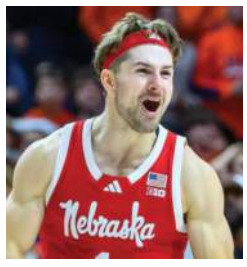
FACES
‘Him,’ Peter Criss, ‘Fallout’ new this week
Page 15



MILITARY
Japan deploys troops after fatal bear attacks surge
Page 3



COLLEGE BASKETBALL
Undefeated Nebraska is rolling, but conference challenges lie ahead
Page 24

Air Force’s long-term medical shaving waiver policy set to end » Page 4

STARS AND STRIPES®

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Volume 84 Edition 174 ©SS 2025 WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2025 平成12年4月5日 第三種郵便物認可 日刊（土日除く）
発行所 星条旗新聞社 〒106-0032 東京都港区六本木7丁目23番17号 定価￥50 50¢/Free to Deployed Areas

DOD will not release video of boat strike to the public

By Stephen Groves, Lisa Mascaro and Ben Finley
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Tuesday that the Pentagon will not publicly release unedited video of a strike that killed two survivors of an initial attack on a boat allegedly carrying cocaine in the Caribbean.

Hegseth said that members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees would have an opportunity this week to review the video, but did not say whether all members of Congress would be allowed to see it, even as a defense policy bill demands that it be released to Congress.



Rubio

“Of course we’re not going to release a top secret, full, unedited video of that to the general public,” Hegseth told reporters as he exited a closed-door briefing with senators.

President Donald Trump’s top Cabinet officials overseeing national security were on Capitol Hill on Tuesday to defend the swift escalation of U.S. military force and deadly boat strikes in international waters near Venezuela, but it left lawmakers questioning the broader goals of the campaign.

Hegseth, along with Secretary of State Marco Rubio and others, briefed the House and the Senate amid congressional investigations into the military strike in September that killed two survivors. Overall, they defended the cam-

SEE VIDEO ON PAGE 6



Jalen Miller/South Carolina National Guard

Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth visits with South Carolina Army National Guard soldiers at Union Station in Washington, D.C., in August.

Change in commands

Pentagon proposal calls for major power shifts within US military

By Dan Lamothe, Tara Copp, Noah Robertson and Alex Horton
The Washington Post

Senior Pentagon officials are preparing a plan to downgrade several of the U.S. military’s major headquarters and shift the balance of power among its top generals, in a major consolidation sought by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, people familiar with the matter said.

If adopted, the plan would usher in some of the most significant changes at the military’s highest ranks in decades, in part following through on Hegseth’s promise to break the status quo and slash the number of four-star generals in the military. It would reduce in prominence the headquarters of U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command by placing them under the control of a new organization known as U.S. International Command, according to five people familiar with the matter.

Joint Chiefs Chairman Air Force Gen. Dan Caine is expected to detail the proposal, which has not previously been reported, for Hegseth in the coming days. Such moves would complement other efforts by the administration to shift resources from the Middle East and Europe and focus foremost on expanding military operations in the Western Hemisphere, these people said. Like others interviewed for this report, they spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the effort before it is conveyed to the secretary.

Hegseth’s team said in a state-

SEE CHANGE ON PAGE 9

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Suit: UPS ripped off seasonal workers with unfair pay

Associated Press

NEW YORK — UPS stole tens of millions of dollars in pay from seasonal workers who help the shipping giant deliver packages during the busy holiday season, forcing some to clock in well after their shifts started and deducting pay for lunch breaks they never took, New York Attorney General Letitia James alleged in a lawsuit.

Filed in state court in Manhattan, the lawsuit accuses UPS of "repeatedly and persistently" failing to properly compensate driver helpers, who assist with deliveries, and seasonal support drivers, who use their own vehicles to make deliveries. James estimated that in the last six years, UPS has deprived tens of thousands of seasonal workers of wages totaling about $45 million.

The lawsuit seeks back pay and penalties, plus a court order requiring UPS to end off-the-clock work and change its timekeeping and payroll practices. The company delivered an average of 22.4 million packages a day and brought in $91.1 billion in revenue last year, according to its website.

"We oftentimes don't think of these workers when we're opening up our gifts for the holidays," James said. "And these individuals are struggling each and every day to make ends meet."

In a statement, Georgia-based UPS said it was aware of the lawsuit, "takes all accusations of wrongdoing seriously and denies the unfounded allegation of intentionally underpaying UPS employees."

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Dec. 17)	0.83
British pound (Dec. 17)	$1.31
Japanese yen (Dec. 17)	151.00
South Korean won (Dec. 17)	1,433.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3744
Britain (Pound)	1.3441
Canada (Dollar)	1.3736
China (Yuan)	7.0470
Denmark (Krone)	6.3311
Egypt (Pound)	47.4106
Euro	0.8475
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7793
Hungary (Forint)	326.35
Israel (Shekel)	3.2148
Japan (Yen)	154.63
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3060
Norway (Krone)	10.1513
Philippines (Peso)	58.44
Poland (Zloty)	3.57
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7464
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2871
South Korea (Won)	1,470.29
Switzerland (Franc)	0.7932
Thailand (Baht)	31.40
Turkey (NewLira)	42.7093

(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

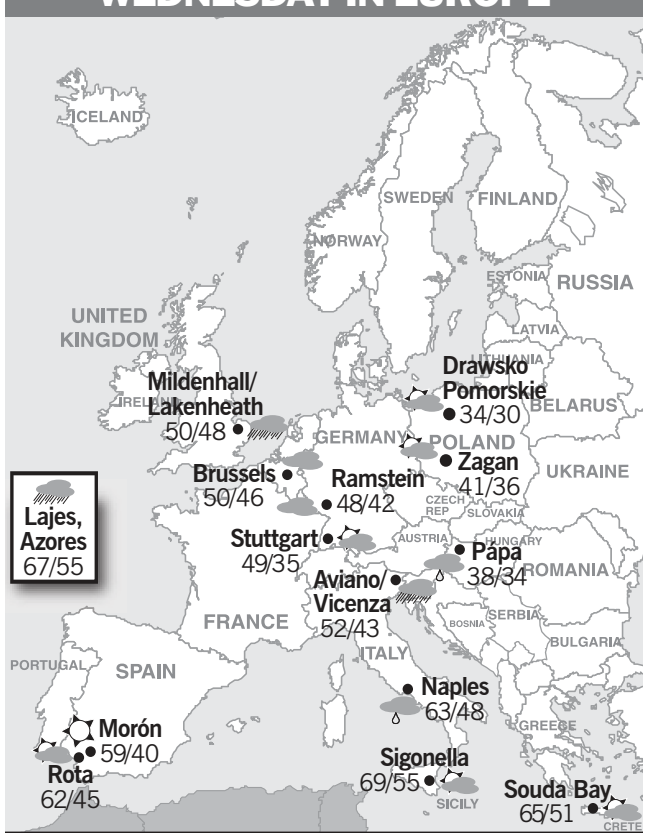
Prime rate	6.75
Interest Rates Discount rate	3.75
Federal funds market rate	3.62
3-month bill	3.64
30-year bond	4.85

WEATHER OUTLOOK

WEDNESDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



WEDNESDAY IN EUROPE



THURSDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is compiled from weather.com reports.

TODAY IN STRIPES

American Roundup 14
Classified 13
Comics 17
Crossword 17
Faces 15
Opinion 16
Sports 18-24

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MILITARY



SETH ROBSON/Stars and Stripes

A poster in Tokyo warns residents that the metropolitan area is also home to bears, and that sightings have increased dramatically across the country.

Japan deploys military to assist after surge in fatal bear attacks

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The Japan Ground Self-Defense Force was deployed last month to confront an unusual threat in northern Japan: Bears.

The rare mobilization followed a surge in bear encounters nationwide that has left 13 people dead and more than 200 injured across 22 prefectures this year, according to Japan's Ministry of Environment.

Akita prefecture, in the country's north, was hit hardest, recording at least 66 attacks and four deaths.

"One of the particular characteristics of this year is that these incidences, these injuries, are happening in urban areas and residential areas," Akita Gov. Kenta Suzuki told reporters Thursday at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan in Tokyo.

Suzuki said that while the number of deaths remains small compared with causes such as traffic accidents, the attacks have generated "very high levels of fear among the population" and caused significant economic disruption in his largely rural prefecture.

"As a result of this situation, on Oct. 28 of this year, we made an emergency request to the Ministry of Defense in order to have the Self-Defense Forces involved in supporting this situation," he said.

About 900 Japanese soldiers were deployed to Akita between Nov. 5 and Nov. 25. Their role was limited to logistical support, including transporting traps and removing bears that had already been killed by hunters and other local teams, Suzuki said.

Suzuki acknowledged that the Self-Defense Forces are primarily tasked with national defense but said the scale of the crisis left local authorities with few alternatives.

"I believe that it was exactly because local resources were not sufficient to deal with the situation that we had to make this request for emergency measures to the Ministry of Defense," he said.

Experts attribute the spike in bear encounters to several overlapping factors, including expanding forests, shrinking food supplies, declining rural populations and a drop in the number of hunters.

Japan once relied heavily on wood for fuel and regularly hunted wildlife, but forests have expanded in recent decades as those practices declined, said Mayumi Yokoyama, a professor at the University of Hyogo.

Because bears were once considered close to extinction, conservation efforts also reduced hunting pressure, Yokoyama said Friday during a livestreamed news conference hosted by Foreign Press Center Japan.

Abandoned farmland has further drawn bears closer to towns and cities, increasing the likelihood of encounters with humans, she said.

Lithuania plans for new military training ground

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

Lithuania plans to build a new military training area near the Suwalki Gap, a strip of land separating Russia's Kaliningrad exclave from Kremlin ally Belarus that's widely regarded as one of the most strategically sensitive places in Europe.

In addition to the new site near the town of Kapciamiestis, the country will also double the size of the Taurage training area in western Lithuania, national public broadcaster LRT reported Monday.

U.S. land forces have conducted rotational deployments in Lithuania since spring 2014 as part of NATO deterrence efforts, and sustained rotations of U.S. heavy battalions have been in place since 2019.

As of last month, more than 1,000 rotational American troops were deployed to Lithuania, where they operate, train and take part in joint NATO exercises, according to the Army.

Western military officials have long assessed that in a conflict, Moscow could attempt to link Kaliningrad with Belarus, severing the Baltic states from NATO's main forces.

"Lithuania is strengthening its national defense with plans for new and expanded military training ranges, boosting NATO's rapid response capabilities and securing the strategically crucial Suwalki Corridor," the Lithuanian defense ministry said in a statement Monday on X.

The roughly 40-mile stretch of territory along Lithuania's border with Poland is the only overland route connecting Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to the rest of the alliance.

Amid heightened tensions between NATO and Russia over the war in Ukraine, Deividas Matulionis, chief national security adviser to Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda, said the Suwalki Gap is receiving "special attention" from the alliance.

"The chosen site is the most suitable from both a military and national security perspective," Matulionis said of the Kapciamiestis location, as reported by LRT. "These training areas are vital for ensuring conditions for the largest possible presence of allied forces in Lithuania."

The new training area will be large enough to support brigade-level training involving several thousand troops, LRT said.

In March, four U.S. soldiers died during an exercise at a military training area in eastern Lithuania near the Belarus border. Their M88A2 Hercules armored recovery vehicle became submerged in swampy terrain.

After a nearly weeklong search and recovery operation involving U.S., Lithuanian and allied forces, the soldiers were found dead.

Lithuania has yet to announce when development work at Kapciamiestis will begin or is expected to finish. Initial estimates put the construction time at four years, the Baltic Times reported in September.

Monday's announcement comes as Lithuania works to establish a full army division for the first time in its modern history, driven by growing numbers of conscripts and reservists. Germany has also pledged to deploy a brigade of several thousand troops to the country by 2027.

Sen. Cruz wants restrictions on military flights reimposed soon

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republican Sen. Ted Cruz says he wants restrictions on military flights approved before government funding runs out at the end of next month to prevent another midair collision like the one over Washington, D.C., that killed 67 people in January.

Cruz and Democratic Sen. Maria Cantwell held a news conference Monday with some of the victims' families to denounce provisions in a massive defense bill that's expected to pass this week. The provisions would allow military aircraft to get a waiver to return to operating without broadcasting their precise location, just as they were before the Jan. 29 crash between an airliner and an Army helicopter.

Cruz and Cantwell want the provisions removed, but changing the bill would send it back to the House, potentially delaying raises for soldiers and other key provisions. With that unlikely, Cruz said he'll seek action to reimpose the restrictions on military flights as part of a government funding package in January.

"I'm seeking a vote on the ROTOR Act as part of any appropriations measure before the current continuing resolution expires at the end of next month," Cruz said. ROTOR stands for "Rotorcraft Operations Transparency and Oversight Reform."

The provision in the defense bill has rekindled debate over air safety near the nation's capital. Before the crash in January, military helicopters routinely flew through the crowded airspace around the nation's capital without using a key system called ADS-B to broadcast their locations. The Federal Aviation Administration began requiring all aircraft to do that in March.

National Transportation Safety Board Chairwoman Jennifer Homendy, senators, airlines and key transportation unions all sharply criticized the new helicopter safety provisions in the defense bill when they came to light.

Cruz said the defense bill provision "was airdropped in at the last moment," noting it would unwind actions taken by President Donald Trump and Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy to make the airspace around D.C. safer.

"The special carve-out was exactly what caused the January 29th crash that claimed 67 lives," Cruz said.

MILITARY

USAF long-term medical shaving waivers ending

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Airmen and guardians who've been allowed to keep a beard for more than nine months for nonreligious reasons may want to add a new razor to their holiday wish list.

All medical shaving waivers issued prior to March 1 will expire at the end of next month, the Air Force Surgeon General's office said in a statement Monday.

To stay in regulation, Air Force and Space Force members on a long-term shaving profile will have to make an appointment with a military health care provider by Jan. 31, 2026, for further evaluation, the statement said, citing a memo signed by Lt. Gen. John DeGoes, the Air Force surgeon general.



COLVILLE MCFEE/U.S. Air Force

An airman's neck and face are inspected during a shaving waiver course in 2018. All medical shaving waivers issued to Air Force and Space Force members prior to March 1 will expire Jan. 31.

Going forward, no single profile can exceed six months, and airmen and guardians accruing more than 12 months of profiles within a two-year period will be referred to their commander, the memo states.

As a result, some members of either service may need preventive education on proper shaving hygiene or even be recommended for laser hair removal, says the new guidance, which revises a January predecessor.

Ultimately, it will be up to unit commanders rather than a military health professional whether to approve a shaving profile for medical reasons, according to the new guidance.

The directive does not apply to religious accommodation shaving waivers, DeGoes said.

The previous guidance noted that extended-duration shaving profiles were generally reserved for severe cases of pseudofolliculitis barbae, or razor bumps, a skin condition caused by ingrown hairs that can make shaving painful and lead to scarring if skin is not given a chance to heal.

The condition, caused by curly hairs growing back into the skin, disproportionately affects Black men and is associated with frequent shaving, according to a study by the Society of Federal Health Professionals.

The previous guidance was intended to differentiate razor bumps from "shaving irritation," according to the surgeon general's statement on Monday.

But in September, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth directed the Pentagon "to revert to pre-2020 standards" and do away with permanent shaving profiles for medical conditions, such as razor bumps.

It's not clear, however, whether permanent conditions will result in automatic administrative separation.

Primary care managers are to evaluate members for medical conditions, recommend profiles and submit their recommendations to a medical profile officer.

Beginning Feb. 1, 2026, airmen and guardians who accumulate more than 12 months of a shaving profile within a 24-month period will be referred to their commander.

Commanders may request an evaluation for an airman or guardian "due to operational concerns stemming from a medical condition," according to the new guidance.

Military medical officers were previously the final authority on medical shaving waivers.

Soon-to-be-retired USS Nimitz comes home for the last time

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

For the 30th time in half a century, the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz is coming home.

Home over the decades has been Norfolk, Va.; San Diego; and Everett, Wash. But for the past 10 years, going home has meant passing Cape Flattery on the Pacific Ocean, making way east through the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and turning south into Puget Sound, Wash.

The Navy's oldest carrier planned to make a short stop at Naval Magazine Indian Island before the final approximately 50-mile trip south on Tuesday to its berth in Bremerton at Naval Base Kitsap.

On this 82,000-mile deployment alone, the ship's Carrier Wing 17 took part in strikes on ISIS targets in Somalia. Overall, squadrons on the Nimitz completed more than 8,500 aircraft sorties, and its jets, reconnaissance planes and helicopters logged 17,000 flight hours. Stops included Malaysia, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

The globe-trotting power projection of the Nimitz was expected from the beginning.

It was commissioned on May 3, 1975 — three days after the fall of Saigon to the North Vietnamese. Since then, the Nimitz and its nine sister ships of its class have been the cornerstone of American military power projection worldwide.

Throughout its career, the Nimitz saw action in Middle East conflicts. It was a launching point for unsuccessful rescue efforts to free American hostages from Iranian militants in April 1980. Two Nimitz F-14 Tomcat fighters were sent to challenge Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi's "Line of Death" across the Gulf of Sidra in North Africa. When attacked by two Libyan SU-22 "Fitter" fighters, the Tomcats shot down both jets.

The Nimitz played a key role in wars against Iraq in 1990 and 2004, al-Qaida terrorists in Afghanistan in 2001, and ISIS camps in Syria in 2014. The carrier also battled the COVID-19 pandemic. The Nimitz spent 27 days in isolation in April 2020, the start of a record 11-month deployment that took it from San Diego to the Persian Gulf and back. The Navy estimated the 99,000 nautical miles represented the longest ship deployment since the Vietnam War.

Beyond the Middle East action, there were a few corners of the world that Nimitz did not visit. Its first deployment in 1976 was to the Mediterranean. The ship circumnavigated the globe from 1997 to 1998. Over the decades, it's racked up 350,000 landings on its deck.

Following the conventionally powered Kitty Hawk-class carriers and the one-off nuclear carrier USS Enterprise, the Nimitz was the first of its class and the template for the 10 Nimitz-class ships that served in the Navy.

"Wherever the United States ship Nimitz shows her flag, she will be seen as we see her now, as a solid symbol of United States strength," said then-President Gerald R. Ford at the ship's christening in 1975.



CHAD K. HUGHES/U.S. Navy

Petty Officer 3rd Class Anthony Lagunes stands watch on the fantail of the USS Nimitz as it departs Naval Air Station North Island in San Diego last week.

That role will now shift to ships named after the president — the Gerald R. Ford aircraft carriers.

The first of the new carriers, the USS Gerald R. Ford, is serving with the Navy off the eastern coast of South America. The second, the USS John F. Kennedy expected to be commissioned next year, will take the Nimitz's place in the fleet and in its home port of Bremerton.

The Navy has announced the Nimitz has orders to depart Naval Base Kitsap early next year and head south. Too large to pass through the Panama Canal, the Nimitz will follow the Strait of Magellan and go around Cape Horn at the tip of South America. The carrier will then head to Naval Station Norfolk in Virginia, where it is scheduled to arrive before May 2026.

If all goes as planned, Nimitz will retire. It's to be decommissioned, defueled and deactivated.

Barring a breakthrough on dealing with remnants of its nuclear heart, Nimitz is bound for the scrap yard and its reactor compartments to a strategic depository.

Discharge upgrades possible for COVID vaccine refusal cases

BY LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon plans to review the records of thousands of service members who were forced out of the military solely for refusing to take the COVID-19 vaccine, and it could facilitate discharge upgrades as it sees appropriate.

Approximately 8,700 service members were involuntarily separated for not complying with the now-rescinded vaccine mandate, and more than 3,000 of them did not receive honorable discharges, the Defense Department said in a statement Monday.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is directing the military services to proactively review those cases and consider potential upgrades.

The statement refers to guidance issued by the Pentagon on Dec. 10. Within 30 days, service secretaries will create and validate lists of individuals who are eligible for review. The former service members do not need to do anything to have their cases reviewed, DOD said.

The military services will then refer eligible cases to discharge review boards, which will issue decisions to every individual within one calendar year of the memorandum.

In a memo earlier this month to senior leadership outlining the policy, Hegseth called the separations unconscionable and said those former service members were holding true to their personal and religious convictions.

"While many have applied for and received relief from our Military Department review boards, I believe the onus is on us to make this right," Hegseth said in the Dec. 6 memo. He was referring to the 3,000-plus former service members who received a general (under honorable conditions) discharge, which is a step down from an honorable discharge.

Former service members who were given a general discharge still have access to veterans benefits.

The military's COVID-19 vaccination mandate for active-duty service members began in August 2021 and was later extended to members of the National Guard and reservists. Then-Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ended the mandate in 2023 but did not change the status of service members who were separated for refusing the vaccine.

