

USMC under more scrutiny for safety

The Washington Post

A disaster at sea that killed nine Marines and a Navy sailor last summer will face more scrutiny after the release of the service's investigative findings, with Congress taking interest and families involved pressing the Marine Corps for answers.

The service members, all between 18 and 23 years old, died after a 35-year-old armored vehicle meant to carry Marines from ship to shore sank to the ocean floor off the coast of California on July 30. A Marine Corps investigation released last week found that the situation was preventable, with shoddy maintenance, a lack of safety boats, insufficient training and complacency all playing a role.

Marine Corps officials and staff members in the House discussed the matter this week, said Rep. John Garamendi, D-Calif.,

the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee's subcommittee on readiness. What they shared, coupled with the details in the investigation, made clear to him that the service has a "systemic, cultural safety problem" that also includes fatal vehicle rollovers and aircraft collisions in training over the last few years, he said.

"It cuts across the entire Corps; it is outrageous, it is deadly, and it has to change," Garamendi said in an interview.

The congressman said that committee members will be briefed by Marine Corps officials about its safety issues next week, and that he will seek participation from Gen. David H. Berger, the service's commandant, at an open hearing in May.

"I will invite the commandant to testify about the culture of safety — or, rather, the lack of a safety culture in the Marine

Corps, and demand answers to how the Marine Corps plans to deal with this," Garamendi said.

The recent disasters include a 2018 collision between an F/A-18 jet and a KC-130 plane off the coast of Japan that killed six Marines and a 2016 accident in which two CH-53E helicopters crashed into each other off the coast of Hawaii, killing 12.

In both cases, training problems were exposed. In the Japan case, an initial service investigation blamed the fighter jet pilot for being unqualified, but a second investigation overturned the results and said there were systemic problems in his squadron that senior Marine officers had overlooked.

Senior service officials have acknowledged mistakes in the disaster and taken steps to discipline several officers.

VA expected illnesses post-9/11 wars

McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Soon after the 9/11 attacks, disease researchers at the Department of Veterans Affairs began internal discussions on how to prepare for the war-related illnesses they knew would follow, agency officials told McClatchy.

"There were lots of conversations about 'we don't know what to expect, but we expect there to be consequences'" for the service members who would deploy overseas in response to the 2001 attacks, Victoria Davey, an epidemiologist and associate chief research officer at the VA, told McClatchy in an exclusive interview.

"We expected there to be hazardous exposures," she said.

The VA was trying to be proactive, after a general feeling among the researchers that it had not been ready to address toxic-exposure illnesses that troops developed after previous conflicts, Davey said.

"I think our major, major impulse was — not another Vietnam," Davey said. "To not follow these people and to look forward and to expect consequences of service in the de-

ployed environment."

So the VA started tracking service members as military operations began in Afghanistan and eventually Iraq following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

"We have had eyes on these populations, we have been collecting data since the conflicts began," said Davey, who has been with the VA since before 9/11.

"I think the first features that we saw coming back were what was called the 'Iraqi lung,' the respiratory problems," Davey said. "It's complicated because it's a sandstorm environment and in addition there's just a lot of smoke, dust, solvent exposure in the military occupation of many kinds, and then we had these chemical, biological weapons worries going on."

The revelation that the VA was concerned that some veterans would return home with illnesses, and that it has been collecting data on those service members since the Iraq and Afghanistan wars began, deeply angered veterans who have spent years trying to convince the agency their illnesses were linked to their service over-

seas.

Many of them have spent the last two decades being told by the VA that there was no known connection yet between their overseas deployments and their ailments, which has resulted in their claims for medical care or compensation being denied.

"This is an insult to know that the VA started planning for toxic exposure shortly after the planes hit the Twin Towers," said retired Army Capt. Le Roy Torres, a reservist who deployed to Balad, Iraq, from 2007 to 2008 and now relies on supplemental oxygen to breathe. He had daily exposure to the military's football field-sized open air trash burning pit at the base.

