes Raleigh, and nearby Durham County, which includes the city of Durham. She said earlier that she did not know how large the op-

eration would be or how long agents would be present.

She encouraged residents to call the police department if they felt unsafe and urged protesters to remain peaceful.

"And just be particularly kind to your neighbors today," she added.

Federal officials have given no information about activity in the Raleigh area.

But in Cary, a sprawling Raleigh suburb where officials say almost 20% of the population was born outside the U.S. and the large Asian population tripled in the 1990s, fear spread quickly.

An area resident recorded as a large black SUV with darkly tinted windows and Texas license plates drove through Cary's downtown, eventually linking up with another SUV. The vehicles stopped at a construction site, where Pamela Hoile recorded Border Patrol agents de-

taining four workers. Speaking by phone after posting the video on Facebook, she described herself as a "very outraged, horrified and concerned citizen."

The Chatham Square shopping center, which is usually bustling at midday with workers eating at mom-and-pop ethnic restaurants, was quiet. Most of the restaurants were closed. Nearby, the often-full parking lot at an Indian grocery store was largely empty, and traffic inside was nonexistent.

Esmeralda Angel's family closed their restaurant, the Esmeralda Grill, to avoid any confrontations between customers and federal agents. At their separate grocery store, they were delivering items to customers who were avoiding going out in public.

The family businesses scaled back to help their community, she said, but knew it would hurt financially.



MATT KELLEY/AP

Protesters hold signs amid the arrival of federal law enforcement, on Tuesday, in Charlotte, N.C. Federal agents expanded their immigration crackdown to the state capital, Raleigh, on Tuesday.

"Taco Tuesday is the busy day for all of these restaurants," Angel said of the weekly specials. "But I think everyone would rather close than operate."

The Trump administration turned to North Carolina after immigration crackdowns in Los Angeles and Chicago, both deep blue cities in deep blue states run by nationally prominent officials who are often loudly critical of President Donald Trump.

The mayors of Charlotte and Raleigh are both Democrats, as is the governor, but none are known for wading into national political battles. In a state where divided government has become the norm, Gov. Josh Stein in particular has tried to get along with the GOP-controlled state legislature. The state's two U.S. senators are both Republican, and Trump won the state in the last three presidential elections.

Spike: Senator now seeking more detailed features on 2019-2025 flight mishaps

FROM PAGE 1

aircraft. Warren's office provided the data to the AP, which reviewed it independently.

The statistics cover the full budget years 2020-23 and then the first 10 months of the 2024 budget year, through July 31. In those 10 months of last year, 25 service members and Defense Department civilian employees were killed and 14 aircraft were destroyed.

"These accident rates are incredibly troubling and demand action," Warren told the AP in an emailed statement. She said legislative changes to make accident reports more accessible "are desperately needed so Congress can understand the root causes of these accidents to save service member lives."

The Osprey, which flies like a plane but converts to land like a helicopter, has been among the

most dangerous aircraft, as the AP has reported extensively.

In addition, the new Defense Department data shows the Apache helicopter had about 4.5 times the rate of the most serious Class A accidents during the 2024 budget year compared with four years earlier. The C-130 transport plane, a workhorse of the military, nearly doubled its rate over the same period, even as it reported safer years in between.

The Pentagon, when asked about these trends, did not immediately respond.

The Navy's data on just its own aviation mishaps shows a marked increase this year. The Naval Safety Command reported eight Class A aviation mishaps in 2024. In 2025, that total has spiked to 14.

Aviation expert and former military pilot John Nance said the ever-growing demands being placed on military pilots are most likely

playing a major part in the growing number of mishaps.

"Whether we're talking about the end of Afghanistan, whether we talk about deployments to Djibouti, or the back and forth across Saudi Arabia to get to the Emirates, I think that as the pace (of military operations) ticks up, the mishaps are going to tick up," Nance said.

In a statement to the AP, the Navy acknowledged the rise in mishaps and noted that its aviators regularly operate in "incredibly complex conditions."

"As a learning organization, we treat every flight and ground evolution as an opportunity to develop better training, create more effective procedures, and safeguard the operational readiness we work tirelessly to generate," the statement said.

While the data does not continue into 2025, there have been mul-

multiple high-profile aviation mishaps this year, including a spate on aircraft carriers at sea and the collision between an Army helicopter and a passenger jet over Washington, D.C., in January, which killed 67 people.

Investigations found that the Black Hawk helicopter's altimeter gauge was broken, there were issues with the military pilot's night vision goggles, and the Federal Aviation Administration didn't address warnings about the dangers that helicopters presented in the area around the Washington airport.

In the spring, the Navy's USS Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier lost two F/A-18 Super Hornet fighter jets in the span of a few weeks — one to a bad landing and another slipped off the deck of the ship and fell into the sea.

In December 2024, the guided-missile cruiser USS Gettysburg

mistakenly shot down an F/A-18 from the carrier.

No aviators were killed in those episodes. The Navy has not released the results of investigations into the causes of these mishaps.

More recently, four U.S. Army soldiers who were part of an elite team that does nighttime missions died when their Black Hawk helicopter crashed near a military base in Washington state while on a training mission in September.

Then, in October, a fighter jet and a helicopter based off the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz both crashed into the South China Sea within 30 minutes of each other, though no one was killed.

Warren's office is now asking for more detailed figures from the Pentagon on aviation mishaps and over a longer period of time, from 2019 to 2025, according to a request sent to the Pentagon and reviewed by AP.

USAF opens medical station in Djibouti that aims to serve thousands

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The recent opening of a medical care facility at Chabelley Airfield in Djibouti is the latest sign the U.S. military is putting down permanent roots at the remote site, which plays a role in projecting American airpower across east Africa.

The new Joint Medical Aid Station will ensure that airmen can maintain the health and readiness required to support the base's

mission, the 406th Air Expeditionary Wing said in a statement Tuesday.

Although the services offered are not specified, the facility doubles the trauma treatment capacity at the airfield and also adds mental health treatment rooms, the wing said.

Establishment of the facility indicates a long-term commitment to the region and solidifies the airfield's status as an enduring forward operating location in Africa,



U.S. Air Force

An airman is treated at the Joint Medical Aid Station at Chabelley Airfield in Djibouti last month.

according to the statement.

The aim is to eventually be able to care not only for airmen at Chabelley, but also for the 25,000 Americans who deploy to the region each year, the wing said.

"As operations expand and regional threats increase, the need for on-site medical readiness has become critical," the statement said.

Over the years, Chabelley Airfield has evolved from a small commuter outpost into a more

permanent base of operations supporting 1,000 personnel, according to the wing.

The airfield was taken over by the Air Force in 2013 and was deemed to have "fully operational capability" by U.S. Africa Command in 2024.

It has been used for drone operations and other Air Force missions over the years and is positioned several miles away from Camp Lemonnier, AFRICOM's main base in Djibouti.

NATION

Saudi prince has fruitful White House visit

Signs deal to buy US tanks, gets OK to buy F-35s

By MATTHEW LEE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A jovial President Donald Trump held a warm and friendly meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the White House, packed with plenty of handshakes and back pats. He brushed aside questions about Saudi Arabia’s human rights record, praised the prince for his statesmanship and announced hundreds of billions of dollars in new Saudi investment in the United States.

The White House rolled out plenty of pomp for the Saudi royal on Tuesday, dispatching fighter jets that the two leaders watched from a red carpet, parading out an honor guard on horseback and giving a lavish dinner in the East Room.

In a sitdown in the Oval Office that took place just seven years after Prince Mohammed was implicated by U.S. intelligence agencies in the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, Trump and the prince took numerous questions from reporters — one of whom was repeatedly insulted by Trump — on everything from commerce to the sale of advanced F-35 fighter jets to Riyadh.

Trump had previewed his deci-



DEMETRIUS FREEMAN/The Washington Post

President Donald Trump and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Tuesday in the Oval Office.

sion to sell F-35s on Sunday but formalized it before the prince on Tuesday when he said the approval was complete and that Israel’s fears about maintaining its qualitative military edge in the Middle East would be addressed.

Details of the deal were not immediately clear, but some in the Pentagon and other agencies have opposed the sale because of the potential for advanced technology being shared with China, which also has close ties with Saudi Arabia.

Israeli officials have suggested that they would not be opposed to Saudi Arabia getting F-35s as long as Saudi Arabia normalizes relations with Israel under the Abraham Accords framework.

The Saudis have said they would join the Abraham Accords but only after there is a credible and guaranteed path to Palestinian statehood, a position Prince Mohammed repeated in the meeting.

Trump also said the U.S. and

Saudi Arabia would complete a broader agreement on military and security issues during the visit and that the U.S. would proceed with a civilian nuclear agreement with Saudi Arabia, about which Israel also has raised concerns.

The two nations also signed a deal that calls for the Saudis to purchase nearly 300 tanks from the U.S.

At the dinner Tuesday night, Trump announced he was designating Saudi Arabia as a major

non-NATO ally, a largely symbolic move that gives foreign partners some defense, trade and security cooperation benefits.

Tuesday’s meeting was the first White House visit for the crown prince since Khashoggi, a U.S. resident and Washington Post columnist, was killed and dismembered at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2018.

U.S. intelligence said Prince Mohammed likely approved the slaying.

In a remarkable scene in the Oval Office, the prince, nicknamed MBS, faced questions from reporters, something not typical for the de facto head of the absolute monarchy where dissent is criminalized.

He was asked about Khashoggi’s slaying along with the role that Saudi citizens played in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States. Trump, however, lashed out at the reporter for the line of questioning.

Trump called Khashoggi, a Saudi pro-democracy activist, “extremely controversial” and said “a lot of people didn’t like that gentleman that you’re talking about. Whether you like him or didn’t like him, things happen, but he (the crown prince) knew nothing about it and we can leave it at that.”

Prince Mohammed told Trump that his country would be increasing its commitments to the U.S. from \$600 billion, which was announced during the president’s trip to Riyadh in May, to \$1 trillion.

US trade deficit drops 24% in August amid Trump’s tariffs

By PAUL WISEMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. trade deficit fell by nearly 24% in August as President Donald Trump’s sweeping global tariffs pushed imports lower.

In a report delayed for more than seven weeks by the federal government shutdown, the Commerce Department said Wednesday that the gap between what the United States buys from other countries and what it sells them fell to \$59.6 billion in August, from \$78.2 billion in July.

Imports of goods and services dropped 5% to \$340.4 billion in August from July when U.S. companies were stocking up on foreign products before Trump finalized taxes on products from almost every country on Earth. Those levies went into effect Aug. 7.

U.S. exports blipped up 0.1% in August to \$280.8 billion.

Trump, charging that America’s persistent trade deficits mean

that other countries have taken advantage of the U.S., has overturned decades of U.S. policy in favor of free trade, slapping double-digit tariffs on imports from most countries and targeting specific products, including steel, copper and autos, with their own levies.

Still, the U.S. trade deficit is up so far in 2025, coming in at \$713.6 billion through August, up 25% from \$571.1 billion in January-August 2024.

A drop in imports and the trade deficit is good for economic growth because foreign products are subtracted from gross domestic product. GDP is the output of a nation’s goods and services.

“August’s smaller trade deficit will be a tailwind for third quarter real GDP, since it means that more U.S. expenditures were directed toward domestically-produced goods and services rather than foreign ones,” Bill Adams, chief economist at Comerica Bank, wrote in a commentary.

Tariffs, which Trump says will protect U.S. industries and lure factories to America, are paid by importers who typically attempt to pass along the higher cost to their customers. Economists say Trump’s tariffs are one reason U.S. inflation remains stubbornly above the Federal Reserve’s 2% target.

After voters’ dissatisfaction with the high cost of living led to big Democratic gains in the Nov. 4 elections, the president relented and dropped tariffs last week on beef, coffee, tea, fruit juice, cocoa, spices, bananas, oranges, tomatoes and certain fertilizers, saying they “may, in some cases” have contributed to higher prices.

His tariffs are also facing a legal challenge that has gone to the Supreme Court. In a Nov. 5, hearing, the justices sounded skeptical that the president had the authority to bypass Congress and slap unlimited tariffs on most imports by declaring a national emergency.

Trump takes major step toward dismantling Education Department

By COLLIN BINKLEY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Education Department is handing off some of its biggest grant programs to other federal agencies as the Trump administration accelerates its plan to shut down the department.

The changes announced Tuesday represent a major step forward for the administration’s dismantling of the department, which has mainly involved cutting jobs since President Donald Trump called for its elimination with an executive action in March.

Six new agreements signed by the Education Department will effectively move billions of dollars in grant programs to other agencies.

Most notable is one that will put the Department of Labor over some of the largest federal funding streams for K-12 schools, including Title I money for schools

serving low-income communities.

Opponents have urged against such a shake-up, saying it could disrupt programs that support some of the nation’s most vulnerable student populations.

Department officials said the programs will continue to be funded at levels set by Congress. They did not say whether the changes would bring further job cuts at the department, which has been thinned by waves of mass layoffs and voluntary retirement offers.

The action leaves in place the Education Department’s \$1.6 trillion student loan portfolio and its funding for students with disabilities, though Education Secretary Linda McMahon has suggested both would be better managed by other federal departments.

Also unaffected is the department’s Office for Civil Rights, which works with students and families who bring allegations of discrimination.



Republican South Carolina state Sens. Tom Fernandez, left, and Jeff Zell talk during a hearing on an abortion bill in a Senate subcommittee on Tuesday, in Columbia.

Bill that seeks prison time for getting an abortion stalls in SC

By **JEFFREY COLLINS**
Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — A South Carolina bill that would allow judges to sentence women who get abortions to decades in prison and could restrict the use of IUDs and in vitro fertilization has stalled after failing to get out of a legislative subcommittee Tuesday.

