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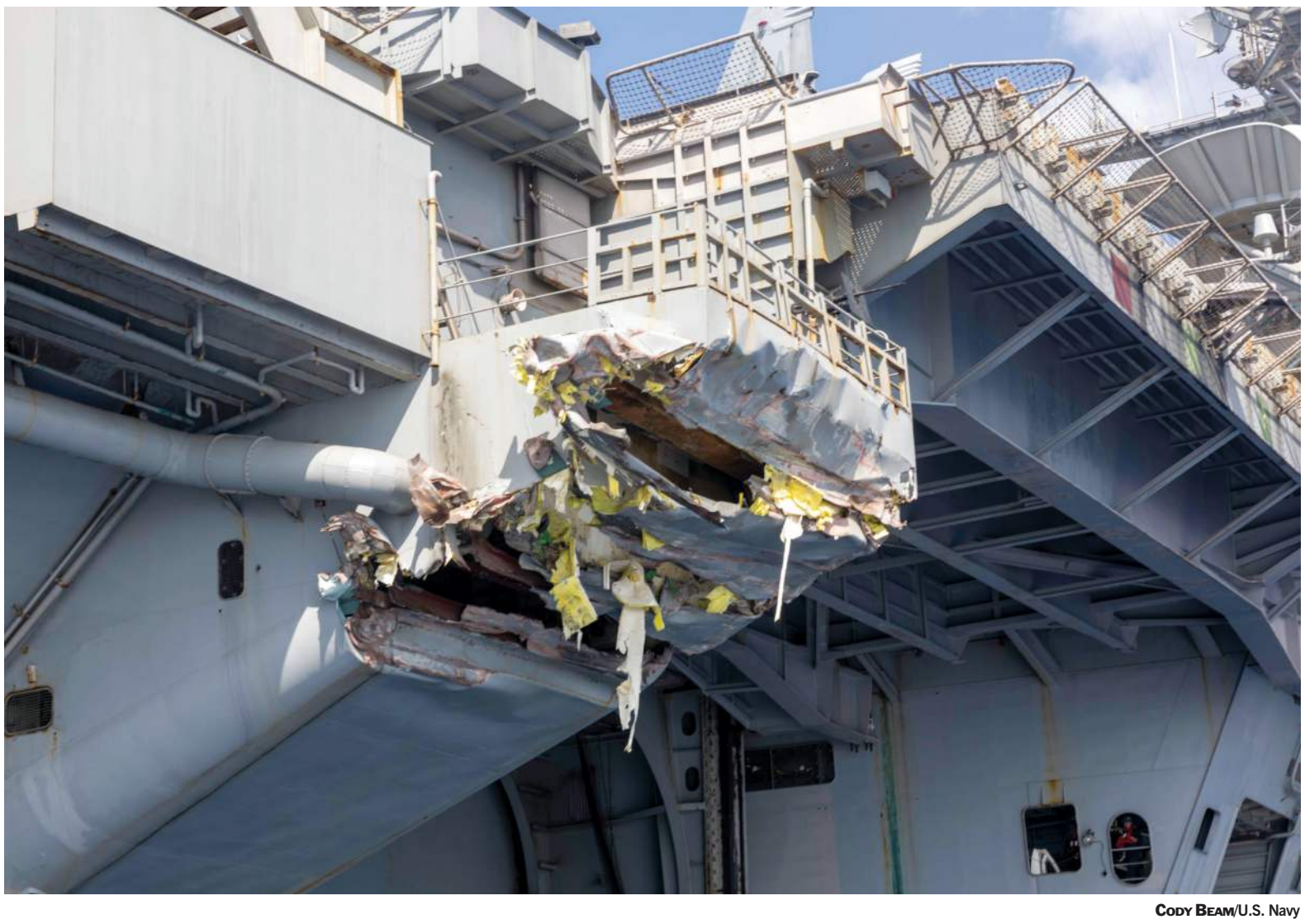
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STARS AND STRIPES®

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CODY BEAM/U.S. Navy

Damage to the USS Harry S. Truman as viewed from a rigid-hull inflatable boat on Feb. 13. The aircraft carrier was involved in a collision with the cargo vessel Besiktas-M a day earlier while operating in the vicinity of Port Said, Egypt.

Navy details Truman failures

Probe says potentially 'catastrophic' incident and 3 others preventable

BY MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Insufficient communication, low level of knowledge for certain operations and the lack of integrated training were factors involved in the four accidents during the USS Harry S. Truman's deployment, the Navy said in its reports on the investigations released Thursday.

One incident, a collision with a merchant vessel in February, "could have caused catastrophic results," the Navy concluded.

The Truman sailed 24,000 nautical miles across Europe and the Middle East during the eight months it was deployed. The four mishaps took place from December 2024 to May 2025.

During deployment, the crew conducted 50 days of continuous strikes, including the launch of Tomahawk land attack missiles and precision airstrikes, meant to degrade Houthi capabilities and disrupt threats to commercial shipping. The Truman fired more than 1.1 million pounds of ordnance against enemy targets. Of that, 125,000 pounds were launched against Islamic State terrorists in northeast Somalia in what the Navy called the largest airstrike in history launched from an aircraft carrier.

"The Navy's sustained combat operations in the U.S. Central Command area of operations for the past two years demonstrated our battle effectiveness and ability to maintain freedom of navigation," Adm. James Kilby, vice chief of

SEE FAILURES ON PAGE 3

Army Forces Command ends as new HQ launches

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Army shuttered its largest command on Friday to activate in its place a new organization focused on soldiers' efforts in the Western Hemisphere as the service continues a major shakeup of its top levels ordered early this year.

U.S. Army Forces Command cased its colors and inactivated Friday afternoon during a formal ceremony at Fort Bragg, N.C., where the new U.S. Army Western Hemisphere Command was activated as a four-star headquarters. Army Gen. Joseph Ryan — he received a fourth star — took command of the new formation. Army Gen. Andrew Poppas, who led FORSCOM from 2022 through its inactivation, was set to retire.



Ryan

"Today is much more than a change of command ceremony," Poppas said. "It's a major step toward the merger of three powerhouse Army headquarters into one operational, transregional team that will face the nation's top strategic priorities."

The transformation efforts grew from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's April orders for the military to reduce general officer billets across the force and to refocus troops' efforts toward protecting the U.S. homeland after more than two decades of war in the Middle East and southwest Asia.

"Western Hemisphere Command is designed for speed, flexibility and relevance to effectively respond to challenges in our com-

SEE ENDS ON PAGE 7

BUSINESS/WEATHER

FAA to probe US airlines over shutdown flight cuts

Associated Press

U.S. airlines were notified last week that an investigation is underway into whether they complied with an emergency order requiring flight cuts at 40 major airports during the record government shutdown, the Federal Aviation Administration said Friday.

The FAA warned in letters sent Monday that the airlines could face fines of up to $75,000 for each flight over the mandated reductions, which fluctuated between 3%, 4% and 6%. The airlines have 30 days to provide documentation showing they complied with the order, the agency said Friday.

The 43-day shutdown that began Oct. 1 led to long delays as unpaid air traffic controllers missed work, citing stress and the need to take on side jobs. The FAA said requiring all commercial airlines to cut domestic flights was unprecedented but necessary to ensure safe air travel until staffing improved.

After the shutdown ended Nov. 12, airlines seemed to anticipate that the FAA would lift or relax the restrictions. With the order still in place on Nov. 14 requiring 6% cuts, just 2% of scheduled U.S. departures that day were canceled, according to aviation analytics firm Cirium.

More than 10,000 flights were canceled between Nov. 7, when the order took effect, and Nov. 16, when the FAA announced it was lifting all flight restrictions. Delta Air Lines said Wednesday it lost $200 million, the first disclosure by a major airline regarding the shutdown's financial impact.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Dec. 8)	0.84
British pound (Dec. 8)	$1.30
Japanese yen (Dec. 8)	151.00
South Korean won (Dec. 8)	1433.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3737
Britain (Pound)	1.3341
Canada (Dollar)	1.3825
China (Yuan)	7.0696
Denmark (Krone)	6.4144
Egypt (Pound)	47.4606
Euro	0.8586
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7849
Hungary (Forint)	327.82
Israel (Shekel)	3.2345
Japan (Yen)	155.365
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3064
Norway (Krone)	10.1021
Philippines (Peso)	58.865
Poland (Zloty)	3.6284
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7488
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2949
South Korea (Won)	1472.70
Switzerland (Franc)	0.8041
Thailand (Baht)	31.85
Turkey (NewLira)	42.524

(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

Prime rate	7.00
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.00
Federal funds market rate	3.88
3-month bill	3.70
30-year bond	4.80

WEATHER OUTLOOK

MONDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



MONDAY IN EUROPE



TUESDAY IN THE PACIFIC



This weather is compiled from weather.com reports.

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MILITARY

Failures: 4 mishaps preventable

FROM PAGE 1

naval operations, said in a statement. "As we reflect on these incidents and ongoing improvement efforts, the Navy remains laser-focused on producing battle ready sailors and forces to ensure the Navy provides our nation with the most lethal, combat-credible, and ready force possible."

The four individual investigations focused on lost aircraft and a tow tractor, the collision and a case of friendly fire involving the carrier and its strike group. The four preventable mishaps cost the Navy more than $100 million as well as multiple injuries.

Sailors also told investigators that they felt the strain of "a pressurized schedule and a culture of 'just get it done.' "

Collision at sea

On Feb. 12 at 11:45 p.m. local time, the Truman — five months into its operational deployment — collided with a merchant vessel in the vicinity of Egypt's Port Said. There were no injuries to crews of the Truman or the Besiktas-M, a bulk cargo carrier sailing under the flag of Panama.

The Besiktas-M struck the starboard quarter of the Truman. The damage was all above the waterline, and the Truman navigated to safe waters after the collision.

The Truman established communications with the security control accessor and learned the Besiktas-M "anchored after collision, reported no engineering or personnel casualties, and requested no assistance," according to the report.

The Truman returned on Feb. 16 to Souda Bay, Greece, to conduct damage assessment and temporary repairs. A final cost assessment was not included in the report.

The results could have been "catastrophic," the investigation concluded, if there had been small change in the path of the ship.

Eight sailors were in a space less than 10 feet from the impact location. A 1-degree change in trajectory could have destroyed the space and caused eight fatalities.

"My team spoke with those eight sailors, and they will never forget how close they came to losing their lives. Neither should we," the report says.

The incident was avoidable, the report concluded.

Capt. Dave Snowden, commander of the Truman, was relieved of duty after the incident.

Friendly fire

The Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group entered the Red Sea on Dec. 14, 2024, and quickly conducted its first defensive strike against Houthi positions.

On Dec. 22, the commanding officer of the USS Gettysburg and combat information center team fired missiles at two friendly F/A-18Fs. The troops from one jet ejected before the missile struck, and the ship stopped the second missile shortly before impact. The Gettysburg targeted but did not fire at a third friendly aircraft, according to the report.

"The decisions to shoot were wrong when measured across the totality of information available to the [Gettysburg commanding officer]. Constrained by a series of previous actions and decisions, the commanding officer had low situational awareness, and his [combat information center] team was unable to help him regain it," the report says.

In the hours leading up to the incident, the Truman Carrier Strike Group had successfully intercepted two anti-ship cruise missiles and two one-way aerial attack drones with reports of other unmanned vehicles in the air, an official said at the time.

On a day when skies were clear, the Gettysburg commanding officer reported to the Truman Carrier Strike Group commander that "he held no tracks that met unmanned aerial system profiles," the report says.

In the 40 minutes that followed, the Gettysburg and Truman gave conflicting guidance to the defense aircraft that remained airborne. On orders from the strike warfare commander on watch, the aircraft returned to base. While this was communicated in various ways, it wasn't understood across the force.

"The process repeated itself nearly verbatim, and [the Gettysburg commanding officer] ordered the launch of a second SM-2 at the aircraft, 5 miles apart from the [first] aircraft, which had begun a left turn in response to the first missile launch," the report says.

The pilots were rescued and were evaluated and released by medical staff.

The report made 42 recommendations.

"In totality of circumstances … [the Gettysburg's commanding officer's] decision to engage was neither reasonable nor prudent, and could have been prevented by action at multiple levels," the report states.

Super Hornet lost at sea

On May 6, an F/A-18F Super Hornet was lost in the Red Sea after attempting to land on the aircraft carrier at 8:46 p.m. local time. According to interviews and the pilot's landing aid camera recording, the fighter jet's approach appeared normal until it caught the cross-deck pendant wire.

Witnesses heard a loud boom and saw sparks and flames, according to the report. The investigation found that a cable designed to bring the 50,000-pound jet to a halt in just a few hundred feet snapped mid-landing.

The aircraft was unable to stop on the flight deck and did not have enough airspeed to take flight before hitting the Red Sea, the report says. The pilot and weapons systems officer ejected from the two-seat aircraft and were recovered by a rescue helicopter, suffering only minor injuries.

Damage was estimated at more than $60 million.

The report stated that a low level of knowledge among certain operators and crew, including the sheave damper operator and arresting gear personnel, contributed to the incident.



MICHAEL SHEN/U.S. Navy

The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman conducts carrier qualifications in the Atlantic Ocean in September.

The investigation also noted there was a malfunction in the No. 4 starboard sheave damper, the hydraulic shock absorber used in arresting gear systems to reduce tension and vibration in the cable.

Jet, tractor go overboard

On April 28, an F/A-18E Super Hornet and a towing tractor were lost overboard on Hangar Bay 3 of the Truman during an evasive maneuver to avoid an incoming medium range ballistic missile.

Fighter jets are routinely towed across the hangar deck to park them for flight operations or other work. The carrier made a "hard turn," a defense official said at the time, though it wasn't enough on its own to cause a $67 million Navy fighter jet to slide off a ship.

At the time, the Truman had been traveling at "135 degrees true at approximately 15 knots" in the Red Sea when the ship received a report of an inbound missile and began the maneuvers.

The junior officer of the deck desired a greater turn rate and ordered an increase in the rudder angle, causing the ship to tilt at a faster rate. The bridge team noticed and attempted to mitigate by easing the rudder back.

At the same time, the wheel chocks and tiedown chains were removed from the aircraft in order to pull it forward into the hangar bay to close the deck edge doors. The investigation determined that about eight seconds after the ship hit maximum tilt, the aircraft and tow tractor slid out of the hangar bay.

"Multiple interviews revealed inadequate communication of the upcoming turn from bridge to flight deck control and hangar bay control. Proper communication would likely have resulted in [the aircraft] remaining tied down to the hangar bay deck through Truman's evasive turn, as the standard operating procedure now codifies," the report says.

Ten recommendations were listed regarding the incident, but "the investigation determined the Truman's changes to standard operating procedure since the April 28 incident adequately address the re-prioritization of hangar bay priorities and will significantly decrease the likelihood of similar incidents in the future."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Suspended Fort Hood doctor jailed amid ongoing investigation

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — A Fort Hood physician under criminal investigation over reports that he secretly recorded patient exams is now in jail because he violated conditions to remain unrestrained during the legal process, according to base officials.

Maj. Blaine McGraw, a suspended OB-GYN at Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center, was detained Tuesday and is being held in pretrial confinement at Bell County Jail, the county where Fort Hood is located. He violated conditions of liberty imposed by his commander, Fort Hood officials said Thursday.

There is no evidence to suggest he violated a military protective order related to alleged victims, according to Fort Hood.

Army Criminal Investigation Division began an investigation into McGraw on Oct. 17, after a patient accused him of recording an exam without her consent. He was suspended from the hospital that same day.

The Army has notified roughly 3,000 former patients of McGraw's that he is under investigation and encouraged them to fill out a questionnaire about their experiences with him.

Those patients saw him at Fort Hood as well as his previous duty station, Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii.

Since his suspension, McGraw, 47, has spent time in an inpatient care facility, according to Bell County court records.

Charges have not yet been referred to a court-martial. Criminal investigators said Wednesday they have conducted hundreds of interviews and are sifting through more than half a terabyte of digital media collected as part of the investigation. That's the equivalent of more than 100,000 high-resolution photographs.

"A team comprised of Army CID special agents and analysts has been focused on this investigation, utilizing all available resources to ensure a thorough and complete investigation," Army CID said in a statement.

Those agents are working closely with the Army Office of Special Trial Counsel, which will ultimately prosecute any court-martial process.

The Uniform Code of Military Justice requires that a neutral military magistrate review McGraw's pretrial confinement within seven days to determine whether it should continue.

Anyone with information that could assist the ongoing investigation is encouraged to call the Army CID Central Texas Field Office at 254-258-2560 or complete the Criminal Investigation Screening Questionnaire at https://forms.osi.apps.mil/r/vgcfuj3pD8.

Individuals may also report anonymously at www.cid.army.mil/tips

MILITARY

Japan and Australia urge calm after incident

By Mari Yamaguchi
Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan and Australia urged calm on Sunday after Chinese military aircraft locked radar on Japanese fighter jets, a month after the Japanese leader's recent remarks on Taiwan that stirred tensions between Tokyo and Beijing.

Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said Japan formally protested the incident, calling it "an extremely regrettable" act and "a dangerous" one that "exceeded the scope necessary for safe aircraft operations."

"We have lodged a strong protest with the Chinese side and demanded strict preventive measures," Koizumi said.

Japan's Defense Ministry said China's military aircraft J-15 took off from the Chinese carrier Liaoning near the southern island of Okinawa on Saturday and "intermittently" latched its radar on Japanese F-15 fighter jets on two occasions Saturday, for about three minutes in the late afternoon and for about 30 minutes in the evening. It was not made clear whether the radar lock incident involved the same Chinese J-15 both times.



Eugene Hoshiko/AP

Japanese Minister of Defense Shinjiro Koizumi, right, and Australian counterpart Richard Marles, left, ride an Australian-made Bushmaster Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle ahead of a bilateral meeting at the defense ministry Sunday in Tokyo.

Japanese fighter jets had been scrambled to pursue Chinese ones that were conducting aircraft takeoff and landing exercises in the Pacific. They were pursuing the Chinese aircraft at a safe distance and did not take actions that could be interpreted as provocation, Kyodo News agency said, quoting defense officials, when the radar lock happened. There was no breach of Japanese airspace, and no injury or damage was reported from the incident.

Senior Colonel Wang Xuemeng, spokesperson for the Chinese navy, defended China's flight training near the island of Miyako Saturday, saying Beijing announced the exercises beforehand and accused Japanese aircraft of "harassment."

"We solemnly asked the Japanese side to immediately stop slandering and smearing, and strictly restrain its frontline actions. The Chinese Navy will take necessary measures in accordance with the law to resolutely safeguard its own security and legitimate rights and interests," Wang said in a statement posted Sunday on the Chinese Ministry of Defense website.

Relations between Japan and China have worsened after Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said in early November its military could get involved if China were to take action against Taiwan, the self-governing island that Beijing claims as its own.

Takaichi later Sunday called the radar lock-in "extremely disappointing."

"We will act calmly and resolutely," she said, vowing to do the utmost in carrying out surveillance operations around Japanese waters and airspace, while closely watching Chinese military activity around Japan.

Japan and Australia, whose defense ministers held their scheduled talks in Tokyo on Sunday, expressed worry over the development.

"We are deeply concerned by the actions of China in the last 24 hours," Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles told a joint news conference Sunday after holding talks with Koizumi. "We expect those interactions to be safe and professional."

Australia does "not want to see any change to the status quo across the Taiwan Straits," Marles said, adding that China is his country's largest trade partner and he wants to have productive relations with Beijing.

"We continue to advocate to China about these issues again, in a very calm, sensible and moderate way," he said.

Japan and Australia, during Sunday talks, agreed to bolster military ties to lead the region's multilateral defense cooperation. The two ministers agreed to form a comprehensive "framework for strategic defense coordination" and discuss further details.

Tokyo has been accelerating its military buildup while expanding its defense ties beyond its only treaty ally, the United States. It now considers Australia to be a semi-ally.

Family sues US sailor yet to be charged in fatal motorcycle crash

By Hana Kusumoto and Alex Wilson
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA, Japan — The family of a Japanese motorcyclist killed in an April collision with a car driven by a U.S. sailor has filed a civil lawsuit as police continue to investigate the case.

Relatives of Shinji Takahashi filed the suit last Monday against the sailor at the Yokosuka branch of the Yokohama District Court, said their attorney, Masahiko Goto.

The family is seeking roughly $772,000 from the sailor, who is stationed at Yokosuka Naval Base. Stars and Stripes is withholding the service member's identity because formal charges have yet to be filed.

The sailor was driving in Yokosuka's Heisei neighborhood around 6:50 p.m. April 27 when he made a right turn and collided with Takahashi, who was riding straight through the intersection, a city police spokesman said at the time. Takahashi, 47, was pronounced dead less than an hour later at a nearby hospital.

The incident remains under investigation, a Yokosuka police spokesman said by phone Thursday. He declined to say why the sailor was not taken into custody or why the case remains under investigation after more than seven months.

Police have not yet referred the case to prosecutors, who will decide whether to file criminal charges.

The lawsuit lists Takahashi's three sons, his mother, two brothers and his partner as plaintiffs. They are seeking compensation for the loss of a family member due to what they describe as serious negligence, according to a copy of the filing provided by Goto.

"I believe that the assaulter's negligence is not merely a minor offense but a serious crime that took a precious life and that he should bear responsibility for the rest of his life and make amends without running away," Takahashi's mother said in a written statement provided by Goto.

Goto did not provide names of the family members, who he said wanted to preserve their privacy.

