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STARS AND STRIPES

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CAROLYN KASTER/AP

Rep. Morgan Luttrell, R-Texas, talks before the start of a House Armed Services Committee hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington in 2023.

‘I’m choosing a different path’

Citing ‘dysfunction,’ several military vets opt not to run again for Congress

BY LINDA F. HERSEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON

Several high-profile veterans in Congress will not seek reelection in 2026, as a record number of lawmakers have declared they will not run again.

Some of the military veterans leaving Congress expressed frustration over increasing polarization, divides within their own party and an environment of “plain nastiness” in Washington, D.C.

A total of 55 incumbents will not run in midterm elections this year — 46 in the House and nine in the Senate.

With Republicans holding a majority in both chambers, elections in November will likely sway the balance of power on Capitol Hill.

At least seven lawmakers who will exit Congress in January 2027 are military veterans. Five are Republicans, and two are Democrats.



Bacon

In the House, they include Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., a retired Air Force brigadier general; Rep. Morgan Luttrell, R-Texas, a medically discharged Navy SEAL; Rep. Troy Nehls, R-Texas, a retired Army Reserve major; and Rep. Jared Golden, D-Maine, a former corporal in the Marine Corps.

“I’m choosing a different path — one that allows me to stay rooted in Texas and focus on the people and places that matter most,” said Luttrell, who is finishing out his second term representing Texas’ eighth congressional district.

A total of 79 lawmakers in the

SEE CONGRESS ON PAGE 10

Okinawa Marines reshape command

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY
Stars and Stripes

CAMP COURTNEY, Okinawa — The Marine Corps’ only permanently deployed expeditionary brigade stood up a new headquarters company on Tuesday, aligning it with a Japanese amphibious brigade to streamline joint humanitarian and warfighting missions in the Indo-Pacific.

Maj. Codi Anne Mullen took command of the newly minted Headquarters Company, 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade, during a small, intermittently rainy ceremony on Camp Courtney.



Mullen

As company commander, Mullen provides command and control, administrative and logistical support for the brigade commander and his 14,500 Marines.

The brigade itself is a middleweight air-ground task force under the III Marine Expeditionary Force and is larger than the approximately 2,200 Marines of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit.

“This formation behind you serves as a leadership element that can aggregate and command and control multiple [expeditionary units] in a high intensity conflict,” brigade commander Brig. Gen. Robert Brodie said in his ceremony remarks. “That’s what the job is.”

The brigade is expected to respond rapidly to crises across the Indo-Pacific, including humanitarian and disaster relief. In November, its Marines provided re-

SEE COMMAND ON PAGE 5

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Alphabet is fourth tech firm to join $4T club

Associated Press

Google parent Alphabet Inc. on Monday became the fourth Big Tech powerhouse to be valued at $4 trillion, a once seemingly unfathomable milestone that's become more like a rite of passage amid an artificial intelligence arms race.

Alphabet reached the threshold four months after Google dodged the U.S. government's attempt to break up its internet empire.

In an effort to prevent further abuses, a federal judge overseeing the case ordered a shake-up that investors widely interpreted as a slap on the wrist, resulting in a 57% increase in Alphabet's stock price since then that has created an additional $1.4 trillion in shareholder wealth.

The rapid run-up thrust Alphabet into a $4 trillion club that has previously welcomed computer chipmaker Nvidia, which became the first to cross the barrier in July. Both Apple and Microsoft also surpassed market values of $4 trillion last year, but they have fallen back amid worries that the spending spree on AI will turn into a bubble that bursts.

Nvidia's market value briefly topped $5 trillion in October, before backtracking as the AI bubble fears also exacted a toll on its stock price because its chipsets are needed to power the technology.

Meanwhile, Amazon is currently valued at $2.6 trillion, in part because of its AI ambitions, and Facebook parent Meta Platforms is valued at $1.6 trillion for some of the same reasons.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Jan. 14)	0.84
British pound (Jan. 14)	$1.31
Japanese yen (Jan. 14)	153.00
South Korean won (Jan. 14)	1,435.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3744
Britain (Pound)	1.3457
Canada (Dollar)	1.3877
China (Yuan)	6.9731
Denmark (Krone)	6.4072
Egypt (Pound)	47.0617
Euro	0.8573
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8022
Hungary (Forint)	331.31
Israel (Shekel)	3.1507
Japan (Yen)	158.91
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3059
Norway (Krone)	10.0617
Philippines (Peso)	59.37
Poland (Zloty)	3.60
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7459
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2874
South Korea (Won)	1,474.49
Switzerland (Franc)	0.7985
Thailand (Baht)	31.41
Turkey (NewLira)	43.1534

(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	4.84

WEATHER OUTLOOK

WEDNESDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



WEDNESDAY IN EUROPE



THURSDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is compiled from weather.com reports.

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MILITARY

Kelly sues Hegseth over punishment efforts

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Sen. Mark Kelly of Arizona on Monday sued Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and the Pentagon for initiating proceedings to reduce his retirement rank and military pension after Kelly reminded troops in a video that they can refuse illegal orders.

The federal lawsuit also names the Navy and Navy Secretary John Phelan as defendants, alleging the Trump administration is illegally disciplining Kelly for political speech protected by the Constitution and violating due process laws by publicly charging Kelly with sedition.

Hegseth last week said the military had started administrative actions against Kelly and issued a formal censure letter accusing Kelly of making a series of public statements that "undermined the chain of command," "counseled disobedience" and constituted "conduct unbecoming an officer."

Kelly's lawsuit asks the courts to declare those moves unlawful.

"If permitted to stand, the secretary's censure and the grade-determination proceedings that he has directed will inflict immediate and irreparable harm," the lawsuit states. "Each of these actions also signals to retired service members and Members of Congress that criticism of the executive's use of the armed forces may be met with retaliation through military channels."

Kelly said in a statement Monday that Hegseth was engaging in an "unconstitutional crusade against me" and "coming after what I earned through my 25 years of military service, in violation of my rights as an American, as a retired veteran and as a United States Senator whose job is to hold him — and this or any administration — accountable."

A Pentagon official said the department was aware of the litigation but declined to comment as a matter of policy.

Kelly retired from the Navy as a captain in 2011 after serving as an officer and flying 39 combat missions as a naval aviator. He is a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, which is charged with providing congressional oversight of the Defense Department.

In November, Kelly and five other Democratic lawmakers who served in the military or the intelligence community came under fire from President Donald Trump for releasing a video reminding service members that they are required not to follow unlawful orders.

The video enraged Trump, who called it "seditious behavior at the highest level," and led to efforts by Hegseth to punish Kelly. The other involved lawmakers did not serve long enough to retire with a military pension or did not fall under military law.

Hegseth in his censure letter also took issue with Kelly's comments over a six-month period in which the senator criticized military leadership for firing admirals and generals and voiced concerns about the legality of certain military operations, including strikes on alleged drug boats.

"We have evaluated those statements, not just that one video, which was incredibly reckless," Hegseth said in a media appearance last week. "He knew exactly what he was doing. … And watching the, I don't know, hissy fit that he's been throwing ever since, shows us just how over the target we are."

The lawsuit states that Hegseth's actions violate Kelly's freedom of speech as well as the Speech and Debate clause of the Constitution, which grants immunity to lawmakers for official acts.

"Allowing defendants to punish a senator through military proceedings for his political speech erodes the separation of powers and gives the executive a power over legislators that the Constitution does not contemplate," the complaint states.

Stars and Stripes reporter Matthew Adams contributed to this report.

Air Force tightens procedures at largest base in South Korea

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force has changed entry procedures at its largest base in South Korea following a search-and-seizure operation conducted there by South Korean officials last year.

Security guards at Osan Air Base, about 35 miles south of Seoul, now use the Defense Biometric Identification System to check in both U.S. and South Korean personnel, Capt. Kristina Strickland, a 51st Fighter Wing spokeswoman, said by email Friday.

The system uses barcodes and fingerprints to verify those authorized to access U.S. military installations.

Previously, South Korean personnel could enter the base, which also hosts South Korean air force facilities, using identification issued by their government, according to a report last month in the Korea JoongAng Daily.

The change followed U.S. military complaints after South Korean officials carried out a raid at the base in July as part of an investigation into former President Yoon Suk Yeol's failed martial law bid in December 2024, the newspaper reported.

Investigators entered the installation under South Korean authority, prompting the Air Force to assume full control of gate access that had previously been jointly managed, according to reports by the Yonhap News Agency, most recently on Tuesday.

South Korea's Ministry of National Defense declined to provide details about the operation.

"We cannot confirm the details for security reasons," a spokesman said by text message Monday. Some South Korean government officials must speak to the press without providing their names.

Another fighter wing spokesman, Andy Ahn, referred questions about the raid to U.S. Forces Korea. Stars and Stripes has reached out to a command spokesperson for comment.

Strickland declined to provide a timeline for the changes to entry procedures, citing operational security.

"Changes followed a routine review of installation access requirements," she said.

U.S. and South Korean military police continue to work together to protect Osan, including updating requirements and practices to ensure base security, Strickland said.

A Sunday wing news release said U.S. and South Korean airmen have conducted joint training and standardized procedures at entry control points.

"Operating on the same procedures improves clarity, trust, and interoperability," Lt. Col. Daniel Evans, commander of the 51st Security Forces Squadron, said in the release. "Our defenders understand what their counterparts are doing and why, which allows them to support each other more effectively if an issue arises."



SARAH WILLIAMS/U.S. Air Force

Airman 1st Class Kwon Jin, a South Korean military police officer, explains what to look for during entry procedures at Osan Air Base, South Korea, on Jan. 5.

Interoperability is a term the military often uses to describe the ability of a country's armed forces to use another country's training methods and military equipment.

The U.S. and South Korean air forces worked together to establish a unified set of entry procedures, the release said, adding that the changes were developed through coordination and negotiation between U.S. and South Korean leadership.

Stars and Stripes reporter Yoojin Lee contributed to this report.

Pentagon embracing Musk's Grok AI chatbot as it draws global outcry

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Monday that Elon Musk's artificial intelligence chatbot Grok will join Google's generative AI engine in operating inside the Pentagon network, as part of a broader push to feed as much of the military's data as possible into the developing technology.

"Very soon we will have the world's leading AI models on every unclassified and classified network throughout our department," Hegseth said in a speech at Musk's space flight company, SpaceX, in South Texas.

The announcement comes just days after Grok — which is embedded into X, the social media network owned by Musk — drew global outcry and scrutiny for generating highly sexualized deepfake images of people without their consent.

Malaysia and Indonesia have blocked Grok, while the U.K.'s independent online safety watchdog announced an investigation Monday. Grok has limited image generation and editing to paying users.

Hegseth said Grok will go live inside the Defense Department later this month and announced that he would "make all appropriate data" from the military's IT systems available for "AI exploitation." He also said data from intelligence databases would be fed into AI systems.

Hegseth's aggressive push to embrace the still-developing technology stands in contrast to the Biden administration, which, while pushing federal agencies to come up with policies and uses for AI, was also wary of misuse. Officials said rules were needed to ensure that the technology, which could be harnessed for mass surveillance, cyberattacks or even lethal autonomous devices, was being used responsibly.

The Biden administration enacted a framework in late 2024 that directed national security agencies to expand their use of the most advanced AI systems but prohibited certain uses, such as applications that would violate constitutionally protected civil rights or any system that would automate the deployment of nuclear weapons. It is unclear if those prohibitions are still in place under the Trump administration.

During his speech, Hegseth spoke of the need to streamline and speed up technological innovations within the military, saying, "We need innovation to come from anywhere and evolve with speed and purpose."

He noted that the Pentagon possesses "combat-proven operational data from two decades of military and intelligence operations."

The Pentagon did not immediately respond to questions about the issues with Grok.

MILITARY

Last remains of 1952 military plane crash ID'd

By Gary Warner
Stars and Stripes

The last of the 52 service members killed in a 1952 transport plane crash in Alaska have been identified, closing a project begun 13 years ago when glacier movement first revealed remains of the missing.

"Reaching this point — identifying all 52 of our fallen service members — represents the highest fulfillment of our sacred duty to bring our fallen home," said Air Force Col. Martha Sasnett, the commander of Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations.

The four-propeller C-124 Globemaster II was on a flight from McChord Air Force Base near Tacoma, Wash., to Elmendorf Air Force Base near Anchorage on Nov. 22, 1952, when it went down on Mount Gannett.

Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine personnel were aboard the flight, which the Air Force said was connected with the ongoing Korean War effort.

Using triangulation of radio signals between the plane and ground controllers, searchers found the plane six days after the crash.

There were no survivors.

Much of the wreckage fell into deep crevasses of Colony Glacier, where recovery was impossible. The crash might have caused an avalanche, burying parts of the plane under tons of snow.

For 60 years, the crash site returned no new clues.

The glacier's movement gradually brought wreckage to the surface — some of it as much as 12 miles from the original impact.



A U.S. Air Force Senior Airman insignia, recovered from Colony Glacier, Alaska, is examined along with other personnel effects.

In 2012, an Alaska National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter spotted a yellow life raft on the glacier. A team that was sent to the site found clothing with name patches, chess pieces, a 1952 schedule of Catholic masses, parachutes, a flight suit and other equipment.

Military teams returned to the site repeatedly to look for more remains as, over time, each of the 52 dead were eventually identified.

"It reflects years of dedication by countless airmen, scientists and support personnel committed to returning these heroes home," Sasnett said.

The mortuary affairs office worked with the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System on the project.

The identification process was conducted by AFMES experts using advanced DNA analysis and forensic techniques to ensure each service member was accurately recognized.

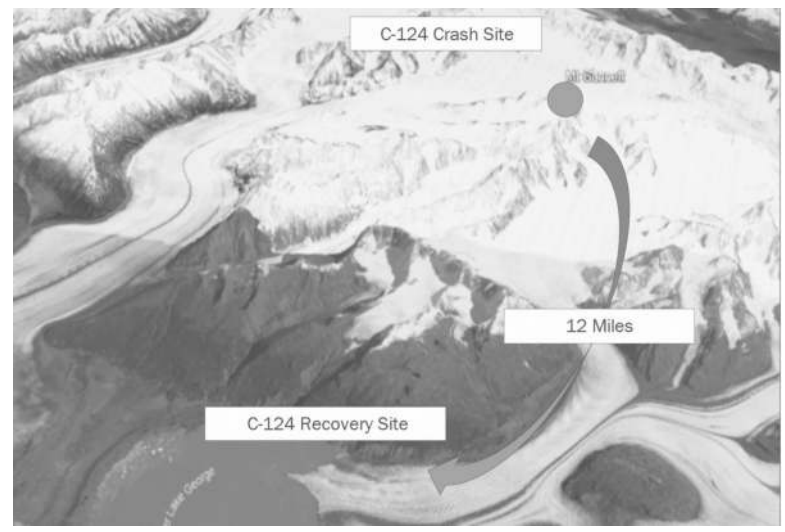


Photos by Madeline Baisey/U.S. Air Force

A photo from a wallet that belonged to one of the service members killed in a 1952 C-124 Globemaster crash, viewed in 2025.



U.S. Air Force Capt. Travis Lockwood searches for remains of the C-124 Globemaster crash.



Noah Coger/U.S. Air Force

A map shows the location of the site where a C-124 Globemaster II crashed into Mount Gannett in the Chugach Mountains of Alaska.

"Each identification represents a promise kept," said Air Force Col. Andrew Rohrer, the AFMES director. "Our scientists and forensic specialists worked meticulously for almost a decade to give every family certainty, closure and the assurance that their loved one's service will never be forgotten. It is a privilege to support this mission of honor and humanity."

Now that the identification process is complete, the Air Force is assessing whether to formally close Operation Colony Glacier, as the recovery site no longer shows evidence of additional remains or material emerging from the glacier.

"Every step of Operation Colony Glacier reflects our commitment to care for those who serve and the families who have waited for answers, ensuring that even decades later, their sacrifices are honored with dignity," said Air Force Lt. Gen. Caroline Miller, deputy chief of staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services.

Lack of winter tires cited in Bavaria crash that injured soldier

By Lydia Gordon
Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — Improper tires contributed to a pair of crashes on the snow-slicked roads of Bavaria last week, and a U.S. soldier was driving in at least one instance, local police said.

An unidentified 32-year-old soldier was airlifted to a hospital in Bayreuth with moderate injuries after a three-vehicle collision Friday on the B470 near Auerbach, Oberpfalz police said in an email.

The soldier lost control of his car and struck an oncoming vehicle. A third driver then collided with the other two vehicles, police said.

The summer tires on the soldier's car likely contributed to the collision, investigators said.

The crash site is approximately 30 minutes west of Grafenwoehr Training Area. An update on the soldier's condition was not available Tuesday.

Another driver in that crash was transported to a separate nearby hospital, police said.

A day later, a single-car accident occurred on the B299, a local road running parallel to Grafenwoehr, the Army's largest training area in Germany.

An unidentified 21-year-old American driving from Grafenwoehr in the direction of Freihung tried to pass a snowplow, lost control of the vehicle and ended up in an embankment, three local media outlets reported.

The newspaper Oberpfalz Aktuell referred to the driver as a U.S. soldier, while the Oberpfalz Echo said only that he is an American man.

When asked for confirmation, police declined to say whether he is a soldier.

No one was injured in the crash, news reports said.

The articles all cited the lack of winter tires as a contributing factor for the vehicle's loss of traction, though local police did not immediately respond to queries confirming the primary cause.

U.S. Army Garrison Bavaria issued weather advisories on Facebook on Thursday and Friday warning of "inclement weather and hazardous road conditions" and announced delays and closures to services on several installations.

Soldiers also get regular reminders about outfitting their vehicles with season-appropriate tires, "especially in the fall before winter weather begins," garrison spokeswoman Kayla Overton said Monday.

Military police and the Directorate of Emergency Services also do spot and safety checks at installation gates to ensure vehicles are in compliance, she said.

The general rule of thumb in Germany is that tires suitable for winter weather are required between October and Easter.

Violators are subject to a fine of up to 120 euros and the assessment of one point on their driving record.

Stars and Stripes reporter Marcus Kloeckner contributed to this article.

MILITARY

US troops left in shock by costly Poland housing



SHATYRA COX/Stars and Stripes

Incoming soldiers complete temporary housing allowance paperwork at Camp Kosciuszko in Poznan, Poland, on Tuesday.

BY SHATYRA COX
Stars and Stripes

POZNAN, Poland — When Spc. Jontae Fielder arrived at her new duty station in Poland, she was in for immediate sticker shock.

With on-post housing unavailable for soldiers on permanent change of station orders to the Army's garrison in Poznan, Fielder was given just days to find her own apartment, a process that involved lease negotiations and the need to cough up thousands of dollars along the way.

"I found out I would have to pay the upfront costs the first week I got to Poland," said Fielder, a signal operations support specialist said. "Thankfully, I had a little money saved, but it caused me to use all of my savings."

Like other soldiers new to the Army's first permanent garrison in Poland, Fielder said delays in processing her travel voucher compounded the strain, forcing her to cover housing costs out of pocket for months.

Poland has emerged as the center of gravity for the Army in Europe.

The vast majority of U.S. troops assigned there are on rotational missions focused on deterring potential Russian aggression on NATO's eastern flank.

But the Army also has begun offering more permanent duty assignments in the country as it solidifies its presence alongside the forces of what Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has called a model ally.

With that transition has come some growing pains, such as grappling with how to assist soldiers making a move to an Army garrison less-established than counterparts in other countries such as Germany.

As the U.S. military presence in Poland continues to expand, many soldiers arriving on PCS orders say they were unaware of and unprepared for the high costs associated with making the move to Poznan and the laborious process of navigating a foreign real estate market.

At the low end of the price range, a roughly 600-square-foot Poznan apartment with one bedroom and one bathroom was listed at about $970 per month in rent.

Agency fees, deposit requirements and utilities add to the cost, although the fees can be avoided by using the base housing office.

The situation has forced some soldiers to seek out financial assistance from organizations such as Army Emergency Relief just to make ends meet.

Staff Sgt. Courtney Brittian, an intelligence specialist, said coming to Poland on PCS orders was much different from her previous stint in 2018, when she was deployed on a rotational mission and lived in the barracks.

"I wasn't informed by my sponsor about the upfront costs of living off post before I arrived," Brittian said. "I knew Poland, but I didn't realize how different the financial side would be when you're here permanently."