Four of the six Republicans on the subcommittee refused to vote on the bill, which would ban all abortions unless the woman's life is threatened. The three Democrats were then able to vote against sending the bill forward.

The proposal is not dead, but the effort did reveal a lack of support for the most extreme positions among groups opposing abortions. If the bill had been sent to the full Medical Affairs Committee, it would have gone further than any other such proposal across the U.S. since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022.

In declining to vote on the bill,

Republican state Sen. Jeff Zell said he wants to stop as many abortions as possible but that most people aren't interested in such extreme positions. He said other issues are more important to South Carolina residents.

"Say what you want. Play your politics. I'm not interested in that. What I'm interested in is speaking on behalf of South Carolinians and they're not interested in this bill right now," Zell said.

South Carolina already bans abortions after cardiac activity is detected, which is typically six weeks into a pregnancy, before many women know they are pregnant. The state allows abortions for rape and incest victims up to 12 weeks.

Tuesday's vote came after two failed attempts to either lessen or eliminate a proposal in the bill to punish a woman who gets an abortion and anyone who helps them with up to 30 years in prison. An attempt to remove a provision

making it a crime to tell someone where they could obtain an abortion or taking them someplace where the procedure is legal also failed.

The bill also appeared to ban any contraception that prevents a fertilized egg from implanting, which would ban intrauterine devices and could limit in vitro fertilization.

Providing information about abortions would be illegal, leaving doctors worried they couldn't suggest places where the procedure is legal.

Republican Sen. Richard Cash, who sponsored the bill and is one of the Senate's most strident voices against abortion, wanted to keep the criminal penalties.

He said that before *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, abortion opponents did not consider all the ramifications of banning abortion, like how to treat embryos.

"We never even thought about it. And now we do," Cash said.

Neo-Nazi admits plot to give poisoned candy to Jewish kids in New York City

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The leader of an Eastern European neo-Nazi group has pleaded guilty in New York to trying to recruit others to commit violent attacks against Jews and racial minorities, including one plot that would have involved dressing as Santa Claus to hand out poisoned candy to children.

Federal prosecutors said they would seek a sentence of up to 18 years for Michail Chkhikvishvili, a 22-year-old from the Republic of Georgia who goes by the nickname "Commander Butcher." He pleaded guilty Monday before a federal

judge in Brooklyn to soliciting hate crimes and distributing information about making bombs and ricin.

Prosecutors described Chkhikvishvili as the leader of the Maniac Murder Cult, an international extremist group that adheres to an ideology that promotes violence intended to trigger a racial and religious war.

They said the group's violent solicitations — promoted through Telegram channels and outlined in a manifesto called the "Hater's Handbook" — appear to have inspired multiple real-life killings, including a school shooting in

Nashville, Tenn., earlier this year that left a 16-year-old student dead.

Chkhikvishvili was arrested in July 2024 in Moldova. He was extradited to the United States in May.

When he was approached by an undercover FBI agent in 2023, Chkhikvishvili recruited the official to various schemes, including one that would have involved dressing up as Santa Claus to give poisoned candy to racial minorities, according to prosecutors.

The plot later evolved into poisoning children at Jewish schools in Brooklyn, prosecutors said.

Gerrymandering push is getting messy for GOP

By **NICHOLAS RICCARDI**
Associated Press

As President Donald Trump laid it out to reporters this summer, the plan was simple.

Republicans, the president said, were "entitled" to five more conservative-leaning U.S. House seats in Texas and additional ones in other red states. The president broke with more than a century of political tradition in directing the GOP to redraw those maps in the middle of the decade to avoid losing control of Congress in next year's midterms.

Four months later, Trump's audacious ask looks anything but simple. After a federal court panel struck down Republicans' new map in Texas on Tuesday, the entire exercise holds the potential to net Democrats more winnable seats in the House instead.

"Trump may have let the genie out of the bottle," said UCLA law professor Rick Hasen, "but he may not get the wish he'd hoped for."

Trump's plan is to bolster his party's narrow House margin to protect Republicans from losing control of the chamber in next year's elections. Normally, the president's party loses seats in the midterms. But his involvement in redistricting is instead becoming an illustration of the limits of presidential power.

To hold Republicans' grip on power in Washington, Trump is relying on a complex political process.

Redrawing maps is a decentralized effort that involves navigating a tangle of legal rules. It also involves a tricky political calculus because the legislators who hold the power to draw maps often want to protect themselves, business interests or local communities more than ruthlessly help their party.

And when one party moves aggressively to draw lines to help itself win elections — also known as gerrymandering — it runs the risk of pushing its rival party to do the same.

That's what Trump ended up doing, spurring California voters to replace their map drawn by a nonpartisan commission with one drawn by Democrats to gain five seats. If successful, the move would cancel out the action taken by Texas Republicans. California voters approved that map earlier this month, and if a Republican lawsuit fails to block it, that map giving Democrats more winnable seats will remain in effect even if Texas' remains stalled.

"Donald Trump and Greg Abbott played with fire, got burned — and democracy won," California Gov.

Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, posted on X after the Texas ruling, mentioning his Republican counterpart in Texas along with the president.

Rep. Kevin Kiley, a Republican whose northern California district would be redrawn under the state's new map, agreed.

"It could very well come out as a net loss for Republicans, honestly when you look at the map, or at the very least, it could end up being a wash," Kiley said. "But it's something that never should have happened. It was ill-conceived from the start."

There's no guarantee that Tuesday's ruling on the Texas map will stand. Many lower courts have blocked Trump's initiatives, only for the conservative majority on the U.S. Supreme Court to put those rulings on hold. Texas Republicans immediately appealed Tuesday's decision to the high court, too.

Even before Tuesday, Trump's push for mid-decade redistricting was not playing out as neatly as he had hoped, though he had scored some apparent wins. North Carolina Republicans potentially created another conservative-leaning seat in that battleground state, while Missouri Republicans redrew their congressional map at Trump's urging to eliminate one Democratic seat. The Missouri plan faces lawsuits and a possible referendum that would force a statewide vote on the matter.

Trump's push has faltered elsewhere. Republicans in Kansas balked at trying to eliminate the state's lone swing seat, held by a Democrat. Indiana Republicans also refused to redraw their map to eliminate their two Democratic-leaning congressional seats.

The bulk of redistricting normally happens once every 10 years, following the release of new population estimates from the U.S. Census. That requires state lawmakers to adjust their legislative lines to make sure every district has roughly the same population. It also opens the door to gerrymandering maps to make it harder for the party out of power to win legislative seats.

Inevitably, redistricting leads to litigation, which can drag on for years and spur mid-decade, court-mandated revisions.

On Tuesday, Republicans were reappraising Trump's championing of redistricting hardball.

"I think if you look at the basis of this, there was no member of the delegation that was asked our opinion," Republican Rep. Pete Sessions of Texas told reporters.

NATION

Probe: Ship had 2 blackouts in Md. bridge crash

BY BRIAN WITTE
AND JOSH FUNK
Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — The loss of electrical power from a loose wire caused a huge cargo ship to lose propulsion and steering before crashing into Baltimore’s Francis Scott Key Bridge, causing it to collapse last year and kill six construction workers, National Transportation Safety Board officials said Tuesday.

The board approved the findings and a set of recommendations to prevent similar tragedies during a hearing in Washington.

Investigators managed to identify one loose wire out of thousands on the container ship called the Dali. The label on the wire slid down too close to the end and prevented it from being fully inserted into the terminal.

The board also found the crew didn’t have enough time to recover propulsion and avoid collision because the Dali was so close to

the bridge when it lost power. “The crew’s actions were as timely as they could be, and they were appropriate and also impressive considering the circumstance,” board member Michael Graham said.

Graham also said the maritime shipping industry needs to strengthen its safety systems and better manage risks to be more in line with the rigorous approach taken in aviation.

“Many of these issues we have discussed today as part of this accident could have been identified, addressed, and either mitigated or eliminated,” Graham said.

The Dali was leaving Baltimore bound for Sri Lanka when it crashed into a supporting column of the bridge about 1:30 a.m. on March 26, 2024, causing the bridge to collapse into the Patapsco River.

Six men on a road crew, who were filling potholes during an overnight shift, fell to their



MARYLAND NATIONAL GUARD/AP

The cargo ship Dali is stuck under part of the structure of the Francis Scott Key Bridge after the ship hit the bridge March 26, 2024, in Baltimore.

deaths. The collapse snarled commercial shipping traffic through the Port of Baltimore for months before the channel was fully opened that June.

The lack of countermeasures to reduce the bridge’s vulnerability to collapse after being struck by a ship also contributed to the disaster, the board said.

Countermeasures could have been implemented if a vulnerability assessment had been conducted by the Maryland Transporta-

tion Authority as recommended by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Authorities, the board said.

The Maryland agency said in a statement after the NTSB meeting that it maintains the bridge collapse and tragic loss of life “were the sole fault of the Dali and the gross negligence of its owners and operators.”

The Dali, which sailed under the Singapore flag, experienced two power blackouts on its way

out of Baltimore.

The crew got the power back on after the first blackout, but a second shortly thereafter was caused by a lack of fuel because the flushing pump used to supply the generators doesn’t restart automatically the way the main pumps do.

The flushing pump must be restarted manually by a crew member leaving the engine room and heading down two decks in complete darkness to reach that pump.

Auction sells golden toilet, tops record in modern art

BY HANNAH SCHOENBAUM
Associated Press

A Gustav Klimt portrait painting that helped save the life of its Jewish subject during the Holocaust sold Tuesday for \$236.4 million, a record for a modern art piece.

Klimt’s “Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer” sold after a 20-minute bidding war at Sotheby’s in New York, where the flashiest item of the night was a solid gold, fully functioning toilet that went for \$12.1 million.

The portrait was part of the collection of billionaire Leonard A. Lauder, heir to cosmetics giant The Estée Lauder Companies. He died this year at 92, leaving behind an impressive collection worth more than \$400 million.

Sotheby’s declined to share the identity of the portrait’s buyer. The sale topped a previous record for 20th-century art set by an Andy Warhol portrait of Marilyn Monroe, which sold for \$195 million in 2022. Five Klimt pieces from Lauder’s collection sold at the auction for a total of \$392 million, Sotheby’s said.



AP

An 18-karat-gold toilet by artist Maurizio Cattelan, like this one at the Guggenheim Museum in 2016, was bought at auction for \$12.1 million in New York.

Pieces by Vincent van Gogh, Henri Matisse and Edvard Munch were among other notable sales.

Later, an 18-karat-gold toilet by Maurizio Cattelan — the provocative Italian artist known for taping a banana to a wall — hit the auction block. Cattelan has said the 223-pound piece, titled “America,” satirizes superwealth.

“Whatever you eat, a \$200 lunch or a \$2 hot dog, the results are the same, toilet-wise,” he once said.

The toilet, owned by an unnamed collector, was one of two that Cattelan created in 2016. The other was displayed at New York’s Guggenheim Museum, which offered to lend it to President Donald Trump when he asked to borrow a Van Gogh painting.

Judge orders man accused of LA wildfire jailed while awaiting trial

BY JAIMIE DING
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The man accused of sparking the deadly wildfire that ripped through a Los Angeles neighborhood in January must remain jailed while he awaits trial, a judge ruled Tuesday.

Federal officials have said Jonathan Rinderknecht, 29, started a small fire on New Year’s Day that smoldered underground before reigniting nearly a week later and roaring through coastal Pacific Palisades and Malibu, home to many of Los Angeles’ rich and famous. The fire, which left 12 dead in the hillside neighborhoods, was one of two blazes that broke out on Jan. 7, killing more than 30 people in all and destroying over 17,000 homes and buildings while burning for days in Los Angeles County.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Rozella A. Oliver denied his bond, saying he must be kept in custody due to his mental health and distress he caused his sister and her family. Rinderknecht’s father testified in support of his release, denying that his son had mental health issues.

Rinderknecht was arrested Oct. 7 in Florida, where he was staying at his sister’s house. A judge ordered that he remain jailed after a prosecutor said he had traits of an arsonist and his family had worried about his declining mental state. Prosecutors also argued Rinderknecht was a flight risk because he had family in France and spoke French.

He was brought to Los Angeles about two weeks later and pleaded not guilty in court.

Prosecutors mentioned two incidents during Rinderknecht’s time in Florida when his sister and her husband called 911 because they were concerned about his behavior.

“I’m afraid that when he’s triggered ... he might actually use his gun,” his father told law enforcement in body camera footage.

One time, Rinderknecht got into an argument with his sister after finding out she had cancer, telling her that she should become vegan.

He also told her he would burn

her house down.

Less than a week later, Rinderknecht had an argument with his father, who was visiting from France, and told him that he had purchased a gun. He said he bought it because his relationship with his sister’s husband was worsening and would use if attacked.

At one point he told his sister, “If I wanted to kill you guys I could’ve done that a long time ago,” his sister said in body camera footage. She called him angry, paranoid, and delusional.

Rinderknecht’s sister and her husband offered to pay for his move back to California and give him \$10,000 if he left their home voluntarily, but he refused unless they gave him \$25,000, Alexander said. His sister and her husband moved out instead.

Despite these incidents, his father said Rinderknecht’s sister and her husband were willing to have him back in their Florida home, and put up \$100,000 for his bond.

The family is “very supportive of him,” his father said. “They are ... upset that Jonathan is being accused of things he hasn’t done.”



Rinderknecht

WORLD

Israel military warns of more strikes in Lebanon

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — The Israeli military on Wednesday warned two villages in southern Lebanon to evacuate buildings close to what it said are Hezbollah sites, as tensions between Israel and militant groups escalate.