Under President Donald Trump, the Pentagon recently announced that discharged service members can pursue reinstatement up to April 2026.

MILITARY

Lawsuits allege more Army OB-GYN misconduct

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — Multiple women have filed legal documents in the past week alleging they were secretly recorded or given unnecessary medical exams by an Army doctor outside the scope of criminal charges that only include misconduct at Fort Hood.

One woman who saw Maj. Blaine McGraw, an OB-GYN, while he was assigned to Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii, said he performed numerous breast exams on her during appointments "when there was no medical reason," according to an administrative claim filed Monday along with those of six other women represented by attorney Christine Dunn.

"During my appointments with him, Dr. McGraw's phone was often visible in his pocket," according to the claim. "I have photos and videos from these visits that show Dr. McGraw's phone in his front pocket."

McGraw, 47, was charged last week with 54 counts of indecent visual recording involving 44 women, according to the Army. All but one of those women were patients he provided medical care to this year at Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center at Fort Hood, Texas. One woman was recorded at an off-post home.

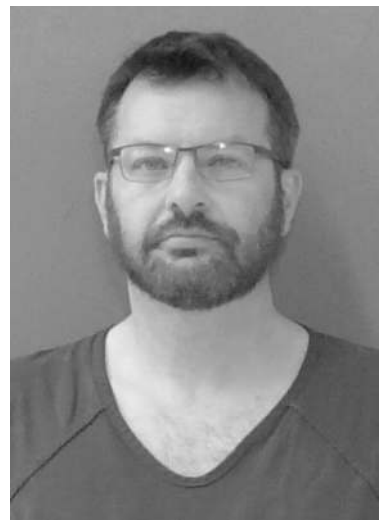
He moved from Hawaii to Texas in August 2023, according to the Army. He served in Hawaii beginning in June 2019 as an intern and then as a resident. Before attending medical school to become an OB-GYN, McGraw was a physician assistant at Fort Campbell, Ky.

The Army has said it has notified roughly 1,600 patients who saw McGraw in Hawaii but has not yet said if any of its criminal or administrative investigations include what may have occurred or been reported during the doctor's time at Tripler.



U.S. Army

Maj. Blaine McGraw saw patients at Tripler Army Medical Center, Hawaii, before he moved to Texas.



Bell County Sheriff's Office

Maj. Blaine McGraw has been charged on more than 50 counts of secretly recording dozens of women he saw as patients at Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center on Fort Hood in Texas.

Officials at Fort Hood said the hospital suspended McGraw immediately upon hearing allegations of misconduct Oct. 17 and a criminal investigation began within hours.

A lawsuit first filed by one woman in Bell County, Texas, court last month claimed that women had reported McGraw at Tripler but that nothing was done. Last week attorney Andrew Cobos amended the lawsuit to include an additional 81 women.

One of those women said that McGraw unnecessarily induced labor against her wishes during an exam at Tripler.

"McGraw expressed that she looked good this late into her pregnancy and began asking questions about how she felt. McGraw stated that his afternoon calendar was free and offered to conduct a pelvic exam," according to the lawsuit.

After inducing labor without a documented appointment, McGraw asked the patient to leave post and then send him a text message "letting him know that her water had broken and that she needed to see him for delivery."

Of the seven women Dunn represents, three of the women filed claims because of improper recording of exams while the other four regard unnecessary medical exams "that were much more a sexual assault than a medical exam," the attorney said.

Dunn submitted the claims on behalf of civilian women and service members through the Federal Tort Claims Act, the law that allows people to take legal action against the federal government for negligence. It is a required step toward a lawsuit against the government.

Each woman requested $8 million in damages, according to filings.

The process to file administrative claims can be long.

The Army has six months to investigate, Dunn said. However, she also represents 45 victims of Maj. Michael Stockin, who was convicted of sexual abuse of patients earlier this year at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington.

Those claims are still pending, and Stockin was removed from seeing patients in 2022 and charged in August 2023.

"It often takes a lot longer, especially when there's a criminal case," Dunn said. "These cases are considered individually, but they're also considered collectively. And there are a lot of victims out there in this case."

Sergeant sentenced to 26 years in death of his soldier-wife

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — A Fort Hood noncommissioned officer was sentenced to 26 years in prison after he pleaded guilty Friday to fatally shooting his wife, who was also a soldier, in their off-post home earlier this year.

Staff Sgt. John Mwangi, 43, pleaded guilty to unpremeditated murder and said he shot his wife, Sgt. Esther Gitau, on Feb. 21, according to the Office of Special Trial Counsel, which prosecuted the case.

Military Judge Col. Maureen Kohn also sentenced Mwangi to forfeiture of all pay and allowances, reduction in rank to E-1 and a dishonorable discharge from the Army during the court-martial held at the Lawrence Williams Judicial Center at Fort Hood, Texas. He will serve his time at the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.



Bell County Jail

Staff Sgt. John Mwangi was arrested and charged in the Feb. 21 death of his wife, Sgt. Esther Gitau, 27, in Killeen, Texas.

Gitau was a food safety inspector assigned to the 1st Medical Brigade, base officials said. She had previously served at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., and Fort Knox, Ky.

"A soldier, a mother, a sister—Sgt. Esther Gitau — was tragically taken away by the accused's reprehensible actions," said the prosecutor, Lt. Col. William Wicks, in a statement. "Though nothing we can do will bring Esther Gitau back, we can only hope that the family can begin to heal as a result of [Friday's] proceedings."

An attorney listed for Mwangi did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

On the night of Feb. 21, Mwangi and his wife were arguing at their Killeen home when Mwangi shot her several times. He then left the home with Gitau locked in the primary bedroom, according to prosecutors.

While in his vehicle, Mwangi called his brother and informed him of the shooting. His brother notified authorities, who located her body upon arriving at the couple's home.

Two children were also found in the home, according to the Killeen Police Department.

Military police detained Mwangi, an aircraft structural repairer in the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, the next day when he tried to enter the gate at Fort Hood, according to prosecutors.

Army Criminal Investigation Division investigated with Killeen police. They found blood, DNA and other forensic evidence that led to the Army charging Mwangi with unpremeditated murder April 2.

"We could not have achieved this outcome without the commitment and collaboration of our Texas law enforcement partners," said Lane Allen, special agent in charge of the Army CID Central Texas Field Office. "While no sentence can undo the harm caused or restore what was taken, today's outcome sends a clear message that our justice system will not waiver in pursuit of those who commit such tragic and irreversible acts."

Mwangi also has a criminal trial pending in Bell County court, where he is charged with first-degree murder, according to county court records. His next hearing is scheduled for March 20.

MILITARY

Trinidad to open its airports to US military

BY ANSELM GIBBS
Associated Press

PORT-OF-SPAIN, Trinidad — The government of Trinidad and Tobago said Monday that it would allow the U.S. military to access its airports in coming weeks as tensions build between the United States and Venezuela.

The announcement comes after the U.S. military recently installed a radar system at the airport on Tobago. The Caribbean country's government has said the radar is being used to fight local crime, and that the small nation wouldn't be used as a launchpad to attack any other country.

The U.S. would use the airports for activity that would be "logistical in nature, facilitating supply replenishment and routine personnel rotations," Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement. It did not provide further details.

Trinidad's prime minister previously has praised ongoing U.S. strikes on alleged drug boats in the Caribbean.

Only 7 miles separate Venezuela from the twin-island Caribbean nation at their closest point. It has two main airports: Piarco International Airport on Trinidad and ANR Robinson International Airport on Tobago.



BRIGETTE WALTERMIRE/U.S. Air National Guard

U.S. Army officials meet with a Trinidad and Tobago air guard squadron commander while on a tour of a helicopter hangar at the Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard Ulric Cross Air Station on April 24.

Hours after the announcement, Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodríguez said her country was immediately canceling any contract, deal or negotiation to supply natural gas to Trinidad and Tobago.

She claimed that the government of Trinidad and Tobago participated in the recent U.S. seizure of an oil tanker off the country's coast, calling it an "act of piracy."

She also accused Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar of having a "hostile agenda" against Venezuela, noting that the U.S. military installed an airport radar on Tobago.

"This official has turned the territory of Trinidad and Tobago into a U.S. aircraft carrier to attack Venezuela, in an unequivocal act of vassalage," Rodríguez said.

Persad-Bissessar told The Associated Press that she wasn't bothered by the statement, describing it as "simply false propaganda."

"They should direct their complaints to President [Donald] Trump, as it is the U.S. military that has seized the sanctioned oil tanker. In the meantime, we continue to have peaceful relations with the Venezuelan people," Persad-Bissessar said.

The prime minister asserted that her nation has "never depended" on Venezuela for natural gas supplies: "We have adequate reserves within our territory."

Trinidad and Venezuela had previously reached a deal over the development of a gas field in Venezuelan waters, near the maritime border separating the two countries.

In December 2023, Venezuela granted a license for oil giant Shell and Trinidad and Tobago to produce gas from the field. In October, the U.S. government granted Trinidad and Tobago permission to negotiate the gas deal without facing U.S sanctions placed on Venezuela.

Amery Browne, an opposition senator and Trinidad and Tobago's former foreign minister, accused the Trinidadian government on Monday of being deceptive in its announcement.

Browne said that Trinidad and Tobago has become "complicit facilitators of extrajudicial killings, cross-border tension and belligerence."

"There is nothing routine about this. It has nothing to do with the usual cooperation and friendly collaborations that we have enjoyed with the USA and all of our neighbors for decades," he said.

He said the "blanket permission" with the U.S. takes the country "a further step down the path of a satellite state" and that it embraces a " 'might is right' philosophy."

American strikes began in September and have killed more than 80 people as Washington builds up a fleet of warships near Venezuela, including the largest U.S. aircraft carrier.

In October, an American warship docked in Trinidad's capital, Port-of-Spain, as the Trump administration boosts military pressure on Venezuela and President Nicolás Maduro.

U.S. lawmakers have questioned the legality of the strikes against vessels in the Caribbean and the eastern Pacific Ocean, and recently announced that there would be a congressional review of them.

Video: Experts say strike seems to run counter to DOD manual

FROM PAGE 1

paign as a success that had prevented drugs from reaching American shores.

Rubio told reporters the campaign is a "counter drug mission" that is "focused on dismantling the infrastructure of these terrorist organizations that are are operating in our hemisphere, undermining the security of Americans, killing Americans, poisoning Americans."

But lawmakers have been focusing on the Sept. 2 attack on two survivors as they sift through the rationale for the broader U.S. military buildup in the region that increasingly appears pointed at Venezuela. On the eve of the briefings, the U.S. military said late Monday it attacked three more boats believed to have been smuggling drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing eight people.

Senators on both sides of the aisle said the officials left them in the dark about Trump's goals when it comes to Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro or committing U.S. forces directly to the South American nation.

The closed-door sessions come as the U.S. is building up warships, flying fighter jets near Venezuelan airspace and seizing an oil tanker as part of its campaign against Maduro, who has insisted the real purpose of the U.S. military operations is to force him from office. Trump's Republican administration has not sought any authorization from Congress for action against Venezuela. But lawmakers objecting to the military incursions are pushing war powers resolutions toward potential voting this week.

It's all raising sharp questions that Hegseth and the others will be pressed to answer. The administration's go-it-alone approach without Congress, experts say, has led to problematic military actions, none more so than the strike that killed two people who had climbed on top of part of a boat that had been partially destroyed in an initial attack.

"If it's not a war against Venezuela, then we're using armed force against civilians who are just committing crimes," said John Yoo, a Berkeley Law professor who helped craft the President George W. Bush administration's legal arguments and justification for aggressive interrogation after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. "Then this question, this worry, becomes really pronounced. You know, you're shooting civilians. There's no military purpose for it."

Yet for the first several months, Congress has received little more than a trickle of information about why or how the U.S. military was conducting a campaign that has destroyed more than 20 boats and killed at least 95 people. At times, lawmakers have learned of strikes from social media.

Congress is now demanding that the Pentagon release video of that initial operation to lawmakers.

For some, the footage has become a case sample that demonstrates the flawed rationale behind the entire campaign.

"The American public ought to see it. I think shooting unarmed people floundering in the water, clinging to wreckage, is not who we are as a people," said Sen. Rand Paul, a Kentucky Republican who has been an outspoken critic of the campaign. He added that, "You can't say you're at war and say, 'We're not going to give any kind of due process to anybody and blow up people without any kind of proof.' "

Hegseth told lawmakers last week that he was still deciding whether to release the footage.

Still, there are also many prominent Republicans who back the campaign. Sen. Jim Risch, the GOP chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, last week called the attacks "absolutely, totally, and 100% legal under U.S. law and international law" and claimed that many American lives had been saved by making sure the drugs didn't reach the U.S.

But as lawmakers have dug into the details of the Sept. 2 strike, inconsistencies have emerged in the Trump administration's explanation of the attack, which the Pentagon initially tried to dismiss as a "completely false" narrative.

Trump has argued that the strike that killed survivors was justified because the people were trying to overturn the boat. Several GOP lawmakers have also put forward that argument, saying that it showed the two survivors were trying to stay in the fight, rather than surrender.

However, Adm. Frank "Mitch" Bradley, who ordered the second strike as he commanded the Special Forces soldiers conducting it, acknowledged in private briefings on Capitol Hill last week that although the two people had tried to overturn the boat, they were unlikely to succeed. That's according to several people who either were in the briefings or had knowledge of them and spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss them.

The two people had climbed on top of the overturned boat, had not made any radio or cellphone calls for backup and were waving, Bradley told the lawmakers. The Navy admiral consulted with a military attorney, then ordered the second strike because it was believed that drugs were in the hull of the boat and the mission was to make sure they were destroyed.

Experts say the strike seems to run counter to the Pentagon's own manual on the laws of war, which states that "orders to fire upon the shipwrecked would be clearly illegal."

"The boat was damaged, the boat was overturned, and the boat had no power," said Michael Schmitt, a former Air Force lawyer and professor emeritus at the U.S. Naval War College. "I really don't care if there was another boat coming to rescue them. They're shipwrecked."

The argument at the heart of Trump's campaign — that drugs bound for the U.S. are the equivalent of an attack on American lives — has resulted in lawmakers trying to parse whether laws were violated and, more broadly, what Trump's goals are with Venezuela.

Besides the briefings from Hegseth and Rubio on Tuesday, Bradley is also expected to appear for classified briefings with the Senate and House Armed Services Committees on Wednesday.

Sen. Thom Tillis, a North Carolina Republican, said he wants to "really understand what action, what intelligence they were acting on and whether or not they follow the laws of war, the laws of the sea."

PACIFIC

Back and bigger than ever

Comic Con Okinawa sees largest turnout yet at base

BY RYAN M. BREEDEN
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Comic Con Okinawa drew more than 10,000 fans of pop culture, sci-fi, fantasy and cosplay to this Marine Corps base over the weekend, marking its largest turnout yet, according to event organizers.

Hosted Saturday and Sunday by Marine Corps Community Services, the 12th annual convention attracted roughly 6,000 more attendees than last year.

The event featured gaming, art exhibitions, cosplay contests and appearances connected to franchises such as Pokémon, Power Rangers, Yu-Gi-Oh! and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

Special guests included Elise Baughman, the voice of Pan in the "Dragon Ball" series; Eddie McClintock, known for his role on SyFy's "Warehouse 13"; and comic book inker Jeremy Clark, whose work includes "Batman," "Gargoyles" and "Blade Runner."

Clark, who last attended Comic Con Okinawa in 2023, said the event has noticeably expanded.

"It's taken what's good about the previous events and built upon it, making it better for the individuals that want to participate and make it an overall positive experience," he said Saturday.

Conventiongoers wandered the Fieldhouse, Community Center and Globe & Anchor inside Ocean Breeze in costumes ranging from "Star Wars" and Marvel characters to custom designs, including one fan dressed as a character from the comedy film "Spaceballs."

Lance Cpl. Gerardo Mendez, of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, who was attending Comic Con Okinawa for the first time Sunday, said the creativity on display stood out.

"I think it was a great opportunity for everyone to express themselves," he said. "I came out to see what it was all about. I was impressed with how unique some of the outfits were."

Comic Con Okinawa began in 2011 at the Camp Foster library and has been hosted by MCCS since 2013. The only interruption came in 2020 during the pandemic, said MCCS assistant program manager Tony Washington.

"Every year, we look forward to hosting this event and finding new ways to make it even better," he said Tuesday. "This year's attendance numbers are a strong indicator that both the military and local community value this event as much as we enjoy providing it. The current plan is to continue hosting this event annually."

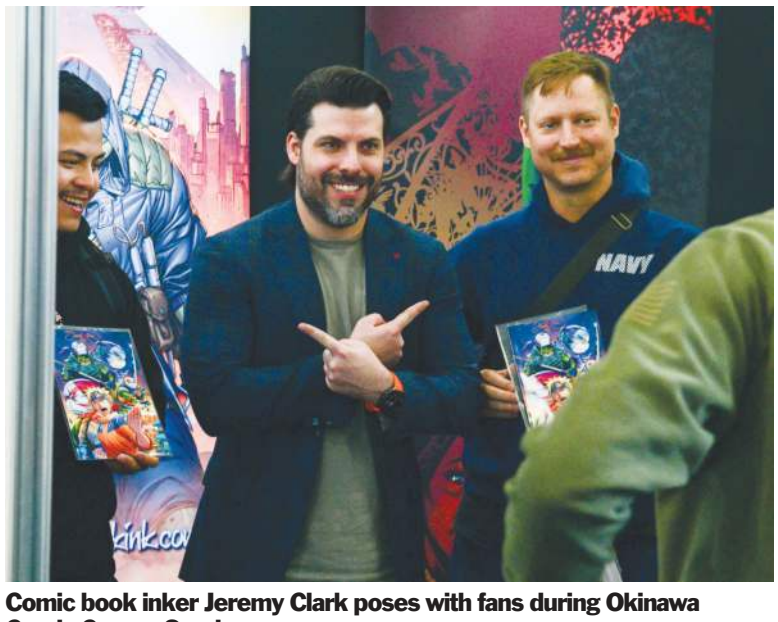


PHOTOS BY RYAN M. BREEDEN/Stars and Stripes

Wyatt Ebbat, 3, and Gabriel Ebbat, 6, pose with cosplayers during Comic Con Okinawa at Camp Foster, on Sunday.



Cosplayers pose at Okinawa Comic Con at Camp Foster on Sunday.



Comic book inker Jeremy Clark poses with fans during Okinawa Comic Con on Sunday.



Antoni Hairston, a civilian contractor, poses while dressed as a character from "Spaceballs."



Conventiongoers take part in a "Star Wars" drone race Saturday.

PACIFIC

Bullet creased a Navy heart, then led to love

Nurse and sailor wounded in Pearl Harbor attack married and spent nearly 50 years together

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — Alice Beck was a 23-year-old Navy nurse at a West Coast hospital in 1942 when she began caring for a sailor with a most unusual wound: a bullet in his heart.

Dean Darrow survived the surgery to remove the bullet that struck his heart during the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, and patient and nurse quickly fell in love.

During their nearly 50 years together, Alice Darrow was fond of saying the bullet left a hole in his heart that she filled with love.

She cherished the bullet as an emblem of their love, but after years of soul-searching following his death in 1991, she decided earlier this fall to donate it to the National Park Service's Pearl Harbor National Memorial museum.

"That bullet and Alice's story really humanizes the history of Pearl Harbor," museum technician Mikael Fox said.

Darrow, now 106, was in Honolulu this month for the 84th commemoration of the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor, and during an interview she recalled the bullet's literal and romantic trajectories.

Dean Darrow, then 24, was a fire controlman aboard the USS West Virginia, one of the ships docked on Battleship Row on the morning of the attack.

A torpedo blast on the ship hurled Darrow into the oily, fiery harbor waters.

As he strained to pull his shrapnel-pocked body onto a small rescue boat, a Japanese plane strafed them.

After weeks of recovery, Darrow was assigned to the destroyer USS Porter. While aboard, he had an attack of appendicitis and was transferred to a hospital ship.

There he told doctors that he had been experiencing growing fatigue, a pounding heart and fainting spells.



Dean Darrow

X-rays revealed an intact bullet lodged in his heart, and he was transferred to Mare Island Naval Hospital just north of San Francisco.

Alice Darrow recalled the hubbub over news that a patient with an unusual condition was arriving for care and "so we were all kind of looking to see the guy that has a bullet in his heart."

She became one of the primary nurses caring for him in the days before the surgery to remove the bullet, which was performed by a doctor from Stanford University.

"In those days, they weren't doing things with the heart," she said.

"It was unusual."

Despite the risks of surgery, the wounded sailor apparently dwelled on thoughts of a happy future.

Before going under anesthesia, he asked Alice if she would go out with him on liberty if he survived.