Fielder voiced the same concerns.

"I wish someone would have informed me that I would be living off post and at least given me an estimate of how much money I needed to have available," Fielder said. "I also wish someone would have explained what could cause delays in receiving back pay."

Like many soldiers arriving on PCS orders, Brittian was required to secure civilian housing immediately, paying deposits and agent fees out of pocket while waiting for the finance and housing offices to process her paperwork and entitlements.

To bridge the gap while her paperwork and entitlements were processed, Brittian applied for an Army Emergency Relief grant and loan. The assistance was approved within five hours and covered the cost of her first month's rent plus utilities, she said.

"AER helped me stay afloat while everything was being processed," Brittian said. "Without that assistance, it would have been much more stressful trying to cover those costs upfront."

The harsh realities of housing in the country are something that U.S. Army Garrison Poland seek to convey.

Younger soldiers and those unfamiliar with European rental markets are prone to feeling the strain of the living situation, garrison housing manager Rhona Nutter said.

"For a newly arriving soldier, the first week can be financially overwhelming," Nutter said. "Agent fees are standard here, deposits are higher than soldiers expect, and landlords typically want large payments upfront before they hand over the keys."

Unit-level sponsors are typically responsible for informing soldiers about such matters, but there can be breakdowns in the communication process. Army officials in Poland say they are working on bringing a more formal process for advising incoming troops.

Meanwhile, the garrison is taking steps to help soldiers make the transition more easily.

For example, the first local Army Emergency Relief section gives soldiers in-country access to direct assistance for emergencies and unexpected costs. AER plans to open a support site in Poznan later this year.

"As USAG Poland moves toward full operational capability, it's essential that we offer the same comprehensive quality-of-life support found at established military communities," said Diane Hupko, the personal financial readiness program manager for the garrison. "A local AER presence gives soldiers a place to sit down with someone, talk through concerns and get immediate help."

Although soldiers apply for AER assistance online, having representation in Poland removes barriers related to time zones and distance.

The larger challenge has often been awareness, according to Hupko.

"Many soldiers didn't realize AER followed them wherever they went," she said. "Too often, they waited until challenges worsened before reaching out."

Requests for support at Army locations across Poland vary, but move-in expenses remain one of the most common issues for incoming personnel, Hupko said.

The goal is to help get new arrivals into housing quickly so they can integrate into their duty assignment, she added.

"Support is available," Hupko said. "We want soldiers to feel empowered to ask for help before a setback becomes a crisis."

Command: Reorganization brings closer alliance with joint efforts in Japan

FROM PAGE 1

lief in the Philippines following Typhoon Kalmaegi and Super Typhoon Fung-Wong.

Mullen, a native of Riverhead, N.Y., and a 2016 Naval Academy graduate, has been with the brigade since July, according to her LinkedIn profile.

She previously served three years as an aide-de-camp and logistics analyst at Marine Corps Logistics Command in Albany, Ga.

She earned a master's in operational analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School in 2022.

The company's mission is to "make sure that the Marines across the brigade are prepared to go when they're called on," Mullen told Stars and Stripes after the ceremony.

"It provides ability against any adversary in this region for us to be more responsive and adaptable and able to move forward more rapidly to respond when something occurs," she said.

III MEF commander Lt. Gen. Roger Turner and 3rd Marine Division assistant commander Brig. Gen. Matthew Good were among the approximately 80 Marines and sailors at the ceremony.

Maj. Gen. Toshikatsu Musha, commander of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force's Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade, represented the Japanese side.

Brodie said he reorganized the brigade to include a headquarters company to maintain parity with the Japanese marines.

"Our relationship and the things that we may be asked to do in a time of conflict or crisis, there will not be time to build leadership within," he said. "There will not be time for us to have worked out the challenges ahead of time that could pose us threats to our Marines and our mission success."

The headquarters company's centralized command and synchronization will "enhance the brigade's ability to fight and win in a contested battlespace," according to a Dec. 23 email announcing the standup.

The move comes as U.S. Forces Japan restructures into a joint force command.

The first phase of restructuring USFJ from a liaison-focused organization to an operationally integrated command was announced March 30 by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth during a visit to Tokyo.

While not necessarily aligned with those changes, the headquarters command "is there, though, for both, to make sure that the units that are here are best postured for why we're here," brigade spokesman Maj. Edward Pingel told Stars and Stripes after the ceremony.

MILITARY/WORLD

Navy admiral touts strikes on Iran, Venezuela

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

WAIKIKI BEACH, Hawaii — U.S. military intervention in Venezuela this month and missile strikes in Iran in June enhanced America's deterrence of its adversaries in Asia by demonstrating "capabilities and will," the commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said Monday.

Those operations demonstrated "a level of excellence of integrating the joint force" that will "help to preserve deterrence in the Indo-Pacific," Adm. Samuel Paparo told attendees at the two-day Honolulu Defense Forum on Waikiki Beach.

The annual conference, hosted by Pacific Forum International, brings together military and defense industry leaders from around world with an emphasis on taking actionable steps on readiness and deterrence.

In an operation dubbed Absolute Resolve, U.S. forces snatched Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife on Jan. 3 during a series of strikes on the South American country. The couple was flown to the United States and face charges related to narco-terrorism.

President Donald Trump described the operation as "brilliant," but many Democrats have decried the action as illegal under domestic and international law.

Some critics contend the operation could embolden China to carry out its threat to seize neighboring Taiwan by force.

In Operation Midnight Hammer, U.S. aircraft and missiles struck three nuclear facilities in Iran in June.

To the extent that Midnight Hammer and Absolute Resolve were "expressions of capabilities and will," Paparo said, "ultimately they help to preserve deterrence in the Indo-Pacific."

Paparo, who delivered the forum's opening keynote speech, was asked during a subsequent question-and-answer portion whether the Indo-Pacific was no longer a strategic priority given the strikes on Venezuela, Iran, Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen.

"The Department of War has been quite clear that the Indo-Pacific is a priority theater," Paparo said.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth understands that the Indo-Pacific theater is "where the greatest threats could potentially emanate," he said, alluding to North Korea, China and Russia.

The White House's National Security Strategy released this fall, however, elevated the Americas as the highest priority for the United States. The strategy focuses on controlling migration and transnational crime such as narcotics smuggling.

The strategy at the same time highlights the Pacific as a crucial region but calls on allies to spend a greater share on the region's defense.

Paparo said he did not view U.S. military operations in the Western Hemisphere, Africa or the Middle East as competing with deterrence in the Indo-Pacific.

"We've not seen any of those operations actually divert forces that would otherwise be used for deterrence," he said.

"None of those [operations] have really imposed any cost at all on our ability to fight and win in the Indo Pacific," he said.



AP

Protesters march on a bridge in Tehran, Iran, on Dec. 29.

Death toll from protests in Iran spikes to 2,000, activists say

BY JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The death toll from nationwide protests in Iran surpassed 2,000 people on Tuesday, activists said, as Iranians made phone calls abroad for the first time in days after authorities severed communications during a crackdown on demonstrators.

The number of dead climbed to at least 2,003, as reported by the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency. That figure dwarfs the death toll from any other round of protest or unrest in Iran in decades and recalls the chaos surrounding the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Iranian state television offered the first official acknowledgment of the high death toll, quoting an official saying the country had "a lot of martyrs" and that it did not release a toll earlier because of the dead suffering gruesome injuries. However, that statement came after activists reported their toll.

The demonstrations began a little over two weeks ago in anger over Iran's ailing economy and soon targeted the theocracy, particularly 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Images obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press from demonstrations in Tehran showed graffiti and chants calling for Khamenei's death — something that could carry a death sentence.

Soon after the new death toll became public, President Donald Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform: "Iranian Patriots, KEEP PROTESTING — TAKE OVER YOUR INSTITUTIONS!!!"

He added: "I have cancelled all meetings with Iranian Officials until the senseless killing of protesters STOPS. HELP IS ON ITS WAY." Trump did not give details.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, speaking to the Qatar-funded satellite news network Al Jazeera in an interview aired Monday night, said he had continued to communicate with U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff.

The communication "continued before and after the protests and are still ongoing," Araghchi said. However, "Washington's proposed ideas and threats against our country are incompatible." He had no immediate reaction to Trump's latest online comments.

The activist group said 1,850 of the dead were protesters and 135 were government-affiliated. Nine children were killed, along with nine civilians it said were not taking part in protests. More than 16,700 people have been detained, the group said.

With the internet down in Iran, gauging the demonstrations from abroad has grown more difficult. The AP has been unable to independently assess the toll. Iran's government has not offered overall casualty figures.

Skylar Thompson with the Human Rights Activists News Agency told AP the new toll was shocking, particularly since it reached four times the death toll of the monthslong 2022 Mahsa Amini protests in just two weeks.

Cuban president says no current talks with US following threats

BY ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ, DÁNICA COTO AND MILEXSY DURÁN
Associated Press

HAVANA — Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel said Monday that his administration is not in talks with the U.S. government, a day after President Donald Trump threatened the Caribbean island in the wake of the U.S. attack on Venezuela.

Díaz-Canel posted a flurry of brief statements on X after Trump suggested that Cuba "make a deal, BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE." He did not say what kind of deal.

Díaz-Canel wrote that for "relations between the U.S. and Cuba to progress, they must be based on international law rather than hostility, threats and economic coercion."

On Sunday, Trump wrote that Cuba would no longer live off oil and money from Venezuela, which the U.S. attacked on Jan. 3 in a stunning operation that killed 32 Cuban officers and led to the arrest of President Nicolás Maduro.

Cuba had been receiving an estimated 35,000 barrels a day from Venezuela before the U.S. attacked the country, along with some 5,500 barrels daily from Mexico and roughly 7,500 from Russia, according to Jorge Piñón of the Energy Institute at the University of Texas at Austin, who tracks the shipments.

On Monday, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum once again declined to provide data on current oil shipments or say whether such shipments would increase when Venezuelan supplies end. She insisted that the aid "has been ongoing for a long time; it's not new."

Sheinbaum said Mexico's fuel supply to Cuba is not a concern for her country because "there is enough oil" — even though production of state-owned oil company Petróleos Mexicanos is steadily declining.

She reiterated that her government is willing to facilitate dialogue between the U.S. and Cuba if both agree.

Even with oil shipments from Venezuela, widespread blackouts have persisted across Cuba given fuel shortages and a crumbling electric grid.

Experts worry a lack of petroleum would only deepen the island's multiple crises that stem from an economic paralysis during the COVID-19 pandemic and a radical increase in U.S. sanctions following the first Trump administration, which aim to force a permanent change in Cuba's political model.

MILITARY

Heroes in the Hallways back at Navy base

Volunteer program allows troops to help out in classrooms at US site in Japan

By Juan King
Stars and Stripes

NAVAL AIR FACILITY ATSUGI, Japan — An elementary school on this U.S. base near Tokyo has revived a program paused during the COVID-19 pandemic that turns service members into classroom volunteers for two hours a month.

Heroes in the Hallways allows troops to assist teachers at Shirley Lanham Elementary School for an hour at a time, said program coordinator Michelle Bodwin, a second-grade teacher who provided details Dec. 29.

"They may be asked to read to small groups of students, prepare classroom materials or assist with various learning activities," she said. "Having a few extra hands in an elementary classroom is always a great help."

The program is designed to strengthen community relationships and create volunteer opportunities at NAF Atsugi, about 32 miles southwest of Tokyo. It was scheduled to resume Jan. 9 and will take place on the second and fourth Fridays of each month, the school announced Monday on its Facebook page.

A committee of educators known as the Crusader CARE Crew pairs volunteers with Lanham teachers. CARE stands for Community, Action, Relationships and Engagement, Bodwin said Tuesday.

Nathan Rogers, who served as Lantham's principal until his death in March 2023, coordinated a similar program for several years before the pandemic, Bodwin said.

"Now that the circumstances have changed, we are ready to reopen our hallways and welcome all active-duty service members to Lanham," she said.

Bodwin said Heroes in the Hallways benefits all participating service members, including those without children.

"First and foremost, the base community, especially our single service members and those without children, is made more aware of the presence of children on our base," she said.

The troops may also inspire and mentor the students, Bodwin said.



JUAN KING/Stars and Stripes

Former principal Nathan Rogers poses in a Shirley Lanham Elementary School classroom at Naval Air Facility Atsugi, Japan, in 2022. Rogers coordinated a program similar to Heroes in the Hallways before it was paused during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's a chance for the students to interact with our service members, learn more about them, and understand the vital role they play in our community," she said.

Bodwin said she was not aware of other schools in the region with similar programs but said plans are underway to share the initiative more broadly.

"It would be amazing to have this program adopted by the Pacific East District so that all schools have a Heroes in the Hallways program to effectively bring the base and school communities together," she said.

Bodwin and the CARE crew said they hope to see increased participation.

"We need everyone looking out for and supporting the young ones," she said.



AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

Naval Air Facility Atsugi, southwest of Tokyo, is home to U.S. Navy Fleet Air Western Pacific and is shared with Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force.

Longtime agent takes over command of Army CID

By Rose L. Thayer
Stars and Stripes

An Air Force veteran with more than 20 years working with Army Criminal Investigation Division stepped in to lead the agency Monday — only the second civilian to be named its director.

Scott Moreland, who first joined Army CID in June 2004, has worked his way through various departments and leadership roles over his two decades, according to Army CID.

"I am truly humbled and grateful for the opportunity to lead Army CID," Moreland said in a statement. "I look forward to continuing to support the professionals who conduct and enable our critical felony-level criminal investigative and executive protection mission."

Gregory Ford, the first civilian to lead the agency, retired in August after about four years leading Army CID through a significant transformation that included converting from military leadership to civilian, expanding jurisdiction and restructuring the force to employ more civilian agents while incorporating a more modern- and technology-focused approach to investigating crimes.



ARMY CID

Scott Moreland became the new director of the Criminal Investigation Division on Monday.

The overhaul followed a 2020 outside review sparked by the disappearance and death of Spc. Vanessa Guillen from Fort Hood, Texas, on April 22, 2020. Another soldier in Guillen's unit is believed to have killed her with a hammer, then moved her body. Her remains were found off post more than two months later, and questions arose during the search about the conditions of the base and division.

The outside review committee's report described the workforce of the base's CID office as "unstable, under-experienced, over-assigned and under-resourced." Those issues led to "inefficiencies that had an adverse impact on investigations, especially complex cases involving sex crimes and soldier deaths."

When Ford stepped in as director, he came from a long career with Naval Criminal Investigative Service. Peter J. Tolentino, acting director of CID after Ford left, also had decades with NCIS. Tolentino will remain at CID as the deputy director.

Moreland will be the first civilian director who built his career moving up the ranks of the organization, bringing an insider's perspective to the top job.

He led the Fraud Field Office and most recently served as the executive assistant director of the Investigations and Operations Directorate, where he was responsible for overseeing the agency's criminal investigations and operations, including death, sexual assault, narcotics, economic crimes and national security criminal investigations. In that role he also oversaw the manning, training and equipping of personnel, as well as the execution of major criminal investigative activities, proactive and reactive, for the Army.

Before joining CID, he served nine years in the Air Force, the last four as a special agent with the Air Force Office of Investigations.

"Director Moreland's leadership and vast experience position him well to guide Army CID in its commitment to investigative excellence and service to the Army community," CID said in a statement.

MILITARY

Fort Greely struggles to feed soldiers

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

A remote Army base in Alaska that has a key role in intercepting incoming intercontinental ballistic missiles in the event of nuclear war says it is struggling to keep its dining facilities operating following an exodus of staff under the DOGE budget-slashing campaign.

Fort Greely, about 100 miles south of Fairbanks, Alaska, is facing "a critical disruption in food service operations resulting from the government's loss of essential civilian positions due to the Deferred Resignation Program, retirements and the federal hiring freeze," the Army wrote in its justification review document filed to allow for a waiver to requirements for a competitive bid contract. The solicitation and documents were posted on government websites.

The lack of staff as a result of the quasi-official Department of Government Efficiency campaign had led to reduced dining facility hours, "jeopardizing the readiness" of soldiers, the document said.

Fort Greely is home to the 49th Missile Defense Battalion, which operates the largest Ground-Based Midcourse Defense anti-ballistic missile system. Congress has authorized up to 40 interceptor missiles for Fort Greeley. A fictionalized version of the base is featured in the nuclear doomsday film "A House of Dynamite" that recently made its debut on Netflix.



JACK W. CARLSON III/Department of Defense

A ground-based missile interceptor is lowered into its silo in 2007. The 800-acre Missile Defense Complex at Fort Greely, Alaska, is the largest anti-ballisitic missile site in the U.S.

Because nighttime winter temperatures at times drop below minus 20 degrees, Fort Greely is also the site of the Cold Regions Test Center, which measures the ability of military equipment to withstand extreme low temperatures.

"Without an operable dining facility, military and government workers will be denied accessibility to prepared meals on the installation," the command said. "That will result in negatively impacting their physical and cognitive readiness and contribute to degraded performance during training and normal duty requirements."

The addition of two cooks and five food service workers carries a projected cost of $750,000 per year, according to the Army document.

The Army is looking to speed the food services contract — the solicitation received a waiver from competitive bidding, meaning the first company that meets the Army's criteria can be awarded the contract.

"Competition is not possible for this requirement due to the short timeline to procure the services needed to prevent mission failure to the government," the statement said.

The Army said it had explored alternative ways to feed the roughly 350 troops at Fort Greely, including transferring staff from Fort Wainwright near Fairbanks to Fort Greely.

As a temporary fix, the Army considered using MREs — "Meals Ready to Eat" — the field rations used by the U.S. military. The Army said it didn't have enough MREs to support the switch.

Former sailor sentenced for selling info to China

BY AUDREY MCAVOY
Associated Press

A former U.S. Navy sailor convicted of selling technical and operating manuals for ships and operating systems to an intelligence officer working for China was sentenced Monday to more than 16 years in prison, prosecutors said.

A federal judge in San Diego sentenced Jinchao Wei, 25, to 200 months. A federal jury convicted Wei in August of six crimes, including espionage. He was paid more than $12,000 for the information he sold, the U.S. Department of Justice said in a statement.

Wei, an engineer for the amphibious assault ship USS Essex, was one of two California-based sailors charged on Aug. 3, 2023, with providing sensitive military information to China. The other, Wenheng Zhao, was sentenced to more than two years in 2024 after he pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy and one count of receiving a bribe in violation of his official duties.

U.S. officials have for years expressed concern about the espionage threat they say the Chinese government poses, bringing criminal cases in recent years against Beijing intelligence operatives who have stolen sensitive government and commercial information, including through illegal hacking.

Wei was recruited via social media in 2022 by an intelligence officer who portrayed himself as a naval enthusiast working for the state-owned China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation, prosecutors said.

Over the course of 18 months, Wei sent the officer photos and videos of the Essex, advised him of the location of various Navy ships and told him about the Essex's defensive weapons, prosecutors said.

Wei sold the intelligence officer 60 technical and operating manuals, including those for weapons control, aircraft and deck elevators. The manuals contained export control warnings and detailed the operations of multiple systems aboard the Essex and similar ships.

He was a petty officer second class, which is a enlisted sailor's rank.

The Navy's website says the Essex is equipped to transport and support a Marine Corps landing force of over 2,000 troops during an air and amphibious assault.

Navy extends Battle 'E' award to onshore installations

BY MARC CASTANEDA
Stars and Stripes

For the first time, the Navy has recognized its shore installations for improving facilities, boosting readiness and sharpening operations with the same award long given to warships.

The 2025 Battle Efficiency, or Battle "E," Award was presented to five installations — large and small — for improvements that enhanced operations and quality of life for the people who live and work there, Naval Installations Command said in a Jan. 6 release.

The largest installation recognized, Naval Base San Diego, earned its award for installing 680 electric vehicle charging stations and increasing shuttle ridership by 200%, according to a Thursday post on the base's official Facebook page. It won in the fleet concentration/extra-large category.

Pacific Missile Range Facility Barking Sands in Hawaii — one of the smallest installations honored — built two playgrounds and established 24-hour access to its fitness center, according to a Barking Sands news released Friday.

It received the Battle "E" for small installations outside the continental United States, the Navy said.

Barking Sands employs about 900 civilians and roughly 80 Navy sailors, according to Navy information posted July 9 in the Defense Visual Information Distribution System.