At least 14 people were killed in Lebanon in the past day by Israeli strikes on what the military said were sites belonging to groups associated with Hezbollah and Hamas.

Earlier Wednesday, an Israeli airstrike on a car in southern Lebanon killed one person and wounded 11 including students aboard a nearby bus, the Lebanese Health Ministry said.

The strike in the village of Tiri followed an Israeli drone attack on the Palestinian refugee camp of Ein el-Hilweh in southern Lebanon that killed 13 people and wounded several others. The Tuesday night strike was the

deadliest among scores of Israeli attacks since a ceasefire in the Israel-Hezbollah war a year ago.

State-run National News Agency said a school bus with students happened to be passing near the car that was hit Wednesday morning. The bus driver and several students were wounded, the report said. The identity of the person who died in the car wasn't immediately clear.

In the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp, just outside the port city of Sidon, life appeared normal Wednesday but Lebanese authorities prevented journalists from entering.

At the scene of the strike, paramedics searched for human remains around a wall that was stained with blood. Several cars were burnt and broken glass and debris littered the ground.

On Tuesday night, the Israeli military said it struck a Hamas training compound that was being

used to prepare an attack against Israel and its army. It added that the Israeli army would continue to act against Hamas wherever it operates.

Hamas condemned the attack and denied in a statement that the sports playground that was hit was its training compound.

Palestinian factions in Lebanon's 12 refugee camps earlier this year began handing over their weapons to the Lebanese state. The government has said that it will also work on disarming Hezbollah but Hezbollah has rejected it as long as Israel continues to occupy several hills along the border and carries out almost daily strikes.

The U.S. has recently increased pressure on Lebanon to work harder on disarming Hezbollah and canceled a planned trip to Washington this week by Lebanese army commander Gen. Rudolph Haikal.



MOHAMMAD ZAATARI/AP

Palestinian people gather Wednesday next to cars that were damaged in an Israeli strike on Tuesday night at the Ein el-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp, in the southern port city of Sidon, Lebanon.



ANDRE PENNER/AP

Activists participate in a demonstration against fossil fuels at the COP30 U.N. Climate Summit, Wednesday in Belem, Brazil.

UN climate summit pushes for progress

Associated Press

BELEM, Brazil — As United Nations climate talks bubble to a critical point, negotiators on Tuesday were pressured to ensure that oil — along with fossil fuels coal and natural gas — won't be burned in the future.

Although the conference, known as COP30, is scheduled to run through Friday, the Brazilian presidency is pushing for an interconnected decision sooner on four issues that weren't originally on the agenda. Meanwhile, dozens of nations — rich and poor — banded together in a concerted call to deliver a detailed road map for the world to phase out or transition away from fossil fuels.

Former Ireland President Mary Robinson, a fierce climate advocate, was unusually optimistic Tuesday, comparing the talks in Belem, on the edge of the Amazon, to the climate talks that produced the landmark 2015 Paris climate agreement that set a target for limiting Earth's warming.

"This COP reminds me of Paris very much," Robinson told The Associated Press in an interview Tuesday. "I'm hoping for as good an outcome out of this difficult environment as possible. We can get it, you know, we can get it."

Much of it was to come to a head

on Wednesday, the deadline set by COP30 President André Corrêa do Lago for a decision on four issues that were initially excluded from the official agenda: whether countries should be told to toughen their new climate plans; details on handing out \$300 billion in pledged climate aid; dealing with trade barriers over climate and improving reporting on transparency and climate progress.

Brazil President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva returned to the talks on Wednesday and planned to meet with some of the negotiating teams, do Lago said.

The issue that's getting talked about by more than 80 nations is weaning the world from fossil fuels. Two years ago, the U.N. climate talks in Dubai agreed on language for a "transition away from fossil fuels."

But the following year the issue disappeared from view. Now, many countries are pushing for a detailed road map that would essentially give directions on how to phase out fossil fuels.

"People around the world are mobilizing on a massive scale, demanding concrete action for climate justice, particularly against the expansion of fossil fuel," said Colombia's Environment Minister Irene Vélez Torres.

Iran releases seized tanker and crew 2 face charges in Ontario over 300 thefts from cemeteries, mausoleums

By JON GAMBRELL

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran on Wednesday released a Marshall Islands-flagged tanker with all its 21 crew members aboard days after Tehran seized the ship without explanation, the vessel's managers said.

Tehran had no immediate comment on the release of the Talara, which marked the first ship sei-

zure by Iran in months. The Middle East remains tense after its 12-day war in June with Israel.

On Friday, Iran's military seized the vessel as it traveled through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of all oil traded passes.

The ship had been traveling from Ajman, United Arab Emirates, onward to Singapore.

Associated Press

Police recovered 600 stolen items and arrested two suspects in the thefts of jewelry, decorative urns and other valuables from mausoleums and cemeteries in Toronto and southern Ontario.

Halton police said Monday that officers investigated more than 300 thefts over the last two months in which thieves targeted eight mausoleums and cemeteries during daytime hours.

The pair allegedly tricked multiple property managers by posing as grieving family members wishing to tour the premises and the used tools to unlock and open niches without causing visible damage.

"This was a crime against places of peace and remembrance," deputy police chief Roger Wilkie said.

"A crime that has inflicted deep emotional pain and heartbreak on

families already grieving for their loved ones, families who have now experienced violation, anger, disrespect and a painful resurgence of their loss."

Some of the stolen items were sold, melted down or discarded, and Wilkie said the suspects dumped some people's cremated ashes.

A 45-year-old man and 31-year-old woman were arrested in Niagara Falls, Ontario, on Nov. 7.

WORLD

Fire in southwest Japan ruins 170 homes, forces evacuations

By MARI YAMAGUCHI
Associated Press

TOKYO — Firefighters and army helicopters battled a fire Wednesday that burned through a neighborhood of old wooden houses in a fishing town in southwestern Japan, killing one person, injuring another and forcing more than 170 people to evacuate.

A man in his 70s was unaccounted for and firefighters later found a body, possibly of the missing man, and a woman in her 50s suffered a minor injury, the Oita prefecture disaster response team said.

Dozens of fire engines and more than 200 firefighters were mobilized to battle the fire, which was not still fully under control more than a day after it started. The Ground Self-Defense Force dispatched two UH-1 army helicopters to assist.

It may take a few more days before the fire is completely extinguished, town mayor Shinya Ada-

chi told reporters after he visited the devastated neighborhood Wednesday.

At least 170 homes have been damaged or burned down, the disaster response team said. The residential section struck by the fire is close to the coastal area of Oita known for mackerel fishing but not near the prefecture's popular hot spring resorts, called onsen, and historic, thatched-roof homes.

The fire started during strong winds Tuesday evening near a fishing port in the Saganoseki district of Oita City on the southern main island of Kyushu. The blaze spread to a forest, affecting about 12 acres, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency said. There was an advisory for strong winds when the fire broke out.

A firefighter told the Kyodo News Agency the firefighting operation was hampered by narrow backstreets where fire engines could not enter. There were also



TAKUMI SATO, KYODO NEWS/AP
The aftermath of a fire in Oita, southern Japan, on Wednesday.

abandoned homes in the rapidly aging and shrinking neighborhood, Kyodo said.

The local network YTV noted that the narrow alleyways where the fire burned had old wooden houses.

The fires spread quickly as a strong wind was "blowing in all directions," a 59-year-old office worker told Kyodo as she recalled how the fire started Tuesday eve-



Kyodo News/AP
Residents watch flames rise from the site of a fire in Oita, on Tuesday.

ning.

Authorities are still investigating the fire's cause and how it spread, the FDMA said.

Japanese television footage showed smoke rising from swaths of land filled with destroyed and damaged houses, though orange flames were no longer visible by

midday Wednesday. The Oita prefecture said about 260 homes remained without electricity Wednesday afternoon.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi posted a statement on X offering sympathy for those affected by the fire and pledged to "provide maximum support."

Louvre to set up new cameras, anti-intrusion systems after heist

Associated Press

PARIS — The head of the Louvre Museum said Wednesday that new surveillance cameras and anti-intrusion systems will soon be installed at the Paris landmark after last month's stunning crown jewels heist.

The cameras — some 100 of them — will be up and running by

the end of next year while anti-intrusion systems will start to be put in place within two weeks, Louvre director Laurence des Cars said.

She described the systems as equipment that will prevent intruders from getting close to the museum buildings but did not offer specifics.

The new surveillance cameras

will try to ensure "complete protection of the museum's surroundings," she said.

"After the shock, after the emotion, after the assessment, it's time for action" at the world's most visited museum, des Cars told the Committee of Cultural Affairs of the National Assembly.

She said it was all part of more

than 20 emergency measures that will be implemented. The new measures also include the creation of a "security coordinator" position at the museum, and the job has been posted this month, she added.

On the day of the heist, it took thieves less than 8 minutes to force their way through a window

into the Apollo Gallery with the help of a freight lift and steal the \$102 million trove.

Des Cars unveiled some new details about the security breach that allowed the Oct. 19 robbery, saying the power tools used by robbers to cut through the display cases were disc cutters meant for concrete.

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



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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Lawsuit filed over deaths in air ambulance crash

PA PHILADELPHIA — The families of two of the eight people killed earlier this year when an air ambulance crashed in Philadelphia filed a lawsuit on Monday, claiming the medical air transport company and others negligently caused their deaths.

The wrongful death case was filed by the estates of Dr. Raul Meza Arredondo, a pediatrician, and Lizeth Murillo Osuna, the mother of a girl who was flying home to Mexico after being treated at a Philadelphia hospital.

All six people on board the Learjet 55 were killed, along with two people on the ground. More than 20 people were hurt.

About a minute after takeoff from Northeast Philadelphia Airport on Jan. 31, the Tijuana, Mexico-bound plane crashed into a busy neighborhood, “erupting in a massive explosion that engulfed multiple vehicles and houses and sent fiery debris raining down on terrified and helpless bystanders,” the plaintiffs alleged in the lawsuit.

The National Transportation Safety Board has said the voice recorder on the plane was not working and that the crew made no distress calls to air traffic control.

The defendants are the Guadalajara air ambulance company, Med Jets, S.A. de C.V., which does business as Jet Rescue, along with unspecified others who were responsible for the plane’s design, manufacture, maintenance and inspection.

Dad charged with murder of sons missing since 2010

MI ADRIAN — A Michigan man charged with murder in the Thanksgiving weekend disappearance of his three sons made his first appearance in court Monday, the latest turn in a saga that has unsettled a small town for 15 years.

John Skelton was taken to Lenawee County from a state prison. He was close to finishing a sentence for failing to return 9-year-old Andrew, 7-year-old Alexander and 5-year-old Tanner Skelton to their mother on the day after Thanksgiving in 2010.

Skelton, 53, now is facing three counts of murder and tampering with evidence. The boys have never been found, despite searches in Michigan and Ohio and tips from across the country, but the father has long been identified by police as the culprit.

Skelton appeared in court and was returned to jail on a \$60 million bond.

Homeowner charged in fatal shooting of maid

IN LEBANON — An Indiana homeowner accused of killing a house cleaner who mistakenly arrived at his front door was charged with voluntary man-



LEONARD ORTIZ, THE ORANGE COUNTY (CALIF.) REGISTER/AP

Seeing the sky from up high

A construction worker takes a breather as clouds loom over a Toll Brothers home construction project in Irvine, Calif., on Monday.

slaughter on Monday in a case that could test the limits of stand-your-ground laws.

Curt Andersen, 62, could face anywhere from 10 to 30 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine if he’s convicted. He was being held in the Boone County Jail pending an initial court hearing.

Officers found Maria Florinda Rios Perez De Velasquez, 32, dead on the front porch of a home in Whitestown, an Indianapolis suburb, on Nov. 5. Authorities said the Guatemalan immigrant was part of a cleaning crew that went to the wrong house just before 7 a.m.

Andersen shot her through the front door with no warning about a minute after hearing someone trying to unlock the door, according to a probable cause statement.

Indiana is one of 31 states with a stand-your-ground law that permits homeowners to use deadly force to stop someone they believe is trying to unlawfully enter their dwelling. But police said that there’s no evidence Rios entered the home before she was shot.

Police: Man sets fire to a woman on an L train, flees

IL CHICAGO — A man doused a woman with a fluid and set her on fire on a Chicago L train, leaving her in critical condition, authorities said Tuesday.

The attack happened Monday night on a Blue Line train, police said. Witnesses told investigators that the 26-year-old woman and a man believed to be in his 40s began arguing, and that the man then

doused her with a liquid and set her alight.

When the train pulled into the Clark and Lake stop, the man fled and the woman stumbled out and fell on the ground, police said, noting that she was taken to a hospital in critical condition. The hospital declined to discuss her condition.

A person of interest in the attack was taken in custody, police said later Tuesday.

Like many other major cities, Chicago has seen a drop in violent crime after a pandemic-era spike. Urban crime has been a hot topic of late following President Donald Trump’s characterization of several Democratic-led cities, including Chicago, as crime-ridden wastelands in need of federal intervention. Local officials have pushed back against that narrative.

No prison time for pilot who tried to cut engines

OR PORTLAND — A former Alaska Airlines pilot won’t serve prison time for trying to cut the engines of a flight in 2023, a federal judge ruled Monday.

U.S. District Court Judge Amy Baggio in Portland, Ore., sentenced Joseph Emerson to time served and three years’ supervised release, ending a case that drew attention to the need for cockpit safety and more mental health support for pilots.

Emerson was subdued by the flight crew after trying to cut the engines of a Horizon Air flight from Everett, Wash., to San Francisco on Oct. 22, 2023, while riding off-duty

in the cockpit. The plane was diverted and landed in Portland with more than 80 people.