"It's been over a decade for those deployed to Iraq, and the only conversations I have witnessed [with the VA] are regarding how we do not have enough science," Torres said.

Both Davey and chief VA research officer Rachel Ramoni said the agency's focus now is two-pronged: to identify what made the veterans ill and to improve their health situation now.

Capitol officer, driver dead after attack

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Capitol Police officer has died after a man rammed a car into two officers at a barricade outside the U.S. Capitol and then emerged wielding a knife. It was the second line-of-duty death this year for a department still struggling to heal from the Jan. 6 insurrection.

Video shows the driver of the crashed car emerging with a knife in his hand and starting to run at the pair of officers, Capitol Police Acting Chief Yogananda Pittman told reporters Friday. Authorities shot the suspect, who died at a hospital.

“I just ask that the public continue to keep U.S. Capitol Police and their families in your prayers,” Pittman said. “This has

been an extremely difficult time for U.S. Capitol Police after the events of Jan. 6 and now the events that have occurred here today.”

Police identified the slain officer as William “Billy” Evans, an 18-year veteran who was a member of the department’s first responders unit.

Authorities said there wasn’t an ongoing threat, though the Capitol was put on lockdown for a time as a precaution. There was also no immediate connection apparent between Friday’s crash and the Jan. 6 riot.

Law enforcement officials identified the suspect as 25-year-old Noah Green. Investigators were digging into his background and examining whether he had any mental

health history as they tried to discern a motive. They were also working to obtain warrants to access his online accounts.

Pittman said the suspect did not appear to have been on the police’s radar. But the attack underscored that the building and campus — and the officers charged with protecting them — remain potential targets for violence.

Green described himself as a follower of the Nation of Islam and its founder, Louis Farrakhan, and spoke of going through a difficult time where he leaned on his faith, according to recent messages posted online that have since been taken down. The messages were captured by the group SITE, which tracks online activity.

Homicide head: Floyd restraint ‘totally unnecessary’

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Kneeling on George Floyd’s neck while he was handcuffed and lying on his stomach was top-tier, deadly force and “totally unnecessary,” the head of the Minneapolis Police Department’s homicide division testified Friday.

“If your knee is on a person’s neck, that can kill him,” said Lt. Richard Zimmerman, adding that when a person is handcuffed behind their back, “your muscles are pulling back ... and if you’re laying on your chest, that’s constricting your breathing even more.”

Zimmerman, who said he is the most senior person on the police force, also testified at De-

rek Chauvin’s murder trial that once Floyd was handcuffed, he saw “no reason for why the officers felt they were in danger — if that’s what they felt — and that’s what they would have to feel to be able to use that kind of force.”

“So in your opinion, should that restraint have stopped once he was handcuffed and thrown on the ground?” prosecutor Matthew Frank asked.

“Absolutely,” replied Zimmerman, who said he has received use-of-force training annually — as all officers do — since joining the city force in 1985.

He said he has never been trained to kneel on someone’s neck if they’re handcuffed be-

hind their back and in the prone position.

“Once you secure or handcuff a person, you need to get them out of the prone position as soon as possible because it restricts their breathing,” Zimmerman said, adding “you need to turn them on their side or have them sit up.”

He also testified that officers have a duty to provide care for a person in distress, even if an ambulance has been called.

Officers kept restraining Floyd — with Chauvin kneeling on his neck, another kneeling on Floyd’s back and a third holding his feet — until the ambulance arrived, even after he became unresponsive.

Newlyweds arrested at port before traveling to join ISIS

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A newlywed husband and wife who expressed interest in fighting for the Islamic State were arrested Thursday at a port near New York City as they attempted to board a cargo ship that an undercover law enforcement officer said would take them to Yemen, prosecutors said.

James Bradley, 20, and Arwa Muthana, 29, were taken into custody on the gangplank at Port Newark — Elizabeth Marine Terminal in New Jersey, prosecutors said. They were charged in federal court in Manhattan with attempting and conspiring to provide material

support to a designated foreign terrorist organization.