"Well, when he was just opening his eyes coming out of the anesthesia, he looked up and saw me, and he said, 'Oh, we're going on liberty, aren't we?' " she said.



WYATT OLSON/Stars and Stripes

Alice Darrow, 106, speaks with Hawaii Gov. Josh Green before a ceremony on Dec. 7, at the Pearl Harbor National Memorial commemorating the 84th anniversary of the Japanese surprise attack on Oahu.

Darrow said she felt it was "my duty" to accompany him on liberty.

They were married four months later.

His surgeon and the medical staff wanted to keep the .303-caliber bullet, which was made of armor-piercing steel rather than lead. It was mostly intact because it was believed to have ricocheted into his body and thus had lost lethal velocity.

"They wanted it, but Dean said, 'No, this is my bullet,' " Darrow recalled.

After her husband's passing, she declined an entreaty by a Pearl Harbor survivor to donate the bullet to the Pearl Harbor museum. For her, it was still more a symbol of love than a marker of history.

But earlier this year, Darrow and her daughter Becky Mitchell planned a cruise to Honolulu for an overnight stay.

"Would you be interested in donating the bullet then?" Mitchell asked.

"Yes, that's where it belongs," Darrow recalled saying. She delivered the bullet to the museum on Sept. 18.

Fox said the bullet may eventually be on permanent display. "This is a story that very much should be shared," he said.

Darrow feels the same, saying that her husband was just one of thousands who were wounded and treated during the war.

"I felt like people should know what the war has done to these boys," she said.

S. Korean shipbuilder secures deal to maintain Navy dry cargo vessel

BY ALEX WILSON AND YOOJIN LEE
Stars and Stripes

A midsized South Korean shipbuilder has secured its first contract to repair and maintain a U.S. Navy vessel, marking another step in expanding maritime cooperation between Washington and Seoul.

HJ Shipbuilding & Construction, based in the port city of Busan, announced in a Monday news release that it won a maintenance, repair and overhaul contract for the dry cargo ship USNS Amelia Earhart. It did not disclose the value of the deal.

The work will be a mid-term availability — longer than routine pierside maintenance but shorter than a major overhaul — on the 40,000-ton vessel, which supplies ammunition, food and fuel to Navy ships, including aircraft carriers and destroyers.

Although owned by the Navy, the Amelia Earhart is primarily crewed by U.S. civilian mariners.

HJ Shipbuilding described the contract as a "major milestone" and a "critical foothold" in entering the Navy's maintenance market.

"Naval MRO services span a vessel's entire life cycle and represent a high value-added business segment," the company said in its release. "While the U.S. Navy's MRO market is known for its stringent regulations and high technical barriers to entry, it also offers strong profitability for qualified contractors."

A company spokesperson did not immediately respond to requests for more information by phone and email Tuesday.

Ahead of the deal, U.S. Forces Korea commander Gen. Xavier Brunson and other senior U.S. officials toured HJ Shipbuilding's Yeongdo Shipyard earlier this year to "assess facilities, equipment, security standards, and technical capabilities," according to the company.

The agreement reflects broader efforts by the United States and South Korea to deepen cooperation in shipbuilding and maritime logistics, as the Navy looks to bolster readiness amid global shipyard backlogs.

Navy Secretary John Phelan said during an April overseas trip that expanding shipbuilding and maintenance capacity — both domestically and with allies — is a top priority. President Donald Trump has promoted the effort under the banner of "Make American Shipyards Great Again."



JENNIFER OWENS/U.S. Navy

South Korean shipbuilder HJ Shipbuilding & Construction secured a contract for repair and maintenance on the dry cargo ship USNS Amelia Earhart, seen here breaking away from the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson following a replenishment-at-sea on May 5.

South Korea earlier this year pledged to invest $150 billion in U.S. shipbuilding projects as part of a broader $350 billion investment commitment announced in July by South Korea President Lee Jae Myung, according to Reuters.

In October, Huntington Ingalls Industries and HD Hyundai Heavy Industries — the largest shipbuilders in the U.S. and South Korea — announced a joint strategy covering military and commercial shipbuilding and maintenance.

MILITARY

Hegseth 'escalating' probe of Sen. Kelly

By Tara Copp, Noah Robertson and Dan Lamothe
The Washington Post

The Pentagon said Monday night that Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is "escalating" his review of Sen. Mark Kelly's involvement in a video he and other Democratic lawmakers made reminding service members of their duty to disobey illegal orders — an unprecedented use of the military justice system to investigate a political adversary.

In a statement, the Defense Department said it was elevating what had been a "review" to an "official Command Investigation" to be carried out at least in part by the Pentagon general counsel's office. The change signals a more formal effort by Hegseth to scrutinize the Democratic senator from Arizona, who is a retired Navy officer and outspoken critic of the Trump administration.


Kelly

Within the military, such investigations seek to determine whether disciplinary action — or potential legal action — is warranted, according to a handbook from the Naval Justice School. They typically last about 30 days and can involve documenting evidence and conducting interviews with relevant witnesses.

Military law experts and Democratic lawmakers have said that, although retired military officers can be recalled to active duty, Hegseth's inquiry into Kelly is a highly unusual use of the military justice system. Some Republicans have also questioned the investigation's merit.

In a letter sent to the Pentagon before its announcement Monday, Paul Fishman, a lawyer representing Kelly, warned that any legal action against the senator "would be unconstitutional and an extraordinary abuse of power."

The video Kelly joined included five other Democrats who previously served in the military or intelligence community. They spoke directly to U.S. service members, reminding them that they can disobey illegal orders. Though none of the lawmakers explicitly said so in the video, their message appeared aimed at the Trump administration's controversial military action in Latin America and its domestic use of active-duty and National Guard troops.

The lawmakers involved have since said that they decided to film the message after troops had asked them about the legality of some of the Trump administration's actions, such as striking alleged drug-trafficking boats or sending the military into U.S. cities to protect federal property and agents.

Hegseth had directed Navy Secretary John Phelan to determine whether Kelly's involvement in the video should merit any action by the Pentagon. Phelan provided his recommendation to Hegseth last week, though the Navy did not disclose publicly what he advised.

Change: Proposal follows variety of reorganization ideas floated

FROM PAGE 1

ment that they would not comment on "rumored internal discussions" or "pre-decisional matters." Any insinuation that there is a divide among officials over the issue is "completely false — everyone in the Department is working to achieve the same goal under this administration," the statement said.

The Pentagon has shared little to no details with Congress, a lack of communication that has perturbed members of the Republican-led Senate and House Armed Services committees, according to two people familiar with how the panels have prepared for the proposal. Top officers at the commands involved are awaiting more details as well, officials said.

The plan also calls for realigning U.S. Southern Command and U.S. Northern Command, which oversee military operations throughout the Western Hemisphere, under a new headquarters to be known as U.S. Americas Command, or Americom, people familiar with the matter said. That concept was reported earlier this year by NBC News.

Pentagon officials also discussed creating a U.S. Arctic Command that would report to Americom, but that idea appears to have been abandoned, people familiar with the matter said.

Combined, the moves would reduce the number of top military headquarters — known as combatant commands — from 11 to eight while cutting the number of four-star generals and admirals who report directly to Hegseth. Other remaining combatant commands would be U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, U.S. Cyber Command, U.S. Special Operations Command, U.S. Space Command, U.S. Strategic Command and U.S. Transportation Command.

Those familiar with the plan said it aligns with the Trump administration's national security strategy, released this month, which declares that the "days of the United States propping up the entire world order like Atlas are over."

The proposal was organized by the Pentagon's Joint Staff under the supervision of Caine and is due to be shared with Hegseth as soon as this week as the preferred course of action among senior military officials. It grew from a request made by Hegseth in the spring to look for ways to improve how troops are commanded and controlled, a senior defense official familiar with the discussion said, adding that Hegseth has kept in touch with Caine about the issue over the past several months.

Any changes would need the approval of Hegseth and President Donald Trump. The moves would come in the Pentagon's Unified Command Plan, which lays out the roles of the military's major headquarters.

Lawmakers have taken the extraordinary step of requiring the Pentagon to submit a detailed blueprint that describes the realignment's potential costs and impacts on America's alliances. The measure, included in Congress's annual defense policy bill, would withhold money to enact the effort until at least 60 days after the Pentagon provides lawmakers with those materials.

The bill has cleared the House and is expected to pass the Senate this week.

The senior defense official said the proposed realignment is meant to speed decision-making and adaptation among military commanders. "Decay" had been observed in how the U.S. military commands and controls troops, he added, suggesting that the need for sweeping change is urgent.

"Time ain't on our side, man," the senior defense official said, describing internal conversations around the plan. "The saying here is, 'If not us, who, and if not now, when?'"

The potential reorganization comes as Hegseth has begun broader efforts to cull the total number of generals and admirals across the military. He also has fired or otherwise forced out more than 20 senior officers, threatened others with polygraph tests to determine whether they have leaked information to the news media and told those remaining that if they do not like the administration's policies they should "do the honorable thing and resign."

Chuck Hagel, who served as defense secretary during the Obama administration and as a Republican member of the Senate before that, expressed concerns about the Trump administration's ambitions. There are different dynamics, needs and security threats throughout the globe, he said.

"The world isn't getting any less complicated," Hagel said in an interview. "You want commands that have the capability of heading off problems before they become big problems, and I think you lose some of that when you unify or consolidate too many."

Senior military officials considered about two dozen other concepts, the senior defense official said. At least one discussion called for a reduction to six total combatant commands. Under that plan, Special Operations Command, Space Command and Cyber Command would be downgraded and placed under the control of a new U.S. Global Command, said other officials familiar with the discussion.

Caine is expected to share at least two other courses of action with Hegseth, people familiar with the matter said. One concept calls for creating two commands to house all of the others, with all major geographic organizations such as Central Command and European Command placed under the control of an entity that would be called Operational Command. Other major headquarters, such as Transportation Command and Space Command, would fall under an organization called Support Command.


MEMPHIS PITTS/U.S. Marine Corps

Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth delivers remarks during an address at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., Sept. 30.

One proposal suggested the creation of a new headquarters unit, Joint Task Force War, to be based at the Pentagon. It would focus on planning and strategy when the United States was not at war and be capable of controlling forces anywhere in the world when there was a conflict, people familiar with the matter said.

The idea didn't "test well" in exercises with military officials and appears unlikely to be adopted, the senior defense official said. Top military officials expressed concerns that such an organization would not possess the same regional expertise and relationships inherent to the military's current construct.

Even if you have "some of your best people" in such a task force, the senior official said, "you don't have a fingertip feel" for what is occurring in a region. A second official said it seemed "very confusing" to have top commanders in a region prepare for a conflict there, only to hand those plans over to another commander when something occurred.

Another plan sought to reorganize the military by domain, with operations organized and led by whether they occurred on land or in air, sea, space or cyberspace, people familiar with the matter said. The idea had supporters in the Space Force but had few other proponents, people familiar with the matter said. It also limited the Marine Corps' influence, with it falling under the control of the Navy Department even as the other branches of service were elevated.

Military officials involved in the reorganization effort also considered whether to elevate the chairman's role to allow him to command forces, rather than serving as the senior military adviser to both the president and the defense secretary. That could have occurred through the Joint Task Force War framework, two officials said, but the concept seemed murky.

The idea also could have been complicated by the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, landmark legislation that reorganized the military and defined the chairman's role. Under the law, the chairman is considered the "principal" military adviser to the president, the defense secretary and other senior officials. Operations are controlled through a chain of command that runs from combatant commanders, to the defense secretary, to the president.

NATION

41K US jobs lost; unemployment up

BY LAUREN KAORI GURLEY
The Washington Post

The U.S. labor market lost 41,000 jobs over October and November, and the unemployment rate ticked up to 4.6%, the highest since 2021, underscoring concerns about the strength of the economy.

The long-awaited jobs report by the Labor Department was delayed because of the federal government shutdown, creating headaches for economists and policymakers trying to assess how the labor market slowed this fall as President Donald Trump's economic policies, including higher tariffs and immigration enforcement, continue to take hold.

The October loss of more than 100,000 jobs was particularly striking, the sharpest losses since the COVID-pandemic era recession. But economists expected losses in October, because the data reflected tens of thousands of federal workers who deferred resignation and officially parted ways with the federal government in October. Federal government payrolls fell by 162,000 jobs in October, the agency reported.

Jobs creation from August was revised down by 22,000 showing the economy lost 26,000 jobs that month. September job gains were also revised lower by 11,000 to 108,000.

"The labor market is cooling," said Guy Berger, director of economic research at the Burning Glass Institute, a company that conducts research on the labor market. "That's a change from where we were during early summer when it looked like things were relatively stable. But data seems to be moving in the wrong direction again."

Health care continued to lead jobs gains adding 46,000 positions in November. Construction payrolls grew by 28,000 jobs.

The report does not contain the unemployment rate for October because the government could not collect survey data during the shutdown, a first for the agency since the survey began in 1948.

But the labor market has been softening since June, with hiring sputtering to near the lowest level in more than a decade and the unemployment rate rising. Headwinds including tariffs, inflation and cautious consumer spending have prompted employers to suspend hiring. Meanwhile, some white-collar employers have laid off employees or announced cuts this fall, especially amid the growth of artificial intelligence, which can make some jobs redundant. Still, filings for unemployment insurance, the closest to a real-time gauge for layoffs in the broader economy, remain low, although they ticked up last Thursday.

"Businesses need certainty when they go and make their hiring decisions and their investment plans, and when there's uncertainty in the economy, it just makes things harder," said Sam Kuhn, an economist with the recruitment software company Appcast.

"I don't know whether it's necessarily that businesses are doing worse, or if it's just the fact that they are perhaps waiting to see what could happen in 2026."

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome H. Powell last week cited a softening labor market in his justification for cutting interest rates for the third time this year. Powell also warned that official statistics may be overstating job creation by 60,000 jobs a month, calling jobs data "a complicated, unusual, and difficult situation."



DAMIAN DOVARGANES/AP

Flowers cover the Walk of Fame star for Rob Reiner on Monday in Los Angeles.

Killings of Reiners stuns as charges for their son loom

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles police were set to present a case to prosecutors following Nick Reiner's arrest in the killings of his parents, Rob Reiner and Michele Singer Reiner, which stunned their communities in Hollywood and Democratic politics, where both were widely beloved.

Nick Reiner's attorney Alan Jackson said his client will not be in court Tuesday for medical reasons. Jackson told reporters outside the courthouse that he did not know what the medical issue was, but he said Reiner will not appear before Wednesday.

Prosecutors are set to decide whether and how to charge 32-year-old Nick Reiner, who is being held in jail without bail. He was arrested several hours after his parents were found dead in their home in the upscale Brentwood neighborhood of Los Angeles on Sunday, police said.

Rob Reiner was the Emmy-winning star of the sitcom "All in the Family" who went on to direct films including "When Harry Met Sally..." and "The Princess Bride" He was an outspoken liberal activist for decades. Michele Singer Reiner was a photographer, movie producer and advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. They had been married for 36 years.

Nick Reiner's attorney didn't comment further Tuesday. Investigators believe Rob and Michele Singer Reiner died from stab wounds, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press.

The killings were especially shocking given the warm comic legacy of the family. Rob Reiner was the son of comedy legend Carl Reiner, who died in 2020 at age 98.

Three months ago, Nick Reiner was photographed with his parents and siblings at the premiere of his father's film "Spinal Tap 2: The End Continues."

He had spoken publicly of his struggles with addiction, cycling in and out of treatment facilities with bouts of homelessness in between through his teen years. Rob and Nick Reiner explored — and seemed to improve — their relationship through the making of the 2016 film, "Being Charlie."

Nick Reiner co-wrote and Rob Reiner directed the film about the struggles of an addicted son and a famous father. It was not autobiographical but included several elements of their lives.

"It forced us to understand ourselves better than we had," Rob Reiner told the AP in 2016. "I told Nick while we were making it, I said, 'You know it doesn't matter, whatever happens to this thing, we won already.'"

Rob Reiner was long one of the most prolific directors in Hollywood, and his work included some of the most memorable movies of the 1980s and '90s, including "This is Spinal Tap" and "A Few Good Men."

Trump sues BBC for $10B, accusing it of defamation

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump filed a lawsuit Monday seeking $10 billion in damages from the BBC, accusing the British broadcaster of defamation as well as deceptive and unfair trade practices.

The 33-page lawsuit accuses the BBC of broadcasting a "false, defamatory, deceptive, disparaging, inflammatory and malicious depiction of President Trump," calling it "a brazen attempt to interfere in and influence" the 2024 presidential election.

It accused the BBC of "splicing together two entirely separate parts of President Trump's speech on January 6, 2021" in order to "intentionally misrepresent the meaning of what President Trump said."

The lawsuit, filed in a Florida court, seeks $5 billion in damages for defamation and $5 billion for unfair trade practices.

The BBC said it would defend the case.

The broadcaster apologized last month to Trump over the edit of the Jan. 6 speech. But the publicly funded BBC rejected claims it had defamed him, after Trump threatened legal action.

BBC chairman Samir Shah had called it an "error of judgment," which triggered the resignations of the BBC's top executive and its head of news.

The speech took place before some of Trump's supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol as Congress was poised to certify President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 election that Trump falsely alleged was stolen from him.

The BBC had broadcast the hourlong documentary — titled "Trump: A Second Chance?" — days before the 2024 U.S. presidential election. It spliced together three quotes from two sections of the 2021 speech, delivered almost an hour apart, into what appeared to be one quote in which Trump urged supporters to march with him and "fight like hell." Among the parts cut out was a section where Trump said he wanted supporters to demonstrate peacefully.

Trump said earlier Monday that he was suing the BBC "for putting words in my mouth."

"They actually put terrible words in my mouth having to do with Jan. 6 that I didn't say, and they're beautiful words, that I said, right?" the president said unprompted during an appearance in the Oval Office. "They're beautiful words, talking about patriotism and all of the good things that I said. They didn't say that, but they put terrible words."

The president's lawsuit was filed in Florida. Deadlines to bring the case in British courts expired more than a year ago.

Legal experts have brought up potential challenges to a case in the U.S. given that the documentary was not shown in the country.

The lawsuit alleges that people in the U.S. can watch the BBC's original content by using the subscription streaming platform BritBox or a virtual private network service.

NATION

Authorities seek leads on Brown gunman

Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Authorities knocked on doors in search of video and sifted through snow and dumpsters for other evidence that might lead them to the Brown University gunman, whose face was covered or not visible in footage captured before and after the weekend attack that killed two students and wounded nine others.

Officials on Monday released three new videos of the man they believe carried out Saturday's attack that show him wearing a mask and a dark two-tone jacket. Although his face wasn't visible, the footage from about two hours before the shooting provided the clearest images yet of the suspect.

The agency offered a $50,000 reward for information leading to the identification, arrest and conviction of the person responsible.

"We're asking for the public's assistance," Providence's police chief, Col. Oscar Perez, said at a news conference, urging people who might recognize the suspect to call a tip line.

Police renewed their search after releasing a person of interest Sunday once they determined the evidence pointed elsewhere.

The abrupt change of direction marked a setback in the investigation as questions swirl about campus security, the apparent lack of school video evidence and whether the focus on the person of interest gave the attacker more time to escape.

Gov. Dan McKee requested additional local police at schools to provide reassurance for students, families and educators.

In a neighborhood near the university, a line of officers scraped their feet through a snow-covered yard looking for evidence. Meanwhile, agents identifying themselves as U.S. marshals asked locals if they had security cameras.

The shooting occurred as final exams were underway at Brown, one of the nation's oldest and most prestigious schools. Investigators were not immediately sure how the shooter got inside the first-floor auditorium-style classroom where students were preparing for an upcoming exam.



ROBERT F. BUKATY / AP

Members of the FBI Evidence Response Team search Monday near the campus of Brown University in Providence, R.I.

Ella Cook, 19, a sophomore who was vice president of the Brown College Republicans and beloved in her church in Birmingham, Ala., was one of the students killed, according to her pastor at home. In announcing her death Sunday, the Rev. R. Craig Smalley described Cook as "an incredible grounded, faithful, bright light" who encouraged and "lifted up those around her."

The other student who was killed was MukhammadAziz Umurzokov, an 18-year-old freshman majoring in biochemistry and neuroscience. He was helping a friend at a review session for an economics final when he was shot, his sister said.

As a child, Umurzokov suffered a neurological condition that required surgery, and he later wore a back brace because of scoliosis, said Samira Umurzokova, noting that the family immigrated to the U.S. from Uzbekistan when she, her brother and sister were young. He knew from an early age he wanted to be a neurosurgeon to help others like himself.

"He had so many hardships in his life, and he got into this amazing school and tried so hard to follow through with the promise he made when was 7 years old," she told the AP by phone Monday.