Emerson told police he was despondent over a friend’s recent death, had taken psychedelic mushrooms about two days earlier, and hadn’t slept in over 40 hours. He has said he believed he was dreaming and was trying to wake up by grabbing two red handles that would have activated the fire suppression system and cut fuel to the engines.

He spent 46 days in jail and was released pending trial in December 2023, with requirements that he undergo mental health services, stay off drugs and alcohol, and keep away from aircraft.

Commission to pay contract for PBS station

AL BIRMINGHAM — Facing a public backlash, the commission that oversees Alabama Public Television voted Tuesday to continue paying its contract with PBS, rejecting an effort — at least for now — to be the first state to cut ties with the broadcast giant because of politics and federal budget cuts.

The Alabama Educational Television Commission voted without dissent to honor the contract with PBS that runs until July. The commission also voted to create a committee to explore the direction of Alabama Public Television. A motion to give the required 180-day nonrenewal notice, the first step to cutting ties with PBS, failed for lack of a second.

The decision means PBS pro-

gramming, which includes programs such as “Sesame Street,” “Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood,” “Antiques Roadshow” and “PBS NewsHour” will remain on the state channel at least for the immediate future.

Two commission members last month had floated the idea of severing ties with PBS, citing federal budget cuts to public broadcasting and accusations by President Donald Trump and other conservatives of bias in news programs. The possibility of dropping PBS prompted a backlash from Alabama public television viewers and donors.

House explosion injures 8, damages other homes

CA CHINO HILLS — A house exploded in a Southern California neighborhood, injuring eight people and damaging two homes nearby, with firefighters evacuating a total of 16 homes.

Firefighters in Chino Hills did not say what caused the explosion Sunday, but said that a gas leak had been stopped. Photos and video from the scene showed the house reduced to a pile of rubble.

The fire department said four people were taken from the home to a hospital, and four others brought themselves. Their conditions were not immediately known.

KABC-TV reported witnesses said they saw people running from the exploded home, including children crying for help.

FACES

Q&A

Desert raves and apocalyptic doom

Director discusses ‘Sirat,’ a Cannes Film Festival darling and one of 2025’s most talked-about films

BY JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

Oliver Laxe, the spiritually minded, 6-foot-6-inch French-born Galician director, knows that his new film, “Sirat,” has given him a reputation to live up to.

“When I’m on a plane and things are going bad, I say, “Come on, you’re the director of ‘Sirat.’ You cannot be scared,” Laxe, 41, says, laughing.

Since its prize-winning debut at the Cannes Film Festival, “Sirat” has been one the year’s most talked-about films. It’s about a father (Sergi López) who, with his 12-year-old son (Bruno Núñez Arjona), is searching for his teenage daughter. After arriving at a remote rave in southern Morocco, where they have no luck, they flee with a small caravan of ravers who ride across a desert expanse.

A primal beat sounds through “Sirat,” which morphs into an existential journey through approaching apocalypse. World War III is referenced on the radio, and the arid landscape where water is in short supply reverberates with the effects of climate change. “Sirat,” which means “path” or “way” in Arabic, is uncommonly blunt about what the future holds for the film’s characters, and for us.

“Sirat” last week began playing a one-week run in select theaters to qualify for the Oscars, where it is Spain’s submission. The Neon release, which will reach more theaters in early 2026, has already been a box-office hit in Spain and in France, drawing comparisons to both “The Wages of Fear” and “Mad Max.” Not everyone has gone along with the intense odyssey of “Sirat,” but it has, undeniably, struck a nerve.

“For me, cinema isn’t about ‘I like it’ or ‘I don’t like it,’” Laxe says. “My purpose is: Did it move something?”

During a stop this fall at the Toronto International Film Festival, Laxe — a lanky and soulful presence who could have been a

romance cover model — talked about the spiritual underpinnings of “Sirat” and why filmmaking can’t be the same, anymore.

Associated Press: Traveling with the film, have you felt it resonating with audiences?

Laxe: The main purpose was to provoke the spectator to look inside. I think it’s the only issue we have. If you put all the audiovisual productions in a box, I can say that 98% of these productions are made for destruction. I think as human beings, we need to look inside. It’s the only way to really be free and emancipated people, you know? And sometimes to look inside, it’s not nice what we see. “Sirat” is a rite of a passage.

You could say that the film leaves you with the feeling that we are all migrants.

Totally. I think the world we are approaching will be like this: Life will push us so much into a border. Life will ask us what it is to be a human being. We don’t have to be really intuitive to know that with climate change and new technology, artificial intelligence, the question is: What is it to be a human being? What I’m studying about psychotherapy is that all of us are broken. We are not connected with this wound, and that’s why we have more fears, more anguish. I’m really optimistic for the future. It will be tough, but we will be obliged to look inside.

It’s funny to hear you say you’re optimistic. Some would call “Sirat” a pretty severe wake-up call.

Yes, though I don’t want to sound too paternalistic. The pain of the wound is so strong that it’s difficult to carry it. That’s why we need destruction. All my mercy to all of us. We do what we can do. But, yes, I think it’s time to look inside. I didn’t want to make a film. (Laughs)

You didn’t?

No, I think the challenges that an artist has are different than before. That’s why I’m happy. Cannes was a test for the film. People say to me: “This is not just a film.



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

Oliver Laxe, director/co-writer of “Sirat,” poses Sept. 5 during the Toronto International Film Festival. The film will be Spain’s submission to the Academy Awards.

“For me, cinema isn’t about ‘I like it’ or ‘I don’t like it.’ My purpose is: Did it move something?”

Oliver Laxe
director and co-writer of “Sirat”

This is a ceremony.” It’s the way I understand a film has to be. To change yourself. Look at the ancient Greeks. They didn’t go to the theater to have fun. They don’t meet and have an aperitif and after have dinner. It was a war. They were going to theater to purge their ghosts in order to experiment with things that they don’t [experience] in life in order to save society.

What was going on in your life when you began to conceive the movie?

I started to deal with the images of “Sirat” in 2011. It was after the release of my first feature, a film I did with 20,000 euros in Tangier with my neighbors. ... There is something about the desert and the mountains of Morocco. It’s a wounded landscape. You are contemplating the creation of the planet, all the erosion, all the layers. I like

this landscape because you feel small. That doesn’t give you anguish. It’s the opposite. It gives you humility. I’m a human being who’s looking for transcendence.

You faced sandstorms and summer heat shooting. How grueling was it?

I like to go to my limits. I think that art, rave culture and spirituality are about this, to cross minefields, to take a path where you don’t know where you’re going. All my shootings are really extreme, probably because I’m a junkie of images. This was one of my easiest shootings.

There are narrative extremes that your film takes that some filmmakers would refuse. Were you concerned about the response?

I have to tell you, I was scared. My practice is always about my intention. The main thing is inside, how you will assume your artistic gesture and all the consequences. When I was doing this film, the feedback was really difficult. For example, one friend told me, “We don’t want people to suffer.” So obviously you have doubts. You ask yourself: I’m working for who? But you keep going. Obviously I was scared but I knew I had to jump into the abyss. I knew I had to cross my own minefield. Some people, they are shaken watching the film. They get scared. But they tell me when they arrive home, they feel a kind of revival. It’s like they feel more life, hopefully.

New coin honors Freddie Mercury and his 4-octave range

Associated Press

Britain’s Royal Mint is celebrating Freddie Mercury with a new coin design that marks 40 years since his iconic Live Aid concert performance.

The coin features an image of the Queen frontman, head thrown back and holding the microphone stand midperformance. A musical stave that runs around the edge of the coin represents his four-octave vocal range.

tave vocal range.

The first coin was struck by Mercury’s sister Kashmira Bulsara at the Royal Mint in Wales last week.

“As Freddie died young, he didn’t get the chance of being awarded a royal medal for his talents in the music world. So to have a royal coin this way is wonderful and very fitting,” she said.

The Royal Mint’s director of

commemorative coin, Rebecca Morgan, said fans had been “calling out” for Mercury to be commemorated via coin and “this felt like the year to do it,” because it’s 40 years since he captivated audiences at the 1985 Live Aid concert, hailed by many as the greatest live gig of all time.

This year also marks the 40th anniversary of Mercury’s solo studio album “Mr Bad Guy.”

Mercury died at age 45 in 1991, just one day after he publicly announced he was HIV positive.

The Royal Mint has issued special coins to celebrate other music legends including David Bowie, George Michael, Shirley Bassey and Paul McCartney.

The coins are now on sale on the Royal Mint website. Prices start at 18.50 pounds (\$24.4) for a 5-pound denomination version.



ROYAL MINT/AP

Britain has minted a coin that celebrates the great Queen frontman Freddie Mercury.



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OPINION

Presidents can no longer be trusted with pardons

BY JONAH GOLDBERG
Tribune Content Agency

Ours is a system of “checks and balances.”

The president can do this or that, but the courts and Congress can put a stop to it (depending on the circumstances and relevant rules). When the courts rule that the executive branch can’t do something, Congress can write a new law saying the president can do it. When Congress passes a law the president doesn’t like, the president can veto it. Congress, if it has enough votes, can override the veto. And so on. The whole idea is to deny any one branch or person too much concentrated power.

I’m sorry if I sound a bit condescending given that everyone is supposed to have learned this stuff in grade school. But it seems a lot of people have forgotten how our system is supposed to work, so I thought a quick recap might be helpful.

Anyway, even under our system, each branch has powers that really can’t be checked. Congress, for instance, has sole authority to levy taxes and spend taxpayer money, declare war, etc. Once a court acquits a defendant, the defendant can’t be prosecuted for that crime again.

The president has some unique powers too. Including the sole, final authority to grant pardons, which cannot be reviewed or repealed by Congress or the courts.

It’s time we changed that — and the only way to do so is by amending the Constitution.

There are two reasons for getting rid of the president’s power to pardon. The first is the grotesque abuses of that power by Presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden. In his first term, Trump issued a series of egre-

gious pardons for, among others, lackeys, war criminals and political allies.

Biden then issued blanket and preemptive pardons for his family and various political allies. Partisan defenders like to say this was necessary to protect the Bidens from persecution by the incoming Trump administration. These defenses tend to overlook the Biden family’s exceedingly shady business dealings. They also ignore a raft of other pardons and commutations Biden allegedly just outsourced to ideologues on his staff.

Back in office in 2025, Trump has outdone Biden (and himself). He launched his second term by granting mass pardons to the goons who beat police with flagpoles and stormed the Capitol on his behalf on Jan. 6, 2021. Since then, he’s pardoned a rogues’ gallery of donors, partisan allies and people with business ties to him or his family, including crypto billionaire Changpeng Zhao, the chief executive of Binance, a trading platform that allowed terrorists and criminal organizations to finance their operations under the radar.

Zhao pleaded guilty to money laundering, but he also worked assiduously to boost the Trump family’s crypto business. It certainly appears that he got a pardon in exchange for services rendered.

The second reason for getting rid of the president’s pardon power involves that earlier stuff about checks and balances. The Founding Fathers believed the only remedy for the corrupt abuse or misuse of pardons was impeachment. James Madison, the principal author of the Constitution, was explicit on this point.

At the Virginia ratifying convention, George Mason objected that the pardon power was too great, and that presidents could

use pardons to suborn criminal activity on their behalf. Madison responded that, “If the president be connected in any suspicious manner with any (such) persons, and there be grounds to believe he will shelter himself, the house of representatives can impeach him.”

The problem: Congress’ impeachment power has proven to be a dead letter in the modern era of hyper-partisanship. Just as presidents cannot be trusted to use the pardon power responsibly, Congress cannot be trusted with the responsibility to hold presidents accountable. Without checks, there is no balance.

There still should be room for pardons and clemency in our system. But leaving it solely in the power of presidents has led to evermore abuse. Indeed, I think it’s almost a certainty that Trump will use the Biden precedent to preemptively pardon much of his administration, his sons and himself before he leaves office. Given the ongoing weaponization of the justice system — and his abuse of it — he’d almost be a fool not to.

The Constitution was written with men like George Washington in mind. When Washington opted to step down after two terms, it established a two-term tradition that endured until Franklin Roosevelt violated it. Afterward, we amended the Constitution to codify what had been a tradition.

For most of our history, presidents took the solemnity of pardons — and the threat of impeachments — seriously. They no longer do. It’s time to change the Constitution accordingly.

Jonah Goldberg is editor-in-chief of The Dispatch and the host of The Remnant podcast.

For too many American kids, math isn’t adding up

Bloomberg Editorial Board

Math scores in the United States have been so bad for so long that teachers could be forgiven for trying anything to improve them. Unfortunately, many of the strategies they’re using could be making things worse.

It’s a crisis decades in the making. In the early 20th century, education reformers including John Dewey and William Heard Kilpatrick developed a theory — drawing from the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau — that came to be known as constructivism. The idea was that learning happens best when students immerse themselves in a problem and find their own solution. By the late 1980s, math standards had embraced “discovery-based learning.”

Unfortunately, a robust body of research has since found that such approaches often fail early math learners (and readers, for that matter). Math rules and facts such as multiplication tables must be taught explicitly, memorized and mastered through practice. Only when this foundation is established can students progress to more complex concepts. Math, it’s often said, is cumulative.

Yet many teachers colleges are still resistant to such findings. Make math engaging, their thinking goes, and children will excel. Stop memorizing facts (it’s “rote”) and eliminate timed tests (they cause anxiety). Academics often call such educational approaches “student-centered.” Yet they lack scientific rigor and have never produced the promised gains in achievement.