Bradley and Muthana made an initial court appearance Thursday and were ordered jailed without bail.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney Audrey Strauss said in a statement that the couple’s “plans to wage attacks against the United States have been thwarted.”

Bradley, of the Bronx, expressed support for ISIS and spoke of his desire to join the group overseas in recorded conversations over the course of nearly a year with an undercover enforcement officer, prosecutors said.

A complaint outlining the charges against Bradley and Muthana does not mention the defendants discussing their intentions with ISIS or others beyond the two undercover law enforcement officers.

Muthana, of Alabama, also expressed support for ISIS and discussed with Bradley plans to travel together to the Middle East to fight on behalf of the group, prosecutors said. After her arrest, she waived her right to remain silent and said she was willing to fight and kill Americans, prosecutors said.

Muthana and Bradley were married in January.

Firms pressured to denounce GOP bills

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Liberal activists are stepping up calls for corporate America to denounce Republican efforts to tighten state voting laws, and businesses accustomed to cozy political relationships now find themselves in the middle of a growing partisan fight over voting rights.

Pressure is mounting on leading companies in Texas, Arizona and other states, particularly after Major League Baseball's decision Friday to move the 2021 All-Star game out of Atlanta. The move came a week after Georgia Republicans enacted an overhaul of the state's election law that critics argue is an attempt to suppress Democratic votes.

Other companies have, somewhat belatedly, joined the chorus of critics.

Delta Air Lines and The Coca-Cola Co., two of Georgia's best-known brands, this past week called the new law "unacceptable," although they had a hand in writing it. That only angered Republicans, including Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp and several

U.S. senators, who accused the companies of cowering from unwarranted attacks from the left.

The fight has thrust corporate America into a place it often tries to avoid — the center of a partisan political fight. But under threat of boycott and bad publicity, business leaders are showing a new willingness to enter the fray on an issue not directly related to their bottom line, even if it means alienating Republican allies.

"We want to hold corporations accountable for how they show up when voting rights are under attack," said Marc Banks, an NAACP spokesman. "Corporations have a part to play, because when they do show up and speak, people listen."

Civil rights groups have sued to block the new Georgia law, which was passed after Democrats flipped the once-reliably Republican state in an election that Donald Trump falsely claimed was rife with fraud. Some activists have called for consumer boycotts of Delta, Coca-Cola and others. They dismiss business leaders' assertions

that they helped water down the bill to ease earlier, more restrictive proposals; those leaders, they argue, should have tried to block the plan altogether.

In Texas, the NAACP, League of Women Voters and League of United Latin American Citizens, among other organizations, are urging corporations in the state to speak out against a slate of Republican-backed voting proposals. "Democracy is good for business," the campaign says.

Unlike their Georgia-based counterparts, American Airlines and Dell Technologies didn't wait for the Texas measure to pass. "To make American's stance clear: We are strongly opposed to this bill and others like it," American said in a statement.

Arizona, which Biden flipped from Trump in November, hasn't seen high-profile corporate players engage yet. But 30-plus groups sent a joint letter to Allstate Insurance, CVS Health and Farmers' Insurance, among others, urging their public opposition to proposed voting restrictions.

Few in GOP rush to defend Gaetz amid sex trafficking investigation

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The political peril for conservative Republican Rep. Matt Gaetz deepened Friday as the often outlandish, Trump-styled provocateur appeared politically isolated amid a federal sex-trafficking investigation.

Few Republicans rushed to offer any kind of support to the three-term Florida congressman known for espousing high-volume attacks — sometimes against those in his own party — during his frequent media appearances. Several GOP lawmakers and top aides who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive situation said Gaetz's prospects for remaining in Congress were bleak and were complicated in particular by his unpopularity among colleagues in his own party.

Federal prosecutors are examining whether Gaetz and a political ally who is facing sex trafficking allegations may have paid underage girls or offered them gifts in exchange for sex, two people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press on Friday.