"Our core mission at [Pacific Missile Range Facility] is to enhance warfighter readiness through fleet training and support of test and evaluation events," base commander Capt. Robert Prince said in the release. "Excellent leadership at all levels and steadfast support from our civilian staff is critical to this mission."

The Navy listed the other Battle "E" recipients as:

Large: Naval Station Mayport, Fla., for ship and aviation support, ordnance capabilities and housing satisfaction.

Medium: Naval Air Station Whiting Field, Fla., for sustaining more than 1 million flight operations while meeting energy and water conservation goals.

Small (continental U.S.): Naval Air Facility El Centro, Calif., for supporting large-scale aviation training with an exceptional safety record.

The traditional Battle "E" award was established in 1976 by then-Secretary of the Navy John Middendorf. It recognizes Navy ships, submarines and aviation squadrons that demonstrate superior battle readiness, operational performance and achievement in required certifications.

The shore-focused version of the award formally recognizes installation teams whose work directly enables operational success across the fleet.

"The outstanding performance of this year's winners is a direct reflection of the dedication and professionalism of our Sailors and civilians," Vice Adm. Scott Gray, commander of Navy Installations Command, said in the release. "They are the backbone of our shore enterprise, and their relentless work ensures our installations are true force multipliers, enabling fleet readiness and power projection around the globe."

NATION

Central bankers in ‘full solidarity’ with Powell

Foreign financial leaders side with Fed over Trump

BY DAVID MCHUGH
Associated Press

FRANKFURT, Germany — Central bankers from around the world said Tuesday they “stand in full solidarity” with U.S. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, after President Donald Trump dramatically escalated his confrontation with the Fed with the Justice Department investigating and threatening criminal charges.

Powell “has served with integrity, focused on his mandate and an unwavering commitment to the public interest,” read the statement signed by nine national central bank heads including European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde and Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey.

They added that “the independence of central banks is a cornerstone of price, financial and economic stability in the interest of the citizens that we serve. It is therefore critical to preserve that independence, with full respect for the rule of law and democratic accountability.”



RICHARD DREW/AP

A video of Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell plays on a screen on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange on Monday. Central bankers from around the world said Tuesday they “stand in full solidarity” with Powell amid the Justice Department investigating the Fed and threatening criminal charges.

The dispute is ostensibly about Powell’s testimony to Congress in June over the cost of a massive renovation of Fed buildings. But in a statement Sunday, Powell, abandoning his previous attempt to ignore Trump’s relentless criticism, called the administration’s threat of criminal charges “pretexts” in the president’s campaign to seize control of U.S. interest rate policy from the Fed’s technocrats.

Trump has repeatedly criticized Powell and the Fed for not moving faster to cut rates. Economists warn that a politicized Fed that caves in to the president’s demands will damage its credibility as an inflation fighter and likely lead investors to demand higher rates before investing in U.S. Treasurys.

Other signatories of the statement carried on the ECB’s website were Erik Thedeen, governor of Sweden’s central bank; Christian Kettel Thomsen, chair of Denmark’s central bank; Swiss National Bank Chair Martin Schlegel; Michele Bullock, governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia; Tiff Macklem, governor of the Bank of Canada; Bank of Korea Governor Chang Yong Rhee; Gabriel Galipolo, governor of the Banco Central do Brasil.

Also attaching their names were François Villeroy de Galhau, board chair of the Bank for International Settlements, and Pablo Hernández de Cos, BIS general manager. The BIS is an international organization of central banks based in Basel, Switzerland.

One prominent central bank not included in the statement was the Bank of Japan. The statement said that more signatures could be added later.

Judge: Administration illegally blocked clean energy grants

BY MATTHEW DALY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal judge ruled Monday that the Trump administration acted illegally when it canceled $7.6 billion in clean energy grants for projects in states that voted for Democrat Kamala Harris in the 2024 election.

The grants supported hundreds of clean energy projects in 16 states, including battery plants, hydrogen technology projects, upgrades to the electric grid and efforts to capture carbon dioxide emissions.

The Energy Department said the projects were terminated after a review determined they did not adequately advance the nation’s energy needs or were not economically viable. Russell Vought, the White House budget director, said on social media that “the Left’s climate agenda is being canceled.”

U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta said the administration’s action violated the Constitution’s equal protection requirements.

“Defendants freely admit that they made grant-termination decisions primarily — if not exclusively — based on whether the awardee resided in a state whose citizens voted for President Trump in 2024,” Mehta wrote in a 17-page opinion. The administration offered no explanation for how their purposeful targeting of grant recipients based on their electoral support for Trump — or lack of it — “rationally advances their stated government interest,” the judge added.

The ruling was the second legal setback for the administration’s rollback of clean energy program in a matter of hours. A separate federal judge ruled Monday that work on a major offshore wind farm for Rhode Island and Connecticut can resume, handing the industry at least a temporary victory as Trump seeks to shut it down.

A spokesman for the Energy Department said officials disagree with the judge’s decision on clean energy grants. Officials “stand by our review process, which evaluated these awards individually and determined they did not meet the standards necessary to justify the continued spending of taxpayer dollars,” spokesman Ben Dietderich said. “The American people deserve a government that is accountable and responsible in managing taxpayer funds.”

Projects were canceled in California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Vermont and Washington state. All 16 targeted states supported Harris.

The cuts include up to $1.2 billion for California’s hydrogen hub that is aimed at accelerating hydrogen technology and production, and up to $1 billion for a hydrogen project in the Pacific Northwest. A Texas hydrogen project and a three-state project in West Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania were spared, according to clean-energy supporters who obtained a list of the DOE targets.

The city of St. Paul and a coalition of environmental groups filed a lawsuit after they lost grants.

Trump said in an Oct. 1 interview that his administration could cut projects that Democrats want.

“I’m allowed to cut things that never should have been approved in the first place and I will probably do that,” Trump said.

Anne Evens, CEO of Elevate Energy, one of the groups that lost funding, said the court ruling would help keep clean energy affordable and create jobs.

“Affordable energy should be a reality for everyone, and the restoration of these grants is an important step toward making that possible,” she said.

Inflation cooled slightly last month but still above Federal Reserve’s target

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Inflation cooled a bit last month as prices for gas and used cars fell, a sign that stubbornly elevated cost pressures are slowly easing.

Consumer prices rose 0.3% in December from the prior month, the Labor Department said Tuesday, the same as in November.

Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core prices rose 0.2%, also matching November’s figure.

Increases at that pace, over time, would bring inflation closer to the Federal Reserve’s target of 2%.

Many economists had expected inflation to jump last month as the government resumed normal data collection after the six-week shutdown last fall, so the modest increases that matched the November figures came as a relief. The price of manufactured goods was flat in December, a sign that the impact of tariffs may be starting to fade.

“Distortions caused by the government shutdown have made the inflation data harder to interpret, but the recent run of figures suggests inflation has peaked,” Michael Pearce, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, wrote in a note to clients.

Signs that inflation is cooling could make it more likely that the Federal Reserve will reduce its key interest rate later this year, which could translate into lower borrowing costs for mortgages, auto loans and credit cards.

Even so, the large price increases in recent years for necessities such as groceries, rent and utilities have left many American households feeling squeezed, turning “affordability” issues into high-profile political concerns. Food prices have jumped about 25% since the pandemic.

President Donald Trump celebrated Tuesday’s figures on social media: “Great (LOW!) Inflation numbers for the USA,” he posted. He also celebrated estimates that the economy expanded at a solid pace in last year’s fourth quarter: “Thank you MISTER TARIFF!”

Yet in a speech Monday, John Williams, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and a key member of the Fed’s rate-setting committee, said that tariffs have likely increased inflation by about a half-percentage point.

NATION

Dems to replicate hands-on GOP on voter registration



ALLISON ROBBERT/AP

Democratic National Committee chair Ken Martin speaks during an interview at DNC headquarters, on Monday, in Washington. The DNC will spend millions of dollars to cement control of voter registration efforts that have traditionally been entrusted to nonprofit groups and individual political campaigns.

BY MATT BROWN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Democratic National Committee will spend millions of dollars to cement control of voter registration efforts that have traditionally been entrusted to nonprofit advocacy groups and individual political campaigns, a shift that party leaders hope will increase their chances in this year's midterm elections.

The initiative, being announced on Tuesday, will begin in Arizona and Nevada with at least $2 million for training organizers. It's the first step in what could become the DNC's largest-ever push to sign up new voters, with a particular focus on young people, voters of color and people without college educations. All of those demographics drifted away from Democrats in the last presidential race, which returned Republican Donald Trump to the White House.

"It's a crisis. And for our party to actually win elections, we have to actually create more Democrats," DNC Chair Ken Martin said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Martin added that "we need all hands on deck, not just the outside groups," as the party tries to win back control of Congress and break Republicans' unified control in Washington.

Democrats have spent decades relying on advocacy organizations and civic groups to register voters, but those efforts are generally required by law to be nonpartisan. Party leaders want a more explicitly partisan approach like the one used by Republicans, who have relied less on outside groups to register and mobilize their voter base.

Martin said allied nonprofits are "really important partners" that have "done amazing work to actually get people engaging in their democracy."

"But in this moment right now, given the significant disadvantage that we have and the advantage the Republicans have, we actually have to do more," he said.

The DNC initiative aims to reach non-college-educated young voters by recruiting organizers from a wide array of backgrounds, like gig economy workers and young parents, who have often been overlooked in the party's grassroots efforts. Democrats hope that organizers' own perspectives and experiences will help party strategists learn how to connect with Americans in blue-collar roles who are disaffected with politics, whom the party fears it has lost touch with in recent elections.

"I think it's incredible that Democrats are actually investing in reaching Democratic voters who have been left behind," said Santiago Mayer, founder of Voters for Tomorrow, a progressive political youth group that is collaborating with the DNC. "We got killed on persuasion in 2024, and I think this is a really important step, fixing it and ensuring that we do not have a repeat of that in 2026."

The program will kick off with dozens of videos from lawmakers, activists and party leaders across the country. Democrats hope to boost enthusiasm for the program through interstate party competitions throughout the year.

If successful, the investments will provide a foundation that Democrats can rely upon beyond the fall midterm elections.

"This is a critical piece of the infrastructure that we're building to actually not only win the moment in '26 but to win the future," Martin said. "For us to put ourselves in a position to win in '28 and '30 and '32, we actually have to keep doing this work and do it consistently."

Congress: Incumbents leaving include Senate's 1st female combat vet

FROM PAGE 1

House are veterans, and there are 18 veterans in the Senate. A significant number, like Luttrell, served in the military following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Luttrell, a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, served as a Navy SEAL who was medically retired in 2014 as a lieutenant, after a 14-year military career. He suffered a traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injury in a helicopter crash in 2009 in Afghanistan.

"My service to our great nation started in the Air Force, where I served 16 assignments, five commands and four deployments and will continue in Congress until the end of the 119th Congress," said Bacon, a 30-year Air Force veteran.

But Bacon, who has served in Congress since 2017, said he is not ruling out runs for governor or the White House.

Bacon, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, has expressed frustration about the current "dysfunction" in Washington and sharp divisions within his own party.

In 2025, Bacon said he was "mad as hell" after the U.S. voted against a resolution condemning Russia's aggression in Ukraine.

In the Senate, veterans not seeking another term include Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, a retired Army lieutenant colonel; Gary Peters, D-Mich., a Navy Reserve veteran; and Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., the former Senate majority leader, whose Army Reserve service in 1967 ended with basic training because of a serious eye condition.



Peters

McConnell has been a steadfast supporter of military aid to Ukraine and critical of the approach by President Donald Trump's administration for a peace deal as too soft on Russia.

"Rewarding Russian butchery would be disastrous to America's interests," said McConnell, in his seventh term. McConnell, 83, disclosed in early 2025 he would not run again.



Nehls

When Ernst announced in September 2025 that she would not seek reelection, she said she was sticking to her plan not to serve more than two terms.

Ernst in 2014 was the first female combat veteran elected to the Senate.

Ernst, a 55-year-old cancer survivor, was a strong advocate for passage of the 2022 PACT Act, which granted benefits and compensation to veterans who became sick from toxic exposures, including burn pits, Agent Orange and radiation.



Golden

But Ernst also faced criticism within the Trump administration over her initial hesitancy to support Pete Hegseth, an Army National Guard veteran and Fox News host, as defense secretary.

She raised concern about Hegseth's statement on a podcast that "we should not have women in combat roles" and about prior sexual misconduct allegations against him. But Hegseth emphasized in his confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee the need for "equal," not "equitable," standards for men and women in the military.

Ernst ended up backing Hegseth's nomination, with her vote considered pivotal to his approval.

Peters, a 67-year-old attorney and former naval officer, has complained recently that it is hard to advance policies in the current political climate in Washington.

"Politics are more polarized. Working together to help people does not get rewarded in this environment," Peters said on a Detroit radio talk show.



Ernst

Peters is completing his third term in the Senate, after three terms in the House.

"The [politicians] who get the most attention are the ones who are more provocative. It's about performative politics — getting the most clicks on social media — instead of getting things done," Peters said.

Peters served in the Navy Reserve from 1993 to 2008. He was a supply corps officer deployed to the Persian Gulf. He achieved the rank of lieutenant commander.

Golden, 43, also complained about the political climate in Washington. Public incivility, "plain nastiness" and threats of violence against him and other politicians convinced Golden to step aside, he wrote in a recent guest editorial in the Bangor Daily News, a Maine newspaper.

"I have never loved politics. But I find purpose and meaning in service, and the Marine in me has been able to slog along through the many aspects of politics I dislike by focusing on the good work that Congress is capable of producing with patience and determination," Golden wrote.



McConnell

Golden served in the Marine Corps from 2002 to 2006, achieving the rank of corporal. He had combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Golden, who sits on the House Armed Services Committee, has served in the House since 2018. But he expressed safety concerns for himself and his family if he runs again.

"As my oldest daughter reaches school age, the threats, the intolerance and hate that often dominate political culture, and my long absences, will be more keenly felt," Golden wrote. "I have to consider whether the good I can achieve outweighs everything my family endures as a result."

NATION



JEN GOLBECK/AP

Protesters yell in front of a federal immigration officer's vehicle as it exits Bishop Whipple Federal Building, on Monday, in Minneapolis. With the Department of Homeland Security pledging to send more than 2,000 immigration officers into Minnesota, the state, joined by Minneapolis and St. Paul, sued the Trump administration Monday to try to halt or limit the surge.

Protesters and federal agents square off at Twin Cities sites

BY REBECCA SANTANA, MARK VANCLEAVE AND STEVE KARNOWSKI
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Days of demonstrations against immigration agents left Minnesota tense on Tuesday, a day after federal authorities used tear gas to break up crowds of whistle-blowing activists and state and local leaders sued to fight the enforcement surge that led to the fatal shooting of a Minneapolis woman.

Confrontations between federal agents and protesters stretched throughout the day and across multiple cities on Monday. Agents fired tear gas in Minneapolis as a crowd gathered around immigration officers questioning a man, while to the northwest in St. Cloud hundreds of people protested outside a strip of Somali-run businesses after ICE officers arrived.

Later that night confrontations erupted between protesters and officers guarding the federal building being used as a base for the Twin Cities crackdown.

With the Department of Homeland Security pledging to send more than 2,000 immigration officers into Minnesota in what Immigration and Customs Enforcement has called its largest enforcement operation ever, the state, joined by Minneapolis and St. Paul, sued the Trump administration Monday to try to halt or limit the surge.

The suit filed says DHS is violating the First Amendment and other constitutional protections. It accuses the Republican Trump administration of violating free speech rights by focusing on a progressive state that favors Democrats and welcomes immigrants.

"This is, in essence, a federal invasion of the Twin Cities in Minnesota, and it must stop," state Attorney General Keith Ellison said at a news conference.

Homeland Security says it has made more than 2,000 arrests in the state since December.

The days after Renee Good was shot in the head by an ICE officer while behind the wheel of her SUV have seen dozens of protests or vigils across the U.S. to honor the 37-year-old mother of three and to passionately criticize the Trump administration's tactics.

In response to Monday's lawsuit, Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin accused Minnesota officials of ignoring public safety.

"President [Donald] Trump's job is to protect the American people and enforce the law — no matter who your mayor, governor, or state attorney general is," McLaughlin said.

The Trump administration has repeatedly defended the immigration agent who shot Good, saying she and her vehicle presented a threat. But that explanation has been widely panned by Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey and others based on videos of the confrontation.

The government also faces a new lawsuit over a similar immigration crackdown in Illinois. More than 4,300 people were arrested last year in "Operation Midway Blitz" as masked agents swept the Chicago area. The lawsuit by the city and state seeks restrictions on certain tactics, among other remedies. McLaughlin called it "baseless."

Danish official says nation provided US support on tanker

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Denmark provided U.S. forces in the east Atlantic with support last week as they intercepted an oil tanker for violations of U.S. sanctions, a Danish government official confirmed on Tuesday, despite tensions between the allies over the Trump administration's desire for control of Greenland.

The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly on the sensitive matter and spoke on the condition of anonymity, declined to provide details about what the support entailed.

But acknowledgment of Danish support for the U.S. operation comes after tensions spiraled between the NATO allies as President Donald Trump renewed calls for the U.S. to take over Greenland. The vast Arctic island is a semiautonomous territory of Denmark.

The U.S. interception in the Atlantic capped a weekslong pursuit of the tanker that began in the Caribbean Sea as the U.S. imposed a blockade in the waters of Venezuela aimed at capturing sanctioned vessels coming in and out of the South American country.

The White House and Pentagon did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Danish support for the U.S. operation was first reported by Newsmax.

Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio will meet with the foreign ministers of Denmark and Greenland on Wednesday at the White House to discuss Trump's interest in acquiring Greenland, according to a U.S. official and two sources familiar with the plans who spoke on condition of anonymity because the meeting has not yet been formally announced.

Denmark's foreign minister, Lars Lokke Rasmussen, said earlier Tuesday that Vance would host a meeting with him and his Greenlandic counterpart, Vivian Motzfeldt, in Washington this week, with Rubio in attendance.

Lokke Rasmussen, a former Danish prime minister, has been foreign minister since 2022 in the government of Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen.

A senior Greenland government official said Tuesday it's "unfathomable" that the United States is discussing taking over a NATO ally and urged the Trump administration to listen to voices from the Arctic island nation. Naaja Nathanielsen, Greenland's minister for business and mineral resources, said people in Greenland are "very, very worried" about the U.S. rhetoric.

"People are not sleeping, children are afraid, and it just fills everything these days. And we can't really understand it," Nathanielsen said at a meeting with lawmakers in Britain's Parliament.

At a joint news conference with Frederiksen in Copenhagen on Tuesday, Greenlandic Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen reiterated that Greenland isn't for sale, Danish media reported. He said that the island is part of the kingdom of Denmark, and Greenland doesn't want to be owned or ruled by the U.S.

Frederiksen also said Greenland isn't for sale and underlined Denmark's willingness to invest in Arctic security. She said it hasn't been easy to stand up to unacceptable pressure from a close ally and there are many indications that the most difficult part lies ahead.

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte refused to be drawn into the dispute, insisting that it was not his role to get involved.

"I never, ever comment when there are discussions within the alliance," Rutte said, at the European Parliament in Brussels. "My role has to be to make sure we solve issues."

He said that the 32-nation military organization must focus on providing security in the Arctic region, which includes Greenland.

Ex-special counsel Smith to testify publicly about Trump probes

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith is set to testify publicly next week about his investigations into President Donald Trump that resulted in two indictments.

Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, the Republican chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said in a Fox News Channel interview on Monday night that Smith would appear before the panel on Jan. 22. A spokesman for Smith on Tuesday confirmed the committee hearing.

Smith had already testified behind closed doors before the committee. A transcript released of that private deposition shows that Smith told lawmakers that the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol "does not happen" without Trump.

Smith led investigations into Trump's hoarding of classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Fla., and his efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election after the Republican president lost to Democrat Joe Biden. Both investigations resulted in indictments that were abandoned after Trump's November 2024 presidential election win, with Smith citing Justice Department legal opinions that bar the indictment of a sitting president.

One of Smith's lawyers, Lanny Breuer, said in a statement last week as a public hearing was being discussed: "Jack has been clear for months he is ready and willing to answer questions in a public hearing about his investigations into President Trump's alleged unlawful efforts to overturn the 2020 election and his mishandling of classified documents."