A spokesman for Naval Forces Japan, Cmdr. Paul Macapagal, confirmed that a Yokosuka-based sailor was involved in a traffic collision that day but declined further comment, citing the ongoing investigation.

The family filed the lawsuit ahead of criminal charges to ensure that legal documents could be delivered to the sailor, a step taken due to problems Goto said he encountered in a similar case.

Goto also represents the family of Tsubasa Ito, who died after a collision with another Yokosuka sailor, Petty Officer 2nd Class Jaden Edwin Llanos. He was convicted in May of negligent driving causing death and received a suspended 1½-year sentence.

Llanos has since left Japan, preventing a civil suit from moving forward because the court cannot serve him with the documents, Goto said.

Philippines: China fired flares toward patrol plane

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Chinese forces fired three flares from an island toward a Philippine plane undertaking a routine patrol Saturday in the disputed South China Sea, but the incident did not cause any problem and the aircraft proceeded with its surveillance mission, the Philippine coast guard said.

It was not immediately clear how far the flares that Filipino officials said were fired from the Chinese-occupied Subi Reef were from the Cessna Grand Caravan aircraft of the Philippine fisheries bureau.

Chinese officials did not immediately comment on the incident. Beijing has claimed virtually the entire South China Sea, a key global trade route, and has vowed to staunchly defend its sovereignty. Chinese forces have fired flares from its occupied islands and from its aircraft as a warning for foreign planes to move away from what it calls its airspace in the disputed waters.

"The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources aircraft recorded video footage of three flares fired from the reef toward the aircraft during its lawful overflight," said the Philippine coast guard, which carried out Saturday's surveillance flight with the fisheries agency.

"These flights aim to monitor the marine environment, assess the status of fisheries resources and ensure the safety and welfare of Filipino fishermen in the West Philippine Sea," the coast guard said, using the Philippine name for the stretch of the South China Sea that Manila claims.

The Philippine patrol plane spotted a Chinese hospital ship, two Chinese coast guard ships and 29 suspected militia ships anchored in the waters off Subi, the Philippine coast guard said.

Subi is one of seven disputed and mostly submerged reefs which China turned more than a decade ago into what are now island bases in the Spratlys, the most hotly disputed region of the South China Sea.

MILITARY

Hegseth defends strikes on alleged drug boats

BY DAVID KLEPPER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth defended strikes on alleged drug cartel boats during remarks Saturday at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, saying President Donald Trump has the power to take military action "as he sees fit" to defend the nation.

Hegseth dismissed criticism of the strikes, which have killed more than 80 people and now face intense scrutiny over concerns that they violated international law. Saying the strikes are justified to protect Americans, Hegseth likened the fight to the war on terror following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

"If you're working for a designated terrorist organization and you bring drugs to this country in a boat, we will find you and we will sink you. Let there be no doubt about it," Hegseth said during his keynote address at the Reagan National Defense Forum. "President Trump can and will take decisive military action as he sees fit to defend our nation's interests. Let no country on Earth doubt that for a moment."

The most recent strike brings the death toll of the campaign to at least 87 people. Lawmakers have sought more answers about the attacks and their legal justification, and whether U.S. forces were ordered to launch a follow-up strike following a September attack even after the Pentagon knew of survivors.

Though Hegseth compared the alleged drug smugglers to al-Qaida terrorists, experts have noted significant differences between the two foes and the efforts to combat them.

The speech was delivered at the Reagan National Defense Forum at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute in California, an event which brings together top national security experts from around the country. Hegseth used the visit to argue that Trump is Reagan's "true and rightful heir" when it comes to muscular foreign policy.

Lawmakers divided after video of follow-up boat strike on survivors

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Senior members of Congress viewed video Thursday of a controversial Sept. 2 attack on a suspected drug boat in the Caribbean, including a follow-up strike that Democrats said they found highly troubling and Republicans maintained was lawful and justified.

Sen. Jack Reed, of Rhode Island, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said he was "deeply disturbed" by the footage top military officers showed to lawmakers in classified briefings on Capitol Hill and called for a public release of the complete, unedited video.

Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Navy Adm. Frank M. Bradley, a top Special Operations commander who oversaw the attack, met top Republicans and Democrats from the House and Senate Armed Services Committees as well as top lawmakers on the Senate and House Intelligence Committees.

"This briefing confirmed my worst fears about the nature of the Trump administration's military activities, and demonstrates exactly why the Senate Armed Services Committee has repeatedly requested — and been denied — fundamental information, documents and facts about this operation," Reed said in a statement afterward.

Reed did not respond to reporters' questions as he left the briefing. Republican Sen. Roger Wicker, of Mississippi, the chairman of the committee, also did not comment.

Both said the week before that they would conduct "vigorous oversight" into the Sept. 2 attack after The Washington Post reported Bradley had ordered a second strike on the boat despite identifying survivors in order to comply with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's directive to kill everybody aboard the vessel.

Lawmakers from both parties said Bradley at the closed-door briefings denied that he was given any order, written or oral, to "kill them all" or "grant no quarter," rejecting reports that Hegseth had ordered follow-up strikes to kill any survivors.

Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, described the strikes on Sept. 2, four in total, as "entirely lawful and needful and they were exactly what we would expect our military commanders to do."

"I saw two survivors trying to flip a boat loaded with drugs bound for the United States back over so they could stay in the fight," he said.

Rep. Jim Himes, of Connecticut, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, had a different interpretation of the video, saying he saw "two individuals in clear distress, without any means of locomotion, with a destroyed vessel, who were killed by the United States."

He said the footage was "one of the most troubling things I've seen in my time in public service."

The Republican chairman of the Intelligence Committee, Rep. Rick Crawford, of Arkansas, shot back that those who were troubled by the videos had "clearly never seen the Obama-ordered strikes, or, for that matter, those of any other administration over decades."

He said there was "no doubt" in his mind that the Pentagon had conducted the strikes in a "highly professional manner" to protect the U.S. from dangerous drug cartels.

The White House has defended the operation and President Donald Trump said Wednesday that he was open to releasing video footage of it. Hegseth said Tuesday that he "did not personally see survivors" after the first strike and said Bradley had made the correct decision to sink the boat.

In a joint statement, Himes and Rep. Adam Smith, of Washington, the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, said nothing they heard or saw at the briefing Thursday convinced them that the decision to strike the boat a second time was justified.

They described watching two shipwrecked individuals who had "no means to move, much less pose an immediate threat."

"We believe the full video, difficult as it is to watch, should be released publicly," they said. "The briefing left us with more questions than answers, and Congress must continue to investigate this matter and conduct oversight."



MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/AP

U.S. Navy Adm. Frank M. Bradley, right, accompanied by Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, left, walks to a meeting with senators on Capitol Hill, on Thursday.

GOP veterans' resolution criticizes Dems for video to troops

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Nearly 20 Republican lawmakers who formerly served in the military have introduced a resolution condemning their Democratic colleagues for making a video reminding troops they could disobey illegal orders.

The video infuriated President Donald Trump, who described it as "seditious behavior." Rep. Rick Crawford, of Arkansas, a former Army sergeant; and Rep. Ryan Zinke, of Montana, a former Navy SEAL commander; along with 16 other veterans echoed that charge in their resolution.

The measure denounces "the dangerous and seditious rhetoric spewing" from the six involved Democrats and condemns them for "attempting to sow disallegiance amongst members of the United States military and intelligence community" and encouraging them to act against the president and violate the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

The video, the resolution argues, has led to an environment putting troops at risk and undermined national security and the "peaceful coexistence and respect deserved by our brave men and women serving in the military and the intelligence community."

Sens. Mark Kelly, D-Ariz., and Elissa Slotkin, D-Mich., as well as Reps. Jason Crow, D-Colo., Chris DeLuzio; D-Pa., Maggie Goodlander, D-N.H.; and Chrissy Houlahan, D-Pa., appeared in the video, telling service members that "no one has to carry out orders that violate the law or our Constitution."

Zinke said the lawmakers promoted disobedience for political purposes "at the peril of our service members" and did not point to evidence of illegal orders being issued.

"The U.S. military code is clear on this, and as veterans themselves, they all should have known better," he said on X on Thursday.

The video prompted the FBI last month to open an inquiry into the six Democrats, who said the agency contacted the House and Senate sergeant at arms to arrange interviews with them. It also led the Pentagon to initiate an investigation into Kelly, a former Navy captain, that could lead to a court-martial.

Kelly, in a news conference on Monday, defended his participation in the video, saying he and the other lawmakers wanted to give service members a reminder of their rights and show that "we had their back and we understood the situation they were in."

"Every service member doesn't hear these reminders as frequently as other service members, so we felt it was important to say under the circumstances," he said.

Democrats in recent months have raised concerns about the legality of the Trump administration's deployment of National Guard troops to U.S. cities as well as a bombing campaign targeting alleged drug-trafficking boats in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean.

EUROPE

US security plan slams allies, eyes Americas

BY MICHELLE L. PRICE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's administration has set forth a new national security strategy that paints European allies as weak and aims to reassert America's dominance in the Western Hemisphere.

The document released Friday by the White House is sure to roil long-standing U.S. allies in Europe for its scathing critiques of their migration and free speech policies, suggesting they face the "prospect of civilizational erasure" and raising doubts about their long-term reliability as American partners.

At the same time the administration is sharply critical of its democratic allies in Europe and carrying out a pressure campaign of boat strikes in South America, it chides past U.S. efforts to shape or criticize Middle Eastern nations and seeks to discourage attempts for changes in those countries' governments and policies.

The strategy reinforces, in sometimes chilly and bellicose terms, Trump's "America First" philosophy, which favors nonintervention overseas, questions decades of strategic relationships and prioritizes U.S. interests.

The U.S. strategy "is motivated above all by what works for America — or, in two words, 'America First,' " the document said.

This is the first national security strategy, a document the administration is required by law to release, since the Republican president's return to office in January. It is a stark break from the course set by President Joe Biden's Democratic administration, which sought to reinvigorate alliances after many were rattled in Trump's first term and to check a more assertive Russia.

Democratic Rep. Jason Crow of Colorado, who sits on House committees overseeing intelligence and the armed forces, called the strategy "catastrophic to America's standing in the world and a retreat from our alliances and partnerships."

The United States is seeking to broker an end to Russia's nearly 4-year-old war in Ukraine, a goal that the national security strategy says is in America's vital interests. But the document makes clear that the U.S. wants to improve its relationship with Russia after years of Moscow being treated as a global pariah and that ending the war is a core U.S. interest to "reestablish strategic stability with Russia."

The document also accuses America's long-standing European allies of facing not just domestic economic challenges but, according to the U.S., an existential crisis.

Economic stagnation in Europe "is eclipsed by the real and more stark prospect of civilizational erasure," the strategy document said.

The U.S. suggests that Europe is being enfeebled by its immigration policies, declining birthrates, "censorship of free speech and suppression of political opposition" and a "loss of national identities and self-confidence."

"Should present trends continue, the continent will be unrecognizable in 20 years or less. As such, it is far from obvious whether certain European countries will have economies and militaries strong enough to remain reliable allies," the document said.

Despite Trump's "America First" maxim, his administration has carried out a series of military strikes on alleged drug trafficking boats in the Caribbean Sea and the eastern Pacific Ocean while weighing possible military action in Venezuela to pressure President Nicolás Maduro.

The moves are part of what the national security strategy lays out as "a 'Trump Corollary' to the Monroe Doctrine" to "restore American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere." The 1823 Monroe Doctrine, formulated by President James Monroe, was originally aimed at opposing any European meddling in the Western Hemisphere and was used to justify U.S. military interventions in Latin America.

With a shift to the Americas, the U.S. will seek a different approach in the Middle East.

The U.S., according to the strategy, should abandon "America's misguided experiment with hectoring" nations in the Middle East, especially monarchies in the Gulf, about their traditions and forms of government.

Meanwhile, as the U.S. under Trump has overturned decades of free trade policies with his sweeping global tariffs, its ties with China have been a prime focus. America under Trump is seeking to "rebalance" the U.S.-China relationship while also countering Beijing's aggressive stance toward Taiwan, according to the document.

But the U.S. wants allies in the region to do more to push back against Chinese pressure and contribute more to their defense.

"The American military cannot, and should not have to, do this alone," the strategy says. "Our allies must step up and spend — and more importantly do — much more for collective defense."

US sets deadline for Europe to lead NATO by 2027, report says

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon wants allies in Europe to take over the bulk of defense responsibilities on the Continent no later than 2027, according to a new report that could carry significant implications for how American troops are deployed.

Defense Department officials told their Western counterparts in Washington this month about the new deadline, Reuters reported Friday, citing five unidentified sources.

U.S. officials said during a meeting that they remain unsatisfied with the progress allies are making when it comes to bolstering their own military capabilities, and that if allies miss the 2027 deadline, the U.S. could stop participating in some NATO activities, Reuters reported.

The report did not detail how the U.S. could scale back its missions or what specific conventional military capabilities might be withdrawn.

Top Pentagon officials have repeatedly said the U.S. expects other NATO countries at some point to take on the bulk of the conventional security burden on the Continent, a reference to various non-nuclear capabilities.

While the U.S. has long been the provider of weapons for NATO's nuclear mission, American troops also provide substantial conventional capabilities in the form of ground forces, warships, fighter planes and command-and-control systems.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, European countries have ramped up defense spending in response to concerns about potential Russian aggression.



DYLAN BAILEY/U.S. Army

Dutch soldiers react to contact from enemy forces during exercise Saber Junction at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, in September. The Pentagon has set a 2027 deadline for European allies to take over responsibility for the defense of the Continent, according to a Reuters report Friday.

NATO members also have agreed to increase their military spending levels to 5% of gross domestic product by 2035 in line with a demand by Trump that NATO's defense spending benchmark be elevated.

Still, security analysts have noted that it will take years for allies in Europe to develop the capabilities the U.S. brings to the table. An American military withdrawal from Europe by 2027 could leave capability gaps.

Indeed, if NATO had to go it largely alone in the event of a Russian attack, European allies would face a daunting challenge, experts say.

At a minimum, it would need to field 50 new combat brigades and some 300,000 troops to offset the loss of U.S. support, according to an analysis earlier this year by Bruegel, a Brussels-based think tank.

A senior NATO military official, not a party to the talks in Washington, said the security situation in Europe is urgent.

"With the alignment of adversaries around the world, time is not on anyone's side," the official said in a statement Friday to Stars and Stripes. "That is why investing in defence, enhancing defence production, and stepping up support for Ukraine, is so vitally, vitally important."

Russia attacks infrastructure as US-Ukraine talks continue

BY SUSIE BLANN
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian missile, drone and shelling attacks overnight and Sunday killed at least three people in Ukraine, after U.S. and Ukrainian officials wrapped up a third day of talks aimed at ending the war.

A man was killed in a drone attack on Ukraine's northern Chernihiv region Saturday night, local officials said, while a combined missile and drone attack on infrastructure in the central city of Kremenchuk caused power and water outages. Kremenchuk is home to one of Ukraine's biggest oil refineries and is an industrial hub.

Kyiv and its Western allies say Russia is trying to cripple the Ukrainian power grid and deny civilians access to heat, light and running water for a fourth consecutive winter, in what Ukrainian officials call "weaponizing" the cold.

Two people were killed and seven others wounded Sunday in shelling by Russian troops in Ukraine's Kharkiv region, according to the regional police.

The attacks came as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday he had a "substantive phone call" with American officials engaged in talks with a Ukrainian delegation in Florida.

"Ukraine is determined to keep working in good faith with the American side to genuinely achieve peace," Zelenskyy wrote on social media.

Speaking Saturday at the Reagan National Defense Forum, President Donald Trump's outgoing Ukraine envoy, Keith Kellogg, said efforts to end the war were in "the last 10 meters."

He said a deal depended on the two outstanding issues of "terrain, primarily the Donbas," and the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.

Russia controls most of Donbas, its name for Donetsk and neighboring Luhansk, which, along with two southern regions, it illegally annexed three years ago. The Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant is in an area that has been under Russian control since early in Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and is not in service, but it needs reliable power to cool its six shutdown reactors and spent fuel, to avoid any catastrophic nuclear incidents.

Kellogg is due to leave his post in January and was not present at the talks in Florida.

Separately, officials said the leaders of the United Kingdom, France and Germany would participate in a meeting with Zelenskyy in London on Monday.

Meanwhile, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov welcomed the Trump administration's new national security strategy. In comments published Sunday by state news agency RIA Novosti, he said the strategy was "encouraging."

The document released Friday by the White House makes clear that the U.S. wants to improve its relationship with Russia after years of Moscow being treated as a global pariah and that ending the war is a core U.S. interest to "reestablish strategic stability with Russia."

MILITARY

Ends: Command change comes as military activity increased

FROM PAGE 1

plex times," Army Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George said. "By consolidating these headquarters and aligning the theater, we will streamline processes, eliminate redundant efforts, and free up talent and resources. This will allow us to better support our fighting formations."

In recent months, the Army has merged two other four-star commands, Training and Doctrine Command and Futures Command, into a single new organization called Transformation and Training Command, which it headquartered in Austin, Texas. That command, known as T2COM, also absorbed the service's three-star Recruiting Command and Army Materiel Command, which was downgraded from a four-star to a three-star headquarters.

Western Hemisphere Command next year will absorb two more general officer-led commands. Three-star-led U.S. Army North and two-star-led U.S. Army South will be inactivated and folded into the new command with responsibility for providing Army forces for missions in the Northern Command and Southern Command areas of responsibility.

The Army anticipates those moves coming by March, but it will be based on conditions and not on a set calendar timeline, said Col. Mike Burns, a spokesman for Army Western Hemisphere Command.

While Army North and South are currently headquartered at Joint Base San Antonio, Texas, most of their personnel are expected to move to Fort Bragg, Burns said. The Army anticipates civilian officials with those commands to move to Fort Bragg by the end of 2026 and soldiers to complete relocation to Fort Bragg by September 2027, Burns said.

Western Hemisphere Command does expect to retain a "forward command post" with some personnel at Joint Base San Antonio to support NORTHCOM operations, according to planning documents. It was not immediately clear Friday how many civilian employees and soldiers would be moved to Fort Bragg or how many would remain at the Texas base. Burns declined comment on specific numbers, citing ongoing planning efforts.

The new Western Hemisphere Command will serve as the Army Service Component Command for both U.S. NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM, much as U.S. Army Europe and Africa Command serves for U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command. Officials said it will be responsible for providing trained and ready forces to the NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM commander for any range of missions that require soldiers, from combat operations to border security efforts to natural disaster response.



PFC. ALEXIS FISCHER/U.S. Army

The new U.S. Army Western Hemisphere Command patch is displayed Friday at the ceremony at Fort Bragg, N.C..

FORSCOM, which was established in 1973, has spent decades overseeing the Army's conventional combat formations and ensuring training and readiness standards across those units worldwide. With its inactivation, much of the responsibilities for unit combat readiness will be decentralized and enforced by the Army's corps commanders, an Army official said.

The Army is expected to announce in the coming weeks that the 18th Airborne Corps will fall under U.S. Army Western Hemisphere Command, while the service's I Corps will align with U.S. Army Pacific and its III Armored Corps and V Corps will serve under U.S. Army Europe and Africa Command, a service official said.

Some other functions traditionally served by FORSCOM will move to the Pentagon under the Army's operations, plans and training chief, according to the official.

The new headquarters is standing up at a time of increased military activity in the Western Hemisphere under President Donald Trump's second administration. That includes increased operations along the U.S. Southern Border, National Guard deployments in U.S. cities and a buildup of military forces — mostly land and air capabilities filled by the Navy, Marines and Air Force — in the Caribbean Sea with lethal strikes against alleged drug-trafficking boats.

However, Army officials said the restructuring does not imply the Army will have more of less involvement in those missions.

"Western Hemisphere Command was designed and built not with any particular crisis in mind," the Army official said. "It was built as a way to say, 'Hey, this is a priority theater.' We want to compete with other aspiring powers in our hemisphere and make sure that we're secure."

STARS AND STRIPES

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NATION

DC pipe bomb suspect was 'disappointed' in election

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The man accused of planting a pair of pipe bombs outside the headquarters of the Republican and Democratic national parties in Washington on the eve of the U.S. Capitol attack told investigators he was "disappointed" in the outcome of the 2020 presidential election lost by President Donald Trump, the top federal prosecutor for the nation's capital said Friday.

U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro told ABC News Live that she believes it is "unmistakable" that Brian Cole Jr. was responsible for placing the pipe bombs based on evidence collected by investigators. Pirro also suggested Cole may have been motivated by claims by Trump and his Republican allies that the 2020 election was stolen from him.

"He was disappointed in various aspects of the election, but this guy was an equal opportunity bomber," Pirro said. "He was disappointed to a great deal in the system. Both sides of the system."

Cole confessed to planting the devices on Jan. 5, 2021, two people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press. Cole also indicated that he believed conspiracy theories around the 2020 election and expressed views supportive of Trump, said the people, who were not authorized to discuss by name an ongoing investigation and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Cole spoke to law enforcement officers for more than four hours after his arrest, a federal prosecutor, Charles Jones, said Friday during Cole's initial court appearance.

The details add to a still-emerging portrait of the 30-year-old suspect from Woodbridge, Va., and it was not immediately clear what other information or perspectives he may have shared while cooperating with law enforcement following his arrest Thursday.