Ballroom called security matter

BY DARLENE SUPERVILLE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration said in a court filing Monday that the president's White House ballroom construction project must continue for unexplained national security reasons and because a preservationists' organization that wants it stopped has no standing to sue.

The filing was in response to a lawsuit filed last Friday by the National Trust for Historic Preservation asking a federal judge to halt President Donald Trump's project until it goes through multiple independent reviews and a public comment period and wins approval from Congress.

The administration's 36-page filing included a declaration from Matthew C. Quinn, deputy director of the U.S. Secret Service, the agency responsible for the security of the president and other high-ranking officials, that said more work on the site of the former White House East Wing is still needed to meet the agency's "safety and security requirements." The filing did not explain the specific national security concerns; the administration has offered to share classified details with the judge in a private, in-person setting without the plaintiffs present.



PABLO MARTINEZ MONSIVAIS/AP

Cranes work on the site of the ballroom at the White House, where the East Wing once stood.

The East Wing had sat atop a emergency operations bunker for the president.

Quinn said even a temporary halt to construction would "consequently hamper" the agency's ability to fulfill its statutory obligations and its protective mission.

A hearing in the case was scheduled for Tuesday in federal court in Washington.

The government's response offered the most comprehensive look yet at the ballroom construction project, including a window into how it was so swiftly approved by the Trump administration bureaucracy and its expanding scope.

The filings assert that final plans for the ballroom have yet to be finalized despite the continuing demolition and other work to prepare the site for eventual construction. Below-ground work on the site continues, wrote John Stanwich, the National Park Service's liaison to the White House, and work on the foundations is set to begin in January. Above-ground construction "is not anticipated to begin until April 2026, at the earliest," he wrote.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation did not respond to requests for comment. The group last week asked the U.S. District Court to block Trump's project.

Trump had the East Wing torn down in October as part of his plan to build an estimated $300 million, 90,000-square-foot ballroom able to accommodate about 1,000 people before his term ends in January 2029.

The Trust asserts that the plans should have been submitted to the National Capital Planning Commission, the Commission of Fine Arts and Congress before any action was taken. The lawsuit notes that the Trust wrote to those entities and the National Park Service on Oct. 21, after East Wing demolition began, urging a stop to the project and asking the administration to comply with federal law, but received no response.

The administration argued in its response to the lawsuit that the president has the authority to modify the White House and included the extensive history of changes and additions to the Executive Mansion since it was built more than 200 years ago. It also asserted that the president is not subject to the statutes cited by the plaintiffs.

Department of Justice attorneys said in the filing that the plaintiff's claims about the East Wing demolition are "moot" because the tear-down cannot be undone.

Evacuations follow levee breaches near Seattle

Associated Press

TUKWILA, Wash. — Residents near a breached levee in Washington state were told to evacuate early Tuesday, just hours after an evacuation alert was lifted for residents near another broken levee in the same county.

Police in Pacific, about 20 miles south of Seattle, urged people in the evacuation area near the White River to "Go Now!" The National Weather Service office in Seattle issued a flash flood warning for the levee breach on the river in King County.

The levee breaches followed days of heavy rain and flooding that inundated communities, forced the evacuations of tens of thousands of people and prompted scores of rescues throughout western Washington state.

Early Tuesday, a man who drove past warning signs was found dead in a car submerged in floodwaters in the first reported death.

Rescue swimmers found the driver and his vehicle in about 6 feet of water in a ditch in the Snohomish area northeast of Seattle, the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office said in a news release. The driver, believed to be a 33-year-old man, was pronounced dead at the scene.

NATION

New York City getting Vegas-style casinos

By Philip Marcelo
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The New York Mets' ballpark in Queens. A Bronx golf course once operated by President Donald Trump's company. A slot parlor on a horse racing track near John F. Kennedy International Airport.

The three disparate sites, located far from the tourist hub of Manhattan, will become the future homes of New York City's first Las Vegas-style resort casinos.

The state Gaming Commission on Monday awarded the three projects licenses to operate in the lucrative metropolitan-area market during a meeting at a riverside park in upper Manhattan.

The panel approved the licenses with the condition that the companies each appoint an outside monitor that would report regularly to the commission to ensure they meet their financial and legal obligations, as well as the promised investments to local communities.

Brian O'Dwyer, the commission's chair, said the state looked forward to the promise of jobs, infrastructure improvements and gaming revenue being realized.



SHoP Architects/AP

A rendering shows the Hard Rock's casino proposal in the Queens borough of New York.

Democratic New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said in a statement the projects would pump billions of dollars into the state's transit and education systems and create tens of thousands of jobs.

But a handful of protesters opposed to billionaire Mets owner Steve Cohen's Hard Rock plan vowed to continue their fight in court. They and other casino opponents worry the projects will only increase gambling addiction.

Cohen and Hard Rock's proposal calls for an $8.1 billion casino complex on a parking lot next to the Mets' Citi Field that would include a performance venue, hotel and retail space.

Bally's has proposed a roughly $4 billion casino at the Ferry Point golf course in the Bronx that would include a hotel, event center, meeting spaces, restaurants and other amenities.

And Resorts World has proposed investing more than $5 billion to expand its slots parlor at Aqueduct Race Track in Queens into a full casino with a hotel, dining and entertainment options.

The projects bested several other proposals that fell by the wayside during the high-stakes competition.

Among them were three casinos proposed for Manhattan that were rejected by local boards, including a Caesars Palace in the heart of Times Square backed by rapper Jay-Z. A plan for a resort on Coney Island's iconic boardwalk in Brooklyn was also defeated by local opposition, and MGM abruptly pulled out of the once-crowded sweepstakes, despite local support.

The state gaming commission was authorized to license up to three casinos in the New York City area after voters approved a referendum in 2013 opening the door to casino gambling statewide.

Four full casinos, all upstate, now offer table games. The state also runs nine gambling halls without live table games, many of them also miles away from Manhattan.

FDA: Retailers didn't pull ByHeart formula quickly enough after recall

Associated Press

Four of the nation's top retail stores failed to promptly pull contaminated infant formula tied to a dangerous botulism outbreak from their shelves, federal health officials said in warning letters posted Monday.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration sent letters to leaders at Walmart, Target, Kroger and Albertsons, saying the companies continued to sell ByHeart infant formula for days or weeks after a Nov. 11 recall of all products in the outbreak that has sickened more than 50 babies in 19 states.

"As a participant in the supply chain, your firm should take prompt and effective action when notified of a product recall," FDA officials said in warning letters sent to the companies on Dec. 12 and posted online Monday.

The formula was found at Target stores in 20 states "well after the recall was initiated," one letter said. In addition, it was sold at a Target store in New Hampshire on Nov. 16, despite an electronic block on the product's sales code, the FDA noted. And at a Target store in Arkansas, single-serve packs of ByHeart formula were promoted with a "Sale!" sign and a $2 discount from Nov. 16 to Nov. 22.

Information from state and local health officials said ByHeart formula was found at Walmart stores in 21 states from Nov. 12 to Nov. 26. The formula was found in Albertsons stores in 11 states from Nov. 12 to Nov. 19 and at Kroger stores in 10 states from Nov. 12 to Nov. 19.

In addition, the companies failed to provide FDA with evidence that corrective actions have been put in place, despite multiple requests, the agency said. The companies have 15 working days to respond to the letters.

Walmart officials said in a statement that no ByHeart formula was sold after cash registers were blocked from selling the formula following the recall.

Albertsons officials said the company worked closely with suppliers and regulators to identify and remove the products and communicate to customers.

All of the babies in the outbreak have been hospitalized and treated with an IV medication to stop the progress of the disease. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention expanded the outbreak to include all babies treated for botulism after consuming ByHeart formula since it was first produced in 2023.

Steven Mandernach, executive director at the Association of Food and Drug Officials, said the FDA itself was slow to distribute information about the recall with state and local food safety officials. The agency didn't fully share product lists until Nov. 14 — nearly a week after the initial recall of two lots of ByHeart formula on Nov. 8.



Cheyanne Mumphrey/AP

Stephen Dexter holds a container of ByHeart baby formula, which was recently recalled by ByHeart, in Flagstaff, Ariz., on Nov. 12

He said it was "disappointing" in an outbreak involving the sole source of nutrition for vulnerable infants.

"There probably wasn't the sense of urgency to ensure the product was off the market that I would expect," Mandernach said.

FDA expands approval of libido-boosting pill for postmenopausal women

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. health officials have expanded approval of a much-debated drug aimed at boosting female libido, saying the once-a-day pill can now be taken by postmenopausal women up to 65 years old.

The announcement Monday from the Food and Drug Administration broadens the drug's use to older women who have gone through menopause.

The pill, Addyi, was first approved 10 years ago for premenopausal women who report experiencing emotional stress due to low sex drive.

Addyi, marketed by Sprout Pharmaceuticals, was initially expected to become a blockbuster drug, filling an important niche in women's health.

But the drug came with unpleasant side effects including dizziness and nausea, and it carries a safety warning about the dangers of combining it with alcohol.

The boxed warning cautions that drinking while consuming the pill can cause dangerously low blood pressure and fainting.

If patients have several drinks, the label recommends waiting a few hours before taking the drug or skipping one dose.

Sales of Addyi, which acts on brain chemicals that affect mood and appetite, fell short of Wall Street's initial expectations.

In 2019, the FDA approved a second drug for low female libido, an on-demand injection that acts on a different set of neurological chemicals.

The medical condition for a troublingly low sexual appetite, called hypoactive sexual desire disorder, has been recognized since the 1990s and is thought to affect a significant portion of American women, according to surveys.

After the blockbuster success of Viagra for men in the 1990s, drugmakers began pouring money into research and potential therapies for sexual dysfunction in women.

But diagnosing the condition is complicated because of how many factors can affect libido, especially after menopause, when falling hormone levels trigger a number of biological changes and medical symptoms.

Doctors are supposed to rule out a number of other issues, including relationship problems, medical conditions, depression and other mental disorders, before prescribing medication.

WORLD

Zelenskyy: Proposals to end war could be offered to Russia soon

By Illia Novikov
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says proposals being negotiated with U.S. officials for a deal to end the fighting in Russia's nearly 4-year-old invasion of his country could be finalized within days, after which American envoys will present them to the Kremlin before possible further meetings in the U.S. next weekend.

A draft peace plan discussed with the U.S. during talks in Berlin on Monday is "not perfect" but is "very workable," Zelenskyy told reporters hours after the discussions. He cautioned, however, that some key issues — notably what happens to Ukrainian territory occupied by Russian forces — remain unresolved.

U.S.-led peace efforts appear to be picking up momentum.

But as the spotlight shifts to Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin may balk at some of the proposals thrashed out by officials from Washington, Kyiv and Western Europe, including postwar security guarantees for Ukraine.

Zelenskyy said that after the Berlin talks, "we are very close to (a deal on) strong security guarantees."

The security proposal will be based on Western help in keeping the Ukrainian army strong, an official from a NATO nation said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.



Lisi Niesner/AP

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff at the Chancellery in Berlin, on Monday as U.S.-led peace efforts appear to be picking up momentum.

"Europeans will lead a multinational and multi-domain force to strengthen those troops and to secure Ukraine from the land, sea and air, and the U.S. will lead a ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanism, with international participation," the official said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov repeated Tuesday that Russia wants a comprehensive peace deal, not a temporary truce.

If Ukraine seeks "momentary, unsustainable solutions, we are unlikely to be ready to participate," he said.

"We want peace — we don't want a truce that would give Ukraine a respite and prepare for the continuation of the war," he told reporters. "We want to stop this war, achieve our goals, secure our interests, and guarantee peace in Europe for the future."

American officials said Monday there's consensus from Ukraine and Europe on about 90% of the U.S.-authored peace plan. President Donald Trump said: "I think we're closer now than we have been, ever" to a peace settlement.

Plenty of potential pitfalls remain, notably the land issue.

Zelenskyy reiterated that Kyiv rules out recognizing Moscow's control over any part of the Donbas, an economically important region in eastern Ukraine made up of Luhansk and Donetsk. Russia's army doesn't fully control either but Trump has previously indicated that Ukraine will have to cede territory.

Putin wants all the areas in four key regions that his forces have seized, as well as the Crimean Peninsula, which Moscow illegally annexed in 2014, to be recognized as Russian territory.

Australian police say Bondi Beach shooting was inspired by ISIS

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — A mass shooting in which 15 people were killed during a Hanukkah celebration at Sydney's Bondi Beach was "a terrorist attack inspired by Islamic State," Australia's federal police commissioner Krissy Barrett said Tuesday.

The suspects were a father and son, aged 50 and 24, authorities have said. The older man, whom state officials named as Sajid Akram, was shot dead. His son was being treated at a hospital.

A news conference by political and law enforcement leaders on Tuesday was the first time officials confirmed their beliefs about the suspects' ideologies. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the remarks were based on evidence obtained, including "the presence of Islamic State flags in the vehicle that has been seized."

Indian police on Tuesday said the older suspect was originally from southern city of Hyderabad and held an Indian passport. They said he married a woman of European origin and migrated to Australia in 1998 in search of employment opportunities, maintaining little contact with his family in India.

"The family members have expressed no knowledge of his radical mindset or activities, nor of the circumstances that led to his radicalization," Telangana State Police Chief B. Shivadhar Reddy said in a statement.

There are 25 people still being treated in hospitals after Sunday's massacre, 10 of them in critical condition. Three of them are patients in a children's hospital.

Also among them is Ahmed al Ahmed, who was captured on video tackling and disarming one assailant, before pointing the man's weapon at him and then setting it on the ground.

Those killed ranged in age from 10 to 87 years old. They were attending a Hanukkah event at Australia's most famous beach Sunday when the gunshots rang out.

Albanese and the leaders of some of Australia's states have pledged to tighten the country's already strict gun laws in what would be the most sweeping reforms since a shooter killed 35 people in Port Arthur, Tasmania, in 1996. Mass shootings in Australia have since been rare.

Officials divulged more information as public questions and anger grew on the third day following the attack about how the suspects were able to plan and enact it and whether Australian Jews had been sufficiently protected from rising antisemitism.

Albanese announced plans to further restrict access to guns, in part because it emerged the older suspect had amassed his cache of six weapons legally.

"The suspected murderers, callous in how they allegedly coordinated their attack, appeared to have no regard for the age or ableness of their victims," said Barrett. "It appears the alleged killers were interested only in a quest for a death tally."



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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Brian Walshe guilty of murder in wife's death

MA BOSTON — Brian Walshe was found guilty Monday of killing his wife, whose body has never been found after she disappeared from their Massachusetts home on New Year's Day nearly three years ago.

Ana Walshe, an immigrant from Serbia, was last seen early Jan. 1, 2023, after a New Year's Eve dinner at the couple's home. Walshe was convicted of first-degree murder after pleading guilty last month to lesser charges of misleading police and illegally disposing of her body.

Prosecutors leaned heavily on searches made by devices connected to Brian Walshe that related to dismembering bodies and cleaning up blood. The search questions included "dismemberment and best ways to dispose of a body," "how long before a body starts to smell" and "hacksaw best tool to dismember."

4 charged with plotting New Year's Eve attacks

CA LOS ANGELES — Federal authorities on Monday announced the arrests of four alleged members of an extremist group who are suspected of planning coordinated bombing attacks on New Year's Eve across Southern California.

The suspects were arrested last week in Lucerne Valley, a desert city east of Los Angeles, where they were suspected of preparing to test improvised explosive devices ahead of the planned bombings, according to the federal criminal complaint filed Saturday.

They are members of an offshoot of a pro-Palestinian group dubbed the Turtle Island Liberation Front, the complaint said. During a news conference Monday, First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli described the group as a "radical anti-government" group.

They each face charges including conspiracy and possession of a destructive device, court documents show.

The group is alleged to have been plotting to set off a series of bombings at multiple targets in California beginning on New Year's Eve and also planned to target Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and vehicles Attorney General Pam Bondi said on social media.

Dem claims upset in state House special election

GA ATLANTA — Democrat Eric Gisler claimed an upset victory Tuesday in a special election in a historically Republican Georgia state House district.

Gisler said he was the winner of the contest, in which he was leading Republican Mack "Dutch" Guest by about 200 votes out of more than 11,000 in final unofficial returns.

Robert Sinners, a spokesperson with the secretary of state's office, said there could be a few provisional ballots left before the tally is finalized.

Republicans remain firmly in control of the Georgia House, but their majority is likely fall to 99-81 when lawmakers return in January.

Most of the district is in Oconee County, a Republican suburb of Athens, reaching into heavily Democratic Athens-Clarke County. Republicans gerrymandered Athens-Clarke to include one strongly Democratic district, parceling out the rest of the county into three seats intended to be Republican.



ALLISON ROBBERT/AP

Meet me under the mistletoe

Participants hold up hearts with their hands before the synchronized kiss in an attempt to break the Guinness World Records title for most couples kissing under the mistletoe Saturday, in Washington, D.C. The 1,435 couples shattered the previous record of 480 kissing couples.

Group appeals on law banning DEI initiatives

AL MONTGOMERY — A group of students and professors at public universities across Alabama are asking an appeals court to halt a state law that bans diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in public schools and prohibits the endorsement of what Republican lawmakers dubbed "divisive concepts" related to race and gender.

The Alabama measure, which took effect in October 2024, is part of a wave of proposals from Republican lawmakers across the country taking aim at DEI programs on college campuses.

The state law prohibits public schools and universities from using state funds for any programs or curriculum that endorse "divisive concepts" related to race, religion, gender identity and ethnicity.

U.S. District Judge David Proctor allowed the law to remain in place, writing that a professor's academic freedom does not override a public university's decisions about the content of classroom instruction.

Antonio Ingram, a Legal Defense Fund lawyer for the plaintiffs, said the law makes professors vulnerable to frivolous investigations and limiting their ability to present vetted research.

Man arrested after painting crosswalk

CA LOS ANGELES — Frustrated by the city's slow progress in painting crosswalks at intersections they believe are unsafe, activists in Los Angeles have been picking up paint rollers and doing it themselves. Now one of them has been arrested on a vandalism charge.

In a video posted online, Jonathan Hale wears a bright yellow safety vest as he's handcuffed by a police officer Sunday. His group, People's Vision Zero, had organized a guerrilla "paint party" at a four-way crossing in a leafy residential neighborhood of west LA.

Hale and his allies have organized operations across the city at intersections they deem dangerous to pedestrians.

The group sets up barricades and swiftly uses rollers to paint the road with bright white markers that they say are code compliant.

"Now, the city will have to spend taxpayer dollars removing our half-finished crosswalk when this whole situation could have been avoided if the mayor's office didn't choose to ignore an issue where people's lives are at stake," Hale said following his arrest.

Hale was cited for misdemeanor vandalism.

Hunter Biden disbarred after gun, tax conviction

CT WATERBURY — A judge on Monday disbarred Hunter Biden in Connecticut for violating the state's attorney conduct rules, a decision that comes after complaints were made about the federal gun and tax charges Biden was convicted of before being pardoned last year by his father, former President Joe Biden.

In an agreement with the state office that disciplines lawyers, Hunter Biden consented to being disbarred and admitted to attorney misconduct, but he did not admit to any criminal wrongdoing.

He was separately disbarred for similar reasons in Washington, D.C., in May.

Hunter Biden did not speak as he and his lawyer, Ross Garber, appeared via video at a virtual court hearing before Judge Trial Referee Patrick L. Carroll III in Waterbury.

Judge refuses to grant Palin new libel trial

NY NEW YORK — Former vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin's bid for a new libel trial against The New York Times was rejected Monday by a New York federal judge who also refused Palin's request that the judge recuse himself.

Judge Jed S. Rakoff said in a written opinion that he was "scrupulous" in affording Palin a fair trial last April, when a jury concluded that the Times did not libel the former Alaska governor in a 2017 editorial.

The lawsuit said Palin was libeled by an editorial about gun control published after U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise, a Louisiana Republican, was wounded in 2017 when a man with a history of anti-GOP activity opened fire on a congressional baseball team practice in Washington.

From Associated Press reports

FACES

The talent behind the curtain

Upcoming Academy Awards to recognize casting for the first time with new category

By Mark Kennedy
Associated Press

Behind the Wizard of Oz in the two-part "Wicked" movies were people actually pulling the strings. They set the table for the hit double-punch movies long before the cameras ever rolled out: The casting directors helped pick who made it to Oz.

"Our job is to know the actors that are out there or know how to find the actors that we don't know," says Bernard Telsey, one of the heavy hitters in the world of casting, who, with Tiffany Little Canfield, populated both "Wicked" movies.

Casting will get some Oscar love next year. A new prize for achievement in casting was added to the Academy Awards in March, a step casting directors believe is long overdue. The 98th Academy Awards will air live on ABC on March 15, 2026.

"It's really hard for people to understand what it is that we do because it's so private," Telsey says. "It's only going to make the profession that much stronger and people that much more aware of what we do."