The scrutiny of Gaetz stemmed from the Justice Department's probe into the politi-

cal ally, Joel Greenberg, the people said. Greenberg, a former Florida tax collector, was indicted last year and is accused of a number of federal crimes. He has pleaded not guilty.

Republican congressional leaders have largely been silent about the investigation, which continues.

That reflected the serious nature of the charges in a story that seems to add new elements by the day, giving lawmakers little motivation to attach themselves to Gaetz.

In one potentially ominous sign, Gaetz spokesman Luke Ball has resigned, according to one Republican who was not authorized to speak publicly on the matter and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Part of the investigation is examining whether Gaetz, 38, had sex with a 17-year-old and other underage girls and violated federal sex trafficking laws, the people familiar with the probe told the AP. Federal agents suspect Greenberg may have enticed the girls and then introduced some of them to Gaetz, and they are examining whether both men may have had sex with the same girls, the people said.

Unique date draws lines for marriage licenses in Vegas

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Soon-to-be newlyweds lined up out the door of the marriage license office in Las Vegas on Friday, ahead of a unique date to tie the knot: 4/3/21.

Nearly 700 couples obtained licenses for the Saturday date, said Jeff Klein, a spokesman for the Clark County Marriage Bureau, as the city where Elvis can be part of the wedding got set to mark yet another quirky date for nuptials. The clerk's office marked the occasion with keepsake certificates.

"Specialty dates like 4/3/21 are always immensely popular," said county Clerk Lynn Goya, who noted that more than 1,800 couples were married on Dec. 13, 2014.

The office is bracing for a busy first 10 days this December, offering what the clerk dubs "palindrome days" for numbers reading the same forward and backward.

Nearly 2,700 couples married on 10/10/10; more than 1,800 tied the knot on 12/12/12; and 3,125 were wed on 11/11/11.

The most popular date to date?

Goya said 7/7/7 took the cake, with 4,492 marriages.

CDC: Fully vaccinated can travel safely

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Add travel to the activities vaccinated Americans can safely enjoy again, according to new U.S. guidance issued Friday.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its guidance to say fully vaccinated people can travel within the U.S. without getting tested for the coronavirus or going into quarantine afterward.

Still, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky urged caution and said she would “advocate against general travel overall” given the rising number of infections.

“If you are vaccinated, it is lower risk,” she said.

According to the CDC, more than 100 million people in the U.S. — or about 30% of the population — have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. A person is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving the last required dose.

The agency has said it would update its guidance on allowed activities for vaccinated people as more people get the shots and evidence mounts about the protection they provide.

California

SACRAMENTO — Sports, theater and music fans will be able to take their seats again in California as the state’s coronavirus cases plummet and vaccinations jump.

After a year-long ban on most indoor seating, the state Friday set the stage for a literal stage-setting that could see resumption of NBA games and live entertainment performances in most counties beginning April 15.

Most of the state’s 58 counties will be permitted to allow at least some indoor seating because they fall into the lower three levels of California’s four-tiered COVID-19 restriction plan.

Big population centers like San Francisco, Santa Clara

County and Los Angeles County are in the second-least restrictive orange tier. Only three counties — San Joaquin, Merced and Inyo — remain in the highest purple tier, indicating “widespread” COVID-19 risk.

The others will be permitted some indoor seating “with capacity limits and modifications including physical distancing, advance ticket purchases, designated areas for eating and drinking, and attendance limited to in-state visitors,” according to a state public health announcement.

In the red tier, venues of up to 1,500 people can operate at 10% capacity and grow to 25% if all guests provide evidence of vaccination or a negative test.

Venues of 1,501 people or more can operate at 20% capacity in the red tier, but guests must show proof of vaccination or a negative test. Capacity increases for tiers where the virus is less

Oregon

LAKE OSWEGO — Firefighters in Lake Oswego weren’t prepared for the crowds that greeted them when they returned from a vaccine clinic in Molalla with dozens of extra COVID-19 vaccine doses.