Surveillance video captured the suspect's movements through the area where the pipe bombs were placed and the surrounding neighborhood. The suspect, whose face was obscured by a mask, was wearing a hooded sweatshirt, gloves and Nike Air Max Speed Turf shoes.

"He told us that he had those sneakers and that he got rid of them after he placed the pipe bombs," Pirro said.

The FBI said a comparison of records from nearby cell towers and for Cole's cellphone indicate he was near the RNC and DNC around the same time that the pipe bombs were placed there.

"In my mind, they were on the right path when it was clear that the cellphone was pinging in the exact locations where we had the video of the suspect walking along the area," Pirro said. "Everywhere he walked, his cellphone was pinging at the cell tower. So it is unmistakable that he was the guy who was walking along and placing those items."



DANA VERKOUTEREN/AP

Brian Cole Jr., 30, of Woodbridge, Va., is accused of planting a pair of pipe bombs outside the headquarters of the Republican and Democratic national parties in Washington on Jan. 5, 2021.

US vaccine advisers say not all babies require a hepatitis B shot at birth

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A federal vaccine advisory committee voted on Friday to end the long-standing recommendation that all U.S. babies get the hepatitis B vaccine on the day they're born.

A loud chorus of medical and public health leaders decried the actions of the panel, whose current members were all appointed by U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. — a leading anti-vaccine activist before this year becoming the nation's top health official.

"This is the group that can't shoot straight," said Dr. William Schaffner, a Vanderbilt University vaccine expert who for decades has been involved with the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and its workgroups.

Several medical societies and state health departments said they would continue to recommend them. While people may have to check their policies, the trade group AHIP, formerly known as America's Health Insurance Plans, said its members still will cover the birth dose of the hepatitis B vaccine.

For decades, the government has advised that all babies be vaccinated against the liver infection right after birth. The shots are widely considered to be a public health success for preventing thousands of illnesses.

But Kennedy's advisory committee decided to recommend the birth dose only for babies whose mothers test positive, and in cases where the mom wasn't tested.

For other babies, it will be up to the parents and their doctors to decide if a birth dose is appropriate. The committee voted 8-3 to suggest that when a family elects to wait, then the vaccination series should begin when the child is 2 months old.

President Donald Trump posted a message late Friday calling the vote a "very good decision."

The acting director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Jim O'Neill, is expected to decide later whether to accept the committee's recommendation.

Asked why the newly-appointed committee moved quickly to reexamine the recommendation, committee member Vicky Pebsworth on Thursday cited "pressure from stakeholder groups," without naming them.

Committee members said the risk of infection for most babies is very low and that earlier research that found the shots were safe for infants was inadequate.

They also worried that in many cases, doctors and nurses don't have full conversations with parents about the pros and cons of the birth-dose vaccination.

The committee members voiced interest in hearing the input from public health and medical professionals, but chose to ignore the experts' repeated pleas to leave the recommendations alone.

National Park Service drops free admission on MLK Day, Juneteenth

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The National Park Service will offer free admission to U.S. residents on President Donald Trump's birthday next year — which also happens to be Flag Day — but is eliminating the benefit for Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Juneteenth.

The new list of free admission days for Americans is the latest example of the Trump administration downplaying America's civil rights history while also promoting the president's image, name and legacy.

Last year, the list of free days included Martin Luther King Jr Day and Juneteenth — which is June 19 — but not June 14, Trump's birthday.

The new free-admission policy takes effect Jan. 1 and was one of several changes announced by the Park Service late last month, including higher admission fees for international visitors.

The other days of free park admission in 2026 are Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Constitution Day, Veterans Day, President Theodore Roosevelt's birthday (Oct. 27) and the anniversary of the creation of the Park Service (Aug. 25).

Eliminating Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Juneteenth, which commemorates the day in 1865 when the last enslaved Americans were emancipated, removes two of the nation's most prominent civil rights holidays.

Some civil rights leaders voiced opposition to the change after news about it began spreading over the weekend.

"The raw & rank racism here stinks to high heaven," Harvard Kennedy School professor Cornell William Brooks, a former president of the NAACP, wrote on social media about the new policy.

Kristen Brengel, a spokesperson for the National Parks Conservation Association, said that while presidential administrations have tweaked the free days in the past, the elimination of Martin Luther King Jr. Day is particularly concerning. For one, the day has become a popular day of service for community groups that use the free day to perform volunteer projects at parks.

Grand jury transcripts from abandoned Epstein probe in Florida can be released

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — A federal judge on Friday gave the Justice Department permission to release transcripts of a grand jury investigation into Jeffrey Epstein's abuse of underage girls in Florida — a case that ultimately ended without any federal charges being filed against the millionaire sex offender.

U.S. District Judge Rodney Smith said a recently passed federal law ordering the release of records related to Epstein overrode the usual rules about grand jury secrecy.

The law signed in November by President Donald Trump compels the Justice Department, FBI and federal prosecutors to release later this month the vast troves of material they have amassed during investigations into Epstein that date back at least two decades.

Friday's court ruling dealt with the earliest known federal inquiry.

In 2005, police in Palm Beach, Florida, where Epstein had a mansion, began interviewing teenage girls who told of being hired to give the financier sexualized massages. The FBI later joined the investigation.

Federal prosecutors in Florida prepared an indictment in 2007, but Epstein's lawyers attacked the credibility of his accusers publicly while secretly negotiating a plea bargain that would let him avoid serious jail time.

In 2008, Epstein pleaded guilty to relatively minor state charges of soliciting prostitution from someone under age 18.

He served most of his 18-month sentence in a work release program that let him spend his days in his office.

NATION

New Orleans chase footage cited as crackdown blasted

By Jack Brook
AP/Report for America

NEW ORLEANS — New Orleans' mayor-elect said Friday that a federal immigration crackdown launched last week is already causing harm as encounters between masked agents and residents, including some caught on video, have prompted public backlash in the blue city.

Frustrated city officials pointed to the case of Jacelynn Guzman, a 23-year-old U.S. citizen who was walking back to her Louisiana home from a trip to the grocery store on Wednesday when a truck pulled up beside her and two masked federal agents approached her, according to security footage obtained by The Associated Press.

Guzman began running away as a second vehicle arrived and the agents pursued her down the sidewalk until she reached her family's home in Marrero, a neighborhood across the Mississippi River from downtown New Orleans. Guzman's mother has lived there her entire life.

Guzman, who has no criminal record, told the AP that she panicked when agents approached.

"That was my only thought that they were going to take me and I wasn't going to get to have a say in that decision," Guzman said. "Because most likely they didn't care that I was saying I was a U.S. citizen. So why would they care what else I had to say?"

Several hundred agents under Border Patrol commander Gregory Bovino converged on Southeast Louisiana last week as part of an immigration enforcement operation seeking to arrest 5,000 people. The Department of Homeland Security has touted dozens of arrests with only limited details released. Many Hispanic residents have said they feel their community is at risk of being abused or detained by agents regardless of their legal status.



JUAN ANGLIN/AP

This cam footage provided by Juan Anglin shows Jacelynn Guzman, Anglin's U.S. citizen stepdaughter, running from federal agents outside his home in Marrero, La., on Wednesday.

Mayor-elect Helena Moreno expressed "deep concern over recent actions" by federal agents. She said the operation is causing harm — forcing businesses to shutter and workers to stay home out of fear of mass arrests.

Guzman's stepfather, Juan Anglin, heard his stepdaughter screaming outside and went out to confront the agents. He told the AP that Guzman ran from the agents because she was a young woman surrounded by aggressive masked men.

"I thought she was going to be kidnapped, honestly," Anglin said. "I thought somebody was going to hurt her."

In response to the incident, the Department of Homeland Security said Border Patrol had been searching for a "criminal illegal alien previously charged with felony theft and convicted of illegal possession of stolen property." DHS said the agents "encountered a female matching the description of the target" and that agents "identified themselves" and left when they realized Guzman was not who they were seeking.

Defiant Noem offers few details on migrant flights to El Salvador

By Steve Thompson
The Washington Post

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said in a federal court filing Friday evening that she was the one who decided Venezuelan detainees aboard two airplanes bound for El Salvador in March would be handed over to that country despite a judge's order temporarily barring their removal.

Noem's declaration came as a federal judge in D.C. resumes a long-stalled inquiry into whether she or any other official should be referred for a potential contempt prosecution for disobeying the order.

Chief U.S. District Judge James Boasberg of the District of Columbia is looking into whether a criminal contempt referral is warranted after the Trump administration, justifying their action under the little-used Alien Enemies Act, continued to fly two planeloads of mostly Venezuelan migrants to El Salvador to be held in the country's notorious Terrorism Confinement Center, or CECOT.

Noem's declaration Friday came in response to an order from Boasberg that officials involved in the decision to continue the flights provide written statements that "detail their roles in such decision." The lack of details in Noem's declaration, as well as those from two other Trump administration officials Friday, may prompt Boasberg, who has said he intends to learn why his order was not followed, to seek testimony from them in court.

Justice Department attorneys remained defiant in the face of that possibility Friday in a filing accompanying Noem's declaration.

If Boasberg "continues to believe" his "order was sufficiently clear in imposing an obligation to halt the transfer of custody for detainees who had already been removed from the United States, the Court should proceed promptly with a referral," the filing said.

Justice Department lawyers have argued that Boasberg's order not to remove more than 100 detainees to El Salvador under the Alien Enemies Act was ambiguous and said officials did not intentionally defy it.

Judge rejects bid to toss suit challenging Gitmo detentions

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal judge has rejected a request from the Trump administration to toss a lawsuit challenging the detention of migrants at the U.S. Navy base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In a ruling Friday, U.S. District Court Judge Sparkle L. Sooknanan denied the federal government's motion to dismiss the case and has set a hearing for this week for the parties to discuss next steps in this case.

President Donald Trump in January announced his administration would use a detention center at Guantanamo to hold tens of thousands of the "worst criminal aliens," as part of his wider immigration crackdown.

Between February and June, the federal government held around 500 immigrants at Guantanamo, according to Sooknanan, as authorities used the base as a way station for immigrants with final removal orders.

American Civil Liberties Union attorney Lee Gelernt, who argued the case, said in a statement Saturday that he hopes the ruling "will put an end to the Trump administration's unlawful policy of sending immigrants to military bases in the middle of nowhere solely for the theatric value."

The ACLU and other advocacy groups have argued that transporting immigrants to Guantanamo is unlawful. The Trump administration has said it has broad authority to hold immigrants with final deportation orders at the facility.

Justices weigh step in favor of presidential power sought by Trump

By Mark Sherman
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Chief Justice John Roberts has led the Supreme Court's conservative majority on a steady march of increasing the power of the presidency, starting well before Donald Trump's time in the White House.

The justices could take the next step in a case being argued Monday that calls for a unanimous 90-year-old decision limiting executive authority to be overturned.

The court's conservatives, liberal Justice Elena Kagan noted in September, seem to be "raring to take that action." They already have allowed Trump, in the opening months of the Republican's second term, to fire almost everyone he has wanted, despite the court's 1935 decision in Humphrey's Executor that prohibits the president from removing the heads of independent agencies without cause.

The officials include Rebecca Slaughter, whose firing from the Federal Trade Commission is at issue in the current case, as well as officials from the National Labor Relations Board, the Merit Systems Protection Board and the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Humphrey's Executor has long been a target of the conservative legal movement that has embraced an expansive view of presidential power known as the unitary executive.

The case before the high court involves the same agency, the FTC, that was at issue in 1935. The justices established that presidents — Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt at the time — could not fire the appointed leaders of the alphabet soup of federal agencies without cause.

Proponents of the unitary executive theory have said the modern administrative state gets the Constitution all wrong: Federal agencies that are part of the executive branch answer to the president, and that includes the ability to fire their leaders at will.

NATION

Netflix to acquire Warner Bros. Discovery

By Wyatte Grantham-philips and Matt Ott
Associated Press

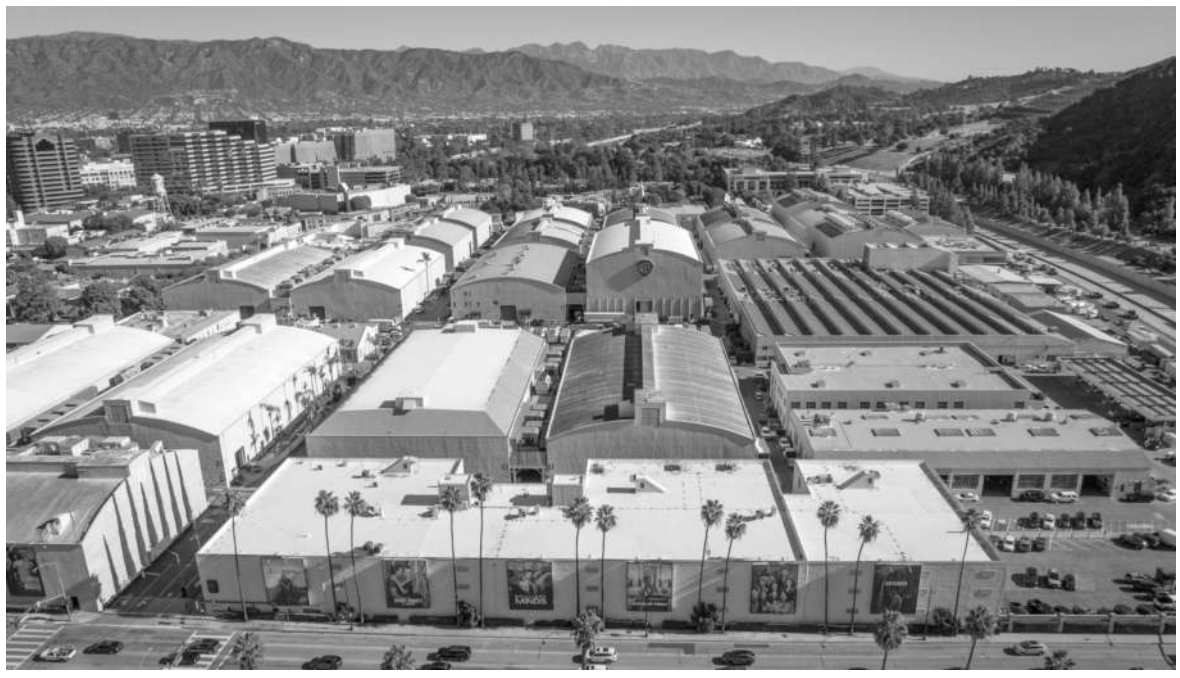
NEW YORK — Netflix struck a deal Friday to buy Warner Bros. Discovery, the Hollywood giant behind "Harry Potter" and HBO Max, in a $72 billion deal that would bring together two of the biggest players in television and film and potentially reshape the entertainment industry.

If approved by regulators, the merger would put two of the world's biggest streaming services under the same ownership — and join Warner's television and motion picture division, including DC Studios, with Netflix's vast library and its production arm, which has released popular titles such as "Stranger Things" and "Squid Game."

The proposal could draw intense antitrust scrutiny, particularly for its effects on movie making and streaming subscriptions.

"Netflix is the top streaming service today. Now combined with HBO Max, it will absolutely cement itself as the Goliath in the streaming industry," said Mike Proulx, vice president and research director at Forrester, a market research company.

The cash and stock deal is valued at $27.75 per Warner share, giving it a total enterprise value of $82.7 billion, including debt.



Jae C. Hong/AP

An aerial view shows Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank, Calif., Friday.

The transaction is expected to close in the next 12 to 18 months, after Warner completes its previously announced separation of its cable operations.

Not included in the deal are networks such as CNN and Discovery.

One of the big unanswered questions, Proulx added, is whether HBO Max and Netflix would "stay as separate streaming services or combine into a mega streaming service."

But either way, he said, customers could see some price relief in the form of a single subscription bill or bundle promotions, which would be a welcome change as streaming prices continue to rise and consumers feel the pinch of paying for multiple services.

Of course, that all depends on whether the deal goes through. Netflix on Friday maintained that the addition of HBO and HBO Max programming will give its members "even more high-quality titles" and "optimize its plans for consumers."

Others warned that a Netflix-Warner combo could create an even bigger entertainment titan with ramifications for both consumers and people working across the film and TV industry.

Critics said that the consequences of the merger could include job losses and a reduced variety of content.

Gaining Warner's legacy studios would mark a notable shift for Netflix, particularly its presence in theaters.

Under the proposed acquisition, Netflix has promised to continue theatrical releases for Warner's studio films, honoring Warner's contractual agreements.

Netflix has kept most of its original content within its core online platform. But there have been exceptions, including qualifying runs for its awards contenders, including this year's "Frankenstein," limited theater screenings of a "KPop Demon Hunters" sing-a-long and its coming "Stranger Things" series finale.

David Zaslav, CEO of Warner Bros. Discovery, added that merging with Netflix "will ensure people everywhere will continue to enjoy the world's most resonant stories for generations to come."

Critics said a Netflix-Warner combo would be bad news for moviegoers and for people who work in theaters. Cinema United — a trade association that represents more than 30,000 movie screens in the U.S. and another 26,000 screens internationally — was quick to oppose the deal, which it said "poses an unprecedented threat to the global exhibition business."

San Diego considers settlement in fatal police shooting of Black teen

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — The San Diego city attorney's office has agreed to pay $30 million to the family of a 16-year-old youth who was fatally shot by police last January in what would be one of the largest settlements of a police-involved killing case in U.S. history.

A resolution authorizing the proposed settlement with the family of Konoa Wilson has been added to the city council's agenda for Tuesday morning.

"What happened to Konoa was a catastrophic failure of policing," family attorney Nick Rowley said in a statement e-mailed to The Associated Press on Saturday. "A 16-year-old boy was running for his life. He was not a threat and not a suspect, yet he was shot in the back by a police officer who only saw him for one second before deciding to pull the trigger."

If approved, the settlement would exceed the $27 million the city of Minneapolis agreed to pay the family of George Floyd, whose May 2020 murder by a police officer who knelt on his neck sparked a nationwide racial reckoning.

Surveillance and body-worn camera footage from Jan. 28 showed Wilson running away from someone who pulled a gun and fired at him in a downtown train station. As he exited the station, Wilson encountered San Diego Police Officer Daniel Gold.

In a lawsuit against the city and Gold, the family alleged the officer "instantly, without any warning," fired two shots at Wilson as he ran by, striking him in the upper body. The lawsuit identified Wilson as Black.

"Only after shooting DECEDENT and watching him fall to the ground did Defendant GOLD finally announce 'San Diego Police,'" said the lawsuit, which was filed in June. "Defendants committed acts of racial violence against DECEDENT, a teenager, by shooting him in his back as he ran past Defendant GOLD, in an attempt to get to a place of safety."

Wilson was pronounced dead at UC San Diego Health Medical Center less than an hour later.

An agenda item posted Friday said the settlement would be paid from the Public Liability Fund.

Lt. Chris Tivanian, a spokesman for the San Diego Police Department, told The New York Times that Gold remained on an administrative assignment pending the results of a case review by the city attorney.



Trial Lawyers for Justice/AP

This undated photo shows Konoa Wilson, left, posing with his father, Steven Lee Wilson.

"He was a rookie, and he shot before he even announced who he was," Rowley said of Gold during a Zoom call with reporters. "I don't think he's a bad man. But he did a very, very bad, reckless thing."

Man wounded in stabbing on NC commuter train

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Police in North Carolina have charged a 33-year-old man with critically injuring another person in a stabbing on a Charlotte commuter train, just a few months after a Ukrainian refugee riding one of the city's trains was killed in an unrelated knife attack.

Oscar Solarzano, 33, was charged with attempted first-degree murder, assault with a deadly weapon and other crimes stemming from the Friday afternoon attack in which he wielded a large knife, Charlotte-Mecklenburg police said in a news release.

Police said the victim suffered a stab wound and was hospitalized in critical but stable condition.

Solarzano was being held in jail Saturday without bond.

A magistrate judge said in a court filing that the suspect was in the U.S. illegally and had previously been deported.

He faced a hearing Monday morning in Mecklenburg County District Court.

An arrest warrant filed in a North Carolina court says that Solarzano appeared to be intoxicated and was slurring his words when he challenged the victim to a fight.

Online court and jail records did not list an attorney for Solarzano.

The attack comes less than four months after a 23-year-old woman from Ukraine was killed on a Charlotte commuter train in an apparently random assault captured on video.

The victim, Iryna Zarutska, had been living in a bomb shelter in Ukraine before coming to the U.S. to escape the war, her relatives said.

A suspect, Decarlos Brown Jr., has been charged first-degree murder for Zarutska's killing in a North Carolina state court, and was also indicted in federal court on a charge of causing death on a mass transportation system.

The death of the Ukrainian woman sparked anger among allies of President Donald Trump and figures in his Make America Great Again movement.

Many pointed to the case as evidence that federal intervention was needed because leaders of large cities and state governors are failing to protect their residents from crime and rampant illegal immigration.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man who had clown mask and chain saw convicted

NY ALBANY — A man who wore a clown mask and brandished a chain saw during a frightful episode in an upstate New York neighborhood was convicted Wednesday of two felony charges.

A jury in Albany County Court found the 35-year-old man guilty of first-degree menacing and third-degree criminal possession of a weapon in connection with the May 1 incident in Cohoes. Sentencing was set for Feb. 6, when he faces two to seven years in prison.

Lee Kindlon, the county's district attorney, said the man was seen on surveillance video footage walking in the neighborhood wearing the clown mask and a football jersey and carrying a red chain saw in the mid-afternoon.