Trump has said the Justice Department was weaponized against him as he was pursuing a return to the White House.

NATION

‘Joe Dirt’ tribute takes prize in mullet contest

By Mark Scolforo
Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. — A packed crowd celebrated the much-maligned but enduring mullet hairstyle Monday in a contest at the Pennsylvania Farm Show in Harrisburg.

The short-in-the-front, long-in-the-back coiffure, once the province of Canadian hockey players and hair metal bands, attracted about 150 competitors and more than a thousand spectators for the day’s “mane” attraction.

The top award, in the form of the rear bumper of a Corvette, went to 10-year-old Drew Fleschut of Dallas, Pa. — who wore a red-and-black shirt in an homage to movie character Joe Dirt and carried Joe’s trademark mop.

Contestants were evaluated for the style of their cut, any props or accessories, their presentation and their overall sense of commitment, said judge Brittany Goldberg.

“This is for fun,” said Goldberg, owner of Heavy Metal Hair Salon in Philadelphia. “It’s about the camaraderie and everyone having a laugh and a good time.”

There were magic tricks, customized T-shirts and even a “skullet” — a mullet sported by a balding man. One kid didn’t want to leave the stage. Another took the occasion to pick his nose. Some danced the worm, some dabbed and a few ripped off their shirts, pro-wrestling style.

Brittni Williamson of Harvey’s Lake brought along her 3-year-old son Mason, who ended up with a mullet when the hair on the back of his head grew more quickly than the rest of his hair when he was a baby.

“We just clean it up in the front and keep the party going,” Williamson said. Mason didn’t win, but he did get to accomplish his New Year’s resolution by feeding a cow.



Tassanee Vejpongsa/AP

Meredith Nelson smiles at her son, Mikey "The Mullet" Nelson, an 8-year old-contestant in the mullet contest, Monday in Harrisburg, Pa.



Tassanee Vejpongsa/AP

6-year-old Axell Jenkins gets ready for a mullet contest, Monday in Harrisburg, Pa.

Ben Barley, 7, of Red Lion arrived at the event wearing a T-shirt featuring his name and the words “MULLET LIFE 6-7,” a nod to both his hairstyle and the bafflingly popular youth catchphrase.

He said he’d been working on his mullet for two years.

Kyle Wertman said he was inspired to go with a mullet while watching old professional wrestling footage of Hacksaw Jim Duggan.

He gets a lot of comments about it in his hometown of Murrysville.

“They like to fluff the curls in the back, ‘Look at this thing, it’s got a mind of its own,’” said Wertman, 43, who works in sales and service of industrial air compressors.



Mark Scolforo/AP

Ben Barley, a 7-year-old first-grader from Red Lion, Pa., waits with his father, Robert Barley, for the start of the mullet judging contest at the Pennsylvania Farm Show in Harrisburg on Monday.

It’s taken Lancaster resident Brayden Shaner, 14, about four years to grow his mullet, which was good enough for third-place in the teenager category.

“I like it because it’s different,” he said. “You don’t see, walking through the grocery store, people with a mullet. I think the girls like it.”

Though mullets likely have been around longer than there have been barbers, the Oxford English Dictionary cites hip-hop legends the Beastie Boys for helping popularize the term mullet with the song “Mullet Head” on their 1994 recording, “Ill Communication.”

As the venerable dictionary notes, it’s a term that is slang, humorous “and frequently derogatory.”

The contest, in its third year, is one of the few at the Pennsylvania Farm Show open to people who live outside the state.

ADHD drugs work, but not the way experts thought

By Mark Johnson
The Washington Post

The stimulants Ritalin and Adderall have been used to treat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder for decades, but research shows they don’t act on the brain’s attention circuitry as had long been assumed.

Instead, the medications primarily target the brain’s reward and wakefulness centers, according to a new study published in the journal Cell.

The research, which used brain imaging data from almost 5,800 children ages 8 to 11, also pointed toward the important role that lack of sleep plays in the disorder.

“When I first saw the results, I thought I had just made a mistake because none of the attention systems are changing here,” said Benjamin Kay, one of the study’s authors and a professor of neurology at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

It’s not that the stimulants are ineffective.

“The paper clearly shows that they help,” said Nico Dosenbach, another of the authors and a professor of neurology at the university. “They help kids who have a diagnosis of ADHD do better in school and do better on tests, and they help kids who don’t sleep enough —and a lot of Americans don’t sleep enough.”

Although ADHD is often thought of as a childhood condition, an estimated 15.5 million American adults have the diagnosis; roughly half of them received the diagnosis in adulthood.

The disorder afflicts an estimated 7 million children, ages 3 to 17.

The prevalence among American children rose from 6.1% in 1997 to 1998 to 10.2% in 2015 to 2016, according to one study.

The exact cause of ADHD remains unknown, and there is no single test for the condition.

“Despite the name ‘Attention Deficit,’ ADHD is a multifaceted disorder in which difficulty focusing attention is just one component,” Maggie Sweitzer, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Duke University School of Medicine who did not work on the study, said in an email.

“It’s important to remember that ADHD is not a benign condition — individuals with ADHD are not only at risk for school problems in childhood, but also for occupational, social, and physical and mental health problems across the lifespan. For many people these medications are transformative.”

The brain images used in the Cell paper published last month came from children enrolled in the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development study, which began in 2015.

Researchers compared images of children who took prescription stimulants on the day of their scan with those of children who did not take stimulants.

By studying the connections that allow different regions of the brain to communicate with one another, the scientists discovered that stimulants were promoting increased activity in the wakefulness and reward regions but not in the attention ones, as was previously thought.

Dosenbach said the stimulants “pre-reward our brains and allow us to keep working at things that wouldn’t normally hold our interest,” such as a class in school that feels like drudgery.

The stimulants “are not a cognition booster,” Dosenbach said.

“They don’t make you smarter, I don’t think. They don’t actually give you better attention.”

Researchers found that the stimulants not only helped children diagnosed with ADHD but also those who had slept less than the recommended nine hours a night.

The stimulants did not lead to better school performance by children who did not have ADHD and were not sleep-deprived.

The new study supports an increasing body of research that has pointed toward lack of proper sleep as a contributor to ADHD.

WORLD

Death sentence sought for ex-S. Korea leader

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — An independent counsel has demanded a death sentence for former South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on rebellion charges in connection with his short-lived imposition of martial law in December 2024.

The Seoul Central District Court said independent counsel Cho Eun-suk's team made the request at a hearing Tuesday. Yoon was expected to make remarks there.

Removed from office last April, Yoon faces criminal trials over his martial law debacle and other scandals related to his time in office. Charges that he directed a rebellion are the most significant ones.

The court is expected to deliver a verdict on Yoon in February.

Yoon has maintained that his decree was a desperate yet peaceful attempt to raise public awareness about what he considered the danger of the liberal opposition Democratic Party, which used its legislative majority to obstruct his agenda and complicate state affairs.

Yoon called the opposition-controlled parliament "a den of criminals" and "anti-state forces." But lawmakers rushed to object to the imposition of martial law in dramatic overnight scenes, and enough of them, including even those within Yoon's ruling party, managed to enter an assembly hall to vote down the decree.

Yoon's decree, the first of its kind in more than 40 years in South Korea, brought armed troops into Seoul streets to encircle the assembly and enter election offices. That evoked traumatic memories of dictatorships in the 1970s and 1980s, when military-backed rulers used martial law and other emergency decrees to station soldiers, tanks and armored vehicles in public places to suppress pro-democracy protests.

Yoon's decree and ensuing power vacuum plunged South Korea into political turmoil, halted the country's high-level diplomacy and rattled its financial markets.



KIM HONG-JI/AP

Former South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol arrives at a court in Seoul, South Korea, for a hearing in July.

BBC will seek to dismiss Trump's $10B defamation lawsuit in a Florida court

Associated Press

LONDON — The BBC plans to ask a court to throw out U.S. President Donald Trump's $10 billion lawsuit against the British broadcaster, court papers show.

Trump filed a lawsuit in December over the way the BBC edited a speech he gave on Jan. 6, 2021. The claim, filed in a Florida federal court, seeks $5 billion in damages for defamation and $5 billion for unfair trade practices.

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 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.

The broadcaster has apologized to Trump over the edit of the Jan. 6 speech. But the publicly funded BBC rejects claims it defamed him. The furor triggered the resignations of the BBC's top executive and its head of news.

Papers filed Monday in U.S. District Court in Miami say the BBC will file a motion to dismiss the case on March 17 on the basis that the court lacks jurisdiction and Trump failed to state a claim.

Russian strike targets Ukraine's power grid again

BY ILLIA NOVIKOV
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia launched a second major drone and missile bombardment of Ukraine in four days, officials said Tuesday, aiming again at the power grid amid freezing temperatures in an apparent snub to U.S.-led peace efforts as Moscow's invasion of its neighbor approaches the four-year mark.

Russia fired almost 300 drones, 18 ballistic missiles and seven cruise missiles at eight regions overnight, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on social media.

One strike in the northeastern Kharkiv region killed four people at a mail depot, and several hundred thousand households were without power in the Kyiv region, Zelenskyy said.

The daytime temperature in Kyiv, which has endured freezing temperatures for more than two weeks, was about 10 degrees Fahrenheit, with streets covered in ice and the rumble of generators heard throughout the capital.

Kyiv has grappled with severe power shortages for days, although Mayor Vitali Klitschko said Monday night's strikes caused the biggest electrical outage the city has faced so far.

More than 500 residential buildings remained without central heating Tuesday. Throughout the city, bare trees were weighed down with icicles and snow was piled up next to sidewalks.

To cope, friends and relatives gathered in those apartments that have power or hot water, at least temporarily. They charge their phones, take hot showers, or share a warm drink.

Klitschko ordered the city to provide one hot meal per day to needy residents. He also announced that workers in the city's water, heating and road maintenance services would receive bonuses for working "day and night" to restore critical infrastructure.

Four days earlier, Russia also sent hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles in a large-scale overnight attack and, for only the second time in the war, it used a powerful new hypersonic missile that struck western Ukraine in what appeared to be a clear warning to Kyiv's NATO allies that it won't back down.

On Monday, the U.S. accused Russia of a " dangerous and inexplicable escalation " of the fighting at a time when the Trump administration is trying to advance peace negotiations.

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Impeachments removed from Trump photo display

DC WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's photo portrait display at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery has had references to his two impeachments removed, the latest apparent change at the collection of museums he has accused of bias as he asserts his influence over how official presentations document U.S. history.

The wall text, which summarized Trump's first presidency and noted his 2024 comeback victory, was part of the museum's "American Presidents" exhibition. The description had been placed alongside a photograph of Trump taken during his first term. Now, a different photo appears without any accompanying text block, though the text was available online.

Trump ordered in August that Smithsonian officials review all exhibits before the nation celebrates the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

Arson suspect arrested after synagogue fire

MS JACKSON — Religious leaders and civil rights activists condemned what authorities said Sunday was an act of arson that heavily damaged a historic Mississippi synagogue that had been bombed decades ago for its congregation's role in the civil rights movement.

One person was arrested for investigation of arson, authorities said.

The fire ripped through the Beth Israel Congregation in Jackson shortly after 3 a.m. on Saturday, authorities said. No congregants or firefighters were injured in the blaze.

Photos showed the charred remains of an administrative office and synagogue library, where several Torahs were destroyed or damaged.

Truck speeds through Iran demonstration

CA LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles police responded Sunday after somebody drove a U-Haul box truck down a street crowded with marchers demonstrating in support of the Iranian people, causing protesters to scramble out of the way and then run after the speeding vehicle to try to attack the driver.

The U-Haul truck, with a window and side mirrors shattered, was stopped several blocks away and surrounded by police cars. ABC7 news helicopter footage showed officers keeping the crowd at bay as demonstrators swarmed the truck, throwing punches at the driver and thrusting flagpoles through the driver's side window.

The driver, a man who was not identified, was detained "pending further investigation," police said in a statement Sunday evening.

The police statement said one person was hit by the truck but nobody was seriously hurt. Two people were evaluated by paramedics and both declined treatment, the Los Angeles Fire Department said.

Los Angeles is home to the largest Iranian community outside of Iran.



ALLISON JOYCE/AP

Walking for peace

Buddhist monks who are participating in the "Walk For Peace" arrive in Saluda, S.C., on Thursday. The group's journey began Oct. 26 at a Vietnamese Buddhist temple in Texas, and is scheduled to end in mid-February in Washington, D.C. Beyond promoting peace, their highest priority is connecting with people along the way.

Supporters press for Thomas Paine memorial

DC WASHINGTON — Some 250 years after "Common Sense" helped inspire the 13 colonies to declare independence, Thomas Paine might receive a long-anticipated tribute from his adopted country.

A Paine memorial in Washington, D.C., authorized by a 2022 law, awaits approval from the U.S. Department of Interior.

It would be the first landmark in the nation's capital to be dedicated to one of the American Revolution's most stirring, popular and quotable advocates — who also was one of the most intensely debated men of his time.

Ali will be honored with commemorative stamp

KY LOUISVILLE — Muhammad Ali once joked that he should be a postage stamp because "that's the only way I'll ever get licked."

Now, the three-time heavyweight champion's quip is becoming reality.

Widely regarded as the most famous and influential boxer of all time and a cultural force who fused athletic brilliance with political conviction and showmanship, Ali is being honored for the first time with a commemorative U.S. postage stamp that features a black-and-white Associated Press photo from 1974 of Ali in his famous boxing pose.

Inmates dead, officer injured in prison fight

GA DAVISBORO — Three inmates were killed and a corrections officer and several other inmates were injured when a fight broke out Sunday at a state prison in Georgia, according to local police.

A fight broke out among the inmates at the Washington State Prison, leaving three inmates dead, Davisboro Police Chief Leondus Dixon said in an email.

A corrections officer was injured and 12 inmates were taken to local hospitals for treatment, Dixon said.

The medium security prison in Davisboro, about 130 miles southeast of Atlanta, has a capacity of about 1,550 inmates, according to the Georgia Department of Corrections website..

Monkeys loose, AI complicating capture

MO ST LOUIS — Multiple monkeys are on the loose in St. Louis, and AI-generated images are complicating the effort to find them.

The Vervet monkeys were first spotted Thursday near a park in the northern part of the city, prompting "rumor after rumor," said city Department of Health spokesperson Willie Springer. It's unclear who owns the monkeys, how they got loose or exactly how many there are.

People have reported capturing the monkeys, even posting fake pictures online to bolster the claim. But as of Monday, the monkeys remained at large, Springer said.

The largest number people have reported seeing is four, Springer said. People aren't allowed to own the animals in the city, so Springer is doubtful that anyone will come forward to claim them.

For now, animal control is working with primate experts at the St. Louis Zoo to find them.

World War II Memorial closes until mid-May

DC WASHINGTON — The National World War II Memorial, in Washington, D.C. — which draws millions of visitors annually — will be closed for the next five months to allow for a $3.7 million renovation project to update lighting and other aging infrastructure, officials said.

Work includes installing new lights at the large fountain and pillars to restore nighttime visibility of the site.

The National Park Service made the announcement Thursday, stating that the grounds will be closed to visitors during the construction period.

Residents left with no water after main break

TX EL PASO — More than 100,000 residents in the Texas border city of El Paso were left with little to no water after a main break over the weekend, and it was expected to take till midweek for operations to return to normal, officials said.

A boil water notice was issued, and water distribution centers were set up, officials said.

Gilbert Trejo, an official with El Paso Water, said that about 38,000 customer connections were put out of service because of the break, which translates to over 100,000 residents impacted.

He said that more than 15 water reservoirs "essentially drained out."

From Associated Press and staff reports

FACES

Tough call at Oscars

A ranking of the top 10 best picture contenders right now

By Glenn Whipp
Los Angeles Times

It's time for a more educated ranking of the best picture contenders 10 days out from Oscar nominations. RIP "Wicked: For Good." The actors, directors and producers guilds have weighed in with their picks for the best of 2025, though, as always, their slates reflect an American sensibility at odds with the motion picture academy's global membership. "F1" as one of the year's best movies? That's a whole lotta love from the Producers Guild of America. Will it translate to an Oscar nom?

10. 'The Secret Agent'

This last slot is truly anyone's guess. "F1"? It's going to pick up Oscar nods for film editing, sound and visual effects. Maybe that below-the-line love catapults it. "Weapons"? It earned a PGA slot too, even with writer-director Zach Cregger off filming "Resident Evil," removing him from the awards circuit. "Blue Moon"? It never entered my mind, but maybe. I'm going to stick to my belief that the academy's overseas contingent will come through in a historic fashion this year, nominating three non-English language films, including Kleber Mendonça Filho's resonant drama.

9. 'It Was Just an Accident'

Here's the second international entry. Jafar Panahi's Palme d'Or-winning thriller possesses a withering critique of the cruelty and corruption of an authoritarian regime, combined with a blistering sense of humor. Panahi didn't receive a Director Guild of America nom, but I still think he'll earn a nomination from the academy's directors branch, putting this movie on solid ground for best picture.

8. 'Train Dreams'

Clint Bentley's haunting adaptation of the Denis Johnson novella was among the producers guild's 10 best picture nominees, following similar success with the National Board of Review, the American Film Institute and the Film Independent Spirit Awards. It entered the season more quietly than Netflix's high-profile contenders — Noah Baumbach's "Jay Kelly," Kathryn Bigelow's "A House of Dynamite" and Guillermo del Toro's "Frankenstein" — and became the year's slow-burn, word-of-mouth favorite. What a terrific story.

7. 'Bugonia'

After the September fall festivals, I figured "Bugonia" would squeak into my rankings at No. 10, if something else didn't come along and knock it out. Now, from all appearances, it looks like Yorgos Lanthimos ("Poor Things," "The Favourite") will have a third best picture nominee with this darkly funny master class in misanthropy.

6. 'Sentimental Value'

Joachim Trier's family drama felt like the kind of beautifully made, down-the-middle movie for grown-ups that would go far this awards season. It even had a dash of film industry satire, poking fun at Netflix, the monolith on everyone's minds these days. And it has done fine. But the fact that it couldn't land a single nomination with Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists voters, not even for Stellan Skarsgård's charming turn as the irascible family patriarch, tells us to temper expectations.

5. 'Frankenstein'

Clearly people like del Toro's monster movie a lot more than I do. Part of it is that people just dig del Toro, a movie fanboy who goes out of his way to boost film culture. His Directors Guild nomination portends similar recognition at the Oscars, and the film itself could wind up with as many as 10 nominations. Some of these will be clearly in the spirit of rewarding work that is the "most" and not the "best," an academy tradition that will never go away.



NEON/TNS

Wagner Moura in "The Secret Agent," set in Brazil in 1977, which Los Angeles Times columnist Glenn Whipp ranks as his No. 10 Oscars best picture contender.

4. 'Hamnet'

So many tears. So many film festival audience awards. And yet Chloé Zhao's tender drama about love and loss and the cathartic power of art seems destined to win just one Oscar — lead actress Jessie Buckley.

3. 'Marty Supreme'

It's done well at the box office. Its director Josh Safdie scored a nod with his branch. And it did well with SAG-AFTRA voters, earning noms for cast and actors Timothée Chalamet and Odessa A'zion. Fire up the blimp and get Chalamet that Oscar.

2. 'Sinners'

Three movies hold the record for most Oscar nominations in a single year, 14 — "La La Land," "Titanic" and "All About Eve." Ryan Coogler's genre-defying "Sinners" appears poised to break that record, notching 15 — and that's not even really wish-casting any categories — picture, director, lead actor Michael B. Jordan, supporting actress Wunmi Mosaku, Coogler's original screenplay, casting, cinematography, costume design, film editing, makeup and hair, production design, score, the original song "I Lied to You," sound and visual effects. You could also make a case for Miles Caton, nominated for an Actor Award for his turn as young blues musician Sammie, and no one would give you any side-eye. So why isn't "Sinners" No. 1 on this list? Because "One Battle After Another" exists. What a year for Warner Bros. (makes that "Sentimental Value" story line all the more cutting).

1. 'One Battle After Another'

Paul Thomas Anderson's electrifying epic seems set for a pretty good Oscar nominations morning too, probably netting a baker's dozen. It also set a Screen Actors Guild Awards (aka The Actors) record, earning seven nominations. It's in great shape, even if that "Sinners" haul indicates that this race might be a close one.