'Feels invisible'

The Emmys have three categories for casting, and the Critics Choice Awards just added a casting trophy this year. The casting industry has its own prize, the Artios Awards, first held in 1985. But the Golden Globes and Tony Awards don't recognize the profession.

"When casting is great, it sometimes feels invisible. Because it's so well done, you don't see the fingerprints," says Destiny Lilly, president of the Casting Society, who also works with Telsey. "I think that it's taken time just to get recognition for that art because a lot of the work that casting directors do happens before a lot of the rest of the production team is brought on board."

Telsey, along with his team at The Telsey Office, casts in every medium, from the films "Mary Poppins Returns" and "Kiss of the Spider Woman" to TV shows like "The Gilded Age" and "Only Murders in the Building." He came up through theater, casting such Tony Award-winners as "Maybe Happy Ending," "Kinky Boots" and "Hairspray."

"Wicked" and "Wicked: For Good" represented one of his team's biggest challenges, filling hundreds of roles and dance parts over more than a year of filming and across continents.

Even though it may have seemed inevitable that Cynthia Erivo was a natural Elphaba and Ariana Grande was a shoo-in for Glinda, that's hindsight. Like all casting decisions, it was a bit of a gamble.

"Not until they got in the room were you like, 'Oh, this is magic. This has to be. There is nobody else to play the part but the two of them,'" he says. "You don't really know until you get to see it."

To keep tabs on as many actors as possible, Telsey goes to the theater four or five nights a week and spends weekends trying to catch up on TV and movies. Twice a week, he and his staff meet to trade tips about who they're seeing and make recommendations.

"Every day you feel like you're behind and there's another hundred actors I don't know and how am I going to meet them and how am I going to see them? So it's a constant race," he says.

A casting coup

Casting directors first talk with the directors, writers and producers to get a sense of what their vision is for the project and then get the right actors to audition. Telsey likens it to how a costume designer must know all the fabrics and colors available.

Lilly recently scored a coup by suggesting comedian Bill Burr join the latest Broadway revival of David Mamet's "Glengarry Glen Ross" alongside Kieran Culkin and Bob Odenkirk. It was Burr's stage debut, but Mamet's explosive dialogue seemed to fit perfectly.

"I think that there's so many people who haven't done theater who can really shine. They just need to be given the right opportunity and the right project and have the right director working with them," she says.

Over the years, Telsey has seen the walls between film, TV and theater work fall away as actors change mediums freely.

"It's a myth that they're different. They're technically different, but they're the same. Good acting is good acting," he says. "Glenn Close can do a musical, a play, a television show and a movie and be nominated in every ... category. Those things have changed over the last 20 years."

Telsey has also seen technology change the job, especially as auditions move online, streaming TV explodes and the movie and film business get more global.

"Most projects you have only a short amount of time to find a cast," he says. "Time is not on our side. It's only going to get tighter as budgets get smaller for the future."



Benjamin Rivera/AP

Casting director Bernard Telsey says the new Oscars prize for achievement in casting will help make people more aware of the profession.

New this week: 'Him,' 'Relay,' Peter Criss album, 'Fallout'

Associated Press

Here's a collection curated by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists of what's arriving on TV, streaming services and music platforms this week.

Movies

■ The Jordan Peele-produced "Him" (Friday on Peacock) takes the hard knocks of the gridiron to bloody extremes. It stars Tyriq Withers as an up-and-coming quarterback whose mentorship with the veteran champ (Marlon Wayans) grows increasingly dark and surreal. In my review, I wrote that "Him" has a decent point to make about QB hero worship, "the problem is that has exactly one thing to say, which it does again and again."

■ In David Mackenzie's "Relay," Riz Ahmed plays a fixer who runs a covert service that brokers deals between corrupt companies and potential threats. To preserve anonymity, he uses a "relay" telephone service, usually for deaf or speech-impaired people, to disguise identities. This nifty thriller streams Friday on Netflix after a late-summer theatrical release. Co-starring Lily James and Sam Worthington.

■ For a particularly seductive December, you can spend your holidays with Wong Kar-Wai. The Criterion Channel is hosting many of the Hong Kong filmmaker's finest films, including "Chungking Express," "Fallen Angels" and "In the Mood for Love," as well as his first TV series, "Blossoms Shanghai." A hit in China, the 30-part series is set amid the 1990s opening of the Chinese economy and the relaunch of the Shanghai Stock Exchange. New episodes debut every Monday.

— AP Film Writer Jake Coyle



Prime Video

Ella Purnell stars in the TV adaptation of "Fallout." Season 2 is now on Prime Video.

Music

■ Alex Warren. BigXthaPlug. Conan Gray. Ed Sheeran. Jelly Roll. Jessie Murph. The Kid LAROI. Laufey. Mgk. MONSTA X. Myles Smith. Nelly. Olivia Dean. Ravyn Lenae. Reneé Rapp. Shinedown. Zara Larsson. What do all these popular artists have in common? They're performing at the iHeartRadio Jingle Ball Tour! On Wednesday, ABC will air the iHeartRadio Z100's Jingle Ball 2025 holiday special — made up of a few tour stops — to become available to stream on Hulu the next day. It's all the fun of a star-studded pop concert from the comfort of your couch.

■ In 2023, glam rockers Kiss said its goodbyes for one final performance at New York City's Madison Square Garden. But that doesn't mean its musical story ended there. On Friday, Peter Criss — Kiss' original drummer and founding member who left and rejoined the group on a number of occasions — will release a brand-new, self-titled album.



Flatiron Recordings

A new album from Kiss drummer Peter Criss is out Friday.

— AP Music Writer Maria Sherman

Television

■ A second season of "Fallout" arrived on Prime Video Tuesday. Based on a hugely popular video game, it's a postapocalyptic series set two centuries after a nuclear war destroyed modern civilization. In Season 2, Justin Theroux, Macaulay Culkin and Kumail Nanjiani join the cast, which includes Ella Purnell and Walton Goggins.

■ Emily, of "Emily in Paris," is still living la dolce vita in Rome when Season 5 drops Thursday on Netflix. The show follows the adventures of an American expat played by Lily Collins.

■ A new documentary series called "Born to be Wild" follows six endangered baby animals that were orphaned or born as part of conservation programs. Narrated by Hugh Bonneville, it streams on Apple TV beginning Friday.

— Alicia Rancilio

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Jacqueline Smith

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Stars and Stripes (USPS 0417900) published daily (except Saturday, Sunday, 25 December and 1 January) for 50 cents (Monday through Thursday) and one dollar on Friday by Stars and Stripes Pacific, OPC 706 BOX 7, APO AP 96301-9001. Periodicals postage paid at San Francisco, CA Postmaster: Send address changes to Pacific Stars and Stripes, OPC 706 BOX 7, AP 96301-9001.

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OPINION

Where's the surveillance state when you need it?

By Jim Geraghty
Special to The Washington Post

I have never been a hardcore libertarian when it comes to surveillance cameras. We've long since gotten used to security cameras watching us not just in a bank lobby or at an ATM, but on street corners and in stores, bars, restaurants and all kinds of other establishments. I'm annoyed by the speed cameras in Washington, D.C., but that's mostly because they think 10 mph above the speed limit is ticket-worthy, when it's just the default speed of most area drivers.

But there's something weird and unnerving about the situation with surveillance cameras in the recent horrific shooting on the Brown University campus in Providence, R.I.

On Saturday afternoon, some malevolence-minded individual brought either a very long gun (as described by one eyewitness) or a 9 mm handgun onto a college campus and covered his face. He entered Room 166 in the Barus and Holley building, where students were wrapping up a final exam review session for Econ 110, the "Principles of Economics" course.

And he went on a rampage, firing more than 40 rounds, killing two people and wounding nine more. According to a statement from Brown University president Christina Paxson released Sunday, one student remains in critical condition.

Apparently there were no police or campus security around to confront or even follow the shooter as he left the scene. He left little or no clue to his identity or motive, and as of this writing, he is still at large.

And apparently, the entire time, he managed to avoid his face being captured by any surveillance camera.

Authorities did release images of a person of interest from surveillance footage outside the building, but the suspect isn't facing the camera, is wearing a hat and has virtually nothing distinguishable about him. (Hey, everybody at the Blaze, no need to rush on naming anyone based upon "gait analysis.")

On Sunday, authorities announced that a person who had been taken into custody was being released and was no longer a suspect. At a news conference late Sunday night, Providence Mayor Brett Smiley said, "At this time, we have no additional actionable information from the video that has been reviewed from the building. And so we are looking for new and additional video evidence … The video that was released was the corner of Hope and Waterman Streets. If you are in that area and you have video, you have home video, ring camera, security camera, you're a small-business owner, please reach out to us. Call that number 401-272-3121." The FBI is also welcoming tips in the investigation.

State Attorney General Peter Neronha said during the news conference, "If there was a piece of video where we could show you a face and say this is our person of interest or suspect, you'd have it."

Now, if your gut reaction is that an Ivy League campus must have security cameras all over the place, your instincts are correct. Back in 2021, John Wrenn, then a fifth-year doctoral candidate at Brown, wrote in the school newspaper, the Brown Daily Herald, that the school was becoming obsessive in its surveillance.

"Since 2017, my friends and I have marked the locations of approximately 150 surveillance cameras on College Hill," Wrenn wrote. "While this is only a fraction of Brown University's more than 800 cameras, the scope of the surveillance is staggering: It is impossible to cross (or even approach) Brown University without being surveilled. I encourage you to try."

Apparently, the shooter figured it out.

At Sunday night's news conference, a reporter asked the sort of question on the mind of anyone who's ever gotten a camera-based ticket: "In a state where somehow if you have a speeding ticket and a Flock camera or some other speeding camera can capture you, how you can have a position where there's hundreds of cameras in that immediate [area], maybe thousands … how is it possible not to have any other evidence surrounding this?"

Neronha responded, "There just weren't a lot of cameras in that Brown building. … The reality is, it's an old building attached to a new one. … We're not holding back video that we think would be useful."

Again, this doesn't make a ton of sense, as old buildings can have new security cameras installed. And while the Barus and Holley building is on one edge of campus, you would figure that no matter which direction the shooter fled in, he would have passed by at least one camera that could have gotten a glimpse of his face.

The failure of the university's system of surveillance cameras to generate more useful leads is a frustrating and infuriating wrinkle in an already frightening situation. And it raises the question: If a network of security cameras can't offer much help in a situation like this — why do we have them in place?

Jim Geraghty is National Review's senior political correspondent, where he writes the daily "Morning Jolt" newsletter, among other writing duties.

Rise in military crashes, deaths warrants more scrutiny

The Virginian-Pilot and Daily Press Editorial Board

A deadly crash involving an Army helicopter and a passenger jet near Washington, D.C., early this year was the most horrific military aviation accident in recent memory, but unfortunately it was not an anomaly.

Data recently released by the Defense Department shows the rate of severe accidents has risen sharply since 2020, a trend that demands greater scrutiny by both the Pentagon and Congress.

In the 2025 budget year, the severe accident rate per 100,000 flight hours spiked 55% for military aircraft over the same period four years earlier, with the Marine Corps showing the biggest increase, nearly triple its previous rate. Ninety people lost their lives, and the accidents cost billions of dollars in damage.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Massachusetts Democrat, asked the Pentagon to provide the data this year while investigating deadly accidents involving the V-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft. The Osprey, as well as the H-64 Apache helicopter and the C-130 transport plane, accounted for much of the increase in 2024, according to an examination of the data by The Associated Press.

As of late last year, 64 personnel died and 93 were injured in Osprey crashes since the aircraft's introduction several years ago, according to the AP. In the 2024 budget year, the severe accident rate for the Apache was about 4½ times four years ago. The severe accident rate for the C-130 almost doubled last year over the same period four years ago.

Although data for 2025 was not part of this release to Congress, it appears the trend has continued this year. The Navy, which has a large presence in Hampton Roads, Va., saw a significant increase in the most serious aviation accidents, known as Class A, jumping to 14 this year from eight in 2024. Two jets fell off the deck of the USS Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier this year, and in October, a Super Hornet jet and a helicopter from the USS Nimitz both crashed into the South China Sea. And a collision between an Army H-60 Black Hawk helicopter and a commercial aircraft at Washington's Ronald Reagan National Airport killed 67 people.

Military experts interviewed by the AP indicate there could be multiple factors influencing the increase, including an accelerated pace of military operations over the past five years. In addition, flying time dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic, hampering the ability of pilots to gain valuable experience.

As the Navy noted in a statement to the AP, pilots also fly in "incredibly complex conditions." While acknowledging the increase in accidents must be addressed, the statement noted, "As a learning organization, we treat every flight and ground evolution as an opportunity to develop better training, create more effective procedures, and safeguard the operational readiness we work tirelessly to generate."

The Navy and other branches of the military no doubt take safety seriously, but the Pentagon should welcome additional scrutiny from Congress. The public has a right to know that every effort is being made to protect military personnel and civilians as well as the hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars invested in aircraft.

The Trump administration may be reluctant to accept additional oversight from Congress, and particularly Warren, but the interest here is certainly bipartisan. Warren, in fact, has joined Sen. Dan Sullivan, an Alaska Republican and fellow member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, in calling for greater transparency in investigations by the military's safety boards.

Currently, investigation reports are not shared with the public or Congress. National security concerns may come into play in some accidents, but there is no reason the reports cannot be shared with the Armed Services Committees in the Senate and House.

Any trends in the root causes of these accidents — from equipment failure to potential shortcomings in training — need to be identified swiftly to ensure the men and women aboard our military aircraft are adequately protected and that the planes and helicopters are providing safe, optimal performance.

Bizarro



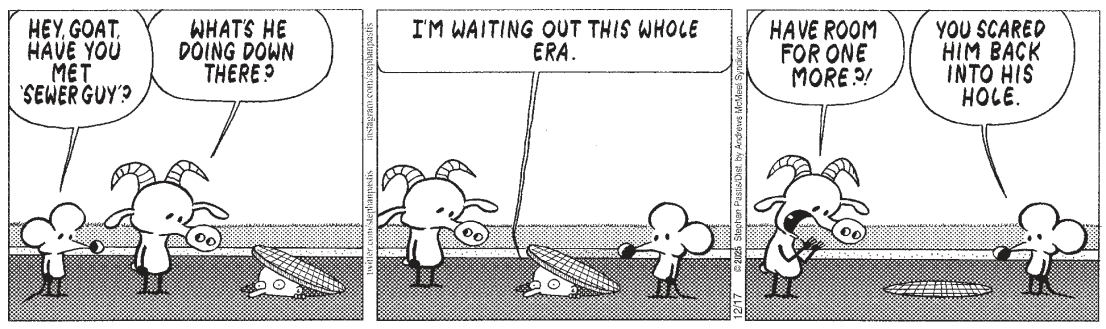
Loose Parts



Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



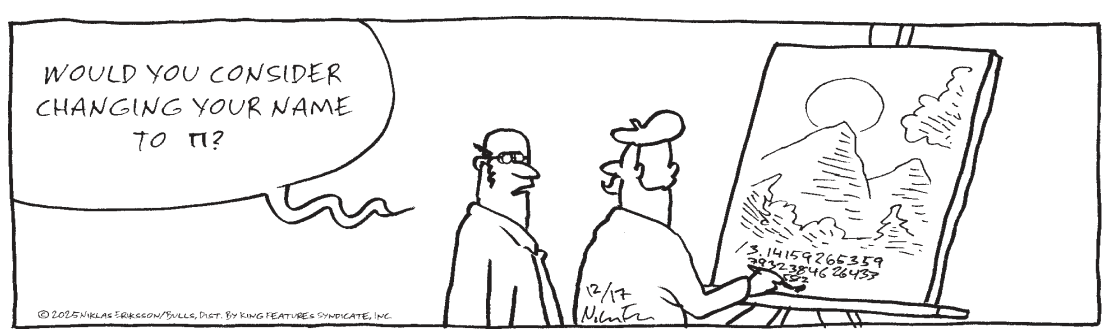
Non Sequitur



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 Aussie boots
5 Turkish title
8 Russian ruler
12 "Scram!"
13 California wine, for short
14 Dream, in Dijon
15 Internal dialogue
17 Lena of "The Reader"
18 Phone feature
19 Yogurt variety
21 Soul, to Camus
22 Daring Knievel
23 Young — (tots)
26 Chum
28 Put in office
31 On the briny
33 Turf
35 Swift jets
36 Ralph — Emerson
38 Former Delta rival
40 Compass dir.
41 Top choice, for short
43 "Sixth sense"
45 Musical speeds
47 German art songs
51 "I smell —!"
52 Autonomy
54 Chic beach resort
55 "Strange Magic" gp.
56 Disarray
57 Ogler's look
58 Diarist Anaïs
59 Undo a dele

DOWN

1 Cold War initials
2 Clarified butter
3 First-place medal
4 Director Coppola
5 Spring bloomers
6 Baseball's Hodges
7 Bracelet site
8 Garden tools
9 Altruistic
10 Athletic shoe brand
11 Monthly payment
16 Pack (down)
20 "A Man Called —" (Fredrik Backman novel)
23 Motor City labor org.
24 Code-breaking gp.
25 Like some billionaires
27 Parcel of land
29 Dol. fractions
30 Mao — -tung
32 Electrical device
34 Obsess over
37 Ab — (from the start)
39 "Dream on!"
42 Ruhr Valley city
44 Salon jobs
45 Towering
46 Huron neighbor
48 Song for two
49 Besides that
50 Take it easy
53 NFL's Manning

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

12-17 **CRYPTOQUIP**

CKUY S HSIBU BIJOL JG LVBW BUP PJBUPKUI GJI S LSIPQ, PKUQ OWOSHHQ UYX OL BJVYB KJB-CVHX.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: PLUNDERING CHICKEN VERY WELL-KNOWN FOR INVADING EUROPE IN THE FIFTH CENTURY: ATTILA THE HEN.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals H

SCOREBOARD

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

AP Top 25

The top 25 teams in The Associated Press' college basketball poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, and total points based on 25 points for a first-place vote through one point for a 25th-place vote and previous ranking.

	Record	Pts	Prv
1. Arizona (42)	9-0	1500	1
2. Michigan (15)	10-0	1470	2
3. Duke (3)	10-0	1406	3
4. Iowa St. (1)	11-0	1336	4
5. UConn	10-1	1286	5
6. Purdue	10-1	1195	6
7. Gonzaga	10-1	1109	8
8. Houston	10-1	1079	7
9. Michigan St.	9-1	1037	9
10. BYU	9-1	1017	10
11. Louisville	9-1	921	11
12. North Carolina	9-1	794	14
13. Vanderbilt	10-0	766	15
14. Arkansas	8-2	726	17
15. Nebraska	11-0	655	23
16. Alabama	7-3	644	12
17. Kansas	8-3	502	19
18. Illinois	8-3	483	13
19. Texas Tech	7-3	314	16
20. Tennessee	7-3	286	20
21. Auburn	8-3	283	21
22. St. John's	6-3	250	22
23. Florida	6-4	200	18
23. Virginia	9-1	200	24
25. Georgia	9-1	82	-

Others receiving votes: Southern Cal 68, Iowa 47, Seton Hall 46, LSU 19, Kentucky 19, UCLA 16, Clemson 14, California 13, Saint Mary's 12, Arizona St 5, Villanova 5, Notre Dame 4, Indiana 4, Miami (Ohio) 4, Miami 4, Utah St. 2, Saint Louis 1, Wisconsin 1.

USA Today Men's Top 25

The USA TODAY Sports Top 25 men's basketball poll, with team's records through Sunday in parentheses, total points based on 25 for first place through one point for 25th, ranking in last week's poll and first-place votes received.

		Pts	Prv	1st
1	Michigan (10-0)	759	1	16
2	Arizona (9-0)	755	2	14
3	Duke (10-0)	714	3	1
4	Iowa State (11-0)	659	4	0
5	Connecticut (10-1)	641	5	0
6	Purdue (10-1)	600	6	0
7	Gonzaga (10-1)	574	7	0
8	Houston (10-1)	551	8	0
9	Michigan State (9-1)	521	9	0
10	Brigham Young (9-1)	511	10	0
11	Louisville (9-1)	473	11	0
12	Vanderbilt (10-0)	390	14	0
13	North Carolina (9-1)	362	15	0
14	Arkansas (8-2)	347	17	0
15	Nebraska (11-0)	321	22	0
16	Alabama (7-3)	306	12	0
17	Kansas (8-3)	267	19	0
18	Illinois (8-3)	232	13	0
19	Texas Tech (7-3)	175	16	0
20	St. John's (6-3)	155	21	0
21	Florida (6-4)	140	18	0
22	Virginia (9-1)	134	25	0
23	Tennessee (7-3)	129	20	0
24	Auburn (8-3)	112	24	0
25	Iowa (9-2)	71	23	0

Dropped out: None.
Others receiving votes: Georgia (9-1) 43; Southern California (10-1) 32; UCLA (7-3) 13; Seton Hall (10-1) 12; Kentucky (7-4) 9; SMU (9-2) 9; Utah State (9-1) 8; Colorado (9-1) 6; LSU (9-1) 6; Oklahoma State (9-1) 6; Saint Louis (9-1) 6; Saint Mary's (9-2) 6; Yale (11-1) 5; Virginia Tech (10-2) 4; Wisconsin (7-3) 4; Clemson (8-3) 2; Missouri (10-2) 2; Ohio State (8-2) 2; North Carolina State (7-4) 1.