A resident confronted the masked man, who pulled a sheath off the chain saw and raised it in a threatening manner, Kindlon said. During a fight, the resident subdued the man until police arrived, the prosecutor said.

Ex-officer admits taking nude photos from phones

MO ST. LOUIS — A former suburban St. Louis police officer admitted that over several months last year, he pulled over 20 women's vehicles and searched their phones for nude photos and videos.

In a deal with federal prosecutors entered Tuesday, former Florissant Officer Julian Alcala, 30, pleaded guilty to 20 counts of willfully depriving someone of their right to be free from unreasonable search and seizure.

According to the plea deal, Alcala pulled over a woman in February 2024 and took her cellphone to his vehicle, saying he needed to do so to confirm her insurance information. Instead he found a video of the woman engaged in sexual activity on her phone and texted it to his own phone. He also found a nude photo of the woman and used his phone to take a picture of it.

Over the next three months, he took 19 other women's phones back to his vehicle during traffic stops, purportedly to confirm their insurance or vehicle registration, the plea deal states. He then looked for nude images and took photos of ones he found.

He was caught after the first victim looked in her deleted texts and learned that the video of her engaged in sexual activity had been sent to an unknown number. She called the FBI, which traced the number to Alcala.



MIKE HOUSEHOLDER/AP

Robohero

People pose for photos with a RoboCop statue that stands outside a business in Detroit's Eastern Market area last week. The original "Robocop" movie was set in Detroit.

Escaped monkey finds new home at refuge

NJ TRENTON — A monkey who spent several days on the lam after escaping from a truck that crashed on a rural Mississippi highway earlier this year now has a permanent home at a New Jersey wildlife refuge.

Forrest, a rhesus macaque, was among 21 monkeys being transported for biomedical research when the truck they were in overturned Oct. 28 on Interstate 59, just north of Heidelberg.

Five monkeys were killed as law officers searched for them in the immediate aftermath of the crash. Video from officers' body cameras showed a chaotic scene as monkeys that escaped from their wooden crates dashed around the grassy interstate median, with some running toward cars and semitrailers on the interstate.

Forrest and two other monkeys eluded officers at the crash site and eventually escaped. The other two were later shot and killed by civilians, who said they were protecting their families and neighborhoods, while Forrest spent about a week on the run before being spotted by a resident who lives near the crash scene. He was captured by workers from one of the companies that had been transporting the truckload of monkeys, officials have said.

Instructor on leave after failing Bible-based essay

OK NORMAN — An instructor at the University of Oklahoma has been placed on leave after a student complained that she received a failing grade on a paper that cited the Bible to assert that the "belief in multiple genders" was "demonic."

Samantha Fulnecky, 20, filed a complaint with the administration.

The school said the failing grade would not affect the junior's academic standing. An investigation into Fulnecky's discrimination complaint is still ongoing.

The assignment was for a psychology class about lifespan development. Students were asked to write a 650-word response to an academic study that examined whether conformity with gender norms was associated with popularity or bullying among middle school students.

Police find decomposed body following standoff

CT STAMFORD — Connecticut police found a decomposed body and numerous explosives inside a home in the aftermath of an hours-long standoff with a man who had barricaded himself and exchanged gunfire with law enforcement officers.

Stamford police responded to the house Tuesday after a state marshal called 911 while trying to evict the man under a court order, authorities said. The man opened fire at officers several times during the day, damaging police vehicles. No officers were hurt. Authorities fired back multiple times.

The 63-year-old man was found dead later in the day of what police believe was a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Officers who were clearing the home afterward found a decomposed body on the second floor, as well as numerous explosives including pipe bombs, grenades and Molotov cocktails, Police Chief Timothy Shaw said in a statement.

Activist gets jail time over purloined Perdue poultry

CA SANTA ROSA — A California animal welfare activist who took four chickens from a major Perdue Farms poultry plant was sentenced to 90 days in jail after being convicted of felony conspiracy, trespassing and other charges.

Zoe Rosenberg, 23, did not deny taking the animals from Petaluma Poultry but argued she wasn't breaking the law because she was rescuing the birds from a cruel situation. A jury found her guilty in October after a seven-week trial in Sonoma County, an agricultural area of Northern California.

Rosenberg was sentenced and ordered to report to the Sonoma County Jail on Dec. 10. She will serve the 90 days, but 60 of those may involve jail alternates, such as house arrest, the county's district attorney's office said. Rosenberg will also have two years of probation, and she is ordered to stay away from all Perdue facilities in the county.

The group named the birds — Poppy, Ivy, Aster and Azalea — and placed them in an animal sanctuary.

Plans for Trump ballroom expected this month

DC WASHINGTON — The White House is expected to submit plans for its new ballroom to a planning commission this month, the presidentially appointed head of the panel said Thursday.

"Once plans are submitted, that's really when the role of this commission, and its professional staff, will begin," Will Scharf, chair of the National Capital Planning Commission, said at its monthly meeting.

The 90,000-square-foot ballroom will dwarf the main White House itself, at nearly double the size, and President Donald Trump has said it will accommodate 999 people. It will have an estimated price tag of $300 million, a cost that has increased from initial projections.

Trump said on social media that the ballroom won't cost taxpayers a dime because it is being privately funded by "many generous Patriots, Great American Companies, and, yours truly."

Lifeguards rescue dog swept out to sea

CA SAN DIEGO — A pup that was swept out to sea by a rip current must be feeling doggone lucky after her unlikely rescue off the San Diego coast.

Sadie, a black Labrador retriever-mix, stole away from the home where her owners were staying last month, the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department said. While her owners tracked Sadie down the coast using an Airtag on her collar, surfers in Ocean Beach alerted lifeguards that a dog had been swept into the rip current near the jetty, officials said.

A Coast Guard boat and lifeguards searched the area after the dog disappeared into the channel, officials said. Lifeguards Garrett Smerdon and Jack Alldredge joined the search on personal watercraft and spent more than an hour looking. When they were called off, Alldredge thought he saw something. They raced over and saw Sadie.

Sadie, who was about a half-mile offshore near South Mission Beach when she was found, was transferred to a surf boat that brought her to shore, where she was reunited with her owners, officials said.

From The Associated Press

WORLD

Benin says coup has been foiled

By Virgile Ahissou and Ope Adetayo
Associated Press

COTONOU, Benin — A coup that was announced in Benin on Sunday has been "foiled," the interior minister said in a video on Facebook.

"In the early morning of Sunday, Dec. 7, 2025, a small group of soldiers launched a mutiny with the aim of destabilizing the state and its institutions," Alassane Seidou said. "Faced with this situation, the Beninese Armed Forces and their leadership, true to their oath, remained committed to the republic."

Earlier, a group of soldiers had appeared on Benin's state TV Sunday to announce the dissolution of the government in an apparent coup, the latest of many in West Africa.

The group, which called itself the Military Committee for Refoundation, announced the removal of the president and all state institutions. Lt. Col. Pascal Tigri was appointed president of the military committee, the soldiers said.

Following its independence from France in 1960, the West African nation witnessed multiple coups, especially in the decades following its independence. Since 1991, the country has been politically stable following the two-decade rule of Marxist-Leninist Mathieu Kérékou.

There has been no official news about President Patrice Talon since gunshots were heard around the presidential residence. However, the signal to the state television and public radio that was cut off has now been restored.



AP

The charred interior of a nightclub that caught fire early Sunday is seen in Arpora, India, on Sunday.

Fire kills dozens at nightclub in India

Associated Press

NEW DELHI — A fire ripped through a popular nightclub in India's Goa state, killing 25 people, including tourists, the state's chief minister said Sunday.

The blaze occurred just past midnight in Arpora village in North Goa, a party hub.

Goa's Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said most of the dead were the club's kitchen workers, as well as three to four tourists. Six people were injured and are in stable condition, he said. All of the bodies have been recovered.

The fire was caused by a gas cylinder blast and has been extinguished, the Press Trust of India news agency reported, quoting local police. However, witnesses told the agency that the fire began on the club's first floor, where nearly 100 tourists were on the dance floor. Several rushed to the kitchen below in the chaos and got trapped along with staff, it said.

Fatima Shaikh said the commotion began as flames erupted, according to the news agency. "We rushed out of the club only to see that the entire structure was up in flames," she said.

The nightclub, located along the Arpora River backwaters, had a narrow entry and exit that forced the firefighters to park their tankers about 1,300 feet away, delaying the efforts, the news agency said.

Sawant said the club had violated fire safety regulations. The state government ordered an inquiry to determine the cause of the fire and responsibility, he said, adding that authorities would act against management and officials who allowed it to operate despite the violations.



MARCO UGARTE/AP

Venezuelan opposition members take part in a demonstration ahead of the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony where Venezuelan Maria Corina Machado is among this year's laureates, in Mexico City, on Saturday.

Venezuelan opposition leader supporters march worldwide

By Regina Garcia Cano
Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — Supporters of Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado demonstrated Saturday in several cities worldwide to commemorate her Nobel Peace Prize win ahead of the prestigious award ceremony this week.

Thousands of people marched through Madrid; Utrecht, Netherlands; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Lima, Peru; and other cities in support of Machado, whose organization wants to use the attention gained by the award to highlight Venezuela's democratic aspirations. The organization expected demonstrations in more than 80 cities around the world.

The crowd in Lima carried portraits of Machado and demanded a "Free Venezuela." With the country's yellow, blue and red flag draped over their backs or emblazoned on their caps, demonstrators clutched posters that read, "The Nobel Prize is from Venezuela."

The gatherings come at a critical point in the country's protracted crisis as the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump builds up a massive military deployment in the Caribbean, threatening repeatedly to strike Venezuelan soil. Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro is among those who see the operation as an effort to end his hold on power, and the opposition has only added to this perception by reigniting its promise to soon govern the country.

Machado won the award Oct. 10 for her struggle to achieve a democratic transition in the South American nation, winning recognition as a woman "who keeps the flame of democracy burning amid a growing darkness."

Machado, 58, won the opposition's primary election and intended to run against Maduro in last year's presidential election, but the government barred her from running for office.

Machado went into hiding and has not been seen in public since Jan. 9, when she was briefly detained after joining supporters in Caracas, Venezuela's capital.

Netanyahu: Israel, Hamas to enter ceasefire's second phase soon

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday that Israel and Hamas are "very shortly expected to move into the second phase of the ceasefire," after Hamas returns the remains of the last hostage held in Gaza.

Netanyahu spoke during a news conference with visiting German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and stressed that the second phase, the disarming of Hamas and the demilitarization of Gaza, could begin as soon as the end of the month.

Hamas has yet to hand over the remains of Ran Gvili, a 24-year-old police officer who was killed in the Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023, attack that sparked the war. His body was taken to Gaza.

The ceasefire's second stage also includes the deployment of an international force to secure Gaza and forming a temporary Palestinian government to run day-to-day affairs under the supervision of an international board led by President Donald Trump.

The return of Gvili's remains — and Israel's return of 15 bodies of Palestinians in exchange — would complete the first phase of Trump's 20-point ceasefire plan.

Hamas says it has not been able to reach all remains because they are buried under rubble left by Israel's two-year offensive in Gaza. Israel has accused the militants of stalling and threatened to resume military operations or withhold humanitarian aid if all remains are not returned.

A group of families of hostages said in a statement that "we cannot advance to the next phase before Ran Gvili returns home."

Netanyahu said few people believed the ceasefire's first stage could be achieved, and the second phase is just as challenging.

"As I mentioned to the chancellor, there's a third phase, and that is to deradicalize Gaza, something that also people believed was impossible. But it was done in Germany, it was done in Japan, it was done in the Gulf States. It can be done in Gaza, too, but of course Hamas has to be dismantled," he said.

WORLD

New Zealand police recover swallowed Fabergé pendant

By Charlotte Graham-McLay
Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — New Zealand Police said Friday they recovered a James Bond-inspired Fabergé pendant after six days of closely watching the man accused of swallowing the jewelry in an Auckland store.

They said the pendant was recovered Thursday night after it exited the suspect's gastrointestinal tract naturally without medical intervention.

The limited-edition, Fabergé egg pendant was inspired by the 1983 James Bond film "Octopussy," in which a jewel-smuggling operation involves a fake Fabergé egg.

A less glamorous photo supplied by New Zealand's police Friday showed a gloved hand holding the recovered pendant and its long, gold chain with an intact price tag showing the jewelry's $19,000 value.

The man was arrested inside Partridge Jewelers in Auckland on Nov. 28 shortly after the alleged theft.

He made a court appearance Nov. 29, when he didn't enter a plea to a charge of theft. Since then, he's been in police custody and officers had been stationed round the clock with the man to wait for the evidence to reemerge.

The 32-year-old man has not been publicly named. He is due to appear in Auckland District Court on Monday and will remain in police custody until then.

"Given this man is in Police custody, we have a duty of care to continue monitoring him given the circumstances of what has occurred," Inspector Grae Anderson said in a statement Wednesday.

The store's website says the egg, one of only 50 made, was crafted from gold, painted with green enamel and encrusted with 183 diamonds and two sapphires. The pendant is 3.3 inches tall and is mounted on a stand.

"The egg opens to reveal an 18ct yellow gold octopus nestled inside, adorned with white diamond suckers and black diamond eyes," an item description said. "The octopus surprise pays homage to the eponymous antagonist at the center of the 'Octopussy' film."



NEW ZEALAND POLICE/AP

A Fabergé pendant is held after it was recovered, Thursday, from a man accused of stealing and swallowing the pendant.



KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH, POOL/AP

Protesters were arrested after throwing food at a display case housing the crown jewels, seen here worn by King Charles III.

4 arrested for smearing food on Crown Jewels case

Associated Press

LONDON — Four protesters were arrested Saturday after splattering food on the display case of a priceless diamond-encrusted crown at the Tower of London.

The Crown Jewels display was temporarily closed after members of a group called Take Back Power smeared apple crumble and poured yellow custard — two staples on British dessert menus — on the case containing the Imperial State Crown worn by King Charles III as he left his coronation ceremony in 2023 and during his speech to open Parliament in 2024.

The hefty crown, containing 2,868 diamonds, 17 sapphires, 11 emeralds, four rubies and 269 pearls, was crafted for the coronation of Charles' grandfather, George VI, in 1937.

Police said the protesters were arrested on suspicion of criminal damage.

But the invaluable jewels that are a major tourist draw were unharmed, Historic Royal Palaces said.

The civil disobedience group that advocates for a permanent citizens' assembly and wants to tax extreme wealth said two of its members had thrown the food and two others were also arrested and taken into "custard-y."

The stunt is one of many that has targeted prized treasures and artworks to draw attention to a political cause. Petroleum protesters were imprisoned last year for tossing a can of tomato soup on glass protecting Van Gogh's "Sunflowers" at London's National Gallery.

Video of the act at the Tower of London, once a royal palace also known as the prison where Anne Boleyn, Thomas More and others were executed, showed two protesters attacking the case as other visitors stepped back in shock.

After an employee intervened and radioed for help, the two demonstrators unfurled a sign saying, "Democracy has crumbled. Tax the rich."

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OPINION

Pregnancy resource centers 'guilty' of helping women

By Kathleen Parker
The Washington Post

No matter how you cut it, trying to shut down pregnancy resource centers is not a good look. Yet government officials in some blue states are targeting such centers, claiming they lure pregnant women who think they're entering an abortion clinic and then, presumably, talk them into keeping their babies. What fresh hell is this?

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., said in 2022 that pro-baby centers shouldn't be allowed to "torture a pregnant person" and introduced legislation to "crack down" on them. New York Democratic Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani has said he would protect the city against "false or deceptive" information from pregnancy resource centers. And New Jersey Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin, a Democrat, issued a subpoena against First Choice Women's Resource Centers Inc., demanding 10 years of confidential internal records, including donor, volunteer and staff information, without cause or evidence of wrongdoing. Indeed, such centers have been offering life-affirming support to expectant mothers and families for decades.

First Choice shot back with a legal challenge that was argued Tuesday before the U.S. Supreme Court. Plaintiffs' lawyers said the centers should be able to defend their constitutional rights in federal court when state officials target them because of their beliefs. Although the case was strictly procedural, the ruling could have wide-ranging implications for nonprofits facing government intimidation, as the American Civil Liberties Union argued in an amicus brief. Cutting through the pettifoggery, it seems that the New Jersey attorney general wants to thwart donor support through exposure and implied threats of contempt.

Wherever one stands on the reversal of Roe v. Wade, one can't possibly think it's wrong to help women who want to carry their babies to term but lack support and resources. If it's the faith-based motivation of providers that rankles, then you might want to brush up on religious liberty and the Constitution. Some argue that the centers are legal but unethical. In the American Medical Association's Journal of Ethics, two doctors write: "Although crisis pregnancy centers enjoy First Amendment rights protections, their propagation of misinformation should be regarded as an ethical violation that undermines women's health."

The authors contend that while seeming to be medical centers, the pregnancy resource centers are not subject to the licensure requirements and credentialing oversight of medical facilities. Not so. Any facility performing medical procedures would face appropriate laws and oversight.

While these legal maneuvers have kept lawyers, doctors, nurses and laymen busy defending their mission to help women and babies, the war on the country's roughly 2,600 pregnancy centers has become violent. According to a tally by the Family Research Council, more than 100 of these centers, anti-abortion organizations and churches were attacked with arson, firebombing and vandalism after the May 2022 leak of the ruling that reversed Roe v. Wade. Jane's Revenge, a pro-choice activist group, claimed responsibility for more than a dozen of those incidents.

Whatever compels people to donate time or money to help the less fortunate when they're most vulnerable should be reason for celebration, not punishment. If a pregnant woman seeking an abortion wanders into a pro-life clinic, it isn't as though she'll be tackled, shackled into a birthing chair and forced to recite the Nicene Creed. She can leave. Instead, such "misguided" women more often find helpful staff members, in many cases a nurse, doctor, radiologist or sonographer whose mission isn't to misinform but to help women in distress make informed decisions.

Most of the centers offer long- and short-term support to mother and child and, in some cases, the father. A lot of these young women are unmarried and say they'd have their babies if they had family or other support. Many pregnancy resource centers offer just that — diapers, formula, baby clothes, strollers, cribs, as well as referrals to other services. Some even provide job training and housing.

So, what's the beef? The answer should be obvious. If the government will no longer support Planned Parenthood through reimbursements — more than a billion dollars in payments from 2019 to 2022 across the organization's affiliates from Medicare, Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program — then pregnancy centers, which are nonprofit and largely but not solely subsidized by private donors, shouldn't be allowed to exist. Some centers now receive state and federal funds, as well as tax credits for donations in states such as Missouri.

Critics see the centers as the next frontier in the war on abortion, a conservative Christian movement to replace abortion clinics. This seems less a hostile takeover than an adaptation to new circumstances, filling a void that's not been addressed.

If feminism has taught us anything, it is that women have agency. It seems preposterous that someone as smart as the senator from Massachusetts would assume that a pregnant woman can't read signs or make phone calls to figure out where she wants to go. Who these days says that women can't think for themselves? Only the purveyors of choice, it seems.

The World Cup draw, always ridiculous, outdid itself

By Will Leitch
Special to The Washington Post

When news surfaced recently that President Donald Trump would not only attend the FIFA World Cup draw Friday in Washington, but also would prominently feature, the idea was greeted with the usual derision prompted by one of the most polarizing humans on the planet. But also with considerable confusion: Trump? Soccer? Had he ever showed the slightest interest in the sport?

But that of course ignored the history of the World Cup draw, which ostensibly exists solely to announce the schedule of matches but historically has been a way for the host country to show off at maximum kitsch to a global audience. This is an event that in 2006 in Germany offered a rickety CGI video of a talking soccer ball; in 2014, an epic Brazilian samba dance that could still be going on; in 2018, Russian supermodels announcing countries they seemed never to have heard of before.

There was no way Trump was going to be able to resist this spectacle at the Kennedy Center. The event was basically made for him. What's the point of being president if you can't have the Village People perform for you at a soccer event, after all?

Thus, we got also Andrea Bocelli opening — the highlight of the ceremony, if just because the Italian tenor seemed to be the only person who had rehearsed — followed by hours (hours!) of strained banter between Heidi Klum and Kevin Hart (who was somehow even *less* funny than in those tortured Verizon Elf commercials); multiple video packages that seemed to be written, narrated and even edited by AI; and soccer legend Rio Ferdinand, Matthew McConaughey, Salma Hayek and FIFA President Gianni Infantino appearing in a ghastly "comedy sketch."

Then there was the pièce de résistance, the awarding of the inaugural FIFA Peace Prize, to Trump himself, who accepted the award with a glee and seemingly genuine appreciation that was astounding to see. The award, invented by Infantino in an obvious effort to curry favor with the president, credited Trump for being "a dynamic leader who has engaged in diplomatic efforts that created opportunities for dialogue, deescalation and stability, and who has championed the unifying power of football on the world stage." Call it the Fauxbel Peace Prize.

What was the most farcical moment? Maybe when Trump returned to the stage to explicate the difference between "football" and "American football" — to an audience, possibly in the billions, that just wanted to know if their country ended up in a group with Spain or France or Brazil.

Trump's stamp was all over the event even when he wasn't on the stage. At one point, Infantino, channeling Trumpian grandiosity, actually said, "FIFA is *the* official happiness provider for humanity since over 100 years, right?" And the World Cup is "the greatest event that humanity, that mankind, has ever seen and will ever see."