New this week: 'The Rip,' A$AP Rocky, Agatha Christie

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

■ Matt Damon and Ben Affleck are together again, this time in Miami. In "The Rip" (Friday on Netflix), the Boston-bred stars are directed by Joe Carnahan in an action thriller about a group of Miami police officers whose bonds begin to fray after they discover millions in cash in a derelict stash house. The supporting cast includes Steven Yeun, Teyana Taylor and Kyle Chandler.

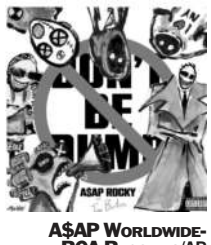
■ James Sweeney's "Twinless," an award-winning standout at last year's Sundance Film Festival, arrives Friday on Hulu. In it, Sweeney stars alongside Dylan O'Brien as two young men who become friends after meeting at a twin bereavement support group.

— AP Film Writer Jake Coyle

Music

■ It has been nearly a decade — eight years — since A$AP Rocky released a full-length project, his third studio album titled "Testing" back in 2018. The wait is finally over Friday when he drops "Don't Be Dumb." The first official taste of the release comes courtesy of "Punk Rocky," a restrained alt-rock song built atop a dream-pop riff and Rocky alternating between a reverbed chorus and melodic flows.

■ The pop-R&B vocalist Madison Beer returns with her third LP, "Locket," also on Friday. It may prove to be her strongest output to date: "Bittersweet" plays to her strengths, recalling a soft, balladic Ariana Grande. Others confirm the current cultural moment as post-"Brat," like the propulsive electro-pop single "yes baby" and the slightly sinister "15 minutes." Could this be the album that sends Beer to the next level? Only time will tell.



A$AP WORLDWIDE-RCA RECORDS/AP

"Don't Be Dumb" by A$AP Rocky drops Friday.

■ For the eclecticists reading along: Avant-garde experimentalists Julianna Barwick and Mary Lattimore have teamed up for the collaborative album "Tragic Magic" out Friday. It's ambient, well, magic — the two composers improvising and weaving into one another; Lattimore with her harps and Barwick with her synthesizers. Together, they form a kind of poetry.

— AP Music Writer Maria Sherman

Television

■ Will Smith takes viewers on a trip to all seven continents in his new National Geographic docuseries "Pole to Pole with Will Smith." This is not your average travel show. It's taken five years to complete and Smith visits the jungles of the Amazon, skis in the South Pole and climbs the Himalayas. The seven-episode series is now streaming on Disney+ and Hulu.

■ The third season of Hulu's "Tell Me Lies" debuted Tuesday. It follows a group of (sort of) friends during two timelines, at college and then six years later as twenty-somethings. Grace Van Patten and Jackson White star.

■ Idris Elba saved the day during a hijacking on a plane in Season 1 of "Hijack" for Apple TV. In Season 2, out Wednesday, his character is scarred from the events of Season 1, but he finds himself in another hostage situation on a train.

■ An adaptation of "The Seven Dials Mystery," a 1929 Agatha Christie novel, lands on Netflix Thursday. It's about a young wealthy woman investigating a murder at a party in the English countryside. "Agatha Christie's Seven Dials" is a three-part series and stars Helena Bonham Carter, Martin Freeman and Mia McKenna-Bruce.

■ Emilia Clarke and Haley Lu Richardson co-star in a new thriller called "Ponies" for Peacock. Out Thursday, the pair play two women living a mundane life in the Soviet Union in the 1970s as their husbands are CIA operatives. When they both find themselves widowed, they get thrust into the action.

— Alicia Rancilio

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OPINION

Even the insured are functionally uninsured

By Joseph Pollino
Los Angeles Times

I recently saw a patient complaining of shortness of breath and a persistent cough. Worried he was developing pneumonia, I ordered a chest X-ray — a standard diagnostic tool. He refused. He hadn't met his $3,000 deductible yet, and so his insurance would have required him to pay much or all of the cost for that scan. He assured me he would call if he got worse.

For him, the X-ray wasn't a medical necessity, but it would have been a financial shock he couldn't absorb. He chose to gamble on a cough, and five days later, he lost — ending up in the ICU with bilateral pneumonia. He survived, but the cost of his "savings" was a nearly fatal hospital stay and a bill that will quite likely bankrupt him. He is lucky he won't be one of the 55,000 Americans to die from pneumonia each year.

As a physician associate in primary care, I serve as a frontline witness to this failure of the American approach to insurance. Medical professionals are taught that the barrier to health is biology: bacteria, viruses, genetics.

But increasingly, the barrier is a policy framework that pressures insured Americans to gamble with their lives. High-deductible health plans seem affordable because their monthly premiums are lower than other plans', but they create perverse incentives by discouraging patients from seeking and accepting diagnostics and treatments — sometimes turning minor, treatable issues into expensive, life-threatening emergencies. My patient's gamble with his lungs is a microcosm of the much larger gamble we are taking with the American public.

The economic theory underpinning these high deductibles is known as "skin in the game." The idea is that if patients are responsible for the first few thousand dollars of their care, they will become savvy consumers, shopping around for the best value and driving down health care costs.

But this logic collapses in the exam room. Health care is not a consumer good like a television or a used car. My patient was not in a position to "shop around" for a cheaper X-ray, nor was he qualified to determine if his cough was benign or deadly. The "skin in the game" theory assumes a level of medical literacy and market transparency that simply doesn't exist in a moment of crisis. You can compare the specs of two SUVs; you cannot "shop around" for a life-saving diagnostic while gasping for air.

A 2025 poll from the Kaiser Family Foundation points to this reality, finding that up to 38% of insured American adults say they skipped or postponed necessary health care or medications in the past 12 months because of cost. In the same poll, 42% of those who skipped care admitted their health problem worsened as a result.

This self-inflicted public health crisis is set to deteriorate further. The Congressional Budget Office estimates roughly 15 million people will lose health coverage and become uninsured by 2034 because of Medicaid and Affordable Care Act marketplace cuts. That is without mentioning the millions more who will see their monthly premiums more than double if premium tax credits are allowed to expire.

If that happens, not only will millions become uninsured but also millions more will downgrade to "bronze" plans with huge deductibles just to keep their premiums affordable. We are about to flood the system with "insured but functionally uninsured" patients.

I see the human cost of this "functional uninsurance" every week. These are patients who technically have coverage but are terrified to use it because their deductibles are so large they may exceed the individuals' available cash or credit — or even their net worth.

This creates a dangerous paradox: Americans are paying hundreds of dollars a month for a card in their wallet they cannot afford to use. They skip the annual physical, ignore the suspicious mole and ration their insulin — all while technically insured. By the time they arrive at my clinic, their disease has often progressed to a catastrophic event, from what could have been a cheap fix.

Federal spending on health care should not be considered charity; it is an investment in our collective future. We cannot expect our children to reach their full potential or our workforce to remain productive if basic health care needs are treated as a luxury. Inaction by Congress and the current administration to solve this crisis is legislative malpractice.

In medicine, we are trained to treat the underlying disease, not just the symptoms. The skipped visits and ignored prescriptions are merely symptoms; the disease is a policy framework that views health care as a commodity rather than a fundamental necessity.

If we allow these cuts to proceed, we are ensuring that the American workforce becomes sicker, our hospitals more overwhelmed and our economy less resilient. We are walking willingly into a public health crisis that is entirely preventable.

Joseph Pollino is a primary care physician associate in Nevada.

Gen Zers aren't talking – and it could cost them

By Maryellen MacDonald
Special to The Washington Post

Picking up the phone isn't as easy as it sounds — at least if you ask Gen Z. Today's young adults struggle to make an appointment, ask a question or dispute a bill. If they manage to leave a message and get a call back, they might refuse to answer.

Gen Z's interaction anxiety has expanded beyond "telephobia." Despite craving closeness, they're now reluctant to engage in face-to-face conversations. Opting for texting might seem like a convenient alternative, but this avoidance is costing the generation in more ways than they realize. What will it take to get Gen Z talking?

The social consequences of talking aversion are obvious: Businesses are starting to worry that young employees won't be able to engage effectively with co-workers and customers. Young adults are lonelier. Dating is declining, and friend groups are shrinking.

But the problem isn't just a matter of social awkwardness. Talking is important brain exercise, a desirable difficulty that enhances our cognition — in the moment of talking, and over our lifetimes. Young adults frequently listen to other people's speech via podcasts, YouTube, TikTok and the like, but these activities don't provide the same cognitive stimulation. The mental effort required to speak is much greater than what's needed to understand someone else, and the cognitive benefits of talking exceed those of listening.

Those benefits are extensive: Talking about goals boosts mental focus and follow-through. Athletes are routinely coached to talk to themselves to improve perseverance, focus and mood. Talking about a topic speeds up learning and makes it more durable. And it continues to tune our brains all the way to old age, when high rates of socializing guard against dementia.

Young adults who avoid conversation are missing out on all of that. We don't yet know the long-term consequences of losing talk-based cognitive, emotional and social enhancement, but the link between silence and dementia is worrisome.

What caused this talking avoidance? The pandemic is one likely culprit, as it removed opportunities for young people to practice socializing while they transitioned to adulthood. Remote work further reduces talking practice and degrades social skills. Helicopter parenting also clears away many challenges of childhood, leading to lower coping and social skills. For over-snowplowed adults still living at home, the parent concierge remains ready to take on phone calls and other talking challenges. It's a vicious cycle: Reluctant talkers gravitate to non-talking activities like looking at their phones and moving through life with earbuds, which discourages anyone from striking up a conversation.

This might sound like just older generations grousing about messed-up kids these days. But similar concerns about less frequent talking are directed at the elderly, who watch lots of TV but talk little. Researchers have even launched interventions to get older adults talking more, with significant benefits for cognition and mood.

Reluctant Gen Z talkers don't need home-visit interventions, but they would benefit from other experiences that allow them to talk more. Speech, acting and improv classes can help. One program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison coaches students in discussion, treating talking as a teachable skill. "Adulting 101" classes in schools and community centers also teach life skills, which sometimes include addressing anxiety about talking on the phone.

Beyond skill-building, there needs to be more space for talking. Young adults expect that conversations will be more awkward than they turn out to be; practice can help them recalibrate. Mentorship programs in business and community centers supply one opportunity. Events like trivia nights and board game parties provide conversation topics and a structure for interaction. Many schools are banning smartphones to improve learning, which creates room for students to talk to each other between classes and during lunch. Young adults who have given up their smartphones or set them aside for many hours report more sleep, better friendships and more face-to-face talking.

Like talking, the work of changing culture to promote social interaction is a desirable difficulty. It will be worth the effort.

Maryellen MacDonald is professor emerit of psychology and language sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and author of "More Than Words: How Talking Sharpens the Mind and Shapes Our World."

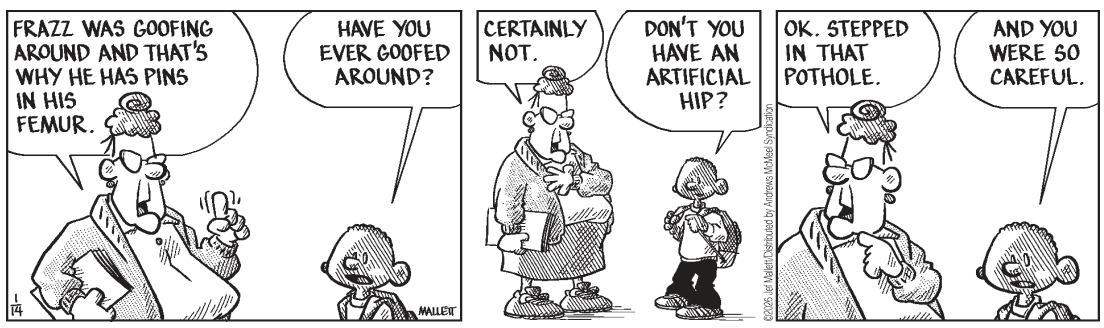
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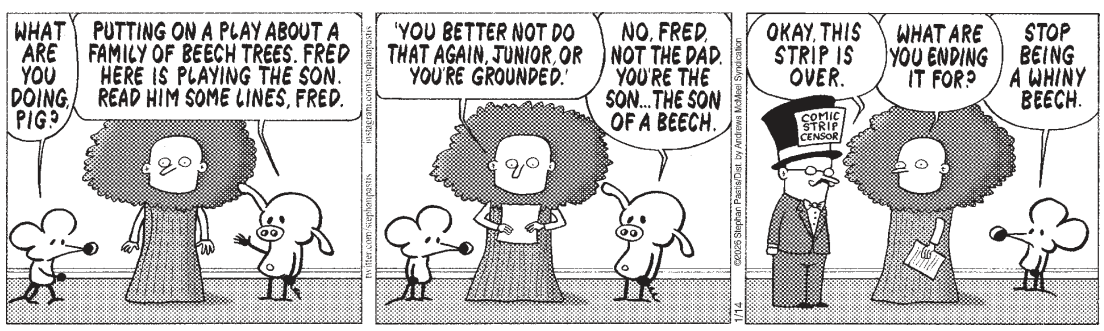
Loose Parts



Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



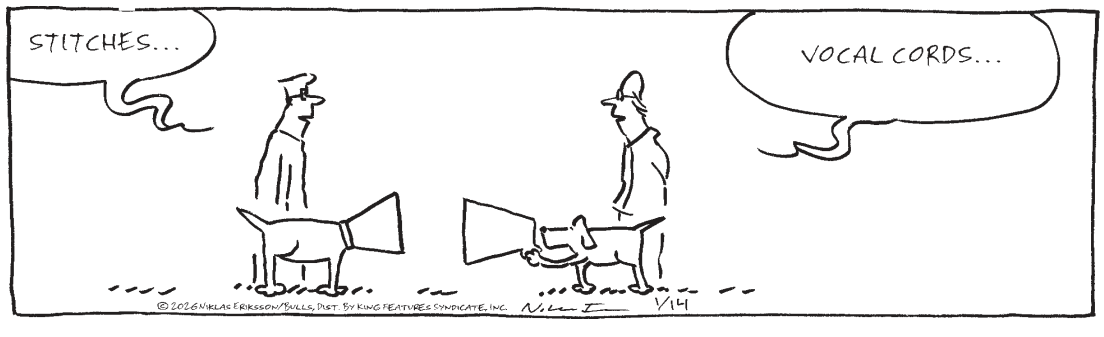
Non Sequitur



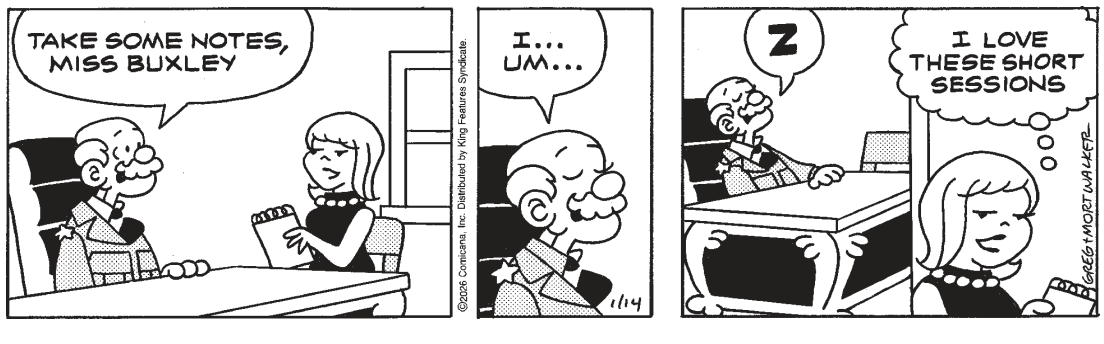
Wumo



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 Possessive pronoun
5 Architect I.M. —
8 Trade
12 Curved molding
13 Connections
14 Astronomer Sagan, author of "Cosmos"
15 Spanish estate house
17 Medley
18 Miscellaneous task
19 Talisman
21 Food Network star Garten
22 Give a darn
23 Rainbow
26 Devious
28 Tubular pasta
31 Grime
33 French article
35 June 6, 1944
36 Puccini work
38 Greek vowel
40 Get older
41 Stitches
43 Overhead trains
45 Take offense at
47 Made level
51 Kimono ties
52 Mexican entree
54 "There!"
55 Rocker Rose
56 Slightly
57 Small fastener
58 Fib
59 Hefty book

DOWN

1 Jolly laugh
2 "Zounds!"
3 Shipping dept. stamp
4 Maestro Ozawa
5 Arcade game
6 Conclude
7 Sir — Newton
8 Cleaned with vigor
9 "Flying" performer of circus fame
10 Singer India.—
11 Conspiracy
16 Billions of years
20 Atlas page
23 Ruckus
24 Tear
25 Lover of Troilus
27 "— -haw!" (oater cry)
29 Pester
30 Storm center
32 Sticky pine product
34 Church topper
37 Bristle
39 Edison's middle name
42 Rob
44 French legislature
45 Breaks down
46 Abba of Israel
48 Post-WWII alliance
49 Dutch export
50 Florida county
53 1011, to Caesar

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

1-14

CRYPTOQUIP

YT P JYPQYRO CLLJR HPQEYQE OSL RYZL BT SYR SLPZ BQ OSL CLKR, SL'R JIBHPHVK JVPKYQE HK LPI.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN SOME SUNBEAMS SHINE ON AN OUTLET THAT CARRIES OFF WATER, COULD THAT CREATE A DRAINBOW?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: S 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 (60)	16-0	1524	1
2. Iowa St. (1)	16-0	1448	3
3. UConn	16-1	1358	4
4. Michigan	14-1	1300	2
5. Purdue	15-1	1253	5
6. Duke	15-1	1237	6
7. Houston	15-1	1130	7
8. Nebraska	16-0	1056	10
9. Gonzaga	17-1	1050	8
10. Vanderbilt	16-0	1035	11
11. BYU	15-1	1013	9
12. Michigan St.	14-2	865	12
13. Illinois	13-3	778	16
14. North Carolina	14-2	659	17
15. Texas Tech	12-4	609	14
16. Virginia	14-2	515	23
17. Arkansas	12-4	492	15
18. Alabama	11-5	470	13
19. Florida	11-5	349	-
20. Louisville	12-4	336	20
21. Georgia	14-2	227	18
22. Clemson	14-3	218	-
23. Utah St.	14-1	161	-
24. Tennessee	11-5	140	21
25. Seton Hall	14-2	136	-

Others receiving votes: Saint Louis 92, Kansas 60, Iowa 58, Miami (Ohio) 49, Villanova 40, Wisconsin 37, Miami 30, Texas A&M 23, UCF 18, Saint Mary's 17, SMU 15, Auburn 14, George Mason 8, NC State 3, Southern Cal 1, St. John's 1.

USA Today Men's Top 25 Poll

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.

	Team (record)	Pts	Prv	1st
1	Arizona (16-0)	773	2	29
2	Iowa State (16-0)	729	3	1
3	Michigan (14-1)	671	1	1
4	Connecticut (16-1)	666	4	0
5	Purdue (15-1)	634	5	0
6	Duke (15-1)	606	6	0
7	Houston (15-1)	579	7	0
8	Vanderbilt (16-0)	557	10	0
9	Gonzaga (17-1)	547	8	0
10	Nebraska (16-0)	534	11	0
11	BYU (15-1)	510	9	0
12	Michigan St. (14-2)	433	13	0
13	Illinois (13-3)	378	16	0
14	Texas Tech (12-4)	336	14	0
15	N. Carolina (14-2)	322	17	0
16	Virginia (14-2)	272	23	0
17	Arkansas (12-4)	237	15	0
18	Alabama (11-5)	230	12	0
19	Louisville (12-4)	198	18	0
20	Florida (11-5)	145	NR	0
21	Clemson (14-3)	122	NR	0
22	Georgia (14-2)	105	20	0
23	Iowa (12-4)	88	19	0
24	Utah St. (14-1)	78	NR	0
25	Kansas (11-5)	57	21	0

Dropped out: No. 22 Tennessee (11-5); No. 24 Villanova (13-3); No. 25 SMU (12-4).
Others receiving votes: Tennessee (11-5) 45; Saint Louis (15-1) 39; Saint Mary's (16-2) 34; Villanova (13-3) 34; Seton Hall (14-2) 29; St. John's (11-5) 21; SMU (12-4) 15; Miami (Fla.) (14-2) 14; Texas A&M (13-3) 13; Miami (Ohio) (17-0) 8; Central Florida (13-2) 6; Ohio State (11-5) 3; Wisconsin (11-5) 5; Indiana (12-4) 1; Southern California (13-3) 1.