Consider how children are learning to add

— say, 12 + 29. Traditionally, they’d line up the figures and “carry” the 1. Kids today are taught this algorithm alongside a basket of other strategies. For example, they can “decompose” the addends by combining the numbers in the tens place (in this case, 10 + 20) and then the ones (2 + 9). Alternatively, they can round to the nearest 10 and add or subtract accordingly: 10 + 30 = 40, then add 2 and subtract 1. Or they can sort numbers into bubbles.

The brightest students may be able to make sense of this, and the richest may pay for tutors. Average students will often find it bewildering. Teachers, for their part, lament the cluttered curricula they’re required to follow and often say they’re overwhelmed by the gap between their efforts and student achievement.

In recent years, policymakers have started to recognize the shortcomings of similar approaches to literacy. More than 40 states have passed laws to ensure reading instruction aligns with sound science. The results have in many cases been dramatic: Mississippi, once ranked 49th in fourth grade reading, now comes in ninth.

Yet math hasn’t gotten the same attention. If anything, some states are moving in reverse. New York, for example, released a new set of “best practices” in May that inveigh against timed quizzes, practicing math facts and so-called explicit instruction. A group of researchers are calling for its retraction.

To be sure, there are many reasons that American schools are failing to teach math: an aversion to standardized tests, powerful

teachers unions, chronic absenteeism and grade inflation, to name a few. Reversing the decline may take years. For now, policymakers should focus on a few practical and evidence-based reforms.

One place to start: teachers colleges, which prepare the next generation of educators. Too many of these programs have been captured by faddish theories that do little to help young students learn. States should work with accreditors to ensure that the coursework at such schools is rigorous, aligns with real evidence and ensures that graduates are themselves proficient in math. Students will never learn if their teachers haven’t already done so.

School districts, meanwhile, should redouble their efforts on elementary education, where interventions are most promising. Curricula should limit the number of strategies introduced to students for basic math operations. They should emphasize direct instruction and encourage regular practice. States should also consider short, standardized assessments, such as England’s successful “multiplication tables check.” Critically, education officials must reform curricula to ensure that students can meet state standards.

The decline in math scores in recent years reflects a more systemic problem: To fix what ails American education, teachers need to stick with the science and let kids get back to the facts.

Bloomberg’s Editorial Board publishes the views of Bloomberg editors across a range of national and global affairs.

Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

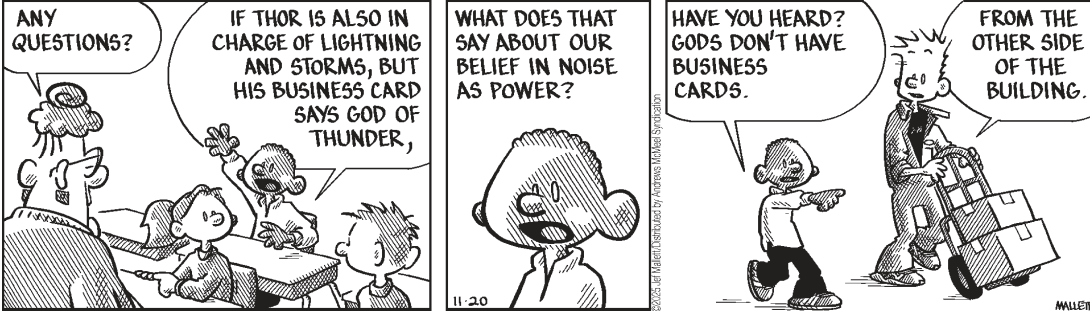
1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11
12					13					14		
15				16						17		
18								19	20			
			21			22	23					
24	25	26			27				28		29	30
31					32					33		
34			35		36				37			
		38		39				40				
41	42						43			44	45	46
47				48	49	50						
51				52					53			
54				55					56			

- ACROSS
- 54 Pac. counterpart
- 55 Scruff
- 56 Gentle soul
- DOWN
- 1 — Raton
- 2 Genesis shepherd
- 3 Piece of hardware
- 4 Rodeo cry
- 5 Nick and Nora's pet
- 6 Avril follower
- 7 Links org.
- 8 Donnybrook
- 9 Therapeutic
- 10 Actor Baldwin
- 11 Baseball glove
- 16 Gender
- 20 Dumpster explorer
- 22 Inane
- 23 Scrabble piece
- 24 Blubber
- 25 Like some humor
- 26 Majestic
- 27 Erte's style
- 29 "Frontera" actress Longoria
- 30 24 hours
- 35 Chemical suffix
- 37 Like cats and dogs
- 39 "Ozark" star Bateman
- 40 Comic Philips
- 41 Polynesian drink
- 42 Skip
- 43 Eyelid woe
- 44 Latvia's capital
- 45 Produce producer
- 46 Thick cut
- 49 Alias abbr.
- 50 LL Cool J's music

Answer to Previous Puzzle

T	O	R	O	V	E	T	A	F	A	R
E	R	I	C	E	R	R	B	R	I	E
R	E	N	T	F	R	E	E	S	E	N
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Z	A	K	K	G	B	S	C	I	F	I
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B	O	A	T	B	A	C	K	R	E	N
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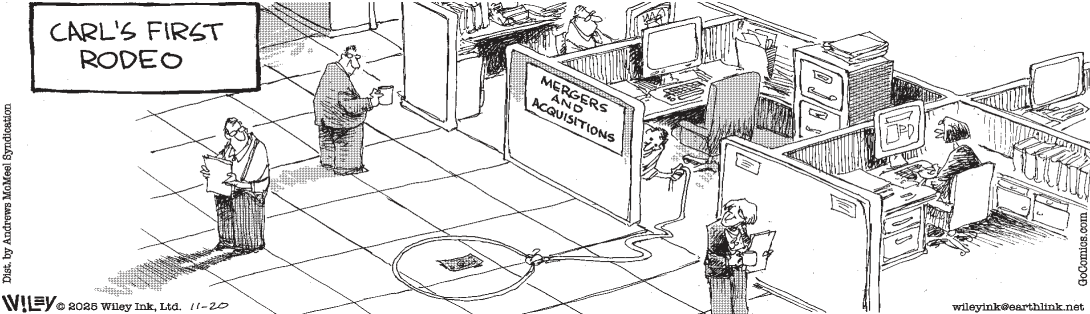
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



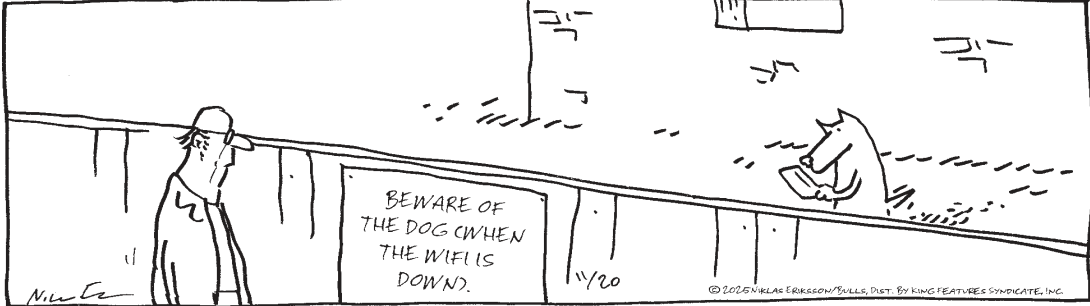
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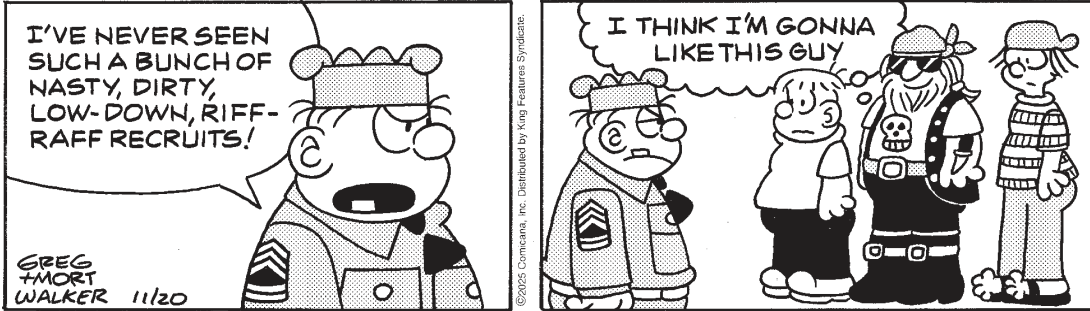
Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



11-20

CRYPTOQUIP

M T H R N F R N A H U F U R O T H
K Y V Q H F F V G F T H X X U R B N
C N Z H Y V G F A U R , X V K H V K C H
F N Z U O ' F F Q N C U R B X V M R ?
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT DO YOU THINK
HORNED FARM ANIMALS PROBABLY WANT FOR
BREAKFAST AFTER WAKING UP? GOATMEAL.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals G

NHL

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference								
Atlantic Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Detroit	20	12	7	1	25	62	62	
Boston	21	12	9	0	24	69	69	
Montreal	19	10	6	3	23	63	66	
Tampa Bay	19	10	7	2	22	59	56	
Ottawa	19	9	6	4	22	64	65	
Florida	19	10	8	1	21	58	59	
Toronto	20	9	9	2	20	70	74	
Buffalo	19	7	8	4	18	56	65	
Metropolitan Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Carolina	19	13	5	1	27	70	54	
New Jersey	19	13	5	1	27	62	57	
Pittsburgh	19	10	5	4	24	62	50	
N.Y. Islanders	20	11	7	2	24	64	64	
Columbus	20	10	8	2	22	62	65	
N.Y. Rangers	21	10	9	2	22	53	52	
Philadelphia	18	9	6	3	21	51	51	
Washington	19	9	8	2	20	53	49	
Western Conference								
Central Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Colorado	19	13	1	5	31	78	47	
Dallas	20	12	5	3	27	66	57	
Winnipeg	19	12	7	0	24	64	52	
Chicago	19	10	5	4	24	64	49	
Utah	20	10	7	3	23	62	61	
Minnesota	20	9	7	4	22	56	61	
St. Louis	20	6	9	5	17	55	78	
Nashville	20	6	10	4	16	49	70	
Pacific Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Anaheim	19	12	6	1	25	70	60	
Vegas	19	9	4	6	24	60	55	
Los Angeles	20	10	6	4	24	56	57	
Seattle	19	9	5	5	23	51	54	
Edmonton	21	9	8	4	22	63	75	
San Jose	20	9	8	3	21	59	65	
Vancouver	21	9	10	2	20	67	77	
Calgary	21	5	13	3	13	45	67	
Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.								
Tuesday's games								
Toronto 3, St. Louis 2, OT								
Tampa Bay 5, New Jersey 1								
Detroit 4, Seattle 2								
Winnipeg 5, Columbus 2								
N.Y. Islanders 3, Dallas 2								
Chicago 5, Calgary 2								
Vegas 3, N.Y. Rangers 2								
San Jose 3, Utah 2, OT								
Wednesday's games								
Edmonton at Washington								
Calgary at Buffalo								
Carolina at Minnesota								
Boston at Anaheim								
Thursday's games								
Columbus at Toronto								
N.Y. Islanders at Detroit								
New Jersey at Florida								
St. Louis at Philadelphia								
Washington at Montreal								
Edmonton at Tampa Bay								
Seattle at Chicago								
N.Y. Rangers at Colorado								
Vegas at Utah								
Dallas at Vancouver								
Los Angeles at San Jose								
Ottawa at Anaheim								
Friday's games								
Chicago at Buffalo								
Minnesota at Pittsburgh								
Carolina at Winnipeg								
Boston at Los Angeles								
Saturday's games								
Columbus at Detroit								
St. Louis at N.Y. Islanders								
Edmonton at Florida								
Toronto at Montreal								
New Jersey at Philadelphia								
Seattle at Pittsburgh								
Ottawa at San Jose								
Tampa Bay at Washington								
Colorado at Nashville								
N.Y. Rangers at Utah								
Vegas at Anaheim								
Dallas at Calgary								
Scoring leaders								
Through Tuesday								
	GP	G	A	PTS				
Nathan MacKinnon, COL	19	14	19	33				
Connor McDavid, EDM	21	9	21	30				
Macklin Celebrini, SJ	20	13	17	30				
Connor Bedard, CHI	19	13	16	29				
Mikko Rantanen, DAL	20	9	18	27				
William Nylander, TOR	17	9	18	27				
Mark Scheifele, WPG	19	11	16	27				
David Pastrnak, BOS	21	11	15	26				
Leo Carlsson, ANA	19	11	15	26				
Cale Makar, COL	19	6	19	25				

ROUNDUP

Guentzel, Lightning hold off Devils

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Jake Guentzel scored three goals for his eighth career hat trick and the Tampa Bay Lightning beat the New Jersey Devils 5-1 on Tuesday night.

Darren Raddysh had a goal and two assists, and Nikita Kucherov had a goal and assist. Andrei Vasilevskiy finished with 31 saves as Tampa Bay improved to 9-3-0 since a 1-4-2 start.

Nico Hischier scored for New Jersey, which got Dougie Hamilton, Connor Brown and Evgeni Dadanov back in the lineup. Jakob Markstrom stopped 24 shots for the Devils, who lost in regulation for the first time since Nov. 2 to end a five-game point streak (4-0-1).

The Lightning played without coach Jon Cooper, who missed the game for what the team described as personal reasons. Cooper, the head coach for Team Canada at the Olympics in February, last missed a game Dec. 21, 2021, at Las Vegas when he tested positive for COVID. Jeff Halpern served as the head coach Tuesday.