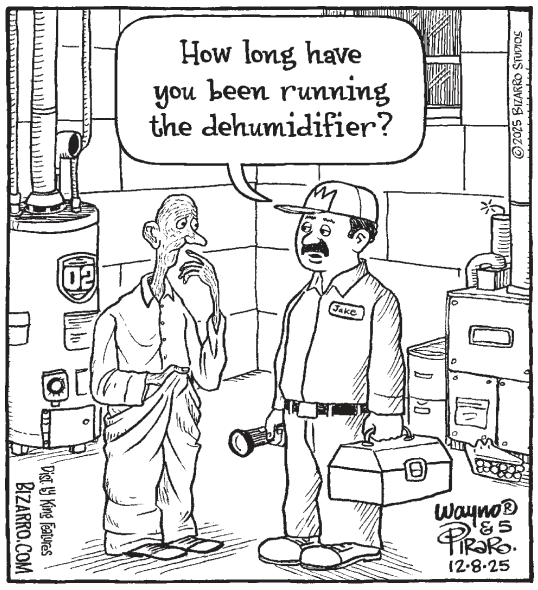
Eventually — eventually — they got to the actual draw, and if you're a U.S. soccer fan, you had to be thrilled with the group selection. To face Paraguay, Australia and the winner of a European playoff involving Turkey, Romania, Slovakia and Kosovo is the platonic ideal; the highest ranked among those teams is Turkey, and they're not even guaranteed to win their playoff to reach the group stage.

It's easy for many Americans to feel a little gloomy about the nation's prospects these days, but for those who watched the draw, now they can look forward to the summer. The U.S. team at least has a decent chance of making the later rounds, even if winning it all is basically unthinkable.

In the meantime, there's the indelible image of Trump dancing to "YMCA," honoring the tradition of the FIFA World Cup draw putting the host nation on ridiculous, embarrassing display. Yet the event was mesmerizing, and it was impossible to look away. Kind of like the effect of the FIFA Peace Prize winner himself.

Will Leitch is the author of "Lloyd McNeil's Last Ride," a contributing editor at New York magazine and founder of Deadspin.

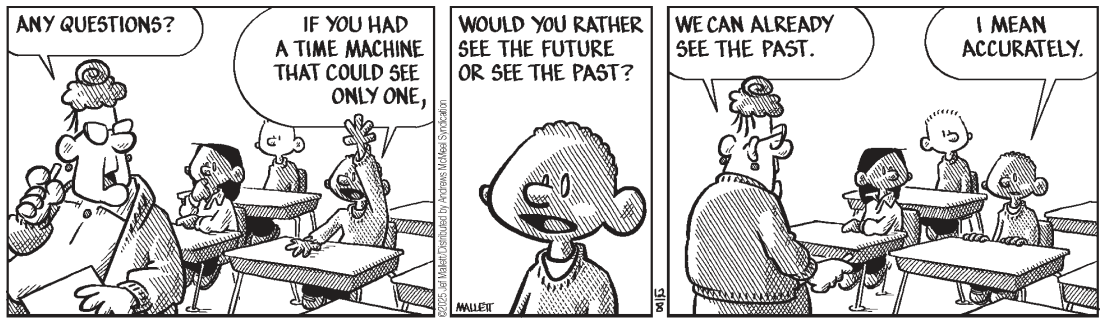
Bizarro



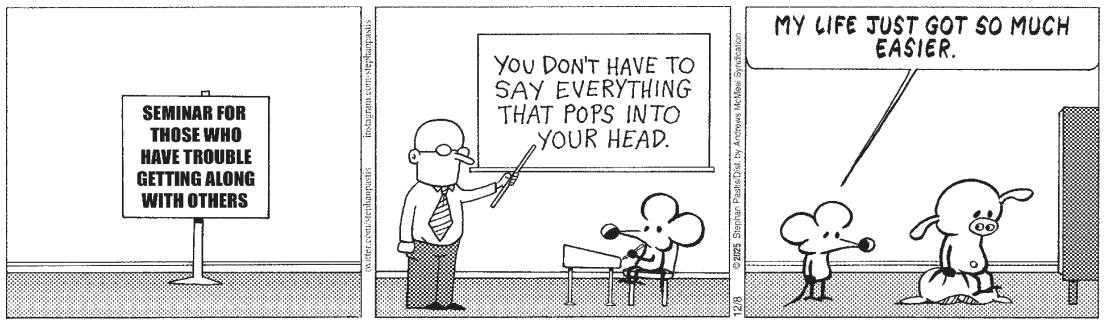
Loose Parts



Frazz



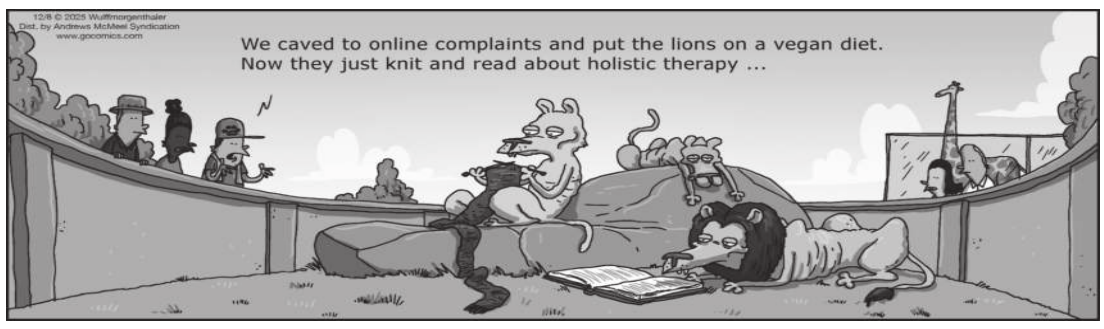
Pearls Before Swine



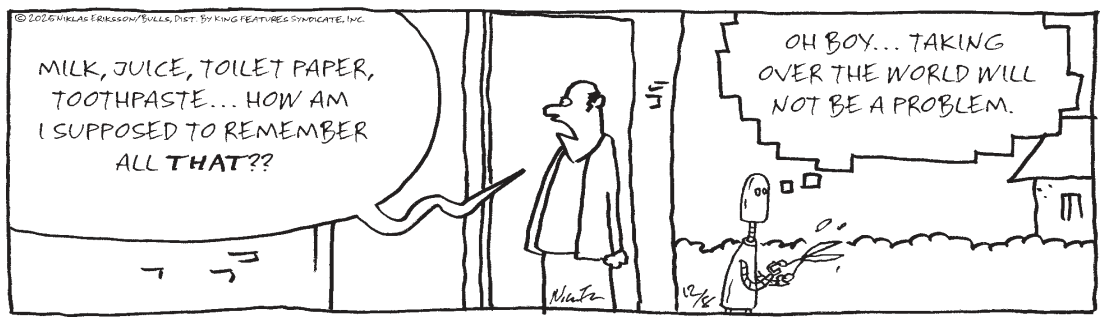
Non Sequitur



Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



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		
57			■	58					■	59		

ACROSS

1 Menagerie
4 Answer
9 Petrol
12 Year in Madrid
13 Big foil maker
14 2016 Olympics city
15 "So grateful that you flagged that typo"
17 Coffee vessel
18 In medias —
19 Baker Street sleuth
21 Dairy case buy
24 Gumbo or bisque, e.g.
25 — Dhabi
26 Go astray
28 Authority
31 Rock's partner
33 Upper limit
35 Golden State sch.
36 Clear up the windshield
38 Pen name
40 "— Wiedersehen"
41 Furnace fuel
43 Rich cakes
45 "Scandal" creator Rhimes
47 Pouch
48 Madre's sibling
49 Prepaid stocking stuffers
54 Triage ctrs.
55 "Adam Bede" author
56 However
57 Drench
58 Infield covers
59 Leading lady?

DOWN

1 Sharp turn
2 Artist Yoko
3 Tic-tac-toe win
4 Indy autos
5 Stretchy
6 Agt.'s cut
7 Lomond and Ness
8 Brutes
9 Irritable feline in a meme
10 Suffix for billion
11 "Brady Bunch" trio
16 — Hill (R&B group)
20 Hawaiian feast
21 Three feet
22 Slender woodwind
23 Region that includes Tampa and Houston
27 Collar
29 Pivot
30 Klutzes
32 Lake bird
34 Refueling break
37 Doohickey
39 Works together
42 Boxer Ali
44 — Victor
45 Leftovers recipe
46 Employ
50 Fragrant tree
51 Reuben bread
52 "Lion" actor Patel
53 Sault — Marie

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

12-8 CRYPTOQUIP

YQZTXLD CXYINXTI QNFCGTXMJ KLMR AXDKY IWLI AZLIGNZ LTINZYYZY NXMJOLDC LMC YWLMMFM: KFDDROFFC.

Saturday's Cryptoquip: IF YOU CHILL OUT AFTER YOU PUT AN EXTRA COAT OF POLISH ON YOUR CAR, DO YOU REWAX AND UNWIND?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals G

FACES



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

From left: Cast member Adam Sandler, co-writer Emily Mortimer, cast member George Clooney, director/co-writer Noah Baumbach and cast member Laura Dern pose Nov. 10 to promote "Jay Kelly."

Fame, failure and film

Art looks suspiciously like life in George Clooney's 'Jay Kelly'

BY LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

George Clooney is not Jay Kelly. That much he is sure of.

But when a famous movie star of a certain age decides to take on a role as a famous movie star of a certain age, full of regrets and realizing that he's missed out on so much of his own life in pursuit of greatness and fame, it does invite some questions.

Clooney, 64, wasn't thinking about all that when Noah Baumbach called him about the part. He was just thinking about how hard it is to get good roles the older he gets.

"I was predisposed to want to do it before I even read it," Clooney said in a recent interview.

He wasn't the only one. Adam Sandler, Laura Dern and Billy Crudup were among the stars of "Jay Kelly," now streaming on Netflix, who pretty much signed on, script unread. Baumbach's name, as the writer-director behind "Marriage Story" and "The Squid and the Whale," has that effect on actors.

"Jay Kelly," which Baumbach wrote with Emily Mortimer, wasn't just a clever character study but a lovingly clear-eyed portrait of the strange business of Hollywood moviemaking and the personalities involved — the managers (Sandler), the publicists (Dern), the makeup artists (Mortimer), the best actor from acting class who didn't make it (Crudup), and, of course, the one who did (Clooney).

"It's so lush in its appreciation for the sort of carnival life of actors and the proximity to some kind of gilded, glorious life that's always tantalizingly close," Crudup said. "We use movie stars as some kind of analogy about what it means to be successful and have a happy life, when in fact, that's smoke and mirrors. And if you're too busy looking out for that, you're gonna miss the life that you have."

Clooney saw the trappings of fame, especially when achieved too young, through the lens of his very famous aunt, Rosemary Clooney.

"She got her fame at 16, and it was big. She was on a cover of Time magazine," he said. "And she believed all the stuff when they tell you how great you are ... Then the business changed, and she wasn't prepared for that. If you believe the first part, you gotta believe the second part."

Failure, which he came to appreciate through many, many rejections, was an important part of the game. Clooney was in his 30s when he launched into the stratosphere with "ER."

"You can't be an actor and not fail," he said. "And that's the risk. That's why when it's successful, it pays off. It's because you're willing to risk humiliation."



NETFLIX/AP

Clooney's movie star character plays to the public at all times, at the expense of family, in "Jay Kelly."

Clooney doesn't have Jay Kelly's regrets. He likes to say if he got hit by a bus tomorrow, he'd be OK with what he left behind — good relationships with friends, family and a few great films. But like Jay Kelly, Clooney is someone who can't exactly walk onto a train and go unnoticed.

During the making of "Jay Kelly," Baumbach put together a montage of that character's career, which would play during a tribute ceremony. While it's well established that George Clooney is definitely not Jay Kelly, in this case, he definitely was. The montage was all Clooney films. And the actor portraying Jay Kelly had no idea what was coming when he sat down in that theater to film the last scene of the movie.

Clooney was taken aback, first by all the "bad haircuts," then by this tremendous sense of time.

"We spent a lot of time that morning making sure all the technical stuff was gonna work," Baumbach said. "When George came, I just told him, 'I'm gonna show you this reel and I just want you to watch it." A lot of actors wouldn't necessarily be open to giving up that kind of control. But what I find beautiful about that sequence is that something is really happening; he's really having this experience, watching his life before him. And he's having a real experience."

On that first take, overwhelmed by emotion, Clooney instinctively grabbed Sandler's hand. It's an image that made it not just into the movie, but onto the poster as well. And it was as authentic as it gets.

"There's a line in this film, 'all my memories are movies,'" Clooney said. "That's not true with me. But my memories of movies are not the scenes or the movie. It's the experience."

He added: "What a lucky life I've lived."

Guitarist Cropper dies

BY ADRIAN SAINZ
Associated Press

Steve Cropper, the lean, soulful guitarist and songwriter who helped anchor the celebrated Memphis backing band Booker T. and the M.G.'s at Stax Records and co-wrote the classics "Green Onions," "(Sittin' on) the Dock of the Bay" and "In the Midnight Hour," has died. He was 84.

Pat Mitchell Worley, president and CEO of the Soulsville Foundation, said Cropper's family told her that Cropper died on Dec. 3 in Nashville. The foundation operates the Stax Museum of American Soul Music in Memphis.

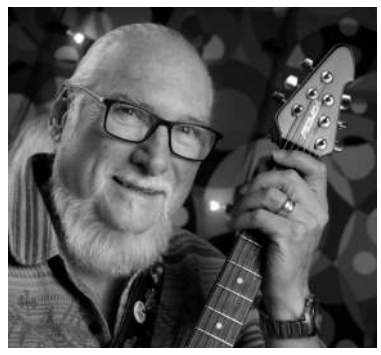
A cause of death was not immediately known.

The guitarist, songwriter and record producer was not known for flashy playing, but his spare, catchy licks and solid rhythm chops helped define Memphis soul music. At a time when it was common for white musicians to co-opt the work of Black artists and make more money from their songs, Cropper was that rare white artist willing to keep a lower profile and collaborate.

Cropper's very name was immortalized in the 1967 smash "Soul Man," recorded by Sam & Dave. Midway, singer Sam Moore calls out "Play it, Steve!" as Cropper pulls off a tight, ringing riff, a slide sound that Cropper used a Zippo lighter to create. The exchange was reenacted in the late 1970s when Cropper joined the John Belushi-Dan Aykroyd act "The Blues Brothers" and played on their hit cover of "Soul Man."

In a 2020 interview with The Associated Press, Cropper discussed his career and how he mastered the art of filling gaps with an essential lick or two.

"I listen to the other musicians and the singer," Cropper said. "I'm not listening to just me. I make sure I'm sounding OK before we start the session. Once we've presented the song, then I listen to the song and the way they interpret it. And I play around all that stuff. That's what I do. That's my style."



AP

Steve Cropper, shown in 2020, died Dec. 3. He was 84.

Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards, asked once about Cropper, said simply, "Perfect, man." On a YouTube instructional video, guitar virtuoso Joe Bonamassa says Cropper's moves are often copied.

"If you haven't heard the name Steve Cropper, you've heard him in song," Bonamassa said.

Cropper was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1992 as a member of Booker T. and the M.G.'s.

Rolling Stone magazine ranked Cropper 39th on its 100 Greatest Guitarists list, calling him "the secret ingredient in some of the greatest rock and soul songs."

Cropper was in the 1980 movie "The Blues Brothers" and its follow-up, "Blues Brothers 2000," portraying "The Colonel" in the Blues Brothers band. In real life, he toured with them.

He was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2005, and two years later received a Grammy Award for lifetime achievement.

'Peter Hujar's Day,' 'Train Dreams,' 'Sorry, Baby' lead Spirit Award noms

Associated Press

Ira Sachs' "Peter Hujar's Day," which re-creates an interview with the 1970s photographer, led the Film Independent Spirit Awards nominations with five nods, including best feature and director, as well as lead and supporting performances for Ben Whishaw and Rebecca Hall. The organization announced nominees for the 41st edition of the show Dec. 3.

Several films followed with four nominations, including best feature and best director, like Clint Bentley's lyrical Denis Johnson adaptation "Train Dreams," and Eva Victor's "Sorry, Baby," about life after an assault. Others receiving four nods were "Blue Sun Palace," "One of Them Days" and "Lurker."

James Sweeney's dark comedy "Twinless" and "The Plague," which like "Train Dreams" also stars Joel Edgerton, were also nominated for best feature.

Edgerton was among the 10 best acting nominees, for "Train Dreams," alongside the likes of Rose Byrne ("If I Had Legs I'd Kick You"), Dylan O'Brien ("Twinless"), Keke Palmer ("One of Them Days"), Tessa Thompson ("Hedda") and Whishaw, who was also nominated for the Netflix series "Black Doves." The organization switched to gender neutral acting categories in 2022.

The Spirit Awards also honor television shows, where "Adolescence," "Forever" and "Mr Loverman" led with four nominations each. The awards show will take place Feb. 15.

SCOREBOARD/AUTO RACING

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Saturday's men's scores

EAST

American 78, Maryland-Eastern Shore 60
Boston College 67, New Haven 63
Brown 115, Elms 34
Colgate 94, St. John Fisher 50
Columbia 93, Albany 65
Delaware State 75, Delaware 72, OT
Duquesne 84, Stony Brook 75
George Washington 99, William & Mary 86
Holy Cross 70, Fordham 69
Howard 85, Bowie State 69
LIU 87, Lehigh 82
La Salle 69, Drexel 64
Le Moyne 78, Binghamton 63
Longwood 84, Morgan State 80
New Hampshire 88, Boston University 82, OT
Providence 90, Rhode Island 71
Saint Joseph's 70, Temple 69
St. Bonaventure 77, Buffalo 69
St. John's 63, Ole Miss 58
UMBC 73, Bucknell 66
UMass 80, UMass Lowell 60
Villanova 90, Pennsylvania 63
Wagner 92, Bobcats 36
Wake Forest 75, West Virginia 66

SOUTH

Akron 88, Tulane 71
Coastal Carolina 88, Winthrop 84
Eastern Kentucky 122, IU East 67
Elon 73, Wofford 52
Florida A&M 60, Florida Memorial 58
Florida International 88, Jacksonville 65
Furman 79, Harvard 69
Georgia Southern 88, Gardner-Webb 84
Georgia Tech 79, Monmouth 67
Houston Christian 85, New Orleans 76
Illinois 75, Tennessee 62
James Madison 68, Norfolk State 67
Kennesaw State 92, Georgia State 69
Liberty 92, Coppin State 50
Memphis 78, Baylor 71
Miami (FL) 88, Southern Miss 64
Murray State 81, Bellarmine 68
Nicholls State 74, Incarnate Word 67
North Carolina A&T 69, North Carolina Central 54
North Carolina State 75, UNC Asheville 63
Presbyterian 80, Morehead State 72
Richmond 86, Old Dominion 77
South Carolina 82, Stetson 51
SW Missouri State 74, Chattanooga 70
Tennessee Tech 87, West Georgia 59
Troy 101, LaGrange 47
UNC Greensboro 82, East Carolina 78
UNC Wilmington 70, Louisiana 63
USC Upstate 78, Western Carolina 67
Virginia 86, Dayton 73
Virginia Tech 73, George Mason 62
Western Kentucky 80, Evansville 79

MIDWEST

Boise State 77, Butler 68
Bradley 84, Northern Illinois 55
DePaul 76, Arkansas-Pine Bluff 72
Detroit Mercy 71, Cleveland State 59
Duke 66, Michigan State 60
Idaho 84, South Dakota State 81
Illinois State 95, Chicago State 53
Iowa 83, Maryland 64
Iowa State 81, Purdue 58
Kent State 111, Roberts Wesleyan 68
Lindenwood 82, Eastern Illinois 74
Louisville 87, Indiana 78
Loyola Chicago 73, Princeton 68
Miami (OH) 93, Maine 61
Michigan 101, Rutgers 60
Milwaukee 74, Robert Morris 72
Montana 79, North Dakota 75
North Dakota State 69, Northern Arizona 68
Oakland 98, Toledo 97
Ohio 88, Marshall 81
Ohio State 86, Northwestern 82
Purdue Fort Wayne 79, Northern Kentucky 77
Seton Hall 78, Kansas State 67
Utah Valley 82, Bowling Green 71
Valparaiso 98, Calumet College of St. Joseph 58
Western Illinois 78, Hannibal-LaGrange 47
Western Michigan 83, SIU-Edwardsville 73
Wichita State 74, Northern Iowa 69, OT
Wisconsin 96, Marquette 76
Youngstown State 78, IU Indianapolis 55

SOUTHWEST

Abilene Christian 77, New Mexico St. 69
Arkansas 82, Fresno State 58
Arkansas State 90, Little Rock 78
Houston 82, Florida State 67
Oral Roberts 72, Montana State 68
Prairie View A&M 124, Champion Christian College 62
Sam Houston 82, Texas Southern 70
Texas A&M-CC 57, Lamar 49
Tulsa 98, Missouri State 74

FAR WEST

Arizona 97, Auburn 68
Arizona State 86, Oklahoma 70
California 67, Pacific 61
Colorado State 91, Colorado 86
Eastern Washington 90, Kansas City 66
Idaho State 93, Denver 79
New Mexico 98, Santa Clara 71
Northern Colorado 89, South Dakota 87, OT
Oklahoma State 84, Grand Canyon 78
Omaha 60, Portland State 55
Oregon State 81, Southern Utah 70
UC Irvine 85, Cal State Northridge 71
UC Riverside 88, Cal Poly 84
UC San Diego 80, Long Beach State 74
UC Santa Barbara 109, Cal State Bakersfield 84
UCLA 74, Oregon 63
Utah 91, California Baptist 85
Vermont 65, Pepperdine 56
Washington 84, USC 76
Wyoming 93, Dartmouth 80