Monday's men's scores

SOUTH

Alabama A&M 68, North Alabama 60
East Texas A&M 70, SE Louisiana 69
Florida A&M 93, Albany State 77
Samford 106, Bryan College 51
Stetson 95, Rhodes 76
VCU 84, Niagara 58
Western Ky. 102, Campbellsville 59
Wofford 83, Gardner-Webb 57

MIDWEST

North Dakota State 101, Minnesota-Crookston 67
Wyoming 87, South Dakota State 72

SOUTHWEST

Arkansas-Pine Bluff 114, Ecclesia 64
McNeese 78, Houston Christian 68
TCU 69, Incarnate Word 65

Men's Top 25 schedule

Wednesday's games

No. 8 Gonzaga (10-1) vs. Campbell (5-5)
No. 12 Alabama (7-3) vs. S. Florida (6-4)
No. 15 Vanderbilt (10-0) at Memphis (4-5)
No. 18 Florida (6-4) vs. St. Francis (PA) (2-9)
No. 25 UCLA (7-3) vs. Arizona State (9-2)

Friday's games

No. 10 BYU (9-1) vs. Abilene Christian (7-3)
No. 25 UCLA (7-3) vs. Cal Poly (5-6)

Saturday's games

No. 1 Arizona (9-0) vs. San Diego State (5-3) at Phoenix
No. 3 Duke (10-0) vs. No. 16 Texas Tech (7-3) at New York
No. 6 Purdue (10-1) vs. No. 21 Auburn (8-3) at Indianapolis
No. 7 Houston (10-1) vs. No. 17 Arkansas (8-2) at Newark, N.J.
No. 9 Michigan State (9-1) vs. Oakland (5-6) at Detroit, Noon
No. 11 Louisville (9-1) vs. Montana (6-5), Noon
No. 14 North Carolina (9-1) vs. Ohio State (8-2) at Atlanta
No. 22 St. John's (6-3) vs. Kentucky (7-4) at Atlanta
No. 24 Virginia (9-1) vs. Maryland (6-5)

AP Women's Top 25

The top 25 teams in The Associated Press' women's college basketball poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, and total points based on 25 points for a first-place vote through one point for a 25th-place vote and previous ranking.

	Record	Pts	Prv
1. UConn (24)	10-0	792	1
2. Texas (8)	12-0	776	2
3. South Carolina	10-1	727	3
4. UCLA	9-1	710	4
5. LSU	11-0	642	5
6. Michigan	9-1	640	6
7. Maryland	12-0	583	7
8. Oklahoma	11-1	566	9
9. TCU	11-0	560	8
10. Iowa St.	12-0	555	10
11. Iowa	10-1	430	11
12. Kentucky	11-1	414	15
13. Vanderbilt	9-0	403	14
14. Mississippi	10-1	322	17
15. Baylor	10-2	302	13
16. Louisville	10-3	297	22
17. Tennessee	7-2	278	18
18. North Carolina	9-3	273	12
19. Southern Cal	7-3	246	16
20. Notre Dame	8-2	221	19
21. Ohio St.	9-1	180	21
22. Washington	9-1	161	20
23. Nebraska	11-0	123	24
24. Michigan St.	9-1	63	25
25. Princeton	10-1	40	-

Others receiving votes: Oklahoma St. 35, Texas Tech 26, Alabama 13, Georgia 12, NC State 8, Arizona St. 1, Illinois 1.

Monday's women's scores

EAST

Mount St. Mary's 81, Mercyhurst 52
Siena 94, Central Connecticut 56

SOUTH

Campbell 68, Norfolk State 63
Fla. International 80, Florida Atlantic 63
Georgia 77, North Carolina A&T 49
Grambling State 93, Jarvis Christian 38
Murray State 85, Memphis 57
Northwestern State 65, McNeese 58
Radford 100, Concord 48
UAB 70, Alcorn State 32
Vanderbilt 87, South Florida 58

MIDWEST

Kent State 117, Davis & Elkins 37
Loyola Chicago 59, Oakland 56

SOUTHWEST

East Texas A&M 76, Texas Southern 60
Lamar 77, Texas A&M-CC 49
Oklahoma State 90, Tulsa 58
UT Rio Grande Valley 87, Stephen F. Austin 85
UTSA 82, Texas AM Kingsville 40

FAR WEST

Arizona 89, Chicago State 70
Northern Arizona 95, Park University-Gilbert 53
Sacramento State 102, Simpson University 42
UC San Diego 67, California Baptist 59

Women's Top 25 schedule

Wednesday's games

No. 1 UConn (10-0) vs. Marquette (7-3)
No. 2 Texas (12-0) vs. Northwestern State (4-4)
No. 14 Ole Miss (10-1) vs. Mississippi Valley State (1-8)
No. 16 Louisville (10-3) vs. Eastern Kentucky (7-3)
No. 18 North Carolina (9-3) vs. UNC Wilmington (3-5)

Thursday's games

No. 3 S. Carolina (10-1) at S. Florida (6-4)
No. 13 Vanderbilt (9-0) vs. Albany (9-2)
No. 15 Baylor (10-2) vs. Southern University (4-5)
No. 19 USC (7-3) vs. Cal Poly (2-7)
No. 21 Ohio St. (9-1) vs. Norfolk St. (5-7)

Friday's games

No. 7 Maryland (12-0) vs. Central Connecticut (0-8)
No. 12 Kentucky (11-1) vs. Wright St. (5-7)
No. 22 Washington (9-1) at Stanford (9-2)

Saturday's games

No. 1 UConn (10-0) vs. No. 11 Iowa (10-1) at Brooklyn, N.Y.
No. 3 South Carolina (10-1) at Florida Gulf Coast (3-5)
No. 4 UCLA (9-1) vs. Long Beach State (0-9)
No. 9 TCU (11-0) vs. Kansas State (7-6)
No. 13 Vanderbilt (9-0) vs. Texas Southern (3-5)
No. 16 Louisville (10-3) vs. No. 17 Tennessee (7-2) at Brooklyn, N.Y.
No. 25 Princeton (10-1) at George Mason (6-5)

DEALS

Monday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

BOSTON RED SOX — Acquired LHP Jake Bennet from Washington in exchange for RHP Luis Perales.
TEXAS RANGERS — Agreed to terms with C Danny Jansen on a two-year contract and LHP Tyler Alexander on a one-year contract.
TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Agreed to terms with RHP Tyler Rogers on a three-year contract.

National League

ATLANTA BRAVES — Agreed to terms with INF Ha-Seong Kim on a one-year contract.
CHICAGO CUBS — Agreed to terms with RHP Esmerbin Guerrero and LHP Fenuel James on minor league contracts.
COLORADO ROCKIES — Named Ian Levin assistant general manager.
PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Agreed to terms with LHP Gregory Soto on a one-year contract.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association

ATLANTA HAWKS — Waived F Jacob Toppin.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

CHICAGO BEARS — Designated LB Tremaine Edmunds to return from injured reserve.
CLEVELAND BROWNS — Signed WR Jamari Thrash to a contract. Waived G Garrett Dellinger.
DENVER BRONCOS — Claimed RB Cody Schrader off waivers from Houston. Placed DB Brandon Jones on injured reserve.
HOUSTON TEXANS — Placed DT Mario Edwards on injured reserve.
JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Fired defensive coordinator Steve Wilks.
MIAMI DOLPHINS — Signed LB Quinton Bell to the active roster from the practice squad. Waived LB Andre Carter II. Elevated OL Kion Smith from the practice squad to the active roster.
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Waived LB Caleb Murphy.
NEW YORK JETS — Signed DB Keidron Smith to the active roster from Denver's practice squad. Placed DB Isaiah Oliver on injured reserve.
PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Signed WR Marquez Valdes-Scantling to the active roster from the practice squad. Elevated T Jack Driscoll and LB DeMarvin Leal from the practice squad. Waived WR Ke'Shawn Williams.
TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Placed CB Zyon McCollum on injured reserve. Signed LB Anthony Walker Jr. off Indianapolis' practice squad.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS — Placed F Connor Bedard on injured reserve. Recalled D Ethan Del Mastro from Rockford (AHL). Placed G Laurent Brossoit on waivers.
DALLAS STARS — Placed D Vladislav Kolyachonok on waivers.
DETROIT RED WINGS — Placed F Jonatan Berggren on waivers.
EDMONTON OILERS — Recalled F Quinn Hutson from Bakersfield (AHL).
PITTSBURGH PENGUINS — Sent G Sergei Murashov to Wilkes-Barre/Scranton (AHL). Added D Brett Kulak and G Stuart Skinner to the active roster.
ST. LOUIS BLUES — Placed F Dylan Holloway on injured reserve. Reinstated F Alexei Toropchenko from injured reserve. Recalled F Otto Stenberg from Springfield (AHL).
SAN JOSE SHARKS — Recalled Fs Igor Chernyshov and Ethan Cardwell from San Jose (AHL). Placed Fs Will Smith and Philipp Kurashev on injured reserve.
TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Placed D Emil Lilleberg on injured reserve. Recalled D Steven Santini from Syracuse (AHL).
VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS — Sent D Dylan Coghlan to Henderson (AHL).

SOCCER
Major League Soccer

FC DALLAS — Acquired M Ran Binyamin via transfer from Hapoel Tel Aviv F.C.
INTER MIAMI CF — Signed D Sergio Reguilón to a one-year contract.
LOS ANGELES GALAXY — Acquired D Jakob Glesnes and a homegrown priority from Philadelphia in exchange for general allocation money.
NEW YORK RED BULLS — Named Michael Bradley head coach.
SEATTLE SOUNDERS — Re-signed G Stefan Frei to a one-year contract.

COLLEGE VOLLEYBALL

Women's Div. I tournament

Quarterfinals
Saturday, Dec. 13
Lexington Regional

No. 1 Kentucky def. No. 3 Creighton, 25-19, 25-13, 25-18

Pittsburgh Regional

No. 1 Pittsburgh def. No. 3 Purdue, 25-22, 25-21, 22-25, 25-17

Sunday, Dec. 14
Austin Regional

No. 3 Wisconsin def No. 1 Texas, 25-22, 25-21, 20-25, 25-19

Lincoln Regional

No. 3 Texas A&M def. No. 1 Nebraska, 25-22, 25-22, 20-25, 35-37, 15-13

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Schedule

Bowl Glance
Dec. 17
Cure Bowl
Orlando, Fla.

Old Dominion vs. South Florida

68 Ventures Bowl
Mobile, Ala.

Louisiana vs. Delaware

Dec. 18
Xbox Bowl
Frisco, Texas

Arkansas State vs. Missouri State

Dec. 19
Myrtle Beach Bowl
Conway, S.C.

Kennesaw State vs. Western Michigan

Gasparilla Bowl
Tampa, Fla.

Memphis vs N.C. State

College Football Playoff
First Round

No. 11 Alabama (10-3) at No. 8 Oklahoma (10-2)

Dec. 20
College Football Playoff
First Round

No. 10 Miami (Fla.) (10-2) at No. 7 Texas A&M (11-1)
No. 17 Tulane (11-2) at No. 6 Mississippi (11-1)
No. 19 James Madison (12-1) at No. 5 Oregon (11-1)

Dec. 22
Famous Idaho Potato Bowl
Boise, Idaho

Utah St. vs. Washington St.

Dec. 23
Boca Raton Bowl
Boca Raton, Fla.

Louisville vs. Toledo

New Orleans Bowl
New Orleans

Western Kentucky vs. Southern Miss

Frisco Bowl
Frisco, Texas

Ohio vs. UNLV

Dec. 24
Hawai'i Bowl
Honolulu

Cal vs. Hawaii

Dec. 26
GameAbove Sports Bowl
Detroit, Mich.

Central Michigan vs. Northwestern

Rate Bowl
Phoenix

New Mexico vs. Minnesota

First Responder Bowl
Dallas, Texas

FIU vs. UTSA

Dec. 27
Military Bowl
Annapolis, Md.

Pittsburgh vs. East Carolina

Pinstripe Bowl
Bronx, N.Y.

Clemson vs. Penn St.

Fenway Bowl
Boston

UConn vs. Army

Pop-Tarts Bowl
Orlando, Fla.

No. 12 BYU vs. No. 24 Georgia Tech

Arizona Bowl
Tucson, Ariz.

Fresno St. vs. Miami (OH)

New Mexico Bowl
Albuquerque

No. 23 North Texas vs. San Diego St.

Gator Bowl
Jacksonville, Fla.

No. 25 Missouri vs. No. 20 Virginia

Texas Bowl
Houston

LSU vs. No. 21 Houston

Dec. 29
Birmingham Bowl
Birmingham, Ala.

Georgia Southern vs. Appalachian State

Dec. 30
Independence Bowl
Shreveport, La.

Coastal Carolina vs. Louisiana Tech

Music City Bowl
Nashville, Tenn.

Tennessee vs. Illinois

Alamo Bowl
San Antonio, Texas

No. 16 Southern Cal vs. TCU

Dec. 31
ReliaQuest Bowl
Tampa, Fla.

No. 13 Vanderbilt vs. No. 23 Iowa

Sun Bowl
El Paso, Texas

Arizona St. vs. Duke

Citrus Bowl
Orlando, Fla.

No. 14 Texas vs. No. 18 Michigan

Las Vegas Bowl
Las Vegas

No. 15 Utah vs. Nebraska

College Football Playoff
Quarterfinals
At Cotton Bowl, Arlington, Texas

Miami/Texas A&M winner at No. 3 Ohio St.

Jan. 1
College Football Playoff
Quarterfinals
At Orange Bowl, Miami Gardens, Fla.

James Madison/Oregon winner at No. 4 Texas Tech

At Rose Bowl, Pasadena, Calif.

Alabama/Oklahoma winner at No. 1 Indiana

At Sugar Bowl, New Orleans

Tulane/Mississippi winner at No. 2 Georgia

Jan. 2
Armed Forces Bowl
Fort Worth, Texas

Texas State vs. Rice

Liberty Bowl
Memphis, Tenn.

No. 22 Navy vs. Cincinnati

Duke's Mayo Bowl
Charlotte, N.C.

Mississippi St. vs. Wake Forest

Holiday Bowl
San Diego, Calif.

No. 21 Arizona vs. SMU

Jan. 8
College Football Playoff
Semifinals
At Fiesta Bowl, Glendale, Ariz.

TBD

Jan. 9
College Football Playoff
Semifinals
At Peach Bowl, Atlanta

TBD

Jan. 19
College Football Playoff
National Championship
At Miami

Semifinal winners

AP SPORTLIGHT

Dec. 17

1983 — In his 352nd NHL game, Wayne Gretzky scores a goal and five assists in 8-1 rout of Quebec Nordiques to record his 800th point and 500th assist.
1987 — Chicago's Michael Jordan scores 52 points to lead the Bulls to a 111-100 win over the Cleveland Cavaliers.
1991 — The Cleveland Cavaliers turn a 20-point halftime lead over Miami into the most lopsided victory in NBA history, 148-80 over the Heat. The 68-point margin eclipses the mark of 63 set March 19, 1972, when the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Golden State Warriors 162-99.
1993 — Virgil Hill becomes the most successful light heavyweight in boxing history, winning a record 15th title defense with a unanimous decision over Guy Waters of Australia. Hill, the WBA champion for five of the last six years, had been tied with Bob Foster, who held light heavyweight titles from 1968 to 1974.
1993 — Julio Cesar Chavez secures his place in boxing history, retaining his WBC super lightweight title with a fifth-round victory over Britain's Andy Holligan. It's the 27th time Chavez fought for a title without a loss since 1984, breaking Joe Louis' mark of 26.
2005 — John Ruiz loses the WBA heavyweight title, dropping a disputed majority decision to 7-foot Nikolay Valuev of Russia in Berlin. Valuev, the first Russian heavyweight champion, also becomes the tallest and heaviest (323 pounds) champion of all-time.
2006 — LaDainian Tomlinson breaks Paul Hornung's 46-year-old NFL single-season scoring record on a 15-yard run in the first quarter of San Diego's game against Kansas City. The touchdown run gives him 180 points, breaking Hornung's record of 176 set with the Green Bay Packers in 1960.
2013 — Kaleena Mosqueda-Lewis scores 21 points on a career-high seven 3-pointers and No. 1 Connecticut beats second-ranked Duke 83-61. Breanna Stewart has 24 points and 11 rebounds for the Huskies as coach Geno Auriemma earns his 850th career win.
2016 — Donnel Pumphrey breaks the NCAA career rushing record in his college finale, running for 115 yards and a touchdown in San Diego State's 34-10 victory over Houston in the Las Vegas Bowl. Pumphrey passes former Wisconsin star Ron Dayne's mark of 6,397 yards on a 15-yard run early in the fourth quarter and wraps up his sensational career in his Nevada hometown with 6,405 yards. Pumphrey's senior total of 2,133 yards rushing ranks in the top 10 for a FBS player.
2022 — The Minnesota Vikings recover from 33-0 down at halftime to beat the Indianapolis Colts 39-36 in overtime to complete the biggest comeback in NFL history.

NHL

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Tampa Bay	33	18	12	3	39	106	88
Detroit	33	18	12	3	39	104	109
Montreal	32	17	11	4	38	105	113
Boston	33	19	14	0	38	109	105
Florida	32	17	13	2	36	103	101
Ottawa	32	15	13	4	34	101	104
Toronto	31	14	12	5	33	102	102
Buffalo	32	14	14	4	32	98	109

Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Carolina	32	21	9	2	44	108	90
N.Y. Islanders	33	19	11	3	41	100	93
Washington	32	18	10	4	40	106	83
Philadelphia	31	16	9	6	38	92	88
Pittsburgh	31	14	8	9	37	99	96
New Jersey	33	18	14	1	37	97	103
N.Y. Rangers	34	16	14	4	36	89	92
Columbus	32	13	13	6	32	96	112

Western Conference

Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Colorado	32	23	2	7	53	128	74
Dallas	34	22	7	5	49	115	90
Minnesota	33	19	9	5	43	99	87
Utah	34	16	15	3	35	106	101
Winnipeg	32	15	15	2	32	98	99
Chicago	32	13	13	6	32	91	98
St. Louis	34	12	15	7	31	86	123
Nashville	32	13	15	4	30	92	111

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	31	16	6	9	41	96	90
Anaheim	33	20	12	1	41	118	108
Los Angeles	32	14	9	9	37	84	86
Edmonton	33	15	12	6	36	110	114
San Jose	33	16	14	3	35	96	110
Seattle	30	12	12	6	30	74	93
Calgary	33	13	16	4	30	84	97
Vancouver	32	12	17	3	27	89	112

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.

Sunday's games

Vancouver 2, New Jersey 1
Utah 5, Pittsburgh 4, OT
Carolina 3, Philadelphia 2, SO
Minnesota 6, Boston 2
Montreal 4, Edmonton 1
Buffalo 3, Seattle 1

Monday's games

Anaheim 4, N.Y. Rangers 1
Florida 5, Tampa Bay 2
Ottawa 3, Winnipeg 2, OT
Nashville 5, St. Louis 2
Dallas 4, Los Angeles 1

Tuesday's games

Anaheim at Columbus
Chicago at Toronto
N.Y. Islanders at Detroit
Philadelphia at Montreal
Utah at Boston
Vancouver at N.Y. Rangers
Edmonton at Pittsburgh
Washington at Minnesota
Calgary at San Jose
Colorado at Seattle

Wednesday's games

Los Angeles at Florida
Utah at Detroit
Carolina at Nashville
Winnipeg at St. Louis
New Jersey at Vegas

Thursday's games

Chicago at Montreal
Edmonton at Boston
Los Angeles at Tampa Bay
Minnesota at Columbus
Pittsburgh at Ottawa
Toronto at Washington
Philadelphia at Buffalo
N.Y. Rangers at St. Louis
Seattle at Calgary
Dallas at San Jose

Scoring leaders

Through Tuesday

	GP	G	A	PTS
Nathan MacKinnon, COL	32	26	29	55
Connor McDavid, EDM	33	18	34	52
Macklin Celebrini, SJ	33	16	31	47
Connor Bedard, CHI	33	14	30	44
Martin Necas, COL	31	19	25	44
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	32	14	29	43
Mikko Rantanen, DAL	33	17	26	43
Nikita Kucherov, TB	30	13	29	42
Jack Eichel, LV	31	12	29	41
Kyle Connor, WPG	32	15	26	41
Mark Scheifele, WPG	33	17	24	41
Leo Carlsson, ANA	32	16	24	40
Jason Robertson, DAL	34	20	20	40
Cale Makar, COL	34	17	22	39

ROUNDUP

Reinhart, Panthers beat Lightning

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Sam Reinhart scored a shorthanded goal and a power play goal to lead the Florida Panthers to a 5-2 victory over the Tampa Bay Lightning on Monday night.