Word had gotten out on social media that 130 extra doses needed to be used before they expired and firefighters found a line several blocks long when they returned to the station on Wednesday night, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported Friday.

Staff administered all the doses and finished the final shot sometime around 10:30 p.m. after working 12-hour shifts.

Officials maintained a formal wait list of people looking for shots but officials say the excess doses easily exceeded the names on the list, said Gert Zoutendijk, the fire marshal and department spokeswoman.

The long line of hopeful vac-

cine recipients took the department by surprise, she said.

The initial news of the extra doses came from a nurse who texted a friend. At some point, someone put it on Facebook as the word spread. In the end, many had to be turned away and the department received 300 voicemails asking about the doses.

Colorado

DENVER — Colorado will no longer require masks to be worn in most settings in the 31 counties that are on the lowest level of the state’s COVID-19 dial system, Gov. Jared Polis’ office announced Friday.

In the counties at Level Green, masks will only be required in schools, among congregate care visitors and in other high-risk settings such as health care facilities and hair salons, The Denver Post reported.

“Every community has been impacted differently by this pandemic, and we want to ensure this order is reflective of that,” Polis said.

Colorado has 64 counties.

The new 30-day order, which takes effect Sunday, will still require masks to be worn indoors in counties at Level Blue and higher when there are public gatherings of at least 10 unvaccinated people or people with an unknown vaccination status.

The order does not mention requiring proof of vaccination and puts much of the enforcement on business owners and operators.

Iowa

DES MOINES — Iowa coronavirus-related hospitalizations increased to over 200 again Friday as the state reported another 616 confirmed cases with much of the increase due to infections of young people.

The Iowa Department of Public Health reported 204 people hospitalized with COVID-19 with 40 people admitted in the

previous 24 hours, both increases over the day before. The state listed an additional eight deaths, bringing the total to 5,751 deaths.

Data shows young adults are a significant segment of those testing positive, as 27% of the positive cases reported in the past seven days are aged 18 to 29.

The data shows positive case were trending lower and flattened but began increasing March 21.

Iowa has the nation’s seventh-highest COVID-19 case rate with 11,125 cases per 100,000, according to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data.

The state has the 16th highest COVID-19 death rate in the nation with 182 deaths per 100,000.

Kentucky

LOUISVILLE — Kentucky’s COVID-19 test positivity rate has risen to almost 3.1% after declining steadily for several days, Gov. Andy Beshear reported Friday.

This development comes after the Democratic governor urged Kentuckians to continue to follow public health guidelines that slow the spread of the virus, even as vaccines become more widely available.

“This thing is still dangerous. It’s still killing people, and it still is going to continue to kill people until we stop it,” Beshear said Monday at a virtual press briefing. “If we want to avoid another rise in cases here in Kentucky, and we can do that, we’ve just got to keep it up.”

The test positivity rate is an indicator of the extent of the spread of the virus.

If the rate is less than 5% for two weeks and testing is widespread, the virus is considered under control, according to the World Health Organization.

Kentucky reported 690 confirmed coronavirus cases and three virus-related deaths Friday.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Morgue workers steal credit cards from dead

NY NEW YORK — The FBI arrested two former city employees accused of stealing bank cards from dead bodies taken to New York City's mortuary and racking up thousands of dollars in charges.

Former mortuary technicians Willie Garcon and Charles McFadgen were charged with access device fraud after using the cards for a long list of unauthorized purchases, prosecutors said.

The FBI said Garcon, 50, of Brooklyn used credit and debit cards from four dead people to make nearly \$6,500 in purchases.

McFadgen, 66, of the Bronx, made more than \$13,500 in unauthorized purchases using bank cards stolen from five dead people, authorities said.

City law restricting plastic utensils takes effect

HI HONOLULU — Under a new law, Honolulu food vendors won't be allowed to provide customers with plastic utensils.

A city ordinance prohibits plastic forks, knives, spoons, straws, stir sticks, picks and sushi grass, the Honolulu Star-Advertiser reported.