Saturday's women's scores

EAST

Army 64, UMass 61
Binghamton 71, Buffalo 58
Columbia 82, Wagner 42
Fordham 69, Hofstra 46
George Washington 53, Brown 48
Iowa 79, Rutgers 36
Marshall 70, Kent State 62
Nebraska 101, Penn State 83
Quinnipiac 68, Cornell 47
St. Bonaventure 66, Le Moyne 57
UMass Lowell 60, New Haven 43
Yale 53, Rider 52

SOUTH

Bethune-Cookman 88, Livingstone 67
Coppin State 52, Sacred Heart 49
Hampton 65, Edward Waters 47
Jacksonville 68, Coastal Carolina 51
Jacksonville State 72, Mercer 62
Kennesaw State 81, Thomas (GA) 37
Murray State 74, Austin Peay 56
Norfolk State 63, North Carolina A&T 50
North Florida 76, UNC Asheville 61
Princeton 70, Belmont 58
Southern Indiana 56, East Tennessee State 41
UMBC 66, Morgan State 48
UNC Greensboro 70, USC Upstate 39
Wofford 70, Charleston Southern 42

MIDWEST

Cleveland State 72, Oakland 55
Eastern Washington 67, South Dakota 63
Illinois 78, Indiana 57
Northern Colorado 71, Omaha 60
Northern Iowa 68, Toledo 52
Portland State 85, Kansas City 79, OT
Southern Illinois 76, SE Missouri State 71

SOUTHWEST

Abilene Christian 72, East Texas A&M 55
Arkansas State 78, Tennessee-Martin 66
Little Rock 57, Central Arkansas 48
North Texas 81, Texas Southern 52
Oklahoma State 133, Mississippi Valley State 46
Oral Roberts 68, Idaho State 58
Rice 75, UNLV 50
Stephen F. Austin 74, Texas State 66
TCU 95, UTEP 40

FAR WEST

Air Force 58, Utah Valley 50
Arizona State 67, San Francisco 44
BYU 87, Portland 53
Boise State 82, California Baptist 80
Cal State Fullerton 82, Hawai'i 80
Gonzaga 83, UC Davis 72
Idaho 84, Denver 54
McNeese 63, Nevada 42
Montana State 99, North Dakota 57
New Mexico State 58, Utah Tech 55
North Dakota State 79, Weber State 72
Pepperdine 65, Fresno State 45
Santa Clara 125, Simpson University 43
South Dakota St. 88, Northern Arizona 72
St. Thomas 81, Montana 65
UC Irvine 72, Cal State Northridge 46
UC Riverside 63, Cal Poly 46
UC San Diego 75, Long Beach State 45
UC Santa Barbara 67, Cal State Bakersfield 47

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Scores

Friday

Conference USA Championship: Kennesaw St. 19, Jacksonville St. 15
Sun Belt Championship: James Madison 31, Troy 14
American Athletic Conference Championship : Tulane 34, North Texas 21
Mountain West Championship: Boise St. 38, UNLV 21

Saturday

MAC Championship: W. Michigan 23, Miami (Ohio) 13
Big Ten Championship: Indiana 13, Ohio St. 10
SWAC Championship: Prairie View 23, Jackson St. 21
SEC Championship: Georgia 28, Alabama 7
Big 12 Championship: Texas Tech 34, BYU 7
ACC Championship: Duke 27, Virginia 20, OT

FCS playoffs

Second Round
Saturday

Illinois St. 29, N. Dakota St. 28
Villanova 14, Lehigh 7
Stephen F. Austin 41, Abilene Christian 34
Tarleton St. 31, North Dakota 13
South Dakota 47, Mercer 0
Montana 50, S. Dakota St. 29
Montana St. 21, Yale 13
UC Davis 47, Rhode Island 26

Quarterfinals

Illinois St. vs. UC Davis
Villanova vs. Tarleton St.
Montana St. vs. Stephen F. Austin
South Dakota vs. Montana

NCAA Division II playoffs

Quarterfinals
Saturday

Kutztown 51, Frostburg St. 29
Newberry 31, Albany St. (Ga.) 24
Ferris St. 52, Minnesota St. 29
Harding 34, Texas-Permian Basin 28

NCAA Division III playoffs

Third Round
Saturday

John Carroll 10, Mount Union 7, 2OT
Berry 31, Trinity (Texas) 23
North Central 35, Wis.-La Crosse 27
Bethel (Minn.) 35, Wis.-Platteville 24
Wheaton (Ill.) 49, DePauw 24
Wis.-River Falls 42, St. John's (Minn.) 14
Susquehanna 29, Eastern 0
Johns Hopkins 45, Salisbury 13

COLLEGE SOCCER

Men's Division I tournament

Quarterfinals
Friday, Dec. 5

Furman 1, Portland 0

Saturday, Dec. 6

Washington 3, Maryland 1
Saint Louis 3, Akron 2
NC State 3, Georgetown 2

Semifinals
Friday, Dec. 12
Cary, N.C.

Furman vs. Washington
Saint Louis vs. NC State

Women's Division I tournament

Semifinals
Kansas City, Mo.
Friday, Dec. 5

Florida St. 1, TCU 0
Stanford 1, Duke 0

Final
Monday, Dec. 8

Florida St. vs. Stanford

PRO FOOTBALL

NFL

American Conference
East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
New England	11	2	0	.846	351	241
Buffalo	8	4	0	.667	337	259
Miami	5	7	0	.417	247	286
N.Y. Jets	3	9	0	.250	246	315

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Jacksonville	8	4	0	.667	292	253
Indianapolis	8	4	0	.667	357	249
Houston	7	5	0	.583	263	198
Tennessee	1	11	0	.083	170	328

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Baltimore	6	6	0	.500	289	293
Pittsburgh	6	6	0	.500	281	289
Cincinnati	4	8	0	.333	280	374
Cleveland	3	9	0	.250	194	270

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Denver	10	2	0	.833	284	218
L.A. Chargers	8	4	0	.667	277	252
Kansas City	6	6	0	.500	305	232
Las Vegas	2	10	0	.167	179	308

National Conference
East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Philadelphia	8	4	0	.667	270	249
Dallas	6	6	1	.500	381	386
Washington	3	9	0	.250	262	323
N.Y. Giants	2	11	0	.154	279	367

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Tampa Bay	7	5	0	.583	279	301
Carolina	7	6	0	.538	247	297
Atlanta	4	8	0	.333	243	276
New Orleans	2	10	0	.167	182	295

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Chicago	9	3	0	.750	313	307
Green Bay	8	3	1	.708	294	226
Detroit	8	5	0	.615	394	304
Minnesota	4	8	0	.333	224	281

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
L.A. Rams	9	3	0	.750	334	210
Seattle	9	3	0	.750	350	217
San Francisco	9	4	0	.692	307	269
Arizona	3	9	0	.250	265	303

Thursday's game

Detroit 44, Dallas 30

Sunday's games

Cincinnati at Buffalo
Indianapolis at Jacksonville
Miami at N.Y. Jets
New Orleans at Tampa Bay
Pittsburgh at Baltimore
Seattle at Atlanta
Tennessee at Cleveland
Washington at Minnesota
Denver at Las Vegas
Chicago at Green Bay
L.A. Rams at Arizona
Houston at Kansas City

Monday's game

Philadelphia at L.A. Chargers
Open: New England, Carolina, N.Y. Giants, San Francisco

Thursday, Dec. 11

Atlanta at Tampa Bay

Sunday, Dec. 14

Arizona at Houston
Baltimore at Cincinnati
Buffalo at New England
Cleveland at Chicago
L.A. Chargers at Kansas City
Las Vegas at Philadelphia
N.Y. Jets at Jacksonville
Washington at N.Y. Giants
Carolina at New Orleans
Detroit at L.A. Rams
Green Bay at Denver
Indianapolis at Seattle
Tennessee at San Francisco
Minnesota at Dallas

Monday, Dec. 15

Miami at Pittsburgh

Thursday, Dec. 18

L.A. Rams at Seattle

Saturday, Dec. 20

Philadelphia at Washington
Green Bay at Chicago

Sunday, Dec. 21

Buffalo at Cleveland
Kansas City at Tennessee
L.A. Chargers at Dallas
Minnesota at N.Y. Giants
New England at Baltimore
N.Y. Jets at New Orleans
Tampa Bay at Carolina
Atlanta at Arizona
Jacksonville at Denver
Las Vegas at Houston
Pittsburgh at Detroit
Cincinnati at Miami

Verstappen wins race, but Norris wins title

Associated Press

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates — McLaren driver Lando Norris clinched his first Formula 1 title at the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on Sunday.

Red Bull driver and defending champion Max Verstappen won the race with Norris placing third behind his McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri in second, which allowed Norris to finish two points ahead of Verstappen in the season-long standings.

Piastri was also in contention for his first F1 title and finished third in the standings, 13 points behind Norris.

The 26-year-old Norris became the first British champion since Lewis Hamilton in 2020, and he also denied Verstappen a fifth straight title.

Norris entered the three-way battle 12 points ahead of Verstappen and 16 ahead of Piastri.

Verstappen started from pole position for Red Bull with Norris on the front row beside him and Piastri third on the grid. Verstappen needed Norris to be fourth or lower and Norris had to finish outside the top five if Piastri won.

Verstappen's astounding late-season charge came close to unseating both McLaren drivers after they had shared the lead throughout the season and then were undone by driver and team-strategy errors.

But even Verstappen's season-leading eighth win and 71st of his career could not stop Norris, who kept his composure Sunday having been under severe pressure in recent weeks.

The McLaren motorhome erupted with joy and CEO Zak Brown congratulated Norris on the team radio in his usual jovial manner.

"Lando, this is Zak from McLaren. Is this the world champion hotline? You did it! You did it! Awesome," Brown said.

Norris didn't know whether to laugh or cry. He did both.

"Oh my God, thanks so much. I love you guys. Thanks for everything," Norris said and then broke down in tears.

After crossing the line, Norris stayed in in his car for a few moments, visibly emotional. His parents were on the side of the track and he went over to hug them before celebrating with his McLaren engineers and mechanics.

DEALS

Saturday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Claimed OF Will Robertson off waivers from the Pittsburgh Pirates. Claimed C Drew Romo off waivers from the Colorado Rockies. Designated 1B/OF Ryan Noda for assignment.
SEATTLE MARINERS — Acquired LHP Jose Ferrer from the Washington Nationals in exchange for C Harry Ford and RHP Isaac Lyon.
TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Sent RHP Yariel Rodríguez outright to Buffalo (IL).

FOOTBALL
National Football League

ARIZONA CARDINALS — Signed LB Channing Tindall to the active roster. Placed WR Greg Dortch on injured reserve.
ATLANTA FALCONS — Signed WR Deven Thompkins. Placed S DeMarcco Hellams on injured reserve.
CHICAGO BEARS — Signed OL Jordan McFadden to the active roster. Waived LB Carl Jones Jr.
DENVER BRONCOS — Signed TE Marcedes Lewis to the active roster. Waived LB Garret Wallow.
GREEN BAY PACKERS — Activated WR Jayden Reed from injured reserve. Claimed DL Quinton Bohanna off waivers from the Seattle Seahawks. Released WR Malik Heath.
HOUSTON TEXANS — Signed DB Jalen Mills to the active roster.
INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Activated LB Jaylon Carlies from injured reserve.
JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Activated S Eric Murray from injured reserve. Waived RB Cody Schrader.
KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Signed S Mike Edwards to the active roster. Placed S Christian Roland-Wallace on injured reserve.
LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Activated RB Omarion Hampton from injured reserve.
MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Signed QB John Wolford to the active roster.
NEW YORK JETS — Signed CB Jordan Clark and QB Brady Cook to the active roster. Placed CB Jarvis Brownlee Jr. and LB Marcelino McCrary-Ball on injured reserve.
SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Activated NT Jarran Reed and S Julian Love from injured reserve.
WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — Activated WR Noah Brown from injured reserve. Released WR Chris Moore.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

CAROLINA HURRICANES — Activated C/F Jesperi Kotkaniemi from injured reserve.
COLORADO AVALANCHE — Assigned F/C Tristen Nielsen to Colorado (AHL). Placed F Gavin Brindley on injured reserve.
DALLAS STARS — Placed C/F Tyler Seguin and D Lian Bichsel on long-term injured reserve.
NEW YORK RANGERS — Activated G Jonathan Quick from injured reserve. Assigned G Spencer Martin to Hartford (AHL). Waived D Brandon Scanlin. Assigned F Brennan Othmann to Hartford. Recalled F Jaroslav Chmelar from Hartford.
OTTAWA SENATORS — Recalled F Hayden Hodgson from Belleville (AHL). Placed C Shane Pinto on injured reserve.
PHILADELPHIA FLYERS — Recalled D Ty Murchison from Lehigh Valley (AHL).
TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Activated D Victor Hedman from long-term injured reserve.
TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Recalled G Artur Akhtyamov from Toronto (AHL). Placed G Joseph Woll on injured reserve.

NHL

ROUNDUP

MacKinnon's OT goal lifts Avalanche

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Nathan MacKinnon scored 2:46 into overtime for his second goal of the game, helping the Colorado Avalanche top Artemi Panarin and the New York Rangers 3-2 on Saturday.

MacKinnon finished Colorado's third win in four games when he beat Igor Shesterkin for his NHL-best 24th goal. He also batted the puck past Shesterkin at 15:26 of the third, lifting the Avalanche to a 2-1 lead.

MacKinnon has 10 goals and five assists in his last nine games.

Parker Kelly also scored for Colorado, and Martin Necas had three assists. The NHL-leading Avalanche bounced back nicely after losing 6-3 at the New York Islanders on Thursday night.

Panarin and Conor Sheary scored for New York, which had won five of six. Shesterkin made 39 saves.

Panthers 7, Blue Jackets 6 (OT): Sam Bennett scored 4:56 into overtime, lifting Florida to a wild home victory over Columbus.

Bennett and Brad Marchand each had a goal and three assists for Florida, which trailed 4-1 midway through the second period. Carter Verhaeghe had two goals and an assist, and defenseman Seth Jones had a goal and an assist.

A streaking Bennett got a slick pass from Marchand and beat Elvis Merzlikins on the goaltender's stick side. It was Bennett's seventh goal of the season.

Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 25 shots for Florida, and Merzlikins finished with 33 saves.

Voronkov, Marchenko and Wood scored in the second to help Columbus open a 4-1 lead. It was No. 10 on the season for Voronkov and Marchenko.

Bruins 4, Devils 1: Morgan Geekie scored his 22nd goal, Jeremy Swayman made 29 saves and host Boston beat New Jersey, sending the Devils to their season-high fifth straight loss.

Elias Lindholm set up Geekie's score early in the second period. Geekie has the second-most goals in the league, trailing Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon by two.

The Bruins were without star winger David Pastrnak, who was sidelined for the fifth straight game with an undisclosed injury.

Timo Meier scored for New Jersey and Jake Allen stopped 17 shots.

Islanders 2, Lightning 0: Ilya Sorokin stopped all 32 shots he faced for his third shutout of the season, tying the Islanders' franchise record for career shutouts, and host New York beat Tampa Bay.

Sorokin recorded his 25th career shutout to tie Glenn "Chico" Resch for most in Islanders history.



ADAM HUNGER/AP

Avalanche center Nathan MacKinnon had two goals Saturday against the Rangers in New York. He has 10 goals in his past nine games.

Calum Ritchie scored in the third period and Casey Cizikas added an empty net goal with 2 seconds left.

Jonas Johansson finished with 17 saves for Tampa Bay, which lost its third consecutive game. The Lightning also lost to the Islanders in New York on Tuesday.

Hurricanes 6, Predators 3: Jackson Blake had two goals and an assist to help host Carolina beat Nashville.

Nikolaj Ehlers added a goal and two assists, and Taylor Hall, William Carrier and Sebastian Aho also scored as Carolina matched its season high for goals. The first two goals came on power plays, giving the Hurricanes multiple power-play goals for the first time this season.

Michael Bunting, Matthew Wood and Filip Forsberg scored for the Predators, who were thwarted in securing their first three-game winning streak of the season. Juuse Saros made 32 saves, but he was pulled after allowing the sixth goal at 8:12 of the third. Justus Annunen made three saves the rest of the way. Nashville lost for the second time in its last six games.

Flames 2, Mammoth 0: Dustin Wolf stopped 28 shots for his fifth career shutout and host Calgary beat Utah.

Yegor Sharangovich and Connor Zary scored for Calgary in its sixth win in nine games (6-2-1).

Vitek Vanecek had 21 saves while taking his sixth straight loss (0-5-1). Utah, which came in with two straight wins, finished 2-4-0 on a six-game road trip. The Mammoth were also shut out in St. Louis on Nov. 29.

Canadiens 2, Maple Leafs 1 (SO): Cole Caufield scored in regulation and a shootout, Alexandre Texier had the winner in the tiebreaker and visiting Montreal beat Toronto.

Jakub Dobes made 22 saves to help Montreal improve to 15-9-3.

Scott Laughton scored for Toronto, and Dennis Hildeby stopped 33 shots. The Maple Leafs dropped to 13-11-4. They had won three in a row.

Kings 6, Blackhawks 0: Brandt Clarke scored twice to help Los Angeles break out of an offensive funk, Darcy Kuemper made 23 saves and host Los Angeles beat Chicago to split a two-game set.

Warren Foegele, Andrei Kuzmenko, Mikey Anderson and Alex Turcotte also scored after the Kings had been held to two goals or fewer in seven of their past nine games. The six goals are their most in regulation this season and they won by more than one goal for the first time since a 5-1 victory at Montreal on Nov. 11.

Spencer Knight made 26 saves for the Blackhawks. Chicago forward Teuvo Teravainen did not play after he was struck in the face by a puck in the final minute of a 2-1 victory over the Kings on Thursday night.

Blues 2, Senators 1: Joel Hofer made 41 saves, Jake Neighbours scored twice and visiting St. Louis beat Ottawa.

Fabian Zetterlund scored, and Linus Ullmark made 18 saves for Ottawa. The Senators have lost four of five games.

Oilers 6, Jets 2: Leon Draisaitl and Evan Bouchard each had a goal and an assist and host Edmonton raced past Winnipeg.

The Oilers scored four times in the first period to chase goalie Eric Comrie.

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Matthew Savoie, Curtis Lazar and David Tomasek also scored for the Oilers. Connor McDavid had two assists, and Stuart Skinner made 19 saves. Edmonton has won three of four to improve to 13-11-5.

Gabriel Vilardi and Cole Koepke scored the Winnpeg. They have lost seven of nine to fall to 14-13-1.

Canucks 4, Wild 2: Aatu Raty had two goals and an assist, and host Vancouver beat Minnesota to snap a four-game skid.

Tom Willander and defenseman Elias Pettersson also scored for the Canucks, and Nikita Tolopilo stopped 27 shots.

Matt Boldy and Mats Zuccarello scored for the Wild. Jesper Wallstedt stopped 16 shots while losing in regulation for the first time in 11 starts (8-1-2) this season.

Red Wings 4, Kraken 3: Patrick Kane scored the tiebreaking goal with 2:29 remaining in the third period and visiting Detroit beat Seattle.

Kane, now three goals shy of 500 for his career, helped the Red Wings extend their point streak to four games (2-0-2). Alex DeBrincat found Kane in the slot for his second consecutive game with a goal.

Brandon Montour, Adam Larsson, and Chandler Stephenson scored for the Kraken, who have lost five straight (0-4-1). Joey Daccord stopped 21 shots.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Tampa Bay	28	16	10	2	34	88	73
Boston	30	17	13	0	34	96	94
Montreal	27	15	9	3	33	89	95
Detroit	29	15	11	3	33	91	102
Toronto	28	13	11	4	30	95	93
Ottawa	28	13	11	4	30	87	92
Florida	27	13	12	2	28	84	89
Buffalo	28	11	13	4	26	84	96

Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	29	17	9	3	37	101	75
Carolina	27	17	8	2	36	93	78
N.Y. Islanders	29	16	10	3	35	86	81
Pittsburgh	26	14	7	5	33	83	74
Philadelphia	26	15	8	3	33	79	74
New Jersey	29	16	12	1	33	84	89
N.Y. Rangers	30	15	12	3	33	81	78
Columbus	28	13	9	6	32	90	97

Western Conference

Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Colorado	28	20	2	6	46	112	64
Dallas	29	19	5	5	43	102	75
Minnesota	29	15	9	5	35	81	80
Utah	30	14	13	3	31	91	86
Chicago	28	12	10	6	30	85	84
Winnipeg	28	14	13	1	29	85	85
St. Louis	29	10	12	7	27	73	101
Nashville	28	10	14	4	24	74	100

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Anaheim	28	17	10	1	35	100	94
Vegas	27	13	6	8	34	83	79
Los Angeles	28	13	8	7	33	76	75
Edmonton	29	13	11	5	31	96	102
San Jose	29	13	13	3	29	82	98
Seattle	26	11	9	6	28	66	79
Calgary	30	11	15	4	26	72	88
Vancouver	29	11	15	3	25	85	104

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.