Reinhart recorded his fourth career game with a shorthanded and power play goal in the same game, the most in franchise history. Anton Lundell, Brad Marchand and Carter Verhaeghe also scored for Florida, which improved to 5-1-1 in the past seven games.

Sergei Bobrovsky finished with 26 saves.

J.J. Moser and Max Crozier scored for Tampa Bay. Brayden Point finished with a pair of assists. Jonas Johansson, making his seventh consecutive start in place of Andrei Vasilevskiy, made 19 saves.

Reinhart scored shorthanded 2:16 into the first period for the Panthers' fourth shorthanded goal of the season.

Reinhart passed Scott Mellanby on the play for sixth most points in franchise history.

Florida made it 2-0 at 3:48 moments after Yanni Gourde hit the crossbar on an open chance above the crease before Lundell finished off a 3-on-1 rush.

Marchand made it 3-0 at 11:48 of the second period before Reinhart notched a power play goal with 1:52 remaining.

Predators 5, Blues 2: Filip Forsberg scored his 12th career hat trick, leading visiting Nashville over St. Louis.

Forsberg scored in the each of first two periods before adding an empty-net goal in the third with 3:51 remaining.

Dalibor Dvorsky scored both goals for the Blues. Joel Hofer finished with 21 saves for St. Louis, which has lost three of its last four games.



CHRIS O'MEARA/AP

Florida Panthers center Sam Reinhart, upper right, scores past Tampa Bay Lightning goaltender Jonas Johansson, left, and defenseman Darren Raddysh during the first period on Monday in Tampa, Fla.

Bunting scored on a wraparound from behind the net at 1:23 of the second period. Forsberg scored a power-play goal at 5:31, and Schaefer made it 4-1 with 1:15 remaining in the second.

Stars 4, Kings 1: Mikko Rantanen, Matt Duchene and Wyatt Johnston had a goal and an assist each and Casey DeSmith tied a Dallas record with his 11th consecutive game earning points as the host Stars rallied past Los Angeles.

Oskar Back scored his first NHL winning goal for Dallas, which is second in the overall standings and avoided its first three-game losing streak since mid-October.

DeSmith made 27 saves and is 8-0-3 after losing his first start of the season, matching Ed Belfour's 8-0-3 run during the 1998-99 season.

Andrei Kuzmenko scored an unassisted 5-on-3 goal for the Kings, who have lost their last three games.

Ducks 4, Rangers 1: Cutter Gauthier scored the go-ahead goal six minutes into the third period and got his second on an empty-netter, Lukas Dostal stopped 26 of the 27 shots he faced, and visiting Anaheim beat New York to end a two-game losing streak.

Gauthier's first goal with one second left on a power play came off a perfectly placed pass from rookie Beckett Sennecke. Igor Shesterkin barely had a chance to react.

Matthew Robertson scored the only goal for the Rangers, who have lost 12 of 16 games at home. The shot from Robinson deflected off Frank Vatrano's stick and popped into the air before going in off Dostal's.

Senators 3, Jets 2 (OT): Brady Tkachuk scored 2:11 into overtime and visiting Ottawa beat Winnipeg.

Nick Cousins and Jake Sanderson also scored for the Senators, and Tim Stutzle had three assists. Linus Ullmark stopped 23 shots in Ottawa's third win in nine games.

Stanley gave the Jets a 2-1 lead with 1:25 left in the middle period for his sixth, surpassing the total of five goals the big defenseman had in his first five NHL seasons. Gabriel Vilardi had an assist, stretching his point streak to seven games.

Sabres fire GM Adams, tap Kekalainen as replacement

By John Wawrow
Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The Buffalo Sabres fired general manager Kevyn Adams on Monday in a move made 2½ months into his sixth season, with the team sitting at the bottom of the Eastern Conference standings and already in jeopardy of extending their NHL-record playoff drought to a 15th year.

The decision was made by team owner Terry Pegula and announced in a press release.

Adams' replacement was already with the team in Jarmo Kekalainen. The former Columbus GM was hired by Adams in June to serve as a senior adviser. The 59-year-old Kekalainen is from Finland and was the NHL's first European-born GM in spending 11 years with the Blue Jackets before being fired in February 2024.



Adams



Kekalainen

"We are not where we need to be as an organization, and we are moving forward with new leadership within our hockey operations department," Pegula said. "We are dedicated to building an organization that is competitive year after year, and we have fallen short of that expectation."

The decision to fire Adams comes despite Buffalo enjoying its first three-game winning streak of the season, following a 3-1 victory at Seattle on Sunday night. The Sabres returned home after splitting a six-game road trip and are now off until hosting Philadelphia on Thursday.

Adams has been criticized for mismanaging the team's assets, an inability to secure a franchise goalie and failure to address a leadership void that continues to linger on a team that's finished last in the overall standings four times and no better than 19th during its playoff drought.

Under Kekalainen, Columbus reached the playoffs five times and set a franchise record with 50 wins and 108 points in 2016-17. He previously held executive roles with St. Louis and Ottawa. Kekalainen also spent three years as general manager of Jokerit in Finland's top professional league and worked with the Finnish national team program.

"It is a great honor to be named general manager of the Buffalo Sabres," said Kekalainen. "I am humbled to be the steward of this team and look forward to experiencing the passion that Sabres fans bring to every game."

Kekalainen's promotion comes a day after his father, Kari, died after a lengthy illness at the age of 82. Kekalainen posted a message on his Instagram account, referring to his father as his coach and idol, translated from his native Finnish.

Buffalo is now on its fifth GM since Darcy Regier was fired a month into the 2013-14 season.

NBA

ROUNDUP

Jokic, Nuggets outlast Rockets in OT

Associated Press

DENVER — Nikola Jokic had 39 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists for his NBA-leading 12th triple-double of the season as the Denver Nuggets outlasted the Houston Rockets 128-125 in overtime on Monday night in a matchup of two of the top three teams in the Western Conference standings.

Jamal Murray added 35 points for Denver, including six of his team's 11 points in overtime. Murray made 14 of his 15 free-throw attempts.

The win was the Nuggets' fifth in a row and was their first home victory since Nov. 8.

The final 1:40 of regulation had four ties and four lead changes, a stretch capped by a Murray free throw that tied the game with 2.3 seconds left after an away-from-play foul on Houston's Amen Thompson. Denver retained possession after the free throw, but a 3-point attempt by Jokic from the top of the key was long.

The Nuggets took a 124-117 lead after a Spencer Jones 3 with 2:59 remaining in overtime, but the Rockets clawed back, getting within three with the ball and 13 seconds left. Alperen Sengun missed a contested 24-foot 3 with 4.9 seconds remaining, allowing Denver to hold on for the victory.



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

Houston Rockets center Alperen Sengun, center, struggles to control the ball as Nuggets center Nikola Jokic, left, and guard Bruce Brown defend in the second half Monday in Denver.

Jazz 140, Mavericks 133 (OT): Keyonte George scored 37 points and Lauri Markkanen added 33 to lift host Utah to an overtime win over Dallas, despite a career-high 42 points from Cooper Flagg.

George, who had 39 points on Friday in Memphis, scored the first five points of overtime. Kyle Filipowski scored 16 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter and overtime as the Jazz won consecutive games for just the second time this season.

P.J. Washington scored 25 and Naji Marshall added 15 points for the Mavericks, who had won five of six games.

Dallas led 124-116 before Utah reeled off 11 consecutive points, capped by Isaiah Collier's driving basket with 53.6 seconds left.

Pistons 112, Celtics 105: Cade Cunningham had 32 points and 10 rebounds to help visiting Detroit beat Boston.

Caris LeVert and Tobias Harris each added 13 points for the Eastern Conference-leading Pistons, who won their fourth straight. Detroit also got even for a frustrating loss at TD Garden late last month.

Jaylen Brown had 34 points, eight rebounds and seven assists to lead the Celtics. Derrick White scored 31 points as Boston lost its second straight after a five-game winning streak.

Detroit opened the final quarter with a four-point edge and pushed it to 103-93 on Javonte Green's steal and breakaway dunk with just under six minutes left.

Raptors 106, Heat 96: Brandon Ingram scored 28 points and visiting Toronto snapped a four-game skid with a win over Miami, extending its losing streak to five.

The Heat lost forward Nikola Jovic to an elbow injury in the first quarter. Jovic took a hard foul from Collin Murray-Boyles while driving to the basket and fell to the floor 12 seconds after he entered the game.

Scottie Barnes added 17 points and 10 rebounds and Immanuel Quickley finished with 15 points for the Raptors, who made 16 3-pointers. Ingram shot 5 of 7 from behind the arc.

Grizzlies 121, Clippers 103: Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 21 of his 31 points in the first half and Cam Spencer added a career-high 27 points as visiting Memphis beat Los Angeles.

Jaylen Wells scored 16 points and rookie Cedric Coward had 12 as the Grizzlies earned a victory over the Clippers for the third time in less than three weeks.

Ja Morant also scored 12 points for Memphis in his second game since returning from a calf injury.

Grizzlies center Zach Edey missed his second game of an extended absence because of a left ankle injury. Santi Aldama started at center for the second consecutive game and was held to just three points with two rebounds.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	18	7	.720	—
Toronto	16	11	.593	3
Boston	15	11	.577	3½
Philadelphia	14	11	.560	4
Brooklyn	7	18	.280	11

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	15	11	.577	—
Atlanta	15	12	.556	½
Miami	14	12	.538	1
Charlotte	8	18	.308	7
Washington	4	20	.167	10

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	21	5	.808	—
Cleveland	15	12	.556	6½
Milwaukee	11	16	.407	10½
Chicago	10	15	.400	10½
Indiana	6	20	.231	15

Western Conference

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	18	7	.720	—
Houston	16	7	.696	1
Memphis	12	14	.462	6½
Dallas	10	17	.370	9
New Orleans	5	22	.185	14

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	24	2	.923	—
Denver	19	6	.760	4½
Minnesota	17	9	.654	7
Utah	10	15	.400	13½
Portland	10	16	.385	14

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	18	7	.720	—
Phoenix	14	12	.538	4½
Golden State	13	14	.481	6
Sacramento	6	20	.231	12½
L.A. Clippers	6	20	.231	12½

Monday's games

Detroit 112, Boston 105
Toronto 106, Miami 96
Utah 140, Dallas 133, OT
Denver 128, Houston 125, OT
Memphis 121, L.A. Clippers 103

Tuesday's game

New York vs. San Antonio (NBA Cup final)

Wednesday's games

Cleveland at Chicago
Memphis at Minnesota

Thursday's games

Atlanta at Charlotte
New York at Indiana
Miami at Brooklyn
Houston at New Orleans
L.A. Clippers at Oklahoma City
Toronto at Milwaukee
Washington at San Antonio
Detroit at Dallas
Golden State at Phoenix
L.A. Lakers at Utah
Orlando at Denver
Sacramento at Portland

Flagg downplays record scoring game in Mavericks' OT loss

BY MATTHEW COLES
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Cooper Flagg scored the most points by an 18-year-old in NBA history, but he couldn't enjoy the accomplishment because it came in a loss.

Flagg had 42 points — topping the previous mark of 37 set by LeBron James on Dec. 13, 2003 — in a 140-133 overtime loss to the Utah Jazz on Monday night.

"Obviously we didn't win. So it's tough for me to want to be happy, or any of that, but obviously it's a success," said Flagg, who had a bag of ice on his ankle after rolling it at the end of regulation.

Flagg also became just the fifth rookie to record 40 points, five rebounds and five assists in the past 15 years as he finished with seven rebounds and six assists.



Flagg

"The more time he spends on the floor, the more he sees, the better he gets. He displayed it all tonight," Dallas Mavericks coach Jason Kidd said.

Flagg has been playing his best basketball the past few weeks as the No. 1 overall draft pick has averaged 25.7 points in the past seven games.

He's also playing aggressive enough to get to the line and made 15 of 20 free throws against Utah.

"It's come a long way from the start of the season, so I'm proud of that fourth quarter," Flagg said. "It's a new game ... but I am getting more and more comfortable ... and just settling in, honestly, just being myself and letting the game come to me."

He scored 12 points in the fourth quarter and made a savvy play to get the game into overtime when he missed a free throw on purpose with such a big carom that teammate Max Christie got the rebound with 3.9 seconds remaining and was fouled.

With Anthony Davis out and the Mavericks missing several other teammates to injuries, this game may be a harbinger of things to come as Flagg becomes a centerpiece of their offense.

"We were going to Coop. He was killing them the whole game, so they finally tried to double him," P.J. Washington said. "It doesn't surprise me at all. I know exactly what he's capable of. He's a special player, so there will be a lot more to come."

Flagg also tied Mark Aguirre for the most points by a rookie in Dallas history as he begins to make his mark on the franchise. But he couldn't stop thinking of what he could have done to get the win despite the throbbing ankle. The Jazz made a late 11-0 run and then dominated in overtime as Flagg didn't score a basket in the extra period.

"I gotta be better. I had a couple of dumb turnovers, missed a couple easy ones, but I gotta be better, executing down the stretch like that," Flagg said.

Setting records might be nice, but Flagg feels it just means he's consistently improving and that's been his goal all season.

"I'm not really focused on a lot of that stuff (the records). I'm more just focused on being present, day to day, and trying to get better and and getting our team as many wins as we can," Flagg said.

COLLEGE

Doubters fuel teen Canadian star McKenna

Associated Press

NIAGARA FALLS, Ontario — Gavin McKenna knew the haters would be ready to pounce.

The young forward was expected to be the runaway No. 1 overall selection at the 2026 NHL draft, and that might still be the case.

There has also been criticism since McKenna bolted the Western Hockey League's Medicine Hat Tigers to play at Penn State. He has 18 points in 16 games in U.S. college hockey — a circuit with a shorter schedule, older players and more defensive structure — after dominating junior play with 129 points over 56 games in 2024-25.

McKenna, who wanted a different challenge as part of a "building year" in hopes of being better prepared for professional hockey, is expected to be a key part of Canada's offense at the upcoming world junior championship. He is certainly motivated.

"I don't mind it at all," he told the Canadian Press on Monday at training camp of the draft chatter. "Sometimes getting people pumping your tires all the time isn't the best thing for you. People have been waiting for me to fail ... it fires me up."

McKenna put up 41 goals and 88 assists last season in a WHL run that included a 40-game point streak. He's scored just four times in 2025-26, but isn't concerned.

"I just try to take it with a grain of salt," said McKenna, who will turn 18 on Saturday. "Where my game's at, if people are watching and if people are smart at hockey and are actually watching the game, not just looking at the numbers, they'd know. I'm confident.

"I've been playing well. Pucks haven't been going in for me, haven't been getting bounces, but I think with world juniors to build my confidence, and then bring it in the second half, I think that'll be huge for me."

The NCAA lifted its ban on Canadian Hockey League players in November 2024, paving the way for McKenna and others — previously considered professionals because they received stipends for living expenses — to defect to the NCAA. More than 300 CHL players had committed to Division I college programs earlier this year. NCAA schools can also lure recruits with name, image, likeness (NIL) endorsement money.



NICK IWANYSHYN, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Gavin McKenna participates Saturday during Canada's national junior team hockey training camp in Niagara Falls, Ontario.

McKenna said there's a big difference in approach when comparing the CHL and NCAA.

"Defensively, it's a lot harder; there's less time and space; guys are quicker," he said of U.S. college play. "It's a skilled league as well, but it's just more straightforward hockey — crash and bang, trying to get to those dirty areas to find ways to score."

The 6-foot, 170-pound freshman added that factors taken into account going the college route extended far beyond the ice surface.

"Living on your own, learning how to become an adult," McKenna said. "I wanted to spend more time in the gym, build my frame out. All this stuff is to prepare me to play in the NHL."

Washington wins 1st men's soccer crown

Associated Press

CARY, N.C. — Harrison Bertos scored 1:54 into overtime after Washington blew a two-goal lead in the second half, and the Huskies beat North Carolina State 3-2 to win the Men's College Cup at First Horizon Stadium on Monday night.

It was the first national championship for unseeded Washington (16-6-2), which became the first team to win six road matches in the tournament — beating six seeded teams along the way under coach Jamie Clark. The Huskies won in their second trip to the final after losing 2-0 to Clemson in 2021.

The No. 15 seed Wolfpack (16-3-4) made the final for the first time behind coach Marc Hubbard. N.C. State was aiming for the school's first national championship since 1983, in men's basketball.

Zach Ramsey scored unassisted with 1:12 remaining in the first half and Washington took a 1-0 lead into the break. It was only the second time this season the Wolfpack trailed at halftime.

Ramsey scored into an empty net after N.C. State goalkeeper Logan Erb couldn't corral the ball at the top of the box. It was Ramsey's second goal of the tournament.

Richie Aman sent a cross to the center of the goal and Joe Dale knocked it in for a 2-0 lead in the 62nd minute.

Donavan Phillip answered in the 66th, scoring with an assist from Nikola Markovic to cut it to 2-1.

Taig Healy scored the equalizer with 3:28 remaining with assists from Justin McLean and Calem Tommy.

Egor Akulov had an assist on Bertos' winner.

Washington keeper Jadon Bowton, the only remaining player from the 2021 squad, had five saves.

Erb saved six shots for N.C. State.

Nebraska: Sustained focus a priority

FROM PAGE 24

points after redshirting last year), while Lawrence returned to Nebraska after playing a year at Rhode Island.

Hoiberg said an offseason priority was to improve the team's 3-point shooting, after going from making 9.4 per game in 2023-24 to just 7.5 last year. They enter this week ranked 19th nationally by making 11.2 per game.

The test this week, beyond Sunday's game, is having players stay focused instead of listening to family members and friends pat them on the back through the Christmas break for the Cornhuskers' strong start.

When Nebraska returns, it hosts New Hampshire on Dec. 30 then returns to Big Ten play against No. 9 Michigan State on Jan. 2.

"We talk to them all the time about keeping your walls up," Hoiberg said, adding: "Listen, we've won two Big Ten games. ... If we get satisfied, we're done. And we remind our guys every day of that."

Cards & Vols

The AP Top 25 national schedule features only four ranked-versus-ranked games on the men's side.

Of those, only one was played in a team's home venue: No. 11 Louisville's trip to No. 20 Tennessee on Tuesday night.

The Volunteers (7-3) entered the week having lost three straight, falling to Kansas in the Players Era Championship in Las Vegas, at Syracuse in the ACC/SEC Challenge and Illinois despite having a home-state crowd in Nashville.

The Cardinals (9-1) suffered their only loss in another trip to a Southeastern Conference venue, falling to now-No. 14 Arkansas in the ACC/SEC Challenge on Dec. 3.

Neutral-court throwdowns

Three top-10 teams — No. 3 Duke, No. 6 Purdue and No. 8 Houston — face ranked opponents Saturday in neutral-court matchups.

The Cougars (10-1) face Arkansas in Newark, N.J., in the first of those matchups. An hour later, the Boilermakers (10-1) tip off against No. 21 Auburn with a home-state crowd in Indianapolis.

The third is the Blue Devils (10-0) meeting No. 16 Texas Tech in New York's Madison Square Garden. It's the latest demanding nonconference matchup for Jon Scheyer's squad after already logging wins against Kansas, Arkansas, Florida and Michigan State.

Watch list

■ USC (10-1) is the top vote-getter among unranked teams. The Trojans — who spent a week at No. 24 this month — have home games against UTSA and Brown this week before the Christmas break, then return to visit No. 2 Michigan on Jan. 2.



CRAIG PESSMAN/AP

Nebraska head coach Fred Hoiberg, shown Saturday, has his Huskers making 11.2 3-point shots per game, up from just 7.5 last year.

■ Iowa (9-2) and Seton Hall (10-1) are hovering behind the Trojans. The Hawkeyes play Bucknell on Saturday, while the Pirates visit Providence on Friday in Big East play.

Iowa hasn't been ranked in the AP Top 25 since November 2022; Seton Hall hasn't been ranked since January 2022.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



JAY LAPRETE/AP

Ohio State defensive back Caleb Downs, the Big Ten defensive player of the year, has been named to the AP All-American first team in each of his first two seasons with Ohio State.