Honolulu vendors may provide disposable utensils, but only if they do not contain plastic derived from petroleum.

Wildlife officials looking for killer of bald eagle

TN TIPTONVILLE — Wildlife officials are

offering a \$10,000 reward in their investigation into the killing of a bald eagle in West Tennessee.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency are seeking the public's help as they work to figure out who shot and killed a mature bald eagle in Lake County.

The bird was shot on Club House Road on March 20.

Patrol car hit in incident with 2 drunk drivers

WI RACINE — Authorities said a suspected drunk driver crashed into a Wisconsin State Patrol car as officers were removing two young children from another vehicle whose driver was pulled over on suspicion of operating while intoxicated.

The children were not hurt. The driver and one law enforcement officer at the scene suffered minor injuries, according to the Racine County Sheriff's Office.

The driver who caused the crash, a Milwaukee man, 25, was arrested on suspicion of multiple offenses, including OWI causing injury. Drugs and paraphernalia were located inside his vehicle, authorities said.

2nd suspect in equipment theft ring pleads guilty

RI PROVIDENCE — One of nine people charged in connection with the thefts of excavators, boats, personal watercraft, all-terrain vehicles, and trailers worth a total of \$700,000 from dealers in four New England states pleaded

guilty, federal prosecutors said.

Jared Santiago, 28, of Providence, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit interstate transportation of stolen property and interstate transportation of stolen property, according to the U.S. attorney's office in Rhode Island. Sentencing is scheduled for May 21.

Santiago is the second of nine people indicted to plead guilty. The rest are awaiting trial.

Vandal smashes dozens of windows in church

CA ANTIOCH — Dozens of windows and doors in a San Francisco Bay Area church were smashed by a vandal who was caught on surveillance video.

Steve Miner, the senior pastor, told KTVU-TV that 36 windows and doors were damaged at Cornerstone Christian Center.

Miner said an outdoor Easter service already planned will go on.

Parents feel for bear trying to corral her cubs

CT WINCHESTER — A mother bear caught on video trying to coax four rambunctious cubs across a busy Connecticut road has parents across the internet nodding in sympathy.

The video shows the bear trying several times to get the cubs safely across Rowley Street, which has a posted speed limit of 40 mph, as a police cruiser blocks traffic.

The mother bear would pick up one cub with her mouth and carry it to a grassy area, only to have another scamper back into

the road.

Police are using the video as a warning to drivers.

State lawmakers vote to nix pro-Confederacy song

MD ANNAPOLIS — Maryland lawmakers gave final passage to repeal the state song, a Civil War-era call to arms for the Confederacy against "Northern scum" that refers to President Abraham Lincoln as a despot.

The vote by Maryland's House of Delegates comes after decades of debate over the song titled "Maryland, My Maryland." It sends the measure to Republican Gov. Larry Hogan.

The song was written as a poem in 1861 by James Ryder Randall. It was adopted as the state song in 1939. Maryland lawmakers have tried to replace it since 1974.

Bi-state tolls to increase for 1st time in 10 years

PA YARDLEY — The bi-state agency that operates river crossings connecting New Jersey and Pennsylvania announced that it will raise tolls next month and again in 2024, the first such increases in 10 years.

The Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission cited the decline in passenger car traffic and toll revenue caused by the coronavirus pandemic, along with the burden of maintaining 13 toll "free" bridges with revenue from its toll bridges.

The commission's net toll revenue for 2020 was \$14.48 million less than had been projected.

— From The Associated Press

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Arizona, Stanford to meet in all Pac-12 final

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — It's been nearly three decades since Tara VanDerveer last won a national championship at Stanford.

She'll have a chance to win her third title Sunday night when the Cardinal face Pac-12 rival Arizona. The Wildcats are playing in their first championship game ever after knocking off top-ranked Connecticut in the Final Four.

"It's just, I think, a credit to how competitive the Pac-12 is," VanDerveer said.

It's the first meeting of conference rivals in the championship game since South Carolina beat Mississippi State in 2017.