Friday's games

Vegas 3, New Jersey 0
Winnipeg 4, Buffalo 1
Dallas 4, San Jose 1
Utah 4, Vancouver 1
Anaheim 4, Washington 3, SO

Saturday's games

Colorado 3, N.Y. Rangers 2, OT
Florida 7, Columbus 6, OT
N.Y. Islanders 2, Tampa Bay 0
Boston 4, New Jersey 1
Calgary 2, Utah 0
Carolina 6, Nashville 3
St. Louis 2, Ottawa 1
Montreal 2, Toronto 1, SO
Los Angeles 6, Chicago 0
Edmonton 6, Winnipeg 2
Detroit 4, Seattle 3
Vancouver 4, Minnesota 2

Sunday's games

Colorado at Philadelphia
N.Y. Islanders at Florida
San Jose at Carolina
Pittsburgh at Dallas
Columbus at Washington
St. Louis at Montreal
Vegas at N.Y. Rangers
Chicago at Anaheim

Monday's games

Tampa Bay at Toronto
Buffalo at Calgary
Los Angeles at Utah
Detroit at Vancouver
Minnesota at Seattle

Tuesday's games

Anaheim at Pittsburgh
New Jersey at Ottawa
San Jose at Philadelphia
Tampa Bay at Montreal
Vegas at N.Y. Islanders
Columbus at Carolina
Boston at St. Louis
Dallas at Winnipeg
Buffalo at Edmonton
Colorado at Nashville

Scoring leaders

Through Sunday

	GP	G	A	PTS
Nathan MacKinnon, COL	28	24	24	48
Connor McDavid, EDM	29	14	28	42
Macklin Celebrini, SJ	29	14	26	40
Connor Bedard, CHI	28	18	21	39
Mikko Rantanen, DAL	28	13	25	38
Martin Necas, COL	28	14	24	38
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	29	17	20	37
Jason Robertson, DAL	29	18	19	37

COLLEGE BASKETBALL/MMA

TOP 25 ROUNDUP

No. 10 Iowa State blows out No. 1 Purdue

Associated Press

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Milan Momcilovic scored 20 points and Iowa State sank 11 3-pointers to propel the No. 10 Cyclones to a dominant 81-58 win over No. 1 Purdue on Saturday.

Momcilovic, Killyan Toure and Joshua Jefferson all hit three 3-pointers. Toure scored 13, Blake Buchanan 12, and Jefferson 11 for Iowa State (9-0). The Cyclones shot 59% in the second half.

The 23-point margin tied the record for the largest home loss by a No. 1 team, the NCAA said, matching No. 15 Villanova's 96-73 win over No. 1 UConn on Feb. 18, 1995. It also tied for the eighth-largest loss overall by a No. 1.

"We played our absolute best," Iowa State coach T.J. Otzelberger said. "When you play an elite competitor and tremendous program and have the respect we have for the program, you know it's going to take your best and we were fortunate enough to do that. We made enough shots and made enough plays."

Leading 35-31 at halftime, the Cyclones used an 11-0 run to take a 48-33 lead with 17:17 left. Tamin Lipsey, Momcilovic and Toure sank three consecutive 3-pointers to finish the spurt.

"It was an avalanche," Purdue coach Matt Painter said. "We had way too many turnovers in the second half and more than anything I feel they just stole our spirit. You have to give Iowa State credit they were the reason for our frustration level. They took us to the woodshed."

No. 3 Michigan 101, Rutgers 60: Morez Johnson Jr. scored 22 points on 9-of-11 shooting, and the host Wolverines won their fifth consecutive game by 25 or more points, beating the Scarlet Knights.



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Iowa State forward Milan Momcilovic shoots over Purdue guard C.J. Cox (0) during the second half in West Lafayette, Ind., on Saturday. Momcilovic had 20 points in the Cyclones' 81-58 win over the Boilermakers.

Michigan scored more than 100 points for the third consecutive game, a feat last accomplished during its 1989 national championship season.

Yaxel Lendenborg had 14 points and eight rebounds for the Wolverines (8-0, 1-0) in their Big Ten opener. Trey McKenney added 13 points, and Elliot Cadeau had 11 points and nine assists.

No. 4 Duke 66, No. 7 Michigan St. 60: Cameron Boozer scored 18 points, including 16 in the second half, and Caleb Foster added 12 points to help the visiting Blue Devils hold on for a victory over the Spartans in a game that had the intensity of an NCAA Regional Final.

Boozer, who entered averaging nearly 27 points a game, also had 15 rebounds for Duke (10-0). The Blue Devils' start is their best open to a season since winning the first 11 games in 2017-18.

A combination of missed open shots and tight defense kept the game close. The teams traded the lead nine times and were tied four times in the second half.

No. 6 Louisville 87, No. 22 Indiana 78: Ryan Conwell had 21 points and the visiting Cardinals turned a fast start into a victory over the Hoosiers.

Conwell made a triumphant return to his hometown, where he starred at Pike High School. The senior point guard made three 3-pointers and went 10 for 11 at the free-throw line. The Xavier transfer is averaging a team-high 19.5 points per game.

Louisville (8-1) made three 3-pointers while scoring the first 16 points. Indiana (7-2) missed eight shots and committed four turnovers before scoring its first basket on a Sam Alexis dunk with 13:28 left in the first half.

No. 8 Houston 82, Florida State 67: Emanuel Sharp scored 27 points, Kingston Flemings added 21 and the host Cougars beat the Seminoles.

Flemings and Sharp each scored 13 points in the first half and were a combined 10 of 15 from the floor as Houston (8-1) held a 41-33 halftime lead.

No. 14 Illinois 75, No. 13 Tennessee 62: Tomislav Ivisic and Keaton Wagler each scored 16 points and the visiting Fighting Illini beat the Volunteers in the second part of the Music City Madness.

Illinois (7-2) came in rested after an eight-day break with this its last of four Top 15 opponents over a seven-game stretch. The Illini snapped a five-game skid on neutral courts against ranked opponents and also gave coach Brad Underwood his first win in three tries against Tennessee.

No. 23 St. John's 63, Mississippi 58: Zuby Ejiofor had a career-high eight blocks along with 15 points and nine rebounds, anchoring a strong defensive performance that carried the host Red Storm past the Rebels at Madison Square Garden.

Ejiofor scored all but two of his points in the second half, and St. John's (5-3) held on after leading by 14 with eight minutes remaining. He blocked six shots in the first half to go with three steals.

Washington 84, No. 24 Southern Cal 76: Hannes Steinbach had 24 points and tied his career high with 16 rebounds, and the visiting Huskies rallied from an 18-point, first-half deficit to beat the Trojans, snapping an 11-game skid to Southern California with their first win in Los Angeles since 2017.

Desmond Claude added 22 points and Wesley Yates III had 16 for Washington (6-3, 1-1 Big Ten).

No. 25 Arkansas 82, Fresno State 58: Darius Acuff Jr. scored 18 points to lead the host Razorbacks to a win over the Bulldogs at Simmons Bank Arena.

Arkansas (7-2) blew open the game with a 22-6 run to open the second half and led by as many as 32 points. It outscored Fresno State 26-11 in transition and went 11 for 30 (36.7%) from 3-point range compared to Fresno State's 4 for 26 (15.4%).

Yan dominates Dvalishvili, wins bantamweight title at UFC 323

BY W.G. RAMIREZ
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Petr Yan stunned Merab Dvalishvili with a dominating effort to capture the bantamweight championship by unanimous decision at UFC 323 on Saturday night.

With punishing strikes and several crushing kicks to the rib cage, Yan (20-5) ended Dvalishvili's 14-match winning streak.

"I'm very happy to stand here with the championship belt, thank you to all the fans," Yan said, through an interpreter. "I worked so hard, I prepared so hard for this moment."

Dvalishvili (21-5) hadn't lost since April 21, 2018, when Ricky Simon won by submission. It was his fourth title match of 2025.

Yan exacted revenge for his last loss when Dvalishvili defeated the 32-year-old by unanimous decision on a UFC Fight Night card March 11, 2023.

Dvalishvili, 34, closed a -425 favorite, which meant a bettor laid $425 to $100 at BetMGM. Anyone wagering $100 on Yan would have won $320.

"I lost today," Dvalishvili said. "Congratulations to him."

In the co-main event, challenger Joshua Van won the flyweight belt from former champion Alexandre Pantoja with a TKO just 26 seconds into the first round after a quirky finish.

In what appeared to be a freak accident, Pantoja (30-6) injured his left shoulder just after throwing a right roundkick to Van's head. But as Van (16-2) blocked the kick, Pantoja used his left arm to brace his fall, but his arm buckled, and he immediately grabbed it and waved to referee Herb Dean to stop the bout at 26 seconds.

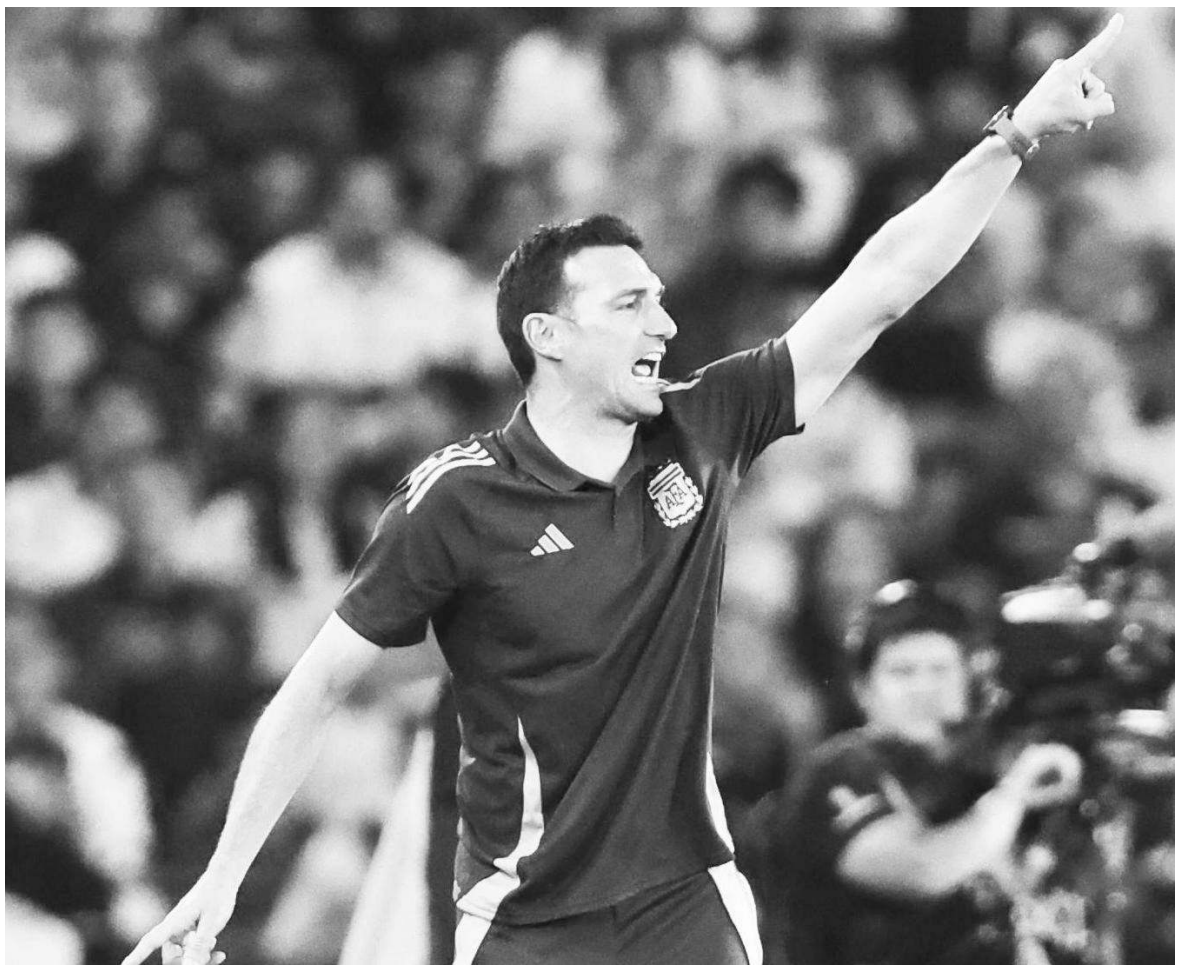


STEVE MARCUS/AP

Petr Yan, right, battles with bantamweight champion Merab Dvalishvili during a UFC 323 match Saturday in Las Vegas.

In a display of sportsmanship, Van immediately joined Pantoja on the canvas to check on him once the bout was called.

SOCCER



PATRICIO TERAN/AP

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni shouts from the sidelines during a World Cup 2026 qualifying match against Ecuador in Guayaquil, Ecuador, on Sept. 9. Argentina won the World Cup finals in 2022.

Each coach claims title of toughest World Cup group

BY HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — If you listened to the words spoken after the World Cup draw by the various coaches who were at the Kennedy Center on Friday, it would seem impossible for any of them to win next year's tournament.

Everyone got thrown into the toughest group — or the "Group of Death," in soccer parlance.

Everyone was burdened with talented foes for their first three matches — even if a half-dozen participants are yet to be determined and the expanded field means some lesser-quality teams will get in. And everyone needs to avoid overlooking any other team and be ready for whatever is to come during the tournament from June 11 to July 19 in the United States, Canada and Mexico during the largest World Cup yet, the first with 48 countries participating (there were 32 last time).

"We need to respect all of the opponents. It's always going to be difficult," said U.S. coach Mauricio Pochettino, whose squad is in Group D and starts off against Paraguay on June 12, then will face Australia and a still-undetermined playoff qualifier.

"My message to the players is: We need to compete better than Paraguay; that is going to be difficult. Australia is going to be difficult," Pochettino said. "And the team that is going to join us is going to be difficult."

Sense a theme?

There is some version of what is often referred to as "coach speak" under nearly every circumstance and in nearly every sport. Just pay attention to what the men in charge of NFL clubs say day after day during that sport's season.

It's the classic playbook: Build up opponents. Don't let your players get complacent. Don't let your fans — or the people who hired you and can fire you — think success is guaranteed.

Didier Deschamps, a player on France's championship team in 1998 and the coach of its title winners in 2018 and runners-up to Argentina in 2022, sounded as worried as anyone else.

It doesn't matter that the French are considered one of the favorites — not merely to get out of the round-robin stage but also to appear in the final again.

"We know this is a very tough group," Deschamps said Friday. "We cannot rest."

His country was dropped into Group I alongside Senegal, Norway and a playoff team (those won't all be set until March).

A little later, Norway's coach, Ståle Solbakken, for his part, praised the French team as "maybe the strongest in Europe," and in the next breath — as though perhaps worried someone from another nation might take offense — pointed out: "But there's two other teams in the group."

One of which won't even be known for another three months.

Luis de la Fuente, who led Spain to the 2024 European Championship, finds his team among the World Cup favorites but insisted there is parity in the sport these days.

Spain's Group H includes Uruguay, Saudi Arabia and Cape Verde.

"People think there are easy groups, but it is a very similar level," the coach said. "This will be a historic World Cup, because there's an exceptional level all-round. These games force you to play at your best."

Players can be just as liable to these sorts of pronouncements.

U.S. midfielder Tyler Adams, speaking to reporters on a video call Friday, said it plainly: "There's no easy game in the World Cup."

And then he pointed out that during the last World Cup, when the Americans were eliminated in the round of 16, their two hardest games came "against two of the lesser opponents."

Inter Miami captures 1st MLS title as Messi outmaneuvers Muller

BY ALANIS THAMES
Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Thomas Müller has often enjoyed the upper hand in his longtime rivalry with Lionel Messi.

The German star has come out on top in seven of 10 head-to-head matchups between the two, and his teams have twice eliminated Messi and Argentina in the World Cup.

But on Saturday, in the latest marquee showdown between the two stars, it was Messi's turn.

The Argentine super star capped his third Major League Soccer season with the 47th trophy of his career, guiding Inter Miami to a 3-1 win over Müller's Vancouver Whitecaps in the MLS Cup final.

"Three years ago, I decided to come to MLS, and today we are MLS champions," Messi said in a quote distributed by MLS. "We reached the semifinals of the (CONCACAF) Champions Cup. Last year we went out early in the league and were eliminated in the first round. This year, winning MLS was one of our main objectives."

Messi set up the go-ahead goal — a feed to Rodrigo De Paul in the 72nd minute — then added another assist in stoppage time to deliver Inter Miami its first championship in franchise history.

"The team made a huge effort — it was a very long year, with many matches — and we were up to the task all season," Messi said. "This is the moment I had been waiting for, and that we, as a team, were waiting for. It's very beautiful for all of us. They deserved it."

Both Messi and Müller had already secured their soccer legacies long before Saturday's match. Each is a World Cup and Champions League winner. And both are Club World Cup winners.

They arrived in MLS with a similar goals: to add a league title to their already overflowing resumes. And even with little left to prove in their careers, it was evident how much the chance to lift the MLS Cup mattered to both veterans.

Müller, who led Germany past Messi and Argentina in the 2014 World Cup final and 2010 World Cup quarterfinal, slammed his hand against the turf in frustration at one point in the match, when Vancouver trailed 1-0 after an early own goal before tying it in the 60th.

During the ensuing trophy ceremony, Müller smiled, clapped and gave a thumbs up as Messi was crowned the match's most valuable player.

"I told (the team) we've never been dreamers. I think Thomas said it when he came in. We're hard workers. We worked hard today. We had the game at 1-1 where we wanted it. ... Then we made a mistake and the ball dropped for Messi. And he played a very, very good pass for Rodrigo," said Vancouver coach Jesper Sørensen.

For Messi, the match ended with his teammates jumping into his arms.

Jordi Alba, who is retiring along with Sergio Busquets, burst into tears and fell to the ground, as the reality of going out as a champion began to sink in.



LYNNE SLADKY/AP

Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi moves the ball as Vancouver Whitecaps forward Thomas Müller defends during the first half of the MLS Cup final Saturday in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

NBA/COLLEGE FOOTBALL

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	15	7	.682	—
Toronto	15	9	.625	1
Boston	14	9	.609	1½
Philadelphia	13	9	.591	2
Brooklyn	6	17	.261	9½

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	14	9	.609	—
Miami	14	10	.583	½
Atlanta	14	11	.560	1
Charlotte	7	16	.304	7
Washington	3	19	.136	10½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	19	5	.792	—
Cleveland	14	11	.560	5½
Chicago	9	13	.409	9
Milwaukee	10	15	.400	9½
Indiana	5	18	.217	13½

Western Conference

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	15	6	.714	—
San Antonio	15	7	.682	½
Memphis	10	13	.435	6
Dallas	9	16	.360	8
New Orleans	3	21	.125	13½

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	22	1	.957	—
Denver	16	6	.727	5½
Minnesota	15	8	.652	7
Portland	9	14	.391	13
Utah	8	14	.364	13½

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	16	6	.727	—
Phoenix	13	10	.565	3½
Golden State	12	12	.500	5
Sacramento	6	17	.261	10½
L.A. Clippers	6	18	.250	11

Thursday's games

Boston 146, Washington 101
Philadelphia 99, Golden State 98
L.A. Lakers 123, Toronto 120
Utah 123, Brooklyn 110
Minnesota 125, New Orleans 116

Friday's games

Boston 126, L.A. Lakers 105
Orlando 106, Miami 105
New York 146, Utah 112
Denver 134, Atlanta 133
Cleveland 130, San Antonio 117
Charlotte 111, Toronto 86
Memphis 107, L.A. Clippers 98
Detroit 122, Portland 116
Houston 117, Phoenix 98
Indiana 120, Chicago 105
Philadelphia 116, Milwaukee 101
Oklahoma City 132, Dallas 111

Saturday's games

Atlanta 131, Washington 116
Brooklyn 119, New Orleans 101
Detroit 124, Milwaukee 112
Sacramento 127, Miami 111
Minnesota 109, L.A. Clippers 106
Dallas 122, Houston 109

Sunday's games

Orlando at New York
Boston at Toronto
Denver at Charlotte
Portland at Memphis
Golden State at Chicago
L.A. Lakers at Philadelphia
Oklahoma City at Utah

Monday's games

Sacramento at Indiana
Phoenix at Minnesota
San Antonio at New Orleans

Tuesday's games

Miami at Orlando
New York at Toronto

Scoring leaders

Through Saturday

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Doncic, LAL	16	175	155	564	35.3
Gil.-Alex., OKC	23	248	207	754	32.8
Maxey, PHI	22	235	147	696	31.6
Mitchell, CLE	23	244	122	702	30.5
Reaves, LAL	19	169	164	557	29.3
Jokic, DEN	22	230	139	643	29.2
Brown, BOS	22	237	119	639	29.0
Edwards, MIN	19	178	113	533	28.1
Brunson, NY	20	196	111	558	27.9
Markkanen, UTA	22	203	136	608	27.6

NBA ROUNDUP

Johnson's triple-double leads Hawks

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Jalen Johnson had his second straight triple-double and fourth of the season, finishing with 30 points, 12 rebounds and 12 assists in the Atlanta Hawks' 131-116 victory over the Washington Wizards on Saturday night.

Onyeka Okongwu added 21 points for the Hawks. They snapped a three-game losing streak and avenged a 132-113 loss in Washington on Nov. 25.

Johnson is averaging 23.8 points, 10.5 rebounds and 7.8 assists, all significant improvements from a 2024-25 campaign that was easily his best.

"It's reflective of a guy that's done a lot of work that we need to make a lot of plays for us," Atlanta coach Quin Snyder said of Johnson. "The triple-doubles, like the statistics, are great. But he wants to win and there's more there. He can continue to become more efficient, because we need him to be that."