Guentzel opened the scoring on a breakaway 11:40 into the game, and added his second of the game at 10:38 of the second period with a power-play goal as he shoveled in a pass from Raddysh. Guentzel completed his third hat trick in a Tampa Bay uniform at 7:48 of the third period from the left post as he again shoveled a puck into the net off a cross-ice pass from Kucherov.

Kucherov moved into third all-time in franchise history with his 366th career goal with 22 seconds left in the first period to make it 2-0. Hischier cut New Jersey's



CHRIS O'MEARA/AP

Lightning center Jake Guentzel, right, shoots wide of New Jersey Devils goalie Jacob Markstrom in the second period Tuesday in Tampa, Fla.

deficit to 3-1 with 2:13 remaining in the second for his 435th career point to move past Mark Streit for fifth-most by a Swiss-born player.

Islanders 3, Stars 2: Bo Horvat scored his 13th goal of the season in the second period before being ejected for high-sticking in the third, and visiting New York held on against Dallas.

Calum Ritchie and Kyle Palmieri also scored and David Rittich made 22 saves for the Islanders, who are 5-1 on their seven-game road swing.

Wyatt Johnson stunningly tied the game with 0.1 seconds, but his goal was waved off by official review for goaltender interference because Jason Robertson collided with Rittich in the crease and knocked him over.

Blackhawks 5, Flames 2: Connor Bedard scored three more goals, and host Chicago beat Calgary for its second straight win.

Ryan Donato and Oliver Moore also scored as the Blackhawks improved to 5-0-1 in its last six games. Arvid Soderblom made 19 saves.

The last-place Flames dropped to 1-4-1 in their last six games.

Maple Leafs 3, Blues 2 (OT): William Nylander scored at 4:06 of overtime as underperforming and injury-ravaged Toronto picked up a victory over visiting St. Louis to snap a five-game slide.

Jake McCabe and Steven Lorentz also scored for the Maple Leafs, who had dropped five straight, including four in regulation.

Celebrini's 30-point feat matches Gretzky, Crosby

By JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Macklin Celebrini might be the only one on the San Jose Sharks not excited to talk about his remarkable season that has the 19-year-old accomplishing feats only some of the greatest players ever have done at his age.

Celebrini delivered another signature performance Tuesday night when he completed his third career hat trick with an overtime goal that gave the Sharks a 3-2 victory over the Utah Mammoth and put him in elite company.

The three goals gave Celebrini 30 points in his team's first 20 games of a season, a mark reached only by two other teenagers in NHL history with Wayne Gretzky doing it in 1980-81 and Sidney Crosby in 2006-07. Mario Lemieux also did it in his first 20 games in 1984-85, but he missed

seven games during that stretch.

"It's cool, but that's the first time I'm hearing about it," Celebrini said, quickly trying to dismiss any comparison to those legends. "I don't really want to hear about that. That's not what's important."

Celebrini had 25 goals and 38 assists as an 18-year-old rookie, but has taken his game to new heights so far this season with 13 goals and 17 assists.

Celebrini has provided reason for optimism for a San Jose franchise that had the worst record in the NHL in each of the past two seasons and hasn't made the playoffs since the 2018-19 season.

He is part of a young core that features several promising players with more in the pipeline who are expected to be the building blocks for a contender in the coming years.

The two main pieces of that rebuild right now are Celebrini and



PAMELA SMITH/AP

The San Jose Sharks' Macklin Celebrini prepares to take a shot against the New Jersey Devils.

linemate Will Smith, the No. 4 overall pick in 2023. The 20-year-old Smith has seven goals and 11 assists with the latest coming on a deft cross-ice pass that set up Celebrini's first goal of the night less than two minutes into the game.

Red Wings 4, Kraken 2: Nate Danielson had a goal and an assist for his first two NHL points as Detroit rookies fueled a victory over visiting Seattle.

Lucas Raymond and Emmitt Finnie scored in a three-goal second period and Dylan Larkin added an empty-netter as the Red Wings began a four-game homestand. Danielson, Finnie and defenseman Axel Sandin-Pellikka, all rookies this season, combined for four points in the second period.

Jets 5, Blue Jackets 2: Mark Scheifele had three assists, Josh Morrissey extended his scoring streak to six games, and host Winnipeg defeated Columbus.

Adam Lowry and Neal Pionk each scored their first goals of the season, Kyle Connor had a nifty third-period goal to go with an assist, while Logan Stanley capped off the scoring for the Jets in the third period.

Golden Knights 3, Rangers 2: Rookie forward Braeden Bowman scored his second career goal and host Vegas defeated New York.

The Golden Knights improved to 2-0-1 in their past three games following an 0-2-2 stretch.

Sharks 3, Mammoth 2 (OT): Macklin Celebrini scored a power-play goal in overtime to complete his second hat trick of the season, and host San Jose overcame a blown third-period lead to beat Utah.

Celebrini scored twice in the first six minutes of the game and capped it when he beat Vitek Vanecek with 2:09 left in overtime after the Mammoth had been called for too many men on the ice.

Coach Ryan Warsofsky said that what sets Celebrini apart from other young stars is his "hockey sense." It's a trait he often sees lacking as players spend so much time working on their skills that they neglect that aspect of the game.

That has helped Celebrini become an instant leader on the team despite his age, as he earned the title of alternate captain this season and is being groomed to wear the "C" on his sweater soon.

His play has helped the Sharks rebound from a six-game winless streak to open the season with nine wins in their last 14 games that has them at least in range of a playoff spot after winning just 39 games combined the past two seasons.

San Jose has shown more resiliency this season, evidenced by the response in overtime after blowing a two-goal lead in the third period against Utah.

NFL



DANNY KARNIK/AP
Carolina Panthers quarterback Bryce Young leads his team onto the field before a game against the Falcons on Sunday in Atlanta. Young has been enjoying a rebound season after getting benched the year before.

Young has Panthers chasing playoffs after being benched

BY ROB MAADDI
Associated Press

When Bryce Young was benched after two games last year, people questioned whether he needed a fresh start on another team.

Young is still in Carolina and has the Panthers in the playoff chase.

The third-year quarterback threw for a franchise-record 448 yards and three touchdowns against the NFL's No. 1 pass defense to lead Carolina to a 30-27 win over the Atlanta Falcons on Sunday.

The Panthers (6-5) trail the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (6-4) by a half-game in the NFC South, and the two teams will meet twice in the final three weeks.

Both have tough road games in Week 12. Carolina faces the San

Francisco 49ers (7-4) on Monday night, while Tampa Bay takes on the Los Angeles Rams (8-2) on Sunday night.

Young bounced back from an ankle injury in the first quarter against Atlanta to lead a comeback from a 21-7 deficit a week after a disappointing 17-7 loss to New Orleans. If Young continues to play at this level, the Panthers could end the Buccaneers' streak of four consecutive division titles.

"To me, it's just my expectation for Bryce to take every game plan and every opportunity and attack it, and he's been doing that," Carolina coach Dave Canales said.

Canales was two games into his first season as an NFL head coach when he decided to bench Young for veteran Andy Dalton.

Young, the 2023 No. 1 draft pick, struggled in his rookie season under former coach Frank Reich. He

needed more time to learn Canales' system, watch from the sideline and grow as a player.

Canales helped develop Geno Smith in Seattle and Baker Mayfield in Tampa Bay. His patient approach with Young is coming along.

Performances like the one against the Falcons should give Panthers fans reason for optimism that Young can still be a franchise QB.

He has completed 62.7% of his passes for 1,962 yards, 14 touchdowns, seven interceptions and a career-high 86.0 passer rating.

"Everybody in the locker room knew it was bound to happen. We knew that we had in our bag, and specifically Bryce," rookie wide receiver Tetairoa McMillan said. "But I mean, to turn the tape on, man, Bryce went out there and balled for sure."

Stroud out again with concussion

BY KRISTIE RIEKEN
Associated Press

HOUSTON — Houston quarterback C.J. Stroud is still recovering from a concussion and will miss a third straight game when the Texans host the Buffalo Bills on Thursday night.

Stroud returned to practice Tuesday for the first time since he was injured, but coach DeMeco Ryans said the short week didn't leave enough time for him to be ready to play.

Houston will also be without

safety Jalen Pitre, who will miss a third game after also sustaining a concussion in the Nov. 2 loss to the Denver Broncos.

"Both guys are progressing, they're doing better," Ryans said. "But right now we've got a short turnaround with the game on Thursday and just don't have enough days for those guys to be available."

Davis Mills will start for a third week after leading Texans to wins over the Jacksonville Jaguars and Tennessee Titans in



Buffalo Bills (7-3)
at Houston Texans (5-5)
AFN-Sports
2:15 a.m. Friday CET
10:15 a.m. Friday JKT

the last two games to help Houston (5-5) reach .500 for the first time this season.

Weekly statistics

AFC individual leaders

Quarterbacks

	Att	Com	Yds	TD	Int
Maye, NE	320	230	2836	20	5
Herbert, LAC	376	250	2691	19	9
D.Jones, Ind	319	223	2659	15	7
Mahomes, KC	361	233	2625	18	6
Allen, Buf	293	204	2456	18	7
Nix, Den	387	237	2421	18	8
Flacco, Cin	373	228	2268	14	9
Lawrence, Jac	338	202	2151	11	8

Rushers

	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Taylor, Ind	189	1139	6.0	83t	15
Cook, Buf	182	968	5.3	64t	7
Achane, Mia	164	900	5.5	59t	5
Henry, Bal	166	807	4.9	59	7
Dobbins, Den	153	772	5.0	41	4
Etienne, Jac	154	729	4.7	71	5
Hall, NYJ	152	722	4.8	35	2
Judkins, Cle	157	620	3.9	46t	5
Jeanty, Las	149	554	3.7	64t	4
Warren, Pit	123	536	4.4	37	2

Receivers

	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Chase, Cin	79	861	10.9	64t	5
Waddle, Mia	49	722	14.7	46t	5
Flowers, Bal	53	703	13.3	56	1
Diggs, NE	59	659	11.2	33	3
Sutton, Den	45	649	14.4	52t	4
McConkey, LAC	54	644	11.9	58	4
Collins, Hou	49	642	13.1	54	4
Kelce, KC	50	631	12.6	44	4
Warren, Ind	50	617	12.3	41	3
Allen, LAC	56	592	10.6	31	4

Punters

	No	Yds	Lg	Avg
Rehkwow, Cin	41	2177	70	53.1
Stout, Bal	34	1708	64	50.2

Scoring

Touchdowns

	TDRush	Rec	Ret	Pts
Taylor, Ind	17	15	2	0
Allen, Buf	10	10	0	0

Kicking

	PAT	FG	LG	Pts
Dicker, LAC	23/23	25/27	59	98
Boswell, Pit	25/25	19/22	60	82
Loop, Bal	25/26	19/21	52	82

Kickoff Returners

	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Mostert, Las	15	463	30.9	54	0
Mims, Den	16	445	27.8	46	0

AFC team statistics

Average per game

Offense

	Yards	Rush	Pass
Indianapolis	396.9	145.3	251.6
Buffalo	387.4	147.6	239.8
Kansas City	364.2	115.3	248.9
New England	357.0	112.9	244.1
L.A. Chargers	347.3	115.7	231.5
Denver	335.3	122.3	213.0
Houston	329.6	107.6	222.0
Jacksonville	326.9	127.5	199.4
Baltimore	322.0	142.0	180.0
Cincinnati	307.1	81.4	225.7
Miami	300.4	112.8	187.5
Pittsburgh	286.9	88.2	198.7
N.Y. Jets	281.5	141.6	139.9
Las Vegas	269.0	81.4	187.6
Cleveland	257.3	98.0	159.3
Tennessee	242.5	78.9	163.6

Defense

	Yards	Rush	Pass
Houston	258.1	87.1	171.0
Cleveland	273.5	106.5	167.0
Denver	274.4	88.5	185.8
L.A. Chargers	286.1	113.8	172.3
Kansas City	296.8	100.0	196.8
New England	300.6	84.7	215.9
Buffalo	322.7	153.0	169.7
Jacksonville	323.6	86.7	236.9
Las Vegas	326.8	107.3	219.5
Indianapolis	327.6	92.3	235.3
N.Y. Jets	329.7	130.9	198.8
Miami	349.8	142.6	207.2
Tennessee	352.5	134.7	217.8
Baltimore	354.1	121.5	232.6
Pittsburgh	368.1	106.4	261.7
Cincinnati	418.2	160.9	257.3

NFC individual leaders

Quarterbacks

	Att	Com	Yds	TD	Int
Prescott, Dal	362	253	2587	21	6
Stafford, LAR	338	223	2557	27	2
Darnold, Sea	272	191	2541	17	10
Goff, Det	310	216	2490	21	4
Love, GB	310	210	2421	15	3
Mayfield, TB	340	216	2365	17	3
Ca.Williams, Chi	325	194	2329	13	4
Jones, SF	289	201	2151	13	6

Rushers

	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Dowdle, Car	168	833	5.0	53	5
J.Williams, Dal	161	809	5.0	66	8
B.Robinson, Atl	158	783	5.0	81t	4
K.Williams, LAR	158	750	4.7	34	6
Gibbs, Det	140	732	5.2	78t	8
McCaffrey, SF	193	707	3.7	20	6
Barkley, Phi	175	662	3.8	65t	4
Jacobs, GB	169	648	3.8	19	11
Swift, Chi	134	634	4.7	25	4
Walker, Sea	136	606	4.5	31	4