Big Ten puts 10 on AP All-America first team

BY ERIC OLSON
Associated Press

Four players from Ohio State are among 10 first-team picks from the Big Ten Conference on The Associated Press All-America team released Monday, a group headed by repeat selection Caleb Downs of the Buckeyes and AP Player of the Year Fernando Mendoza of Indiana.

The AP has named an All-America team every year since 1925, and Notre Dame's two first-team picks this season increased its all-time lead to 87.

Downs, the Big Ten defensive player of the year, has made the first team each of his two seasons with the Buckeyes after landing on the second team as a freshman at Alabama in 2023. He is one of 12 players on the 27-man first team who did not start their careers at their current school. Downs is joined on the first team by fellow Ohio State players Jeremiah Smith, Kayden McDonald and Arvell Reese.

Mendoza, who won the Heisman Trophy over the weekend, led the top-ranked Hoosiers to a 13-0 record and the No. 1 seed in the College Football Playoff after transferring from California. He has thrown a nation-leading 33 touchdown passes and is the catalyst of one of the most productive offenses in the country.

A total of 18 schools are represented on the first team, including seven of the 12 in the CFP.

Iowa has had at least one first-team player for seven straight years and in 10 of the last 12. This is the fourth year in a row Miami, Notre Dame and Ohio State have had at least one.

Punter Cole Maynard gave Western Kentucky its first-ever first-team pick. Defensive lineman Landon Robinson is Navy's first since 1975 and kicker Kansei Matsuzawa is Hawaii's first since 1986.

The AP All-America team was selected by a panel of 52 college Top 25 poll voters:

First-team All-Americans (by conference)

Big Ten — 10
SEC — 6
Big 12 — 3
ACC — 1
Independent — 3
Conference USA — 2
American — 1
Mountain West — 1

First-team offense

Wide receiver —Makai Lemon, Southern California, junior, 5-11, 195, Los Angeles

Wide receiver — Jeremiah Smith, Ohio State, sophomore, 6-3, 223, Miami Gardens, Florida

Wide receiver — Skyler Bell, UConn, senior, 6-0, 185, New York, N.Y.

Tackle — Francis Mauigoa, Miami, junior, 6-6, 335, Ili'ili, American Samoa

Tackle — Spencer Fano, Utah, junior, 6-6, 308, Spanish Fork, Utah

Guard — Emmanuel Pregnon, Oregon, senior, 6-5, 318, Denver

Guard — Beau Stephens, Iowa, senior, 6-5, 315, Blue Springs, Missouri

Center — Logan Jones, Iowa, graduate, 6-3, 202, Council Bluffs, Iowa

Tight end — Eli Stowers, Vanderbilt, graduate, 6-4, 235, Denton, Texas

Quarterback — Fernando Mendoza, Indiana, junior, 6-5, 225, Miami

Running back — Jeremiyah Love, Notre Dame, junior, 6-0, 214, St. Louis

Running back — Ahmad Hardy, Missouri, sophomore, 5-10, 210, Oma, Mississippi

Kicker — Kansei Matsuzawa, Hawaii, senior, 6-2, 200, Tokyo

All-purpose — KC Concepcion, Texas A&M, junior, 5-11, 190, Charlotte, North Carolina

First-team defense

Edge rusher — David Bailey, Texas Tech, senior, 6-3, 250, Irvine, California

Edge rusher — Cashius Howell, Texas A&M, senior, 6-2, 248, Kansas City, Missouri

Interior lineman — Kayden McDonald, Ohio State, junior, 6-3, 326, Suwanee, Georgia

Interior lineman — Landon Robinson, Navy, senior, 6-0, 287, Fairlawn, Ohio

Linebacker — Jacob Rodriguez, Texas Tech, senior, 6-1, 235, Wichita Falls, Texas

Linebacker — Arvell Reese, Ohio State, junior, 6-4, 243, Cleveland

Linebacker — CJ Allen, Georgia, junior, 6-1, 235, Barnesville, Georgia

Cornerback — Leonard Moore, Notre Dame, sophomore, 6-2, 195, Round Rock, Texas

Cornerback — Mansoor Delane, LSU, senior, 6-0, 190, Silver Spring, Maryland

Safety — Caleb Downs, Ohio State, junior, 6-0, 205, Hoschton, Georgia

Safety — Bishop Fitzgerald, Southern California, senior, 5-11, 205, Woodbridge, Virginia

Defensive back — Jakari Foster, Louisiana Tech, senior, 6-0, 211, Piedmont, Alabama

Punter — Cole Maynard, Western Kentucky, senior, 6-1, 180, Mooresville, North Carolina

Vanderbilt's Patterson among 5 filing lawsuit to play in 2026 season

BY TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Five college football players at power-conference schools asked a federal judge on Monday for a preliminary injunction to play a fifth year next season.

All five have competed four seasons in four years without taking a redshirt. They are Vanderbilt linebacker Langston Patterson; kicker Nathanial Vakos, tight end Lance Mason and long snapper Nick Levy, all of Wisconsin; and Nebraska long snapper Kevin Gallic.

U.S. District Judge William L. Campbell granted an injunction nearly a year ago that allowed Diego Pavia to play this season. Pavia finished as the Heisman Trophy runner-up leading the Commodores to a 10-2 record.

Patterson testified that he asked about taking a redshirt season as a freshman and was told he was too valuable. The team captain, who graduated with his bachelor's degree three days ago, said he knew during Vanderbilt's fifth game of the season Sept. 27 that he wouldn't be able to take a redshirt season.

These players are part of a lawsuit seeking class action status alleging the NCAA violates U.S. antitrust laws with its redshirt rule for athletes during five seasons of eligibility. The lawsuit includes seven other named plaintiffs and potentially thousands of current and former NCAA football, baseball and tennis players.

Patterson, a lead plaintiff in that lawsuit, also testified that he was asked about the status of the lawsuit during an end of year meeting with Vanderbilt's general manager and his position coach.

Without an injunction, Patterson said the Commodores will turn to the transfer portal opening Jan. 2 to replace him with a linebacker with two years' experience at a similar level to the Southeastern Conference program. Levy also testified that Wisconsin would be looking for help if no decision comes before the portal opens.

Another season gives these five players more practice and playing time with the chance to attract more NFL scouts' attention along with pursuing graduate degrees. Mason monitored the hearing remotely.

The federal judge had pointed questions on the potential "ripple effect" if he grants this injunction. The NCAA has faced a series of lawsuits since that Pavia injunction over eligibility rules.

Attorney Ryan Downton told the judge that this injunction involves five specific players ahead of the upcoming transfer portal. Downton also said courts never rule in a vacuum.

"The Pavia ruling gave players something to point to just like the Alston ruling and the O'Bannon ruling and the House settlement," Downton said after the hearing. "What I said in there is that the NCAA has been found to be a serial violator of antitrust law, and whether the court grants or denies a preliminary injunction doesn't change that."

Attorney Taylor Askew, arguing for the NCAA, said this injunction request comes from players who knew they were playing their final season and that the lawsuit had been mentioned as early as July before being filed in September.

Askew also noted the Sherman Act only limits unreasonable restraint on competition, and said the only thing that makes eligibility rules unreasonable is that it affects the players.

"If you have eligibility rules, someone won't be eligible," Askew told the judge.



WADE PAYNE/AP

Vanderbilt linebacker Langston Patterson (10) testified that he asked about a redshirt season as a freshman, but was told he was too valuable.

NFL

Scoreboard

American Conference

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
New England	11	3	0	.786	382	276
Buffalo	10	4	0	.714	411	324
Miami	6	8	0	.429	296	324
e-N.Y. Jets	3	11	0	.214	276	397

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Jacksonville	10	4	0	.714	376	292
Houston	9	5	0	.643	323	228
Indianapolis	8	6	0	.571	392	303
e-Tennessee	2	12	0	.143	225	394

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Pittsburgh	8	6	0	.571	336	326
Baltimore	7	7	0	.500	335	320
e-Cincinnati	4	10	0	.286	314	437
e-Cleveland	3	11	0	.214	226	332

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
x-Denver	12	2	0	.857	342	261
L.A. Chargers	10	4	0	.714	315	284
e-Kansas City	6	8	0	.429	328	268
e-Las Vegas	2	12	0	.143	196	363

National Conference

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Philadelphia	9	5	0	.643	320	271
Dallas	6	7	1	.464	407	420
e-Washington	4	10	0	.286	291	375
e-N.Y. Giants	2	12	0	.143	300	396

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Tampa Bay	7	7	0	.500	327	354
Carolina	7	7	0	.500	264	317
e-Atlanta	5	9	0	.357	281	341
e-New Orleans	4	10	0	.286	226	332

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Chicago	10	4	0	.714	365	338
Green Bay	9	4	1	.679	348	281
Detroit	8	6	0	.571	428	345
e-Minnesota	6	8	0	.429	289	307

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
x-L.A. Rams	11	3	0	.786	420	261
Seattle	11	3	0	.786	405	242
San Francisco	10	4	0	.714	344	293
e-Arizona	3	11	0	.214	302	388

x-clinched playoff spot
e-eliminated from playoffs

Thursday's game

Atlanta 29, Tampa Bay 28

Sunday's games

Baltimore 24, Cincinnati 0
Buffalo 35, New England 31
Chicago 31, Cleveland 3
Houston 40, Arizona 20
Jacksonville 48, N.Y. Jets 20
L.A. Chargers 16, Kansas City 13
Philadelphia 31, Las Vegas 0
Washington 29, N.Y. Giants 21
Denver 34, Green Bay 26
L.A. Rams 41, Detroit 34
New Orleans 20, Carolina 17
San Francisco 37, Tennessee 24
Seattle 18, Indianapolis 16
Minnesota 34, Dallas 26

Monday's game

Pittsburgh 28, Miami 15

Thursday, Dec. 18

L.A. Rams at Seattle

Saturday, Dec. 20

Philadelphia at Washington
Green Bay at Chicago

Sunday, Dec. 21

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

Monday, Dec. 22

San Francisco at Indianapolis

Thursday, Dec. 25

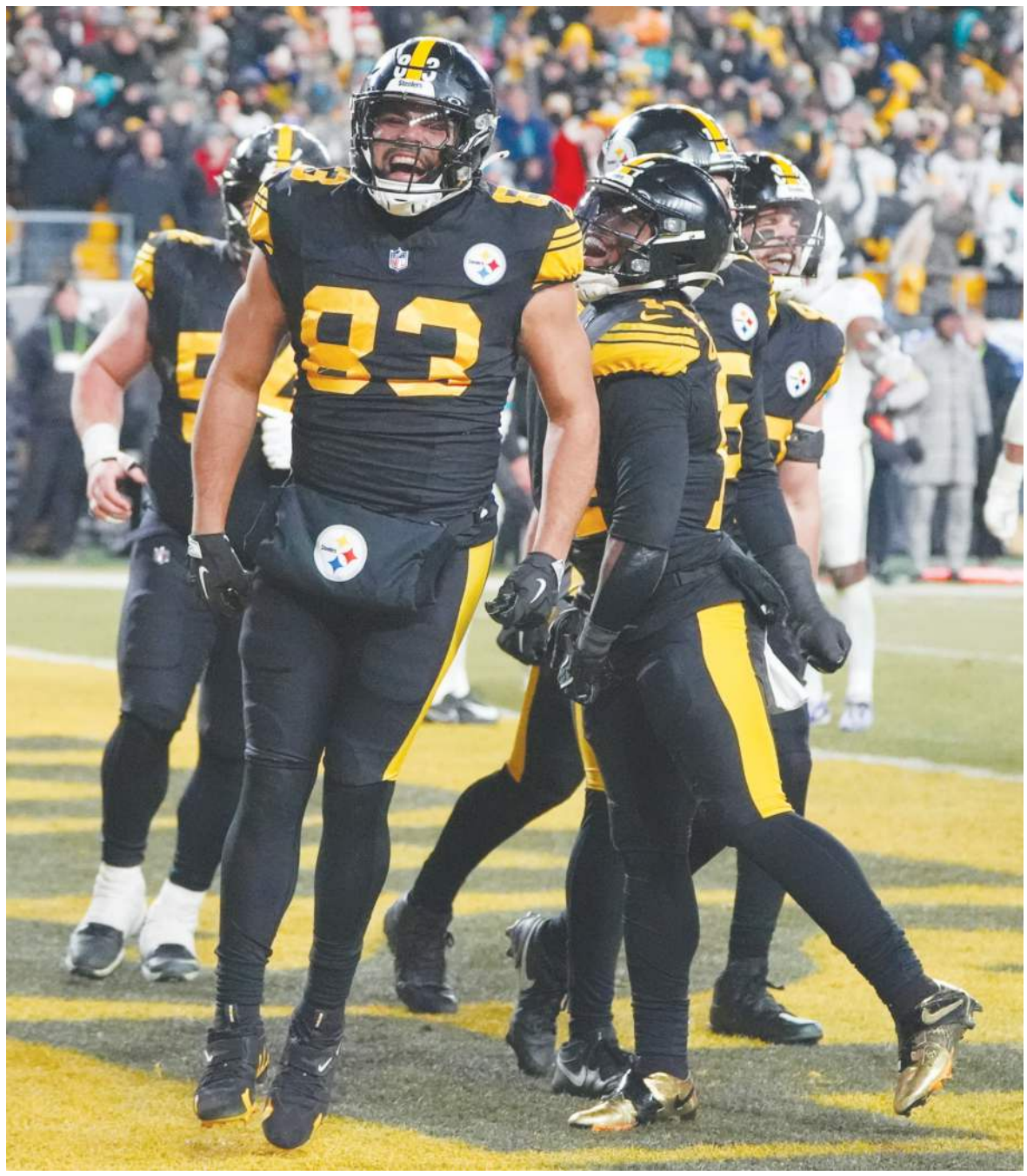
Dallas at Washington
Detroit at Minnesota
Denver at Kansas City

Saturday, Dec. 27

Houston at L.A. Chargers
Baltimore at Green Bay

Steelers win, maintain AFC North lead

By Will Graves
Associated Press



GENE J. PUSKAR/AP

Steelers tight end Connor Heyward celebrates his touchdown run with teammates in the first half against Miami in Pittsburgh on Monday. The Steelers beat the Dolphins 28-15.

PITTSBURGH — It felt a little bit like Green Bay. And for Aaron Rodgers, it looked a little like the Packers, too.

Frigid conditions. High stakes. The number of games dwindling.

During the four-time MVP's long run with Green Bay, this was the time of year that Rodgers thrived. And while Pittsburgh is not the Packers and the 2025 version of Rodgers is not quite the 2015 version, he offered a reminder on Monday night against Miami that there's still life in his 42-year-old right arm, and in his maddeningly hot-and-cold team.

Rodgers passed for 224 yards and two touchdowns and the Steelers kept their grasp on the top spot in the AFC North with a clinical 28-15 victory over the Dolphins, who were eliminated from playoff contention.

While Rodgers wasn't quite in what he called a "flow state," he certainly looked comfortable while becoming the oldest quarterback in league history to complete at least 85% of his passes. Rodgers connected on 23 of 27 against Miami, including third-quarter touchdown throws of 19 yards to Marquez Valdes-Scantling and 28 yards to DK Metcalf.

"I think he's the best quarterback to ever play this game," said Valdes-Scantling, who played alongside Rodgers with Green Bay and signed with Pittsburgh's practice squad earlier this season. "I don't care if he's 65 years old or not, he can still spin the ball and he's always playing chess with the defense."

Throwing short passes that got the ball out of his hands quickly, Rodgers was fine working underneath and letting the Steelers' skill position players do the work. Running back Kenneth Gainwell had 126 total yards, including a team-high seven receptions. Metcalf's touchdown catch — he shoved former Steeler Minkah Fitzpatrick out of the way en route to the end zone — came on a pass between two defenders that echoed Rodgers in his prime.

Pittsburgh (8-6) maintained its one-game lead over Baltimore in the division with three weeks to go. As spotty as the Steelers have looked at times, everything remains on the table as Christmas approaches.

"It's been a while since I've been a part of stuff like this," said Rodgers, who last made the playoffs in 2021. "Nothing changes. It's just, I feel real comfortable in this environment."

Done Dolphins

Miami (6-8) saw its slim playoff hopes vanish in the chill as its four-game winning streak was snapped. The Dolphins prepped by practicing in the snow at nearby Robert Morris University over the weekend, but it didn't help.

While Miami took a 3-0 lead during a sluggish first half on Riley Patterson's career-long 54-yard field goal, Tua Tagovailoa and the Dolphins' offense had no answer once Rodgers heated up.

Tagovailoa completed 22 of 28 passes for 254 yards with two garbage-time touchdowns to Darren Waller and his NFL-leading 15th interception.

De'Von Achane, who had powered Miami's recovering from a 1-6 start, ran for 60 yards and caught six passes for 68 more but was a nonfactor during the middle portion of the game, when Pittsburgh scored touchdowns on four straight possessions to remain unbeaten at home on Monday nights since 1992.

Tagovailoa remained winless in games where the temperature at kickoff was under 40 degrees. The Dolphins had minus-20 yards of total offense in the third quarter.

"It's disappointing we didn't get the outcome we wanted to, and everything that goes on with the playoffs," Tagovailoa said. "When you start the season the way we did, we made it hard on ourselves."

Winning without Watt

The Steelers won for just the second time in 13 tries without outside linebacker T.J. Watt during the perennial All-Pro's nine-year career. Watt is out indefinitely after having surgery to repair a collapsed lung sustained during a dry-needling treatment last week.

For a night anyway, Watt's absence didn't matter. Pittsburgh defensive captain Cam Heyward paid tribute to his teammate after collecting one of the Steelers' four sacks. The 36-year-old Heyward stood up and attempted to emulate Watt's signature leg kick, though Heyward said he probably didn't get his leg up high enough.

"We've got all the confidence in our guys to go out there and play a hell of a game," linebacker Patrick Queen said. "Obviously they did."

It helped that Asante Samuel Jr. thwarted an early Miami drive with an interception, his first for Pittsburgh after joining its practice squad in October, six months after neck surgery.

"It's a blessing (to get a second chance)," Samuel said. "You can't take nothing for granted. None of the hard days. None of the long days. You just take everything and appreciate it."

McDaniel's murky future

The Dolphins' improved play of late solidified — temporarily, anyway — coach Mike McDaniel's status. With the playoffs out of reach, Miami will turn its attention to the future, one that might not include the bespectacled 42-year-old whose idiosyncratic approach may be wearing thin.

"We have three (more) opportunities with this team," McDaniel said. "I think really the character of the locker room has been tested all year. My expectation is that we're going to bounce back regardless of how much it hurts."

SPORTS

Vintage performance

Rodgers leads Steelers over Dolphins to keep 1st in AFC North ›› NFL, Page 23

TOP 25 THIS WEEK

On the way up

Undefeated Nebraska rolling, but conference challenges are coming

By Aaron Beard
Associated Press

Fred Hoiberg has his Nebraska team off to its best start in program history, owning the nation's longest winning streak and armed with its best AP Top 25 ranking in more than three decades.

He wants it to be merely a start rather than a high point for the 15th-ranked Cornhuskers, along with a springboard into making more gains before diving into the meat of the Big Ten schedule. That starts with Sunday's home game against North Dakota before taking the Christmas break.

"We've got to get tougher; there's no doubt about it," Hoiberg told The Associated Press on Monday. "We've got to find a way to finish possessions. That toughness, you have to have it in this league if you want to be consistent and you want to have any chance to win."

Still, there's plenty for Hoiberg to feel good about, too.

Nebraska (11-0, 2-0 Big Ten) is coming off a week that saw the Cornhuskers beat Creighton by 21, beat Wisconsin by 30, then win at then-No. 13 Illinois on Jamarques Lawrence's last-second 3-pointer. Throw in winning last year's College Basketball Crown tournament, and Nebraska has now won a program-record 15 straight games.

And that helped the Cornhuskers on Monday to jump eight spots in the AP Top 25 poll, the program's highest ranking since sitting at No. 11 in March 1991 in the final poll of that season.

Hoiberg, now in his seventh season in Lincoln, can point to a number of factors in Nebraska's rise. Big man Rienk Mast — who led the Huskers in rebounding and assists for a team that reached the 2024 NCAA Tournament — is back for a sixth season of competition after missing last year with a knee injury.

They've gotten a boost from adding Pryce Sandfort (Iowa transfer averaging 17.1 points) and Braden Frager (averaging 10.8

SEE NEBRASKA ON PAGE 21



Craig Pessman/AP

Nebraska's Rienk Mast, right, goes up for a shot Saturday against Illinois' Tomislav Ivisic in Champaign, Ill. The Cornhuskers jumped eight spots up the AP Top 25 rankings to No. 15 after beating the then-No. 13 Fighting Illini on a last-second 3-pointer.

Big Ten stars in All-America first team ›› College football, Page 22

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