CJ McCollum scored 28 points for the last-place Wizards, who lost their third in a row and second straight at home following two consecutive home wins. He hit seven 3s as Washington stayed in the game on 17-of-28 shooting beyond the arc.

Nets 119, Pelicans 101: Michael Porter Jr. tied his season high with 35 points, Nic Claxton had his second triple-double and host Brooklyn beat New Orleans.

Porter matched his career best by reaching 30 for a third straight game, having also done it last Feb. 3-6 during his final season with Denver. He made five 3-pointers and had nine rebounds after sitting out Thursday to rest his back in the second night of a back-to-back.



NICK WASS/AP

Wizards forward Justin Champagnie fouls Atlanta Hawks forward Jalen Johnson during the second half Saturday in Washington.

Claxton finished with 14 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists. He's the first Nets player with multiple triple-doubles in a season since James Harden (nine) and Kevin Durant (four) in 2021-22, and the second Brooklyn center with multiple career triple-doubles. Shawn Bradley had five from 1995-97.

Warriors 99, Cavaliers 94: Pat Spencer scored a career-high 19 points in his first NBA start and visiting Golden State shook off an awful-shooting first quarter to defeat Cleveland.

It was the third consecutive game the third-year guard has scored at least 15. His three 3-pointers were a career high.

Gui Santos added 14 points, Buddy Hield scored 13 in his first start of the season and Quinton Post had 12. The short-handed Warriors have won three of four, despite missing Stephen Curry, Draymond Green, Jimmy Butler and Al Horford.

Pistons 124, Bucks 112: Cade Cunningham had 23 points and 12 assists and Detroit beat Milwaukee to end the Bucks' 15-game winning streak in Detroit.

Milwaukee came into the season with a 13-game winning streak against the Pistons, but Detroit has won two of three this season.

Jalen Duren had 16 points and 16 rebounds for the Pistons, who have won four of five to improve to 19-5. Isaiah Stewart added 19 points.

Kings 127, Heat 111: Zach LaVine had season highs of eight 3-pointers and 42 points, and visiting Sacramento got its first double-digit win of the season by topping Miami.

Keegan Murray scored 16, Nique Clifford had 15 and DeMar DeRozan finished with 13 for the Kings, who came into the game having lost four straight and 12 of their last 14.

Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored 27 for the Heat, who have dropped three straight for the first time this season. Simone Fontecchio scored 20 for Miami, which got 18 from Norman Powell and 13 from Andrew Wiggins.

Timberwolves 109, Clippers 106: Naz Reid made a go-ahead 3-pointer with 13 seconds remaining, Jaden McDaniels scored 27 points and host Minnesota beat Los Angeles.

Julius Randle added 24 points for the Timberwolves. Reid's big shot capped a 19-point night off the bench, including 5 of 8 from deep. McDaniels then made two free throws with 4.8 seconds left and Minnesota held on.

Mavericks 122, Rockets 109: Anthony Davis scored 29 points and host Dallas beat Houston to finish a back-to-back coming off a blowout loss at defending champion Oklahoma City.

Kevin Durant scored 20 of his 27 points in the first half but ended up not playing in the fourth quarter after the Mavericks outscored the Rockets 37-20 in the third and took a 21-point lead early in the fourth.

Style: Hoosiers likely have top playoff seed after win

FROM PAGE 24

back-to-back national championships for the first time will likely begin with the No. 2 seed and a first-round bye.

The Buckeyes had a chance to retake the lead on fourth-and-1 from the Hoosiers 5-yard line late in the third quarter. But a replay review overturned the call on the field, determining Julian Sayin came up short. They also had a chance to tie the score with 2:48 to play, but Jayden Fielding missed a 29-yard field goal wide left.

"There's going to be a lot of hard conversations over the next two weeks," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said. "It hurts, it stings."

The Buckeyes still haven't won a conference crown since 2020.

The two quarterbacks dueling for the Heisman Trophy essentially played to a draw.

Mendoza was injured on the first offensive play of the game, but returned after missing one play and went 15-for-23 for 222 yards and the one TD and one interception. Sayin had his ankle retaped in the second quarter and was 21-for-29 for 258 yards, one TD and one interception.

But when the big plays needed to be made, Mendoza made them.

Indiana took a 3-0 lead after Sayin was picked off in the first quarter, but Ohio State turned Mendoza's miscue into a 17-yard TD pass to Carnell Tate for a 7-3 lead late in the quarter.

The teams traded field goals in the second quarter as the Buckeyes took a 10-6 lead, but Mendoza neatly tucked a TD pass into Sarratt near the sideline on Indiana's first possession of the third quarter and that was all they needed.



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Indiana's D'Angelo Ponds stops Ohio State's Max Klare during the second half of the Big Ten title game in Indianapolis on Saturday.

"A year late," Hoosiers coach Curt Cignetti said. "I've three weeks to get these guys humble and hungry."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Duke beats Virginia in OT to win ACC title

By Steve Reed
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Duke has its first outright Atlantic Coast Conference football championship since 1962.

Now it wants a little more.

Blue Devils coach Manny Diaz wasted little time Saturday night advocating for his team to make the 12-team College Football Playoff after Duke beat No. 16 Virginia 27-20 in overtime on Saturday night.

"The ACC champion should go to the College Football Playoff this year and every year," Diaz said.

The Blue Devils threw the CFP selection process into chaos when Darian Mensah connected with Jeremiah Hasley for a 1-yard touchdown on a fourth-down play in overtime and Luke Mergott sealed the game with an interception.

But winning the first overtime game in ACC championship history isn't expected to be enough to get Duke and its 8-5 record into the CFP. The Blue Devils' victory opens the door for a second Group of Five team — likely James Madison — to make it.

Diaz doesn't get it.

He pointed out Duke's superior strength of schedule, with seven wins over power-conference teams — all ACC foes — while the Dukes lost to their only Power Four opponent, Louisville.

"You can't compare going through the Sun Belt this year — it has been a really good conference in years past — but most of their top teams are just having down years," Diaz said. "So they (James Madison) probably are not challenged they way the would going through a normal Sun Belt season."

The Blue Devils last won a share of the ACC regular-season title in 1989, alongside Virginia in Steve Spurrier's final season as Duke's coach. The conference championship game was created in 2005, and the Blue Devils got there this year by winning a five-way tiebreaker.



Jacob Kupferman/AP

Duke running back Nate Sheppard runs for a touchdown in the first half of the ACC championship game against Virginia on Saturday in Charlotte, N.C.

The Cavaliers (10-3), the ACC regular-season champion, would have reached the CFP for the first time in school history with a victory but fell short when Chandler Morris was intercepted by Mergott on Virginia's first offensive play of OT.

Coach Tony Elliott described his team as having "the heart of a champion."

"Obviously disappointed, and it hurts," Elliott said. "There is nothing I can say to them to take away the pain. But I also told the guys how proud I am of the team that was picked to finish 14th out of 17 teams and earned the right to be here. ... When you're trying to climb that mountain, the air is thin and the margin for error is very, very small."

Mensah threw for 196 yards and two scores — both to Hasley — while Nate Sheppard ran for 97 yards and a score for Duke.

Virginia trailed by 10 with 5:02 left in regulation, but got a field goal from Will Bettridge before Morris capped a 10-play, 96-yard drive with an 18-yard strike to Eli Wood in the left corner of the end zone with 22 seconds left to tie it at 20-all.

In the extra period, Sheppard got the Blue Devils to the Cavaliers 2 with three runs. Duke was stuffed on two straight plays before Mensah rolled out and found Hasley for the go-ahead score. Virginia was flagged for roughing passer on the throw, meaning it had to start its overtime possession at the 40 instead of the 25.

Elliott said that put his team in position to try to get a "chunk play."

It didn't work. Morris took a throwback pass from a running back, fired downfield and was picked off by Mergott, setting off a raucous Duke celebration.

"To bring a championship to this school, which is primarily known for basketball, is a statement that me and the seniors on this team have been trying to make," Mensah said.

Morris, who finished 21-for-40 for 216 yards with two TDs and two interceptions, was in tears after the game. J'Mari Taylor, the ACC's leading rusher, was limited to 65 yards on 15 carries and scored on an 11-yard reception.

The Blue Devils established control of the line of scrimmage early.

Duke controlled the clock in the first half, putting together the two longest drives in ACC championship game history — 9:38 and 8:02 — culminating with a 12-yard touchdown catch by Hasley and a 16-yard run by Sheppard to take a 14-7 lead into halftime.

Diaz, who ran a fake field goal that led to the Blue Devils' dramatic win over rival North Carolina, called a fake punt on Duke's go-ahead drive in the second quarter. It worked, with Kevin O'Connor taking the direct snap and running up the middle for 6 yards.

Penn State hires Campbell; Chesney heading to UCLA

Associated Press

Matt Campbell was hired as Penn State's coach Friday night, ending a two-month search by the Nittany Lions to find James Franklin's successor.

The 46-year-old Campbell heads to Happy Valley after going 72-55 in 10 seasons at Iowa State to become the winningest coach in the history of that program.

Terms of Campbell's contract were not released, pending approval by a committee of the school's Board of Trustees. That committee is scheduled to meet Monday, after which Campbell will be introduced.

"Coach Campbell is, without a doubt, the right leader at the right time for Penn State football," athletic director Pat Kraft said in a statement. "He is a stellar coach with a proven track record of success and his values, character and approach to leading student-athletes to success on and off the field align perfectly with the traditions and values of Penn State."

The Nittany Lions advanced to the College Football Playoff semifinals last season and began this season ranked No. 2 in the AP poll, but Franklin was fired Oct. 12 after they started 0-3 in Big Ten play.

Before Campbell's arrival at Iowa State in 2016, the Cyclones had a record of 489-622-45 with just three bowl wins in their 133-year history. His 10-year tenure in Ames included eight winning seasons, three bowl wins and the program's only 11-win campaign last year, when Iowa State reached the Big 12 championship game.



Campbell

Campbell spent five years as Toledo's coach before joining the Cyclones and is 107-70 overall. He signed a contract extension at Iowa State in August worth $5 million per year until 2032, with a buyout of $2 million.

An Ohio native, Campbell becomes Penn State's 17th full-time coach. He takes over a program that missed big during the early signing period that began Wednesday.

The Cyclones wasted no time finding a replacement for Campbell, hiring Washington State's Jimmy Rogers as its football coach Friday night.

Iowa State went 8-4 this season and awaits a bowl bid.

The Cyclones agreed to a six-year deal with Rogers, who led the Cougars to a 6-6 record in his lone season after a two-season run at South Dakota State that included an FCS championship.

"Jimmy Rogers is a rising star in college athletics who has very strong ties to the Midwest both as a player and as a coach," Iowa State athletic director Jamie Pollard said in a statement. "He has been on my short list ever since the first time I met him. He immediately impressed me with his interest in Iowa State University and told me during our first visit several years ago that he wanted to be the next head coach at Iowa State.

"Since our initial meeting, I have stayed in close contact with him and have been very impressed with his work ethic and understanding of what it takes to be successful at Iowa State," he added. "He is a proven winner who has demonstrated throughout his career that he will fit our culture."

Rogers is 33-9 in three years as a head coach. He is one of four Washington State coaches to lead the Cougars to a bowl game in their first season.

The Nittany Lions and Cyclones were not the only teams hiring new football coaches.

UCLA hired Bob Chesney from James Madison on Saturday, hoping he can turn around a program that has struggled for years, including in its first two seasons in the Big Ten.

Chesney takes over from interim coach Tim Skipper, who guided the Bruins (3-9, 3-6) after athletic director Martin Jarmond fired DeShaun Foster on Sept. 14. Foster went 5-10 after taking over the program from Chip Kelly in February 2024. Skipper was hired as coach at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo on Wednesday.

Chesney becomes the 20th head coach in UCLA football history and the first sitting coach to be hired since Pepper Rodgers in 1971.

Chesney led the No. 19 Dukes to a 12-1 record this season, with JMU making its case for a berth in the College Football Playoff after winning the Sun Belt Conference title game in his farewell Friday.

"Bob Chesney has built programs into consistent winners at every stop in his career, and he's ready to do it at UCLA," Jarmond said in a statement.

The Dukes have filled their vacancy by hiring former Florida coach Billy Napier to replace Chesney, who will coach JMU in the College Football Playoff.

Napier, who was 22-23 in four seasons with the Gators, was fired Oct. 19.

"We are humbled and honored to accept this incredible opportunity to be the head football coach at James Madison University," Napier said in a statement. "I've been blown away with the alignment & vision at JMU. There is dynamic leadership in this administration. Our team, staff and entire organization will work daily to promote a program with integrity and class that will be a source of pride for all of us."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Texas Tech cruises past BYU for first Big 12 title

By Stephen Hawkins
Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Once again, Jacob Rodriguez and Texas Tech were asked questions about all the money invested in their team this season.

The Red Raiders so far have gotten quite a return on those millions of dollars spent in the transfer portal. They have their first Big 12 Conference title and are going to the College Football Playoff for the first time, almost certainly with a first-round bye.

"If we are gonna buy a team, why not be the best," Rodriguez said after No. 5 Tech's 34-7 win over 11th-ranked BYU in the Big 12 championship game Saturday.

"Man, I can't wait to see where the CFP is going to put us," fourth-year Tech coach Joey McGuire said. "We're looking forward to the bye. You know, we're hoping and expecting that's where we'll be."

Rodriguez had 13 tackles and Ben Roberts overcame an early injury scare with two interceptions in the second half when Tech (12-1, No. 4 CFP) forced four turnovers while holding BYU to a season-low 200 total yards. The two linebackers have both played more than 40 games for a defense transformed by additions in the transfer portal.

Behren Morton, who made his 35th start but didn't play in Tech's only loss this year at Arizona State, threw two TDs to Coy Eakin and Stone Harrington kicked four field goals.

Texas Tech, one of only six schools that have been part of all 30 Big 12 seasons, likely prevented the league from getting a second team in the playoff.

The only losses by BYU (11-2, No. 11 CFP) are to the Red Raiders, including 29-7 in Lubbock four weeks ago. The Cougars, who likely needed to be in the top 10 for a playoff spot, won't move up when the final CFP rankings come out Sunday.

Roberts got his first interception with about 3½ minutes left in the third quarter when he reached up and deflected a pass by true freshman Bear Bachmeier. On the next play, Cameron Dickey took a direct snap and ran untouched 11 yards for a touchdown and 21-7 lead after a 2-point conversion.

Harrington, who kicked a school-record five field goals against BYU last month, missed a 49-yard field goal attempt after Roberts jumped a route to make a one-handed interception in the fourth quarter.

Midway through the first quarter on BYU's opening drive, Roberts was down on one knee at the end of a play. He came in and out of the game until halftime, then had a huge impact after that.

Roberts believes he tweaked his lower abdomen when fully extended on a tackle of Bachmeier a few plays earlier.

"I just did everything I could to stretch it out and fix it up," Roberts said. "The trainers really helped me at halftime. They got it all heated up and relaxed."

Roberts is the first player with multiple interceptions in one of the 24 Big 12 championship games. He almost had another one, but that deflection on a fourth-down play gave the ball back to the Red Raiders.

The Cougars avoided a slow start this time, going 90 yards in 14 plays on their opening drive for a 7-0 lead on LJ Martin's 10-yard TD run. But they had only 24 more yards before halftime, and 110 the rest of the game. They trailed 26-0 in Lubbock before their only touchdown midway through the fourth quarter.

Tech went ahead to stay on Eakin's incredible leaping 33-yard TD catch early in the second quarter that made it 10-7. He reached up with both hands to snag the ball, and got a foot down while twisting and lunging into the end zone. He had a 28-yard catch-and-run score in the fourth quarter after Romello Height's fumble recovery.



Julio Cortez/AP

Texas Tech linebacker Ben Roberts returns an interception in the 2nd half of the Big 12 championship game against BYU on Saturday.



Mike Stewart/AP

Georgia running back Nate Frazier celebrates his touchdown against Alabama during the second half on Saturday in Atlanta. Georgia defeated Alabama 28-7 to win the SEC championship.

No. 3 Georgia ends drought vs. Alabama, wins SEC title

By Charles Odum
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Gunner Stockton and Georgia finally put an end to Alabama's mastery of the rivalry between Southeastern Conference powers.

Stockton threw three touchdown passes as the third-ranked Bulldogs solidified their position for a first-round bye in the College Football Playoff and beat Alabama in the SEC championship game for the first time, pounding the 10th-ranked Crimson Tide 28-7 on Saturday.

Stockton, who completed 20 of 26 passes for 156 yards and rushed for 39 yards, was named the game's MVP. It was the first victory over Alabama for Georgia's fourth-year players, including Stockton.

"We approached it the same, like it was a big game, and didn't make it bigger than it was," Stockton said.

Georgia (12-1, No. 3 CFP) had been 0-4 against Alabama in the SEC title game and 1-7 against the Crimson Tide under coach Kirby Smart. Playing in their fifth straight league championship game, the Bulldogs earned their fourth title under Smart and 16th overall.

During a team meeting at the start of the week, Georgia players who had a win over Alabama were asked to stand up.

"None of them stood up," Smart said.

Now the Bulldogs can stand. They also can brag about winning back-to-back SEC championships.

"I thought it hit right between the eyes of doing it for the seniors," Smart said.

The lopsided loss forces Alabama (10-3, No. 9 CFP) to worry about its standing with the College Football Playoff selection committee. The Crimson Tide were believed to be in good position when they moved up one spot in last week's CFP ranking, but the loss to the Bulldogs provides renewed cause for concern that the Crimson Tide could miss the playoff for the second consecutive season under coach Kalen DeBoer.

"We fell short today, but I'm proud of our season," DeBoer said. "Getting to the SEC championship, getting to this great game, there's a lot to build off of."

Alabama will learn its playoff fate on Sunday.

"If this game applies to and takes away from our resume, I don't think that's right," DeBoer said. "I really don't."

Georgia led 21-0 before Alabama's Ty Simpson threw a 23-yard touchdown pass to Germie Bernard early in the fourth quarter.

Georgia will play a CFP quarterfinal game in the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans.

Thriving on second chances

Georgia teams coached by Smart improved to 4-0 in second-chance games. The Bulldogs beat Auburn in their second meeting in 2017, Alabama in their second game in the 2021 national championship game, Texas in the 2024 SEC championship game and the Crimson Tide this season.

Crucial block and interception

The Bulldogs turned two game-changing plays into first-half touchdowns.

Cole Speer's block of Blake Doud's punt in the first quarter allowed Georgia to start a drive at the Alabama 21. Nate Frazier ran for 14 yards on first down. On third down from the 1, Stockton faked a handoff, rolled right and passed to Roderick Robinson II for the touchdown.

Late in the first quarter, Daylon Everette's interception of Simpson's pass deflected by KJ Bolden gave the Bulldogs the ball near midfield. Stockton's 1-yard scoring pass to Dillon Bell gave Georgia a 14-0 lead.

A block by London Humphreys helped Nate Frazier score easily on a 9-yard run to cap Georgia's first possession of the second half, extending the lead to three touchdowns.

No repeat comeback

Alabama posted the biggest comeback in SEC championship game history when it beat Georgia 35-28 in 2018 after trailing by 14 points. It wasn't Alabama's only rally against Georgia. Before Saturday, the Bulldogs were 0-3 against Alabama under Smart when leading at halftime and 90-1 against all other teams before Saturday.

This time, Georgia wasn't giving up the lead.

After Simpson's fourth-and-2 pass from the Alabama 12 was incomplete with 8:17 remaining, Georgia put the game away on Stockton's 13-yard touchdown pass to Zachariah Branch.

SPORTS

Dominant upset
No. 10 Iowa State hands No. 1 Purdue its 1st loss ›› College basketball, Page 19



AJ MAST/AP

Indiana's Elijah Sarratt catches a touchdown pass with Ohio State's Jermaine Mathews Jr. defending during the second half of the Big Ten championship game in Indianapolis on Saturday.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Winning in style

No. 2 Indiana beats No. 1 Ohio St. to end Big Ten title drought

BY MICHAEL MAROT
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana quarterback Fernando Mendoza made all the big plays Saturday night.

Then his Hoosiers teammates and their fans celebrated like it was 1967.

Mendoza's neatly tucked 17-yard pass to Elijah Sarratt gave the No. 2 Hoosiers the lead they needed, and the defense shut down No. 1 Ohio State the rest of the way in a 13-10 win for their first Big Ten title in nearly half a century while likely locking up the No. 1 seed in the College Football Playoff.

"We were never supposed to be in this position, but now we're the flipping champs," Mendoza shouted on television before he was selected the game's MVP. "We are brothers, we know how to stick together and we're the toughest glue ever."

They did it in style — extending the best season in school history to 13-0, snapping a 30-game losing streak against the Buckeyes that stretched to 1988, ending major college football's longest winning streak at 16 and moving to the precipice of earning the first No. 1 ranking in school history.

Heck, Mendoza could become the first Heisman Trophy winner to play for Indiana, too.

And they sealed it with a remarkable 33-yard pass from Mendoza to Charlie Becker on third down, a play that took the clock down to the 2-minute timeout.

"The Hoosiers are real and we are here," Becker said after hauling in six passes for 126 yards.

Ohio State fell to 12-1 overall, though its quest to win

SEE STYLE ON PAGE 21

Avs top Rangers on MacKinnon's goal in OT ›› NHL, Page 18

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