Monday's men's scores

EAST

American 65, Navy 51
Howard 84, Delaware State 58
North Carolina Central 89, Morgan State 78
South Carolina State 74, Coppin State 72

SOUTH

Alabama A&M 100, Jackson State 91
Alabama State 81, Alcorn State 66
Florida A&M 91, Grambling State 84
Maryland-Eastern Shore 74, Norfolk State 70
McNeese 94, Nicholls State 68
New Orleans 79, Southeastern Louisiana 76
Northwestern State 64, Texas Rio Grande Valley 63
Southern University 77, Bethune-Cookman 73

SOUTHWEST

Lamar 64, Houston Christian 56
Prairie View A&M 73, Arkansas-Pine Bluff 61
Stephen F. Austin 56, Incarnate Word 46
Texas A&M-CC 61, East Texas A&M 50
Texas Southern 84, Mississippi Valley State 51

Men's Top 25 Schedule

Tuesday's games

No. 2 Iowa State (16-0) at Kansas (11-5)
No. 3 UConn (16-1) at No. 25 Seton Hall (14-2)
No. 7 Houston (15-1) vs. West Virginia (11-5)
No. 8 Nebraska (16-0) vs. Oregon (8-8)
No. 12 Michigan State (14-2) vs. Indiana (12-4)
No. 16 Virginia (14-2) at No. 20 Louisville (12-4)
No. 18 Alabama (11-5) at Mississippi State (10-6)
No. 19 Florida (11-5) at Oklahoma (11-5)
No. 22 Clemson (14-3) vs. Boston College (7-9)
No. 24 Tennessee (11-5) vs. Texas A&M (13-3)

Wednesday's games

No. 1 Arizona (16-0) vs. Arizona State (10-6)
No. 4 Michigan (14-1) at Washington (10-6)
No. 5 Purdue (15-1) vs. Iowa (12-4)
No. 6 Duke (15-1) at California (13-4)
No. 10 Vanderbilt (16-0) at Texas (10-6)
No. 11 BYU (15-1) vs. TCU (11-5)
No. 13 Illinois (13-3) at Northwestern (8-8)
No. 14 North Carolina (14-2) at Stanford (13-4)
No. 15 Texas Tech (12-4) vs. Utah (8-8)
No. 17 Arkansas (12-4) vs. South Carolina (10-6)
No. 21 Georgia (14-2) vs. Ole Miss (9-7)
No. 23 Utah State (14-1) vs. Nevada (12-4)

Thursday's game

No. 9 Gonzaga (17-1) at Washington State (8-10)

Saturday's games

No. 1 Arizona (16-0) at UCF (13-2).
No. 2 Iowa State (16-0) at Cincinnati (8-8)
No. 3 UConn (16-1) at Georgetown (9-7)
No. 4 Michigan (14-1) at Oregon (8-8)
No. 5 Purdue (15-1) at USC (13-3)
No. 6 Duke (15-1) at Stanford (13-4)
No. 8 Nebraska (16-0) at Northwestern (8-8)
No. 9 Gonzaga (17-1) at Seattle (12-6)
No. 10 Vanderbilt (16-0) vs. No. 19 Florida (11-5)
No. 11 BYU (15-1) at No. 15 Texas Tech (12-4)
No. 12 Michigan State (14-2) at Washington (10-6)
No. 13 Illinois (13-3) vs. Minnesota (10-6)
No. 14 North Carolina (14-2) at California (13-4)
No. 16 Virginia (14-2) at SMU (12-4)
No. 17 Arkansas (12-4) at No. 21 Georgia (14-2)
No. 18 Alabama (11-5) at Oklahoma (11-5)
No. 20 Louisville (12-4) at Pittsburgh (7-9)
No. 22 Clemson (14-3) vs. Miami (FL) (14-2)
No. 23 Utah State (14-1) at Grand Canyon (10-5)
No. 24 Tennessee (11-5) vs. Kentucky (10-6)
No. 25 Seton Hall (14-2) vs. Butler (10-6)

Sunday's game

No. 7 Houston (15-1) vs. Arizona State (10-6)

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 (32)	17-0	800	1
2. South Carolina	17-1	748	3
3. UCLA	15-1	734	4
4. Texas	18-1	710	2
5. Vanderbilt	17-0	671	7
6. LSU	16-2	598	12
7. Kentucky	16-2	583	6
8. Michigan	14-2	574	9
9. Louisville	16-3	550	10
10. TCU	16-1	497	13
11. Iowa	14-2	406	14
12. Maryland	16-2	403	8
13. Oklahoma	14-3	401	5
14. Ohio St.	15-2	391	19
15. Michigan St.	16-1	383	15
16. Mississippi	16-3	365	18
17. Texas Tech	18-0	323	17
18. Baylor	15-3	289	16
19. Iowa St.	14-3	205	11
20. Tennessee	12-3	197	20
21. Alabama	16-1	141	-
22. Princeton	14-1	116	24
23. Notre Dame	12-4	65	-
24. Nebraska	14-3	48	25
25. Illinois	14-3	43	-

Others receiving votes: West Virginia 41, Duke 41, North Carolina 21, Minnesota 12, Washington 11, Stanford 10, Utah 8, Southern Cal 4, Rode Island 4, Georgia 3, Oregon 2, NC State 2.

Monday's women's scores

MIDWEST

Alabama 74, Missouri 63

Women's Top 25 schedule

Monday's game

No. 21 Alabama (16-1) at Missouri (12-6)

Tuesday's game

No. 17 Texas Tech (18-0) vs. Houston (6-10)

Wednesday's games

No. 3 UCLA (15-1) at Minnesota (12-4)
No. 10 TCU (16-1) at West Virginia (14-3)
No. 14 Ohio State (15-2) vs. Penn State (7-10)
No. 18 Baylor (15-3) at Utah (13-4)
No. 19 Iowa State (14-3) at Colorado (11-6)

Thursday's games

No. 1 UConn (17-0) vs. Villanova (14-3)
No. 2 South Carolina (17-1) vs. No. 4 Texas (18-1)
No. 5 Vanderbilt (17-0) at Mississippi State (14-4)
No. 7 Kentucky (16-2) vs. Florida (12-7)
No. 8 Michigan (14-2) vs. No. 25 Illinois (14-3)
No. 9 Louisville (16-3) at No. 23 Notre Dame (12-4)
No. 11 Iowa (14-2) vs. Oregon (14-4)
No. 12 Maryland (16-2) at USC (10-6)
No. 15 Michigan State (16-1) vs. No. 24 Nebraska (14-3)
No. 21 Alabama (16-1) at Auburn (12-6)

Saturday's games

No. 10 TCU (16-1) vs. Arizona (10-6)
No. 17 Texas Tech (18-0) vs. Kansas State (9-9)
No. 18 Baylor (15-3) at BYU (14-3)
No. 22 Princeton (14-1) vs. Dartmouth (9-6)

AP SPORTLIGHT

Jan. 14

1968 — The Green Bay Packers win their second straight Super Bowl. The game draws the first $3 million gate in football history. Bart Starr, the game's MVP, completes 13 of 24 passes for 202-yards.

1973 — The Miami Dolphins, who went 14-0 in the regular season and won two playoff games, beat the Washington Redskins 14-7 in the Super Bowl to become the first undefeated team in NFL history.

1990 — Joe Montana sets an NFL record when he tosses his 30th and 31st postseason touchdown passes as the San Francisco 49ers beat the Los Angeles Rams 30-3 in the NFC championship game. Terry Bradshaw had thrown 30.

1990 — John Elway passes for 385 yards and three touchdowns as the Denver Broncos advance to their fourth Super Bowl with a 37-21 victory over the Cleveland Browns in the AFC Championship.

2001 — Led by Kerry Collins' five touchdown passes, the New York Giants reach their first Super Bowl in a decade with a 41-0 romp past the hapless Minnesota Vikings — the biggest rout in NFC championship history.

2006 — Johnny Weir wins his third straight title at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships and Sasha Cohen takes the women's division.

2007 — In Altenmarkt-Zauchensee, Austria, Julia Mancuso and Lindsey Kildow captures the top two places in a World Cup super-combi and Resi Stiegler just misses making it an American sweep. The 1-2-4 finish is a first for American women in a World Cup alpine skiing event.

2012 — Tom Brady throws for a record-tying six touchdown passes, five in the first half and three to Rob Gronkowski, to lead the New England Patriots to a 45-10 win over Tim Tebow and the Denver Broncos in the divisional playoffs.

2012 — Alex Smith completes a 14-yard touchdown pass to Vernon Davis with 9 seconds left just after Drew Brees put the high-powered Saints ahead, and the resurgent San Francisco 49ers capitalize on five New Orleans turnovers for a thrilling 36-32 playoff victory.

2017 — Top-ranked UConn breaks its own NCAA record with its 91st consecutive victory, scoring the first 21 points and romping past SMU 88-48. Coach Geno Auriemma and the Huskies (16-0) surpass the record of 90 that his team first accomplished more than six years ago. The four-time defending national champions hadn't lost a game since falling in overtime at sixth-ranked Stanford on Nov. 17, 2014.

2017 — New England's Dion Lewis becomes the first in NFL postseason history to have a rushing TD, receiving TD and kickoff return for a TD in a single game, which led to the Patriots' 34-16 division playoff win over the Houston Texans.

DEALS

Monday's Transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

TAMPA BAY RAYS — Acquired INF Brett Wisely and LHP Ken Waldichuk from the Atlanta Braves in exchange for a player to be named later or cash considerations. Designated RHP Osvaldo Bido and INF Tsung-Che Cheng for assignment.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association

NBA — Suspended Minnesota Timberwolves C Rudy Gobert one-game without pay for accruing his sixth Flagrant Foul point of the 2025-26 regular season.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

BUFFALO BILLS — Designated DT Ed Oliver and WR Curtis Samuel to return from injured reserve.
CAROLINA PANTHERS — Signed G Ja-'Tyre Carter, G Saahdiq Charles, WR Dan Chisena, RB Montrell Johnson, OLB Jamil Muhammad, LB Mapalo Mwansa, TE Bryce Pierre, WR Ja'seem Reed, S Demani Richardson, WR Ainias Smith, RB Anthony Tyus, LB Jacoby Windmon, LB Jared Bartlett, CB Tyrek Funderburk, and G Joshua Gray to reserve/futures contracts.
GREEN BAY PACKERS — Signed T Brant Banks, DL Dante Barnett, G Karsen Barnhart, DL Anthony Campbell, TE McCallan Castles, T Dalton Cooper, TE Drake Dabney, DL James Ester, K Lucas Havrisik, CB Tyron Herring, LB Jamon Johnson, RB Damien Martinez, S Mark Perry, WR Will Sheppard, RB Pierre Strong Jr. and TE Messiah Swinson to reserve/futures contracts.
HOUSTON TEXANS — Released DE Darrell Taylor Jr. Activated DB Jaylen Reed from injured reserve.
JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Signed QB Carter Bradley, WR Chandler Brayboy, G Jerome Carvin, TE Patrick Herbert, RB Ja-'Quinden Jackson, WR Tim Jones, T Ricky Lee, DB Keni-H Lovely, DB Jabbar Muhammad, DT Keivie Rose, DB Cam'Ron Silmon-Craig, DB Trevian Thomas, WR Austin Trammell, G Sal Wormley, and T Kilian Zierer to futures contracts.
KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Signed LB Abdre Carter to a reserve/futures contract.
LOS ANGELES RAMS — Placed CB Ahkello Witherspoon on injured reserve.
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Released RB D'Ernest Johnson. Released T Sebastian Gutierrez from the practice squad.
NEW YORK JETS — Signed QB Bailey Zappe to a reserve/futures contract. Signed WR Mac Dalena and K Lenny Krieg to reserve/futures contracts.
PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Signed LB Chance Campbell, DB Tariq Castro-Fields, WR Danny Gray, DT Gabe Hall, DB Brandon Johnson, C Jake Majors, T Hollin Pierce, and WR Quez Watkins to reserves/futures contracts.
PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Released LB DeMarvin Leal from the practice squad.
WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — Signed DE Andre Carter to a reserve/futures contract.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

COLORADO AVALANCHE — Recalled F Ivan Ivan from Colorado (AHL).
PITTSBURGH PENGUINS — Assigned D Caleb Jones to Wilkes-Barre/Scranton (AHL).
TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Assigned F Curtis Douglas to Syracuse (AHL).
TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Assigned D Dakota Mermis to Toronto (AHL).
WINNIPEG JETS — Placed D Colin Miller on injured reserve. Recalled D Isaak Phillips from Manitoba (AHL).

SOCCER
Major League Soccer

ATLANTA UNITED — Re-signed D Ronald Hernández to a contract through the 2026 season with an option through 2027.
D.C. UNITED — Waived F Dominique Badji and D David Schnegg.
FC CINCINNATI — Signed F Tom Barlow to a contract through December 2027, with an option through the remainder of the 2027-28 MLS season.
MINNESOTA UNITED — Hired Cameron Knowles as head coach.
NEW YORK CITY FC — Re-signed MF Maxi Moralez for the 2026 season.
NEW YORK RED BULL — Signed D Robert Voloder to a three-year MLS contract through December of 2028 with an option through June of 2029.
SAN DIEGO FC — Signed head coach Mikey Varas to a multi-year contract extension.
SAN JOSE EARTHQUAKES — Acquired the Right of First Refusal for G Nate Crockford from FC Cincinnati in exchange for a third-round pick in the 2027 Major League Soccer SuperDraft.

National Women's Soccer League

DENVER SUMMIT — Signed MF Lindsey Heaps to a contract.
UTAH ROYALS — Acquired MF Narumi Miura from the Washington Spirit in exchange for $180,000 in allocation money.

TENNIS

WTA Adelaide International 1

Tuesday
At Memorial Drive Tennis Centre
Adelaide, Australia
Purse: $1,206,446
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Seedings in parentheses
Women's Singles
Round of 32

Diana Shnaider, Russia, def. Leylah Annie Fernandez, Canada, 7-5, 6-3
Kimberly Birrell, Australia, def. Anastasia Potapova, Russia, 6-4, 6-4
Marketa Vondrousova, Czechia, def. Liudmila Samsonova (7), Russia, 6-1, 4-6, 6-2
Maya Joint, Australia, def. Sofia Kenin, United States, 7-6 (3), 6-4
Tereza Valentova, Czechia, def. Jelena Ostapenko, Latvia, 7-5, 3-2, ret.

Women's Doubles
Round of 16

Asia Muhammad, United States, and Erin Routliffe (3), New Zealand, def. Nicole Melichar-Martinez, United States, and Cristina Bucsa, Spain, 6-4, 3-6, 10-6

ATP Adelaide International 1

Tuesday
At Memorial Drive Tennis Centre
Adelaide, Australia
Purse: $700,045
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Seedings in parentheses
Men's Singles
Round of 32

Tomas Machac (8), Czechia, def. James Duckworth, Australia, 6-3, 6-3
Rinky Hijikata, Australia, def. Tristan Schoolkate, Australia, 6-4, 6-4
Quentin Halys, France, def. Jacob Fearnley, Britain, 6-3, 6-4
Andrea Vavassori, Italy, def. Gabriel Diallo, Canada, 6-3, 7-6 (4)
Alexander Shevchenko, Russia, def. Damir Dzumhur, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 4-6, 6-4, 7-5

Men's Doubles
Round of 32

Evan King, United States, and John Peers, Australia, def. Blake Bayldon and Patrick Harper, Australia, 6-2, 5-7, 10-7
Rafael Matos and Orlando Luz, Brazil, def. Nikola Mektic, Croatia, and Austin Krajicek, United States, 7-6 (4), 7-5
Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni, Argentina, def. Romain Arneodo, Monaco, and Sander Arends, Netherlands, 6-1, 6-2
Hendrik Jebens, Germany, and Ray Ho, Taiwan, def. Diego Hidalgo, Ecuador, and Jacob Fearnley, Britain, 7-6 (5), 3-6, 10-7

WTA Hobart International

Tuesday
At Hobart International Tennis Centre
Hobart, Australia
Purse: $283,347
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Seedings in parentheses
Women's Singles
Round of 32

Anna Bondar, Hungary, def. Ella Seidel, Germany, 6-0, 6-1
Rebecca Sramkova, Slovakia, def. Varvara Gracheva, Russia, 6-4, 4-6, 6-2
Iva Jovic (3), United States, def. Janice Tjen, Indonesia, 6-0, 6-1
Peyton Stearns, United States, def. Barbora Krejcikova, Czechia, 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (4)
Magdalena Frech, Poland, def. Elsa Jacquemot, France, 6-4, 6-0
Tatjana Maria (6), Germany, def. Venus Williams, United States, 6-4, 6-3
Wang Xinyu, China, def. Talia Gibson, Australia, 6-2, 6-3

Women's Doubles
Round of 16

Eri Hozumi, Japan, and Fang-Hsien Wu (3), Taiwan, def. Momoko Kobori and Ayano Shimizu, Japan, 6-3, 6-1

ATP World Tour ASB Classic

Tuesday
At ASB Tennis Arena
Auckland, New Zealand
Purse: $700,045
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Seedings in parentheses
Men's Singles
Round of 32

Alejandro Tabilo, Chile, def. Camilo Ugo Carabelli, Argentina, 6-4, 6-2
Alex Michelsen (6), United States, def. Mariano Navone, Argentina, 2-6, 6-2, 7-5
Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard, France, def. Roberto Bautista Agut, Spain, 6-3, 7-6 (2)
Marcos Giron, United States, def. Alexandre Muller, France, 6-2, 6-2
Hamad Medjedovic, Serbia, def. Aleksandar Kovacevic, United States, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (2)
Fabian Marozsan, Hungary, def. Gael Monfils, France, 5-7, 6-3, 6-4

Men's Doubles
Round of 16

Patrik Rikl and Petr Nouza, Czechia, def. Santiago Gonzalez, Mexico, and David Pel, Netherlands, 7-6 (5), 4-6, 10-8
Robin Haase, Netherlands, and Constantin Frantzen, Germany, def. Robert Cash and James Tracy (4), United States, 6-3, 5-7, 10-7
Finn Reynolds and James Watt, New Zealand, def. Sander Gille, Belgium, and Sem Verbeek, Netherlands, 6-4, 6-7 (2), 13-11

GOLF/TENNIS

Koepka back with PGA Tour under financial penalty



SETH WENIG/AP

Five-time major champion Brooks Koepka joined LIV Golf in 2022 but departed the Saudi-owned tour just five weeks ago, setting up his return to the PGA Tour under significant financial penalties.

BY DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

HONOLULU — Brooks Koepka is returning to the PGA Tour just five weeks after bolting from LIV Golf, agreeing to a one-time program for elite players that comes with a financial penalty which could rank among the largest in sports.

Koepka plans to resume his PGA Tour career in the Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines at the end of the month.

But he will not be eligible for PGA Tour equity grants for five years, he will not receive FedEx Cup bonus money in 2026 and he cannot play signature events unless he earns his way in.

The out-of-pocket cost is a $5 million charity donation to be decided jointly with the tour. The financial repercussions — no access to equity or FedEx Cup bonus money this year — is a potential loss the tour puts at $50 million and upward.

Brian Rolapp, the CEO of PGA Tour Enterprises, outlined the agreement with Koepka and details of the "Returning Member Program" in a memo to players Monday. A copy of the memo was obtained by The Associated Press.

Rolapp made clear, however, this was a one-time program and not a precedent.

It applies only to players who have won majors or The Players Championship from 2022 through 2025, meaning Bryson DeChambeau, Jon Rahm and Cameron Smith would be the only LIV players who could return. They have three weeks to decide.

Koepka will have to earn his way into $20 million signature events. He would be added to the field to not take a spot from another tour player.

The board, which has a majority of players led by Tiger Woods, approved the program.

Rolapp described Koepka's case as a "unique situation." He said the solution was guided by what would make the PGA Tour stronger, preserving playing opportunities for current members and responding to fans who want to see all the best players together.

But this is far from an open path back for LIV players if they want to return. The program had the tone of an ultimatum for the trio of stars still in the Saudi-funded league.