Receivers

	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Smith-Njigb., Sea	72	1146	15.9	61t	5
Pickens, Dal	58	908	15.7	45	7
Nacua, LAR	73	850	11.6	39t	4
D.London, Atl	60	810	13.5	43	6
McMillan, Car	54	748	13.9	40	4
Jefferson, Min	56	747	13.3	50	2
St. Brown, Det	66	735	11.1	34	8
McCaffrey, SF	74	732	9.9	39	5
McBride, Ari	71	718	10.1	31	7
Egbuka, TB	45	717	15.9	77t	6

Punters

	No	Yds	Lg	Avg
Whelan, GB	31	1576	65	50.8
Mann, Phi	46	2308	70	50.2

Scoring

Touchdowns

	TDRush	Rec	Ret	Pts
Jacobs, GB	11	11	0	0
McCaffrey, SF	11	6	5	0

Kicking

	PAT	FG	LG	Pts
Myers, Sea	33/33	21/26	57	96
Aubrey, Dal	32/33	18/19	64	86
Pineiro, SF	18/22	22/22	59	84

Kickoff Returners

	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
McCaffrey, Was	26	769	29.6	58	0
Moore, SF	21	599	28.5	98	0

NFC team statistics

Average per game

Offense

	Yards	Rush	Pass
Dallas	378.7	120.0	258.7
Chicago	373.8	146.6	227.2
Detroit	366.9	130.1	236.8
Seattle	365.8	116.4	249.4
L.A. Rams	360.9	114.0	246.9
San Francisco	349.4	94.8	254.5
Green Bay	344.0	113.5	230.5
Arizona	333.5	105.7	227.8
N.Y. Giants	333.2	124.7	208.5
Atlanta	332.5	119.9	212.6
Tampa Bay	332.2	110.0	222.2
Washington	330.2	138.5	191.6
Carolina	314.3	127.1	187.2
Philadelphia	300.1	115.2	184.9
New Orleans	297.2	92.8	204.4
Minnesota	296.4	103.4	193.0

Defense

	Yards	Rush	Pass
Detroit	291.8	99.7	192.1
Green Bay	292.1	96.8	195.3
Seattle	301.5	93.5	208.0
Minnesota	317.5	127.0	190.5
New Orleans	317.5	123.8	193.7
L.A. Rams	323.0	100.7	222.3
Carolina	325.9	113.1	212.8
Atlanta	326.5	138.5	188.0
Philadelphia	326.8	114.1	212.7
Arizona	333.6	112.2	221.4
Tampa Bay	342.0	100.4	241.6
San Francisco	352.9	103.8	249.1
Chicago	364.6	133.3	231.3
N.Y. Giants	375.1	149.9	225.2
Dallas	381.3	131.4	249.9
Washington	387.0	137.5	249.5

NBA

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference				
Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	9	5	.643	—
New York	8	5	.615	½
Philadelphia	8	5	.615	½
Boston	8	7	.533	1½
Brooklyn	2	12	.143	7
Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	9	6	.600	—
Miami	8	6	.571	½
Orlando	8	7	.533	1
Charlotte	4	10	.286	4½
Washington	1	12	.077	7
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	13	2	.867	—
Cleveland	10	5	.667	3
Chicago	7	6	.538	5
Milwaukee	8	7	.533	5
Indiana	1	13	.071	11½
Western Conference				
Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	9	3	.750	—
San Antonio	10	4	.714	—
Memphis	4	11	.267	6½
Dallas	4	11	.267	6½
New Orleans	2	12	.143	8
Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	14	1	.933	—
Denver	10	3	.769	3
Minnesota	9	5	.643	4½
Portland	6	8	.429	7½
Utah	5	9	.357	8½
Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	11	4	.733	—
Phoenix	9	6	.600	2
Golden State	9	7	.563	2½
L.A. Clippers	4	10	.286	6½
Sacramento	3	11	.214	7½
Tuesday's games				
Orlando 121, Golden State 113				
Boston 113, Brooklyn 99				
Detroit 120, Atlanta 112				
San Antonio 111, Memphis 101				
L.A. Lakers 140, Utah 126				
Phoenix 127, Portland 110				
Wednesday's games				
Charlotte at Indiana				
Houston at Cleveland				
Toronto at Philadelphia				
Golden State at Miami				
Denver at New Orleans				
Sacramento at Oklahoma City				
Washington at Minnesota				
New York at Dallas				
Chicago at Portland				
Thursday's games				
L.A. Clippers at Orlando				
Atlanta at San Antonio				
Philadelphia at Milwaukee				
Sacramento at Memphis				

ROUNDUP

Magic stay hot with win vs. Warriors

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Desmond Bane had 23 points and five steals, Anthony Black came off the bench to score 21 points and the Orlando Magic beat the Golden State Warriors 121-113 on Tuesday night.

Six Orlando players scored at least 13 points, offsetting 34 points and nine assists from Golden State's Stephen Curry and 33 points from Jimmy Butler.

Franz Wager had 18 points and eight rebounds and Wendell Carter Jr. had 17 points and 12 rebounds for the Magic, who have won four of their last five games. Tristan da Silva had 15 points and Jalen Suggs finished with 13 points and eight assists.

Curry passed Vince Carter on the NBA's all-time scoring list, moving into 22nd place all-time. Curry now has 25,749 points, good for 21 more than Carter.

Lakers 140, Jazz 126: LeBron James had 11 points and 12 assists in the first game of his unprecedented 23rd NBA season, and Luka Doncic had 37 points and 10 assists in host Los Angeles' victory over Utah.

Austin Reaves added 26 points as the Lakers improved to 11-4 with their third straight victory.

Lauri Markkanen had 31 points for the Jazz, who have lost five of seven.

Celtics 113, Nets 99: Jaylen Brown scored 29 points, Payton Pritchard had 22 points and 10 rebounds, and visiting Boston beat Brooklyn to move above .500 for the first time this season.

Derrick White added 15 points for the Celtics, who won their third straight game to improve to 8-7. They played the Nets even for about three quarters before



JOHN RAOUX/AP

Magic guard Jalen Suggs makes a move to get around Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry during the second half Tuesday in Orlando, Fla. The Magic won 121-113.

smothering them defensively in the fourth, allowing just one basket for the first 10 minutes of the period.

Michael Porter Jr. scored 25 points for Brooklyn, his career-best seventh straight game with at least 20. But after his 3-pointer gave the Nets a 90-89 lead with 9:08 left, they didn't make another basket until 1:56 remained.

Pistons 120, Hawks 112: Cade Cunningham returned from injury with 25 points and 10 assists as visiting Detroit won its 11th straight game over short-handed Atlanta.

Jalen Duren added 24 points for

the Pistons (13-2), who have their best start since going 15-2 out of the gates in 2005-06. That team finished 64-18 and reached the Eastern Conference finals. The Pistons have the NBA's longest winning streak this season and their longest since an 11-gamer during the 2007-08 season, the last time they won a playoff series.

Spurs 111, Grizzlies 101: De'Aaron Fox had 26 points, Harrison Barnes added 23 points and host San Antonio escaped with a victory over Memphis in a battle of injury-riddled rosters with Victor Wembanyama and Ja Morant both out.

Barnes was 9 for 14 from the field, including seven straight points on a running hook, nine-foot floater and 3-pointer to give the Spurs a 107-101 lead with 53.2 seconds remaining. Keldon Johnson added 18 points on 8-for-15 shooting.

Suns 127, Trail Blazers 110: Devin Booker scored 19 points and visiting Phoenix pulled away in the second half for a victory over Portland.

Collin Gillespie added 19 points off the bench for the Suns, who led by as many as 25 after the break. Phoenix coach Jordan Ott rested Booker in the fourth quarter.

Return: James quickly finds rhythm in first game since April

FROM PAGE 24

servers wondered whether his presence would disrupt LA, which got off to a 10-4 start without him. The four-time NBA champion could only laugh.

"I can fit in with anybody," James said. "I don't even understand why that was even a question. What's wrong with these people out here? I can fit in right away with anybody. Just watching the guys the first 14 games, I was putting myself (mentally) in position while I was watching the games of how I could help the team and how I could be successful to help those guys. I'm still able to gain a lot of eyes when I'm driving the ball or have the ball."

About 30 minutes before tipoff, the team confirmed James would start for the 1,561st time in his 1,563rd regular-season games. He got a loud ovation when he was announced first in the Lakers' starting lineup.

James didn't score in his first 11 minutes on court, but soon found his rhythm. After hitting a pair of 3-pointers in the second quarter, he recorded eight assists in the second half — including six in just over three minutes early in the fourth quarter.

Deandre Ayton was visibly impressed by James' passing during his first chance to play in a game alongside his new teammate. Los Angeles' new center noted that the alley-oop pass he threw down for a dunk was actually the second lob he had ever received from James —

the first was at James' basketball camp in Las Vegas when Ayton, a future No. 1 overall pick, was in the eighth grade.

"He played with the right spirit," Lakers coach JJ Redick said of James. "Very unselfish all night. Was a willing passer. Didn't force it. Took his drives and his shots when they were there. The defense is going to pay attention to him, and I just thought he made



James

a lot of great decisions tonight. Really great to have him back."

James said Monday that his body isn't in ideal game shape, but he was eager to get started on his latest milestone achievement in a career packed with distinction. Redick was also impressed by James' fitness, saying he could have played more minutes if LA hadn't already run away from Utah.

"LeBron is, for a lot of us that played with him, or some of these guys that grew up watching him, he's a superhero," said Redick, who played 15 NBA seasons. "What he's been able to do in this game, there's a handful of guys that have been able to do it."

With this debut, James is now just 48 games behind Robert Parish's NBA record for regular-season games played (1,611). James already holds another NBA record with 1,855 regular-season and playoff games combined — 58 more than Kareem Abdul-Jabbar — along with the record for most total minutes played.

James has repeatedly said he isn't assuming this season will be his last, but he also hasn't decided whether he'll play another year. His most recent offseason was injury-plagued, with two months of recovery after spraining his knee ligament during the Lakers' first-round playoff loss to Minnesota followed by that painful bout of sciatica — pain in the nerves running from the buttocks and down the back of the legs.

Los Angeles' next game isn't until Sunday — also against the Jazz in Salt Lake City. The Lakers will have at least two practices before then, allowing James to continue to establish his chemistry and his role.

"I don't have to worry about chemistry," James said. "This is a great group. Everyone enjoys being around each another, sacrificing for one another, playing for one another. (Just got to) get my wind, get my rhythm back. Missed a couple of chippies tonight that I'm used to making. But that will come around."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL/SOCCER

Georgia slides into bye; Miami still top ACC pick

By EDDIE PELLs
Associated Press

Georgia got a boost to No. 4, Ohio State, Indiana and Texas A&M stayed in the top three and, in what is beginning to feel like a weekly ritual in the College Football Playoff rankings, everyone is wondering what the heck might happen to Miami.

The Hurricanes were ranked 13th in Tuesday's playoff reveal — the best Atlantic Coast Conference team and a placeholder in the projected 12-team bracket. But their two conference losses make them a long shot to win the league, and their best chance of getting into the playoff — with an at-large berth — hinges on getting some help from above them.

"Miami needs to continue to win the football games they have in front of them, and good things will happen," explained Hunter Yurachek, who took over this week as chair of the selection committee and answered more questions about the Hurricanes than any other team in the rankings.

Clearly, their best chance would be leapfrogging No. 10 Alabama, No. 11 BYU and No. 12 Utah to move into the same section of the bracket as Notre Dame, ranked ninth this week. That, in turn, would make Miami's win over the Fighting Irish back in August more relevant to the committee, which likes to compare teams in

CFP Rankings		
1	Ohio State	10-0
2	Indiana	11-0
3	Texas A&M	10-0
4	Georgia	9-1
5	Texas Tech	10-1
6	Ole Miss	10-1
7	Oregon	9-1
8	Oklahoma	8-2
9	Notre Dame	8-2
10	Alabama	8-2
11	BYU	9-1
12	Utah	8-2
13	Miami	8-2
14	Vanderbilt	8-2
15	Southern California	8-2
16	Georgia Tech	9-1
17	Texas	7-3
18	Michigan	8-2
19	Virginia	9-2
20	Tennessee	7-3
21	Illinois	7-3
22	Missouri	7-3
23	Houston	8-2
24	Tulane	8-2
25	Arizona State	7-3

The four highest-ranked teams determined by the selection committee will be seeded Nos. 1-4 and receive a first round bye. Seeds 5-12 will play each other in the first round.

close proximity to each other.

Meanwhile, it's No. 16 Georgia Tech and No. 19 Virginia, each with one ACC loss, that have the best chance to win the conference and the automatic bid into the 12-team field that goes with it.

Make sense? There are two more Tuesday night rankings reveals to position everyone before the official bracket comes out Dec. 7.

The playoffs start Dec. 19, with

the title game set a month later just outside — where else? — Miami.

No surprises in top 10

No. 10 Alabama fell six spots after its 23-21 loss to Oklahoma, which moved up three notches to No. 8.

Ranking the Crimson Tide below the Sooners was an easy choice. Why they were below Notre Dame had a lot to do, Yurachek said, with comparing losses: The Irish fell to the Hurricanes and Texas A&M, while Alabama's Week 1 loss to Florida State seems to look worse every week.

Georgia moved up a spot to No. 4, which would give the Bulldogs the last first-round bye in this week's projected bracket. They were followed by Texas Tech, Mississippi and Oregon.

The No. 3 Aggies overcame a 30-3 halftime deficit to beat South Carolina 31-30. It came a week after No. 2 Indiana needed a late rally to barely beat Penn State.

"What the committee saw in both Indiana and Texas A&M is that good teams find ways to win even when they don't play their best," Yurachek said.

Meanwhile, nobody has come within 17 points of No. 1 Ohio State since Week 1.