Now the Pac-12, which has had six different teams reach the Final Four since 2013 will be

guaranteed its first champion since Stanford won in 1992.

"I've been saying all along, the Pac-12 is the best conference in the country," Arizona coach Adia Barnes said. "Hands down."

To get to Sunday night's game the Cardinal got a little bit of luck edging South Carolina 66-65 on a basket by Haley Jones with 32 seconds left Friday night. The Cardinal survived two last-second misses by the Gamecocks.

Arizona didn't need any last-second karma to beat the Huskies. Wildcats All-American Aari McDonald scored 26 points and the team played stifling defense on UConn, holding them to 22 points in the first half and leading by 10. UConn got within five

with a minute left, but could get no closer.

"No one thought we'd win, no one thought we'd be here," Barnes said. "We don't care. We believed in each other. We believed, our team believed."

The win made Barnes the third coach to lead her alma mater to the championship game, joining Sonja Hogg, who guided Louisiana Tech to the first NCAA title in 1982 and was the runner up in 1983, as well as Wendy Larry at Old Dominion.

Arizona saved its best basketball for the NCAA Tournament.

"I'm just happy we got hot at the right time during the tournament and if you look back at two or three weeks ago we weren't playing our best basketball," Barnes said. "So we start-

ed to change some things and got better. We just became more united right before the tournament and just found ways."

It's been quite a year for VanDerveer and the Cardinal. The team was forced on the road for nearly 10 weeks because of the coronavirus and spent 86 days in hotels, according to ESPN.

The Cardinal didn't complain and went about their business. Along the way the Hall of Fame coach earned her 1,099th career victory to pass Pat Summitt for the most all-time in women's basketball history.

These two Pac-12 teams met twice this season with the Cardinal winning both meetings. Stanford won 81-54 on New Year's Day and 62-48 on Feb. 22.

Cardinal hold off Gamecocks in women's semifinals

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Haley Jones came up with a big shot, and Stanford got a little bit of luck to get back to the national championship game for the first time in 11 years.

Jones scored 24 points, including the go-ahead jumper with 32 seconds left, to help Stanford beat South Carolina 66-65 on Friday night and advance to the women's NCAA Tournament title game.

"It was a battle. It was a really tough game where we had to work really hard," Stanford coach Tara VanDerveer said.

It's Stanford's first trip to the title game since 2010, which was also in San Antonio. The Cardinal lost to UConn in that contest, 53-47. Now they'll face Pac-12 rival Arizona on Sunday night. The fourth-seeded Wildcats knocked off top-seed UConn 69-59.

Leading by one, the Cardinal turned it over with 6.2 seconds left at midcourt and Brea Beal missed a contested layup as Lexie Hull hustled back to get in her way. Aliyah Boston grabbed the

rebound, but her putback attempt also bounced off the rim setting off a wild celebration by the Cardinal.

"It is nice to have a little karma go your way," VanDerveer said.

VanDerveer, who earlier this season topped Pat Summitt's all-time win mark of 1,098 victories, will be looking for her third national championship at the school and first since 1992.

Trailing 65-64 with 32 seconds left, Jones hit a jumper from the corner off a rebound that gave the Cardinal their one-point lead.

"I just saw the ball bouncing around and most of my teammates were hitting some bodies to open it up. I just let it fly and I said, 'Please, Jesus, go in,' and it did," said Jones, who was 11-for-14 from the field. "And then we just had to go on to the next play. There's no time to get hyped about. We had to get back on defense."

The Gamecocks had a couple of chances after Jones' shot. On the next possession, Boston had her shot blocked, but got her own rebound. Then, with 15 seconds

left, Destanni Henderson threw a pass that was stolen by Ashton Prechtel.

After an inbounds, Cameron Brink lost the ball at midcourt to Boston, giving South Carolina those final two chances.

"We got a pretty decent, two looks at it, layup, follow up," South Carolina coach Dawn Staley said. "We just came up short. We lost the way we did and it's heartbreaking."