"Only those who have recently achieved the highest accomplishments in the game are eligible to return to the PGA Tour, where the best players in the world compete, week in and week out," Rolapp wrote. "This is a one-time, defined window and is not a precedent for future situations.

"Once the door closes, there is no promise that this path will be available again."

This can be viewed as catering to the stars — the tour has a history of that with the Player Impact Program and sponsor exemptions — but the stars are limited to a four-year window of big wins.

Those ineligible to return under this program — assuming they even want to — include Dustin Johnson, Phil Mickelson, seven-time LIV winner Joaquin Niemann, Ryder Cup player Tyrrell Hatton of England and Patrick Reed.

Koepka, a five-time major champion, was one of the biggest names to sign with LIV Golf in June 2022. He said in a 2023 podcast with influencer and boxer Jake Paul that his contract was for at least $100 million and that "I signed for the dough."

Koepka, in a brief telephone interview, said he wasn't entirely sure the PGA Tour would allow him back this quickly but "I'm grateful it's come to this."

"I've got a lot of work to do with some of the players," he said about the reception he gets. "There's definitely guys who are happy, and definitely guys who will be angry. It's a harsh punishment financially. I understand exactly why the tour did that — it's meant to hurt. But it (his departure) hurt a lot of people."

Rolapp said he understands there will be questions about holding a defector to LIV accountable, "especially after earning substantial compensation elsewhere."

"Ultimately, by accepting membership in the Returning Member category, Brooks is making the decision to return to the PGA Tour now — something our fans want, and something that strengthens both the game and our organization."

The financial penalty is based largely on the value of the equity and how the 35-year-old Koepka performs. Assuming he averages a top-30 finish over the next five years and holds his equity shares until he is 50, tour officials estimate the potential loss of earnings at anywhere from $50 million to as high as $85 million.

Otherwise, Koepka is back in the fold, exempt through 2028 based on his 2023 victory in the PGA Championship. He also would be eligible for the Presidents Cup and the indoor TGL league.

But he cannot receive sponsor exemptions to the $20 million signature events. Koepka could only become eligible by qualifying, either with a PGA Tour victory or in two categories that reward current play.

In an effort to protect current players, Rolapp said Koepka would be added to the field at any such tournament he gets in. That includes the FedEx Cup playoffs. If he qualifies this year, the tour would take the 71st player in the standings for the postseason opener, and 51st and 31st players if Koepka advances to the Tour Championship.

Venus Williams loses early in tuneup for Australian Open

Associated Press

HOBART, Australia — Venus Williams lost 6-4, 6-3 to Tatjana Maria in the first round at the Hobart International on Tuesday, less than a week before her appearance at the Australian Open.

The 45-year-old Williams received a wild-card entry for the first Grand Slam event of the year. She also had a wild card to play in Hobart, where she lost to sixth-seeded Maria in a match lasting almost 1½ hours.

Williams also lost her first-round match at Auckland, New Zealand, last week.

The seven-time Grand Slam singles champion, who is 576th in the world rankings, broke 38-year-old Maria's serve in the opening set. But Williams dropped serve twice, handing the set to Maria, who is 42nd on the WTA rankings.



CHRIS KIDD/AP

Venus Williams of the United States lost her first-round match against Tatjana Maria of Germany at the Hobart International tournament on Tuesday, less than a week before the Australian Open.

Tournament officials said the match featured the highest combined age — 83 years — of a singles match in the history of the WTA.

"The crowd was amazing. Usually I play a really big game and it's fun to watch," Williams said. "I felt I couldn't play that with the wind. I felt bad I wasn't able to give that performance I usually give. I was in control until I wasn't ... I just need to keep going and doing that and earn my stripes. I've been away a while."

Maria, who has two children and has won three of her four titles since becoming a mother, hoped the pair could send a message to younger players.

"For all the little girls out there ... that they have time and can improve and play (for) longer," she said. "I'm a professional tennis player but I'm also a mom and we have a normal life."

Williams has made the Australian Open singles final twice — in 2003 and 2017 — losing to her sister Serena both times.

The Australian Open begins Sunday. Williams has not played at Melbourne Park for five years and will break the age record held by Kimiko Date, the Japanese player who was 44 when she contested the 2015 Australian Open.

In another first-round result in Hobart, two-time major winner Barbora Krejcíková lost to Peyton Stearns. Krejcíková, ranked 55th and unseeded in Hobart, lost to Stearns 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (4).

NHL

ROUNDUP

Devils beat Wild, snap 4-game skid

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Jesper Bratt and Ondrej Palat each scored twice and the New Jersey Devils beat the Minnesota Wild 5-2 on Monday night to snap a four-game skid.

Dawson Mercer had a goal and an assist for New Jersey, and Nico Hischier and Dougie Hamilton each had two assists. Jacob Markstrom finished with 20 saves.

Ryan Hartman and Marcus Foligno scored for Minnesota, and Jesper Wallstedt had 24 saves. The Wild lost in regulation for just the second time in 10 games (4-2-4) and third in the last 18 (11-3-4).

Bratt scored his two goals 21 seconds apart to push the Devils' lead to 4-1 at 7:49 of the third period. On the first, he got a nice feed from Hamilton in front and beat Wallstedt for a two-goal lead. He then redirected Hamilton's point shot past the goalie for his 11th of the season.

Palat, who had two goals coming into the game, then got his second of the night at 9:39 after Mercer tapped a centering pass over in front for a four-goal lead.

Foligno scored a power-play goal with 19 seconds remaining for the final margin.

Mercer gave New Jersey a 1-0 lead midway through the first period on their first shot on goal of the game, a one-timer from the inside edge of the right circle off a pass from Nico Hischier from behind the goal line.

Hartman tied the score 1-1 with 6:19 remaining in the second period as he deflected Brock Faber's long point shot through traffic for his 12th.

Palat put the Devils back ahead with 8 seconds to go in the middle period off a pass from Hischier.

Kraken 4, Rangers 2: Shane Wright scored the tiebreaking goal in the third period, and visiting Seattle rallied from two goals down and beat New York on Monday night.

Eeli Tolvanen, Jordan Eberle and Jared McCann also scored for the Kraken, and Philipp Grubauer had 19 saves.

Mika Zibanejad and Sam Carrick scored for the Rangers, and Jonathan Quick finished with 25 saves. New York fell to 5-12-4 at Madison Square Garden this season.

Red Wings 4, Hurricanes 3 (OT): Andrew Copp scored at 3:27 of overtime, lifting host Detroit over Carolina.

Alex DeBrincat, who scored and had two assists, set up Copp for the game-winning goal by passing him the puck in front of the net.



ABBIE PARR/AP

New Jersey Devils center Jack Hughes, left, skates with the puck as Minnesota Wild defenseman Brock Faber defends during the second period Monday in St. Paul, Minn.

The Red Wings pulled into a tie atop the Eastern Conference with the Metropolitan-leading Hurricanes.

Panthers 4, Sabres 3: Anton Lundell scored the go-ahead goal in the third period and A.J. Greer scored twice as visiting Florida beat Buffalo.

Jacob Bryson, Zach Benson and Alex Tuch scored for the Sabres, who lost for just the second time in the past 15 games.

Lightning 5, Flyers 1: Brandon Hagel, Jake Guentzel and Nikita Kucherov each had a goal and an assist as visiting Tampa Bay notched its 10th consecutive victory with a win over Philadelphia.

The Lightning have a 10-game winning streak for the fourth time in team history and the first time since a franchise-record 11-game streak in February 2020.

Canadiens 6, Canucks 3: Mike Matheson and Juraj Slafkovsky scored goals 37 seconds apart to start the third period, propelling host Montreal over last-place Vancouver.

Elias Pettersson, Evander Kane and Max Sasson scored for the Canucks.

Oilers 4, Blackhawks 1: Connor McDavid extended his career-high point streak to 19 games, helping visiting Edmonton beat shorthanded Chicago.

McDavid picked up a secondary assist on Edmonton's first two goals.

Stars 3, Kings 1: Jason Robertson scored late in the third period, Wyatt Johnston scored his 25th goal of the season and visiting Dallas defeated Los Angeles.

Matt Duchene added an empty-net goal with 17.4 to go, and the Stars have won two of three following a season-worst six-game winless streak.

Maple Leafs 4, Avalanche 3 (OT): William Nylander scored 3:59 into overtime and visiting Toronto defeated Colorado to bring the Avalanche's 17-game home winning streak to an end.

Nylander took a pass from Oliver Ekman-Larsson and lined it past Trent Miner.

Blue Jackets fire coach Evason, hire Bowness

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Columbus Blue Jackets fired coach Dean Evason and named hockey-lifer Rick Bowness as his replacement Monday.

Evason is the first NHL coach fired this season. General manager Don Waddell announced the abrupt change with his team sitting in last place in the Eastern Conference 45 games into the season with a record of 19-19-7.

"This season has been a frustrating one for all of us and the bottom line is we are not performing at a level that meets our expectations," Waddell said. "We all share in that responsibility, me included, and while this was not a decision that was made lightly, it is one that needed to be made at this time. Dean did a tremendous job last year under extremely difficult circumstances, and I thank him for that."



Evason



Bowness

Assistant Steve McCarthy, who had been with the organization for nearly a decade, was also fired.

Bowness is back in the league after he retired in the spring of 2024, ending a stint with the Winnipeg Jets.

Bowness, who coached Dallas to the Stanley Cup Final in the 2020 pandemic bubble, turns 71 on Jan. 25, and at 70 becomes the oldest head coach in the NHL.

"Rick Bowness is a tremendous coach with invaluable experience and knowledge, and he will bring a steadiness to our team at an important juncture in our season," Waddell said. "He is a good communicator whose teams play with structure, are sound defensively and we believe he is the right person to bring out the best in our group."

Bowness has been head coach for seven different teams during his lengthy career, dating to the original Jets in 1988. He did some broadcasting with TNT since stepping away from his most recent job in Winnipeg.

Evason was just past the midway point of his second season in charge of the Blue Jackets. Waddell's first order of business upon becoming GM was to fire then-coach Pascal Vincent and put Evason behind the bench.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Detroit	47	28	15	4	60	149	145
Tampa Bay	44	28	13	3	59	158	115
Montreal	46	26	14	6	58	157	151
Toronto	45	23	15	7	53	152	143
Buffalo	44	24	16	4	52	143	138
Boston	46	25	19	2	52	152	146
Florida	45	24	18	3	51	139	145
Ottawa	44	20	19	5	45	141	148

Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Carolina	46	28	14	4	60	158	139
N.Y. Islanders	45	25	15	5	55	134	125
Philadelphia	44	22	14	8	52	133	132
Washington	46	23	17	6	52	150	133
Pittsburgh	44	21	14	9	51	140	135
New Jersey	46	23	21	2	48	123	143
N.Y. Rangers	47	20	21	6	46	122	139
Columbus	45	19	19	7	45	135	153

Western Conference

Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Colorado	45	33	4	8	74	182	103
Dallas	46	27	10	9	63	160	130
Minnesota	47	26	12	9	61	148	130
Utah	46	22	20	4	48	139	130
Nashville	45	21	20	4	46	125	148
Chicago	46	19	20	7	45	130	146
St. Louis	46	17	21	8	42	114	161
Winnipeg	44	17	22	5	39	130	138

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	44	21	11	12	54	144	136
Edmonton	46	23	16	7	53	156	153
Seattle	44	21	15	8	50	123	128
San Jose	45	23	19	3	49	143	162
Los Angeles	45	19	16	10	48	120	128
Anaheim	45	21	21	3	45	150	168
Calgary	45	19	22	4	42	116	135
Vancouver	45	16	24	5	37	124	164

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.

Monday's games

Seattle 4, N.Y. Rangers 2
Florida 4, Buffalo 3
Tampa Bay 5, Philadelphia 1
Montreal 6, Vancouver 3
Detroit 4, Carolina 3, OT
New Jersey 5, Minnesota 2
Edmonton 4, Chicago 1
Dallas 3, Los Angeles 1
Toronto 4, Colorado 3, OT

Tuesday's games

Calgary at Columbus
Montreal at Washington
Tampa Bay at Pittsburgh
Vancouver at Ottawa
Carolina at St. Louis
Detroit at Boston
Edmonton at Nashville
N.Y. Islanders at Winnipeg
Dallas at Anaheim
Toronto at Utah

Wednesday's games

Seattle at New Jersey
Ottawa at N.Y. Rangers
Philadelphia at Buffalo
Vegas at Los Angeles

Thursday's games

Montreal at Buffalo
Philadelphia at Pittsburgh
San Jose at Washington
Vancouver at Columbus
Seattle at Boston
Winnipeg at Minnesota
Calgary at Chicago
Dallas at Utah
N.Y. Islanders at Edmonton
Toronto at Vegas

Friday's games

Florida at Carolina
San Jose at Detroit
Tampa Bay at St. Louis
Nashville at Colorado
Anaheim at Los Angeles

Scoring leaders

Through Tuesday

	GP	G	A	PTS
Nathan MacKinnon, COL	45	36	45	81
Connor McDavid, EDM	46	30	50	80
Macklin Celebrini, SJ	45	24	46	70
Nikita Kucherov, TB	40	23	44	67
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	46	24	40	64
Mikko Rantanen, DAL	45	18	44	62
Martin Necas, COL	45	21	36	57
David Pastrnak, BOS	41	19	36	55
Jason Robertson, DAL	46	27	28	55
Cale Makar, COL	45	14	39	53

COLLEGE BASKETBALL/WNBA

TOP 25 THIS WEEK

Seton Hall back in poll after comebacks

By Aaron Beard
Associated Press

Seton Hall hasn't made things easy in returning to The Associated Press men's college basketball poll for the first time in four years

The Pirates jumped into Monday's latest poll at No. 25, marking the program's first appearance in the rankings since sitting at No. 20 almost exactly four years earlier. That set up an immediate marquee matchup against No. 3 UConn on Tuesday as part of the national AP Top 25 schedule before hosting Butler on Saturday.

And it comes after Seton Hall (14-2, 4-1 Big East) rallied from double-digit deficits after halftime for three straight games, the last coming in Saturday's win at Georgetown.

"They just kept playing," coach Shaheen Holloway said after one of those wins against Creighton.

And that's been good enough for this bunch.



NOAH K. MURRAY/AP

Seton Hall center Najai Hines blocks a shot by Creighton guard Blake Harper during the second half Jan. 4 in Newark, N.J. The Pirates are in the AP Top 25 poll for the first time in four years.

The Pirates entered the week ranked No. 9 in KenPom's adjusted defensive efficiency by allowing 93.9 points per 100 possessions, as well as 15th in Division I by holding opponents to 38.5% shooting this year. They are also ranked ninth by KenPom by forcing a turnover on 22.4% of all possessions.

Seton Hall has also shown offensive balance with three double-digit scorers, led by A.J. Staton-McCray's 12.3 points per game, and four others averaging at least 6.9 points.

Yet the Pirates' resilience has been a strength, too.

Seton Hall has trailed by double-digit margins after halftime in all three games since losing to Villanova on Dec. 23: down 10 at Marquette with 12:56 left on Dec. 30, down 16 to Creighton with 15:53 left on Jan. 4 and down 11 at Georgetown with 14:15 left.

And the Pirates won all three.

"We're never going to let up," junior guard Adam "Budd" Clark said after beating the Bluejays. "We're resilient, we're going to fight until there's zero seconds on the clock. It doesn't matter if we're up 20, down 20, we're just trying to find a way to win."

Tracking perfect teams

No. 8 Nebraska and No. 10 Vanderbilt were among the five unbeaten teams left in Division I going into Tuesday's games.

The Cornhuskers (16-0) moved up two spots Monday to match the program's highest ranking set in February 1966. They carried the nation's longest active win streak (20 games) into Tuesday's visit from Oregon and Saturday's trip to Northwestern — matchups with teams holding a combined 1-9 record in Big Ten play.

The Commodores (16-0) visit Texas on Wednesday, then return home to host 19th-ranked reigning national champion Florida on Saturday.

Cavs rolling

Virginia had the week's biggest jump, climbing seven spots to No. 16 during a successful start to Ryan Odom's coaching tenure. The Cavaliers (14-2) have lost just once since Thanksgiving, falling in triple overtime at rival Virginia Tech on Dec. 31.

Virginia will have two road tests this week. First came Tuesday's trip to No. 20 Louisville. Then comes Saturday trip to SMU, which was ranked No. 24 last week before falling at now-ranked Clemson and at No. 6 Duke — the latter seeing the Mustangs give the Blue Devils fits despite playing without top scorer Boopie Miller due to illness.

Watch list

Saint Louis, Kansas and Miami (Ohio) are the teams to watch from just outside the poll.

The Billikens (15-1) have won nine straight games entering home games this week against Fordham and Richmond as they try to stay unbeaten in the Atlantic 10.

The Jayhawks (11-5) fell out of the poll Monday for the second time this season after a weekend loss at West Virginia. They had a marquee game to jump back in Tuesday with a visit from No. 2 Iowa State before hosting Baylor on Friday.

The RedHawks (17-0) are the only unbeaten Division I team without an AP Top 25 ranking. They hosted Central Michigan on Tuesday and host Buffalo on Saturday as they try to reach 7-0 in the Mid-American Conference.

League, players' union halt business after no CBA deal

By Doug Feinberg
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The WNBA and its players' union agreed to a moratorium for league business Monday.

The moratorium, which was confirmed by the league, was necessary because the sides failed to reach a deal on a new collective bargaining agreement or an extension of the current one by Friday night's deadline.

The sides are continuing to negotiate on a new CBA but are far apart on salaries and revenue sharing.

The moratorium will halt the initial stages of free agency in which teams would seek to deliver qualifying offers and franchise tag designations to players.

Before the moratorium, the WNBA, under U.S. labor law, had a status-quo obligation to allow teams to send out qualifying offers under the expired CBA agreement. Sunday was the first day teams would have sent out offers to players.

While the moratorium makes sense for both sides, they are still far apart on key issues.

The league's most recent offer last month would guarantee a maximum base salary of $1 million in 2026 that could reach $1.3 million through revenue sharing. That's up from the current $249,000 and could grow to nearly $2 million over the life of the agreement, a person familiar with the negotiations told the AP earlier this month. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the negotiations.

Under the league's proposal, players would receive in excess of 70% of net revenue — though that would be their take of the profits after expenses are paid. Those expenses would include upgraded facilities, charter flights, five-star hotels, medical services, security and arenas.

The average salary in 2026 would be more than $530,000, up from its current $120,000, and grow to more than $770,000 over the life of the agreement. The minimum salary would grow from its current $67,000 to approximately $250,000 in the first year, the person told the AP.

The proposal would also pay star young players like Caitlin Clark, Angel Reese and Paige Bueckers, who are all still on their rookie contracts, nearly double the league minimum.

Revenue sharing is one of the big sticking points in the negotiations.



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert is under increased pressure to reach a deal with the players' union on a collective bargaining agreement.

The union's counter proposal to the league would give players around 30% of the gross revenue. The player's percentage would be from money generated before expenses for the first year and teams would have a $10.5 million salary cap to sign players. Under the union's proposal, the revenue sharing percent would go up slightly each year.

NBA

AROUND THE NBA

Siakam, Pacers facing tough year

By Tim Reynolds
Associated Press

Indiana's Pascal Siakam went 1-on-1 against Boston's Derrick White as time was running out, backed into him a couple of times near the foul line, spun into the lane and then watched his shot kiss off the backboard and fall for what became a game-winner.

For the Pacers, it was joy.

There hasn't been much of that this season.

Monday night's 98-96 victory over Boston — one where Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla answered every question in his postgame news conference by saying "illegal screen" — sent Indiana's record to just 9-31 on the season, still the worst in the Eastern Conference.

It's a far cry from seven months ago, when the Pacers were in Game 7 of the NBA Finals and fully believing they were about to beat Oklahoma City for the title. Then Tyrese Haliburton tore his Achilles in the first half, Myles Turner left in free agency and ... well, everything is different.

Except, that is, for Siakam. He was an All-Star last season, his third selection to the league's showcase game, and has even better numbers this season. And



Doug McSchooler/AP

Indiana Pacers forward Pascal Siakam, right, attempts a pass through Boston Celtics defense during the first half in Indianapolis on Monday.

with the debut of the U.S. vs. the World All-Star format this season, the forward from Cameroon is hoping to get another invite.