Conference watch

SEC: Texas plunged seven spots with its not-so-pretty loss to



COLIN HUBBARD/AP

Georgia wide receiver Noah Thomas scores a touchdown during the first half against Texas on Saturday in Athens, Ga.

Georgia. ... The best hope for the SEC to get a sixth team in the field now belongs to Vanderbilt, which seems stuck at No. 14. But whose spot would the Commodores take? ... Maybe Alabama's? The Tide — teetering right around the bubble and with a game at Auburn on Nov. 29 — needs to watch it.

Big Ten: Saturday is No. 15 Southern California's big chance, with a game at No. 7 Oregon. No. 18 Michigan also lingers with that game against the Buckeyes coming in two weeks. Upsets in either contest would be the best chance for this to be a four-team league.

Big 12: No. 11 BYU and No. 12 Utah are both on the bubble and would presumably need a win over Texas Tech in the title game to give this league two teams. But Commissioner Brett Yormark seems satisfied: "I am thrilled to see the Big 12 Conference getting the respect it deserves," he said.

ACC: Virginia's best win of the season — at Louisville — got devalued a bit more when the Cardinals lost to Clemson last week. Georgia Tech didn't wow anyone with a last-second win over Boston College (1-10).

Group of 5: At No. 24, Tulane is the third team in three weeks to hold the G5 spot. Power 4 games against Duke, Ole Miss and Northwestern help the Green Wave, but they would still need to win the tough American. (Think Navy.)

US routs Uruguay, heads into World Cup year on a roll

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Alex Freeman scored twice and Sebastian Berhalter and Diego Luna had one goal each as the United States overwhelmed Uruguay with a four-goal first half in a 5-1 win on Tuesday night to head into a World Cup year with a five-game unbeaten streak.

Tanner Tessmann added a goal in the 68th-minute for the U.S., which scored five times against a South American confederation opponent and a top 30 team for the first time.

The 16th-ranked Americans continued their autumn turnaround after lackluster performances in the CONCACAF Nations League and Gold Cup.

They have just two more games, March friendlies likely against Belgium and Portugal, before coach Mauricio Pochettino selects his World Cup roster.

Freeman, Berhalter and Tessmann all scored their first international goals as the U.S. got five



JASON BEHNKEN/AP

The United States' Tanner Tessman, right, scores on Uruguay goalie Cristopher Fiermarin during an international friendly Tuesday.

goals against a team outside the CONCACAF region for the first time since beating Scotland 5-1 in 2012. The Americans have won four games, including three straight, during the five-game unbeaten streak against World Cup-bound teams.

Uruguay's Rodrigo Bentancur was sent off in the 64th minute for a high sliding tackle on Berhalter. La Celeste, ranked 15th and head-

ed to its fifth straight World Cup, had entered the friendly with a six-game unbeaten streak.

Berhalter, a son of former coach Gregg Berhalter, put the U.S. ahead in the 17th minute off a free kick and Freeman headed in Berhalter's corner kick in the 20th. Freeman added a 31st-minute goal and Luna opened a four-goal lead in the 42nd.

Fielding a starting lineup of mostly backups before a crowd of 26,110 in 69,000-capacity Raymond James Stadium, the U.S. scored four goals in a half for the first time against a South American team.

Uruguay's Giorgian de Arrascaeta scored on a 7-yard overhead kick in the first minute of first-half stoppage time, his 13th international goal, after goalkeeper Matt Freese and defenders Auston Trusty and Mark McKenzie converged and all failed to clear the ball.

Before the start and again at the final whistle, Pochettino hugged

Uruguay's Marcelo Bielsa, the coach who signed him as a 13-year-old for Newell's Old Boys in Argentina.

The U.S. went ahead after Manuel Ugarte fouled Haji Wright just to the side of the penalty area. Berhalter exchanged passes with Sergiño Dest and one-timed a shot past backup goalkeeper Cristopher Fiermarin inside the far post.

Freeman, a son of former NFL all-pro receiver Antonio Freeman playing in his home state, out-jumped Bentancur to head in Berhalter's corner kick for the second goal and Timmy Tillman slid to win a challenge against Nahitan Nández, leading to the third goal. Tillman passed wide to Trusty, who one-touched the ball into the path of Freeman. He dribbled between Ronald Araújo and Manuel Ugarte to score from short range off a deflection, becoming only the second American defender with a two-goal game after Aaron Long in 2019 against Trinidad and Tobago.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

TOP 25 ROUNDUP

Boozers, No. 5 Duke defeat No. 24 Kansas

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Cameron Boozer had 18 points and 10 rebounds, twin brother Cayden made a couple of big second-half baskets and fifth-ranked Duke outlasted No. 24 Kansas, defeating the undermanned Jayhawks 78-66 on Tuesday night in the annual Champions Classic.

Isaiah Evans scored 16 points and Patrick Ngongba had 13 on 4-of-4 shooting for the Blue Devils (5-0).

Kansas (3-2) was still without its best player, freshman Darryn Peterson, the nation's top recruit and potentially the top pick in next year's NBA draft, because of a lingering hamstring injury. Peterson has missed three consecutive games since hurting himself during a shootaround.

Peterson's absence was enough to make a difference at Madison Square Garden even though Duke was less consistent than in its last four victories. The Jayhawks rattled the Blue Devils with some fast-break points early before getting worn down by foul trouble and a depth disparity.

All five Kansas starters had at least one foul and three had two apiece in the first half, and Duke closed it out on a 17-5 run to lead by eight. The Jayhawks trimmed their deficit to 67-64 on Melvin Council Jr.'s 3-pointer with 4:59 left.

The foul trouble showed in some tired legs. Flory Bidunga picked up his fourth with more than seven minutes left, and Bryson Tiller fouled out with 3:04 remaining.

Evans hit a 3 coming out of the



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Duke's Cameron Boozer drives past Kansas during the first half Tuesday in New York. Boozer had 18 points in the Blue Devils' 78-66 victory.

under-4-minute timeout, and Cameron Boozer scored four of the eight points in an 8-0 run by the Blue Devils to pull away.

No. 18 North Carolina 73, Navy 61: Caleb Wilson had 23 points and 12 rebounds, leading the host Tar Heels over the Midshipmen.

A true freshman, Wilson also had four steals and three blocks for North Carolina (5-0). Luka Bogavac added 16 points, Jarin Stevenson scored 11 and Henri Veesaar had 10.

The Tar Heels led wire-to-wire, but Navy trimmed the deficit to

three points midway through the first half on a layup from Donovan Draper. UNC responded with a 14-5 run — capped off by free throws from Bogavac — to retake a comfortable double-digit advantage.

The Midshipmen cut the Tar Heels' lead to four points early in the second half, but North Carolina answered with a 24-7 run, highlighted by three spectacular transition dunks from Wilson.

Despite returning 86.6% of its scoring from last season — the most of any roster in the nation

this year — Navy had trouble finding the basket consistently against the Tar Heels, shooting just 30.4% from the floor. UNC has held four opponents to under 40% shooting this season and is now 49-4 under fifth-year coach Hubert Davis when doing so.

The Tar Heels became the third program in Division I men's basketball to reach 2,400 victories, joining Kentucky and Kansas.

This victory marked the final of five consecutive home games to start the season for North Carolina, the longest season-opening home stretch it's had since 1918. The Tar Heels won't return to the Dean Smith Center until Dec. 7.

No. 19 UCLA 79, Sacramento State 48: Eric Dailey Jr. had 15 points and 12 rebounds, Xavier Booker scored 12 and the host Bruins rode a new-look starting lineup to a home victory over the Hornets.

Trent Perry, Jamar Brown, Steven Jamerson II and Brandon Williams all started for UCLA (4-1) after making just two starts between them in the first four games of the season. Booker, Tyler Bilodeau, Donovan Dent and Skyy Clark all began the game on the bench.

The revamped starting unit helped to hold Sacramento State scoreless over the opening six minutes, and the defense overall limited the Hornets to 24.1% shooting for the game.

Perry had 11 points and Brown added 10 for the Bruins.

Prophet Johnson had 13 points with 10 rebounds and Jahni Summers scored 11 as Sacramento State fell to 0-4 against UCLA.

The Hornets (3-3) lost leading

scorer and second-leading rebounder Jeremiah Cherry to a right knee injury with 8:18 remaining in the first half. He finished with two points and one rebound.

The Bruins' new starting lineup played nearly five minutes together to begin the game. Only when Bilodeau, Booker and Clark entered with 15:17 remaining in the half did the Hornets finally score on a jumper from Brandon Gardner following a turnover by Perry.

No. 21 Arkansas 84, Winthrop 83: Meleek Thomas scored a career-high 26 points as the host Razorbacks scored the final six points to rally past the Eagles.

Arkansas took their final lead with 11 seconds left when Nick Pringle scored at the rim after a Winthrop turnover. After the basket, he and the Eagles' Logan Duncomb became tangled. As the officials attempted to break up the entanglement, Pringle threw Duncomb to the floor, leading to a brief delay as the play went to review.

Pringle and Duncomb were issued offsetting technical fouls and four players — two Razorbacks and two from Winthrop — were ejected for coming on to the floor from the bench. Duncomb's technical resulted in him fouling out, as well.

Daylen Berry attempted a potential game-winning 3-pointer from the wing as time expired, but Thomas played tight defense, forcing an awkward attempt and the ball bounced off the rim.

Thomas shot 10 for 20 from the field, Trevon Brazile scored 14 points, Pringle 13 and Darius Acuff Jr. added 12 for Arkansas.

No. 17 Michigan State tops No. 12 Kentucky with 3-point barrage

BY STEPHEN WHYNO

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Tom Izzo had some nit-picking to do even after 17th-ranked Michigan State pulled away to beat No. 12 Kentucky 83-66 in the Champions Classic on Tuesday night. The Hall of Fame coach also pointed out a major positive.

"We made some shots," Izzo said. "I don't know. Did we make more 3s today than we've made all year? That's not meant to be funny, but it is funny."

Funny — and close. The Spartans shot 11 of 22 from beyond the arc at Madison Square Garden after making just 13 of their first 60 3-point attempts in their first three games, good for 21.7% and fourth-worst out of 361 Division I programs.

"I'm not really sure," Kur Teng, who had three of those 11, said when asked what changed. "But

we can only go up from here. We've just got to make sure we keep on stacking these type of performances."

Izzo recalled telling his wife and athletic director J. Batt that the previous three days were his team's best practices so far this fall. While rebounding and defending has been a hallmark of his three decades in East Lansing, this most recent stretch had a lot to do with trying to ease offensive concerns from missing shots.

"This entire week we've been really trying to step up our game in terms of shooting," senior forward Jaxon Kohler said. "This week in shooting, we've been shooting very well. The key is to go into this game and have confidence in your shot."

It worked. After falling behind 5-0 in the opening minutes, Michigan State scored its first 12 points by going a perfect 4 of 4 on 3s. The



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Michigan State's Kur Teng aims for an opening during the second half against Kentucky on Tuesday in New York. The Spartans won 83-66.

burden lifted from there.

"The first one went in, and you just kind of build on that confidence," said Kohler, who made two 3-pointers as part of his game-high 20 points. "I feel like that

gave a leeway for everybody to make their shots. Us as a team, (we) shot the ball really well tonight."

Izzo acknowledged the Spartans "weren't great" other than

their shooting early and took advantage of some uncharacteristically poor shooting by Kentucky. The lead was 17 at halftime, and when the Wildcats began to close the gap, Teng hit back-to-back 3s to keep the margin from dipping into single digits.

"I'd seen them kind of flying at me for that one 3, so I kind of upfaked, took a dribble and knocked it down," said Teng, who scored a career-high 15 points. "I just want to make sure I'm there for my teammates in them type of moments."

Izzo, one of the old guard left on the college sidelines in an era predicated by the transfer portal and name, image and likeness deals, was gratified to see practice habits pay off. The 70-year-old joked that having a couple of sessions a day may be against the rules, but he was happy to see the shots fall for a change.

SPORTS



3-point barrage

No. 17 Michigan State uses unexpected surge to top No. 12 Kentucky » College basketball, Page 23

NBA

Long-awaited return

James leads Lakers in victory to begin record 23rd season

BY GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — LeBron James certainly didn't look like he had been away from an NBA court for nearly seven months when he began his unprecedented 23rd season Tuesday night — even if his burning lungs told him otherwise.

After reaching another landmark in what is now officially the longest career in league history, James was not at all surprised to return from his lengthy injury absence by fitting in seamlessly with the surging Los Angeles Lakers in yet another victory.

James had 11 points, 12 assists and three rebounds while starting and playing 29 minutes in the Lakers' 140-126 win over the Utah Jazz, kicking off his new season with an impressive playmaking performance.

"The pace tested me, but I was happy with the way I was able to go with the guys," James said. "As the game went on, my wind got a lot better. Caught my second wind, caught my third wind. Rhythm is still coming back, obviously. First game in almost seven months, so everything that happened tonight was to be expected."

That's because not much can surprise James at this point in his basketball odyssey — not even the work necessary to overcome injuries.

The 40-year-old James had been sidelined since the start of training camp by sciatica, keeping him out of the preseason and Los Angeles' first 14 games of the regular season. James, who had never missed a season opener since he started playing organized basketball three decades ago, returned to contact basketball activity last week before participating in his first Lakers practice of the new season Monday.

James realized that some ob-



JAE C. HONG/AP

Lakers center Jaxson Hayes and forward LeBron James celebrate after Hayes made a basket and drew a foul call against the Utah Jazz during the second half on Tuesday in Los Angeles. James had 11 points and 12 assists in his first game of the season after dealing with sciatica.

SEE RETURN ON PAGE 21

Lightning top Devils on Guentzel's hat trick » NHL, Page 19