"I'm not too focused on it. I just try to be the best player that I could be out there every single night. Some nights are going to be great. Some nights are not. But I just stick to the work and hopefully it comes with some accomplishments." Siakam said.

Indiana coach Rick Carlisle has been campaigning. Siakam's heroics Monday night made it easy to keep it going.

Siakam is averaging 23.5 points and 6.8 rebounds; only nine other players right now have numbers like that per game in both categories. It could be argued that he's putting up those numbers for a team where he's often the go-to option with Haliburton out for the year, and that's fair.

But Carlisle has also pointed out that Siakam is leading by example, helping young players in new roles as the Pacers try to figure out who can best help them going forward.

"Pascal Siakam is one of the favorite players I've ever been around at any level," Carlisle said. "He's just amazing."

Indiana beat Sacramento on Dec. 8 for what was its sixth win of the season and the 999th in Carlisle's career as a head coach.

The Pacers went into the next game wondering if that would be the night. And so on. And so on. And so on. They lost 13 in a row. Carlisle was stuck on 999 wins for a month. It was Jan. 8 when the streak was snapped and the celebration finally happened.

Indiana is 3-0 since that losing streak. Siakam has no delusions about what the rest of the season may bring. Haliburton will be back next season and the Pacers should be vastly improved. Siakam isn't thinking about that yet, though. For now, it's just about what happens each day, with this team, and this three-game streak is a reminder that work is paying off.

ROUNDUP

Harden passes Shaq on scoring list in Clippers' win

Associated Press

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — Kawhi Leonard scored 35 points and James Harden had 32 to move into ninth place on the NBA's career scoring list, and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Charlotte Hornets 117-109 on Monday night for their fourth win in five games.

Jordan Miller added 14 points and Ivica Zubac had nine points and 11 rebounds for Los Angeles.

LaMelo Ball had 25 points and nine rebounds to lead Charlotte in its third loss in four games. Kon Knueppel scored 18 points, Moussa Diabaté had 13 points and 15 rebounds, Brandon Miller also scored 13 and Miles Bridges added 11.

Harden, who began the night 14 points behind Shaquille O'Neal's 28,596 points for ninth, had 13 in the first half and then moved ahead on a 3-pointer early in the third quarter.

After Tre Mann's 3-pointer gave the Hornets a 100-99 lead with 7:18 remaining in the fourth quarter, Harden scored eight points during a 15-1 run that gave the Clippers a 13-point lead 4:02 later.



Jae C. Hong/AP

Los Angeles Clippers guard James Harden celebrates his three-point basket during the second half against the Charlotte Hornets on Monday in Inglewood, Calif. The Clippers beat the Hornets 117-109.

Charlotte followed with six consecutive point to pull to 114-107 with 1:22 to go, but that was as close as it got.

Leonard scored 20 points with five 3-pointers in the third quarter for LA. Harden made two free throws and a layup, and Leonard hit a 3 for a 73-64 advantage.

Jazz 123, Cavaliers 112: Keyonte George scored 32 points, Lauri Markkanen added 28 and visiting Utah bounced back after a 55-point loss to beat Cleveland.

George had 16 points during the third quarter, when the Jazz rallied from a 10-point deficit and regained control to begin their five-game road trip with a victory.

Pacers 98, Celtics 96: Pascal Siakam scored 21 points, including the decisive 7-foot bank shot with 6.1 seconds remaining, and host Indiana won three straight games for the first time this season, beating Boston.

The Celtics' Derrick White missed a go-ahead 3-point attempt in the final seconds.

76ers 115, Raptors 102: Tyrese Maxey scored 33 points, Joel Embiid had 27 and visiting Philadelphia used an 80-point first half to beat Toronto.

VJ Edgecombe and Paul George each scored 15 points as the 76ers bounced back from Sunday's overtime loss to the Raptors to win for the sixth time in eight games.

Mavericks 113, Nets 105: Cooper Flagg scored 27 points and matched a season high with three steals, and Naji Marshall had three straight baskets down the stretch and finished with 22 points as host Dallas beat Brooklyn.

The Mavericks (15-25) snapped a two-game skid. The Nets (11-26) have lost four consecutive games.

Kings 124, Lakers 112: Malik Monk made seven 3-pointers and scored 26 points to help host Sacramento beat Los Angeles.

DeMar DeRozan had 32 points and six assists for the Kings (10-30), who won their second straight after a seven-game skid.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	25	14	.641	—
Boston	24	15	.615	1
Toronto	24	17	.585	2
Philadelphia	22	16	.579	2½
Brooklyn	11	26	.297	13

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	22	18	.550	—
Miami	20	19	.513	1½
Atlanta	20	21	.488	2½
Charlotte	14	26	.350	8
Washington	10	28	.263	11

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	28	10	.737	—
Cleveland	22	19	.537	7½
Chicago	18	20	.474	10
Milwaukee	17	22	.436	11½
Indiana	9	31	.225	20

Western Conference

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	27	12	.692	—
Houston	22	14	.611	3½
Memphis	17	22	.436	10
Dallas	15	25	.375	12½
New Orleans	9	32	.220	19

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	33	7	.825	—
Denver	26	13	.667	6½
Minnesota	26	14	.650	7
Portland	19	21	.475	14
Utah	14	25	.359	18½

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	23	14	.622	—
Phoenix	24	15	.615	—
Golden State	21	19	.525	3½
L.A. Clippers	16	23	.410	8
Sacramento	10	30	.250	14½

Sunday's games

Orlando 128, New Orleans 118
Memphis 103, Brooklyn 98
New York 123, Portland 114
Toronto 116, Philadelphia 115, OT
Oklahoma City 124, Miami 112
Minnesota 104, San Antonio 103
Phoenix 112, Washington 93
Denver 108, Milwaukee 104
Atlanta 124, Golden State 111
Sacramento 111, Houston 98

Monday's games

L.A. Clippers 117, Charlotte 109
Utah 123, Cleveland 112
Indiana 98, Boston 96
Philadelphia 115, Toronto 102
Dallas 113, Brooklyn 105
Sacramento 124, L.A. Lakers 112

Tuesday's games

Phoenix at Miami
Chicago at Houston
Denver at New Orleans
Minnesota at Milwaukee
San Antonio at Oklahoma City
Atlanta at L.A. Lakers
Portland at Golden State

Wednesday's games

Cleveland at Philadelphia
Toronto at Indiana
Brooklyn at New Orleans
Utah at Chicago
Denver at Dallas
New York at Sacramento
Washington at L.A. Clippers

Thursday's games

Memphis at Orlando
Phoenix at Detroit
Boston at Miami
Oklahoma City at Houston
Milwaukee at San Antonio
Utah at Dallas
Atlanta at Portland
New York at Golden State
Charlotte at L.A. Lakers

Scoring leaders

Through Monday

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Doncic, LAL	30	315	281	1009	33.6
Gil.-Alex., OKC	38	413	309	1211	31.9
Maxey, PHI	36	387	205	1114	30.9
Jokic, DEN	32	339	203	948	29.6
Mitchell, CLE	37	381	187	1092	29.5
Brown, BOS	36	391	201	1062	29.5
Brunson, NY	36	370	190	1041	28.9
Edwards, MIN	33	329	185	953	28.9
Curry, GS	30	283	157	864	28.8
Leonard, LAC	29	283	168	814	28.1

NFL PLAYOFFS

Texans stifle Rodgers, Steelers for road win

By Will Graves
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Sheldon Rankins is well-versed in the Houston Texans' nondescript playoff history. The veteran defensive tackle is hell-bent on writing a different ending this time.

And he's hardly alone. The NFL's best defense is eager to prove it's a unit capable of winning a championship.

So far, so dominant and so, so good.

Rankins returned a fumble by Aaron Rodgers 33 yards for a touchdown early in the fourth quarter to break open a tight game, and Houston beat the Pittsburgh Steelers 30-6 on Monday night for the first road playoff win in franchise history.

"We're here for it all," Rankins said after the Texans (13-5) won their 10th straight game. "I won't sugarcoat it, won't dance around that topic. We're here for the whole thing."

The next step comes Sunday at New England (15-3), where Houston will try to reach the AFC Championship game for the first time.

If the Texans can replicate what they did at chilly Acrisure Stadium, they might get there. They limited Pittsburgh (10-8) to 175 total yards, including 81 in the second half. Coach DeMeco Ryans called it the best defensive performance in the franchise's 24-year history.

"Every time we go out there, we show (we're the best)," said Houston cornerback Calen Bullock, who picked off what might be the final pass of Rodgers' Hall of Fame career and raced 50 yards for the final score. "We went out there and showed it today. I don't think they even scored a touchdown."

No, they didn't. The Steelers managed just a pair of first-half field goals by Chris Boswell to lose at home on a Monday night for the first time since 1991. Pittsburgh and coach Mike Tomlin have now dropped seven straight playoff games, with Tomlin tying former Cincinnati coach Marvin Lewis for the longest postseason losing skid in NFL history.

"I don't necessarily compare it to any other moment," Tomlin said. "It's the here and now, and certainly it's difficult. But that's what we sign up for. That's the life we live."

C.J. Stroud turned it over three times but also threw a first-half touchdown pass to Christian Kirk, who had eight catches for 144 yards. Woody Marks had 112 yards rushing for the Texans, who had been 0-6 on the road in the postseason.

"It's all about moving forward and trying your best to flush it and keep going," Stroud said. "Every time we had to bounce back, we made more plays."

Marks' 13-yard touchdown run with 3:43 to go sealed it, and Bullock got his pick-6 less than a minute later.

Rodgers passed for just 146 yards in the final game of his 21st season. Whether there's a 22nd is anyone's guess. The four-time MVP will take some time before deciding whether to return next fall.

While Rodgers' play down the stretch was one of the reasons the Steelers won the AFC North, he struggled in much the same way as his predecessors, Russell Wilson and Mason Rudolph, did.

"I'm not going to make any emotional decisions," Rodgers said. "I'm disappointed. Obviously, it was such a fun year. A lot of adversity but a lot of fun."

More adversity than fun in the end. Rodgers' final pass of the night was a forced downfield throw that Bullock stepped in front of, and Rodgers tried and failed to tackle Bullock on the way to the end zone.

Pittsburgh's defense, long the biggest problem during a playoff victory drought that is nearing a decade, forced Stroud into numerous mistakes and kept the Steelers in the game until late.

The result, however, was the same as it has been for Pittsburgh and Tomlin since they fell to New England in the 2016 AFC championship game, with a long walk to the locker room and a longer-than-hoped-for offseason to figure out what went wrong.

Houston's victory was hardly a thing of beauty, as a thrilling opening weekend of the playoffs ended with a rock fight between clubs trying to shed some ignominious playoff history.

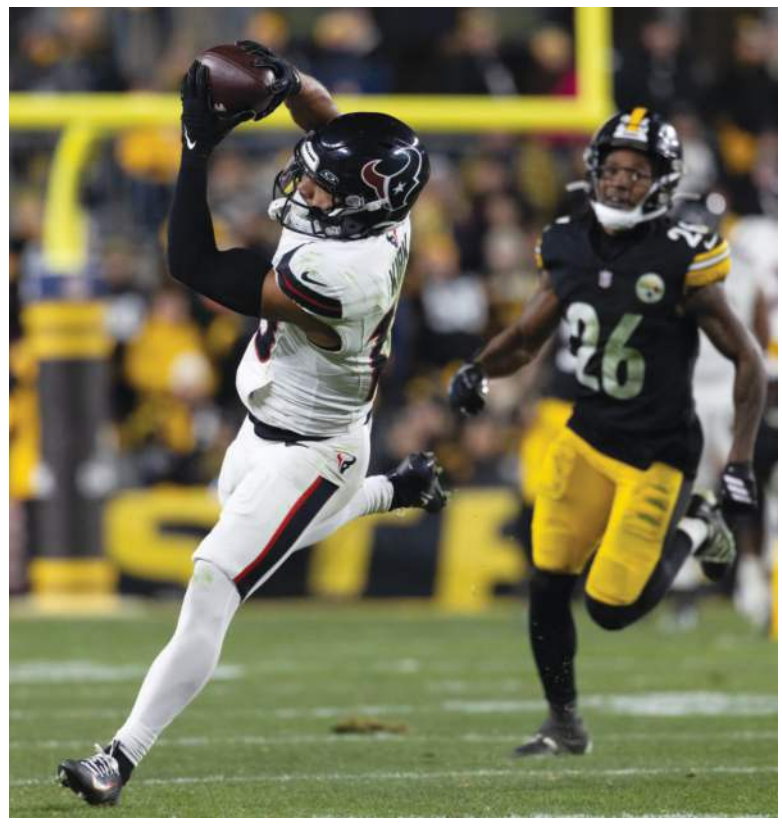
The Texans survived the way they have much of the season, by letting the league's best defense smother their opponent.

The Steelers failed to capitalize on the miscues from a jittery Stroud, who fumbled twice and threw a pick. They scored just three points off those turnovers.

Not even the return of wide receiver DK Metcalf from a two-game suspension for making contact with a fan in Detroit helped. Metcalf finished with two catches for 42 yards and had a critical drop that cost Pittsburgh a chance to extend a 3-0 lead.

Houston gathered itself after an iffy start and took a 7-6 lead when Stroud finished off a 16-play, 92-yard drive by flipping a pass to Kirk for a 4-yard touchdown.

Unlike a heart-stopping fourth-quarter rally against Baltimore that earned the Steelers their first AFC North title since 2020, this time there was no late-game magic from Rodgers or his teammates.



Matt Durisko/AP

Houston wide receiver Christian Kirk catches a pass during the Texans' first road playoff win in franchise history as they defeated the Steelers 30-6 on Monday in Pittsburgh.



Matt Durisko/AP

Pittsburgh quarterback Aaron Rodgers passed for just 146 yards in the loss to Houston.

While Tomlin, the NFL's longest-tenured coach, is all but assured of returning for a 20th season if he wants — even if there were chants for his firing in the final moments — Pittsburgh heads into yet another offseason in search of a quarterback and answers to a playoff drought whose weight seems to grow by the year.

The Texans, meanwhile, will face the Patriots as the hottest team in the NFL with a quarterback who will be eager for a chance at a reprieve and a defense that can keep a game close against any opponent.

Scoreboard

Wild-card Round

Saturday's games

L.A. Rams 34, Carolina 31
Chicago 31, Green Bay 27

Sunday's games

Buffalo 27, Jacksonville 24
San Francisco 23, Philadelphia 19
New England 16, L.A. Chargers 3

Monday's game

Houston 30, Pittsburgh 6

Divisional Round

Saturday, Jan. 17

Buffalo at Denver
San Francisco at Seattle

Sunday, Jan. 18

Houston at New England
L.A. Rams at Chicago

Conference Championships

Sunday, Jan. 25
AFC

At AFC highest remaining seed

NFC

At NFC highest remaining seed



John Raoux/AP

Jaguars quarterback Trevor Lawrence (16) is stopped by Buffalo defensive tackle Daquan Jones during Sunday's loss to the Bils in Jacksonville, Fla.

Going: Fourth-down conversion calls critical

FROM PAGE 24

Saturday when early fourth-down failures led to touchdowns by each team.

Trevor Lawrence thought he had the first down when Jacksonville went for it on fourth-and-2 from the Buffalo 9 only to see the review reveal his shin had hit the ground shy of the first-down marker, a fourth-down faux pas that proved pivotal in the Jaguars' 27-24 loss to the Bills.

Buffalo twice went for it on fourth-and-1 deep in Jacksonville territory. Josh Allen had a 4-yard keeper on the first one and was carried 9 yards on an astonishing tush push to the 1 that also led to a Bills touchdown.

The San Francisco 49ers didn't attempt a single fourth-down conversion in its 23-19 win at Philadelphia, where the Eagles were 3-for-5 on fourth down.

The New England Patriots converted their only fourth-down try, on fourth-and-4 from the Chargers' 30, which led to a field goal. When Los Angeles took a delay after failing to induce an offsides call and then punted from midfield, NBC analyst Cris Collinsworth said, "I think Jim Harbaugh's been watching the games this weekend."

And when Pittsburgh Steelers coach Mike Tomlin chose to take the three points with a 32-yard field goal try rather that chancing it fourth-and-3 from the Houston Texans 14 Monday night, ESPN analyst Troy Aikman commented: "We're in a time as we all know when a lot of offenses would be going for it ... But points are going to be (at) a premium. You've got two defenses that are capable of dominating their opponent. Get 'em when you can."

Points certainly were at a premium for Pittsburgh, which hung in there until Houston's 23-0 fourth-quarter blitz.

Rodgers' final pass was a pick-6 by safety Calen Bullock, whose 50-yard interception return for a touchdown came on ... you guessed it, fourth down.

SPORTS

Defensive clinic

Texans get first playoff road win in rout over Steelers ›› NFL, Page 23

NFL PLAYOFFS

Going for it

Wild-card games full of 4th-down fun and folly, but mighty few punts

By Arnie Stapleton
Associated Press

The NFL set a record for fewest punts per game in 2025, and wild-card weekend was filled with fourth-down fun and folly as punters were mostly spectators, especially Chicago's Tory Taylor, who never stepped off the sideline in the Bears' come-from-behind win over the Green Bay Packers.

In all, teams converted 15 of 29 fourth down attempts on wild-card weekend, when there were only 41 punts, nine of them Monday night in the Houston Texans' 30-6 rout of Aaron Rodgers and the Pittsburgh Steelers.

First-year Chicago coach Ben Johnson was particularly aggressive, going for it a half dozen times on fourth down Saturday night, including two backfires in the first half that led to a pair of Green Bay touchdowns and put the Bears in a 21-3 halftime hole.

Caleb Williams was intercepted on fourth-and-6 from the Packers 40-yard line, leading to Jordan Love's 18-yard touchdown throw, and Williams threw incomplete on fourth-and-5 from his own 32. That one led to Love's TD throw on fourth-and-goal from the Chicago 2 that gave Green Bay an 18-point halftime cushion.

The Packers couldn't capitalize on another turnover on downs by the Bears just before halftime because Brandon McManus missed a 55-yard field goal on the final play after Williams threw incomplete deep on fourth-and-4 from the Packers 37.

When Prime Video's sideline reporter Kaylee Hartung asked the Chicago coach about his aggressive approach and going for it on fourth down multiple times on his own side of the field, Johnson replied, "Yeah, we want to maximize our possessions and we want to go for fourth-down plays."

Her follow-up was about how to slow down Green Bay's efficient offense.

"That's a big reason why we're being aggressive on offense, so that we can extend our drives and score points ourselves," Johnson insisted. "It's a really good offense we're going against."

Although the Bears would convert just twice on their six fourth downs — the Packers were 3 for 3 on fourth down — that strategy paid off in the end. Williams threw a 27-yard pass to Rome Odunze to Green Bay's 30-yard line, which led to the TD that pulled Chicago to 27-24 with 4:21 remaining.

Johnson said the game plan featured an aggressive fourth-down mentality, and "I think where it gets misconstrued is, there's a lack of confidence in your defense when you do that. I think the opposite, I think it's because I have confidence in our defense and their ability to stop teams in the red zone.

"I'm never going to apologize for being aggressive or doing things that might be a little unorthodox, if it's what we deem is best for us to win a ballgame," Johnson added.

Johnson was Detroit's offensive coordinator when the Lions blew a 17-point halftime lead and lost the NFC championship to San Francisco 34-31 after the 2023 season. In that game, Detroit coach Dan Campbell went for it on fourth down twice in field-goal range but came up short, later saying he'd do it again if he could.

Those failures didn't curtail the Lions' aggressive fourth-down philosophy, one that Johnson took to the Bears when they hired him a year ago.

He had plenty of company over the weekend as a trend from the regular season continues. There were just 3.55 punts per game per team this season, and that figure fell in the first round of the playoffs with teams averaging just 3.41 punts per game.

The Carolina Panthers and Los Angeles Rams got the fun going

SEE GOING ON PAGE 23



Photos by Nam Huh/AP

Chicago's Kyle Monangai runs Saturday against Green Bay. The Bears had six fourth-down attempts in Saturday's 31-27 win over the Packers.

"I'm never going to apologize for being aggressive or doing things that might be a little unorthodox, if it's what we deem is best for us to win a ballgame."

Ben Johnson
Chicago Bears head coach



Harden passes Shaq on career scoring list ›› NBA, Page 22

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