Jones and Fran Belibi ran to Boston, who was still standing under the basket and both embraced her with a long hug after the buzzer sounded.

"Me, Fran and Aliyah, we're best friends. We text every day. We talk all the time. We love competing against each other. I think us being so close really boosted our competitiveness against each other," Jones said. "So, I mean it was a hard-fought battle. She played great. We both played great. So, we just wanted to pay her the respect that she deserves."

Down 64-59 with 1:42 left, Henderson scored six straight

points to give the Gamecocks (26-5) a 65-64 lead with 38.8 seconds left. She had a three-point play and a three-pointer.

Zia Cooke finished with 25 points to lead South Carolina.

Despite the frenetic finish, VanDerveer felt that the first quarter was huge for the Cardinal.

Trailing 15-6 midway through the first quarter, Stanford scored the last nine points of the period to tie the game heading into the second. The Gamecocks missed their final six shots of the quarter and were scoreless for the final 4:48.

"We know basketball teams have runs, so we can't let that first quarter or the first five minutes dictate the whole game," said Hull, who had 18 points and 13 rebounds.

The drought continued in the second quarter as the Gamecocks missed their first five shots and didn't hit a field goal until Zia Cooke's three-pointer in the quarter made it 22-20. She had hit the previous basket nearly 9½ minutes earlier.

McDonald, Arizona shock Connecticut

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Aari McDonald and Adia Barnes have marched Arizona out of the basketball desert to the doorstep of a national championship.

McDonald scored 26 points and led a smothering defensive effort as the Wildcats beat UConn 69-59 Friday night to advance to the women's NCAA Tournament championship game for the first time in school history.

The Wildcats never trailed against the favored and fabled Huskies, who have made the Final Four 13 consecutive times, but haven't made the championship game since 2016 when UConn won its 11th title.

And Barnes, who led Arizona to the NCAA Tournament as a player two decades ago, is now just the third coach to lead her alma mater to the championship. It comes five years after she took the job to rebuild one of the worst programs in the Pac-12.

Arizona will face Stanford on Sunday in the first all Pac-12 final. Barnes got there by beating UConn and Geno Auriemma,

who coached all of UConn's 11 championships.

"No one thought we'd win. No one thought we'd be here," Barnes said. "We don't care. We believed in each other. We believed. Our team believed."

McDonald, who stands just 5-foot-6, has led the way on the court since transferring from Washington and sitting out her first season when Arizona won just six games.

She did it all for the Wildcats against UConn with slashing drives, pinpoint shooting from long range, and a defensive intensity that held UConn's star freshman Paige Bueckers in check for long stretches.

Arizona held UConn to a season-low in points and led by 14 late in the third quarter before holding off a late push. At the final buzzer, McDonald threw the ball high in the air and was mobbed by her teammates near center court. Then she shared a long hug with Barnes.

The small, but mostly pro-Arizona crowd at the Alamodome — the NCAA put limits on attendance because of the pandemic —

chanted "U of A!" Arizona players came over to the loud rooting section, pointing to jerseys and waving hands up to get them to get louder.

"It was that grit," McDonald said of the Wildcats' defensive lockdown. "We didn't want to go home once again, and we're proving it. We're locking down and we're playing team defense. This is our identity, and we're best at defense. Defense wins games and we did that tonight."

Bueckers, The Associated Press player of the year, finished with 18 points and her three-pointer got UConn within 60-55 in the final two minutes before Arizona closed out the win with free throws. Christyn Williams led UConn (28-2) with 20 points before fouling out.

UConn has no seniors in the lineup and started slow as the Huskies looked tentative in the role of favorite. McDonald and the Wildcats looked primed for their moment after being left out of the NCAA's Final Four promotional video on Twitter that had featured the three other teams but not them.

UConn had four early turnovers and missed its first five shots before Bueckers made a three-pointer to settle the offense, but only temporarily. McDonald, opened the game with a three-pointer, made another two minutes later, and scored eight as the Wildcats led 16-10 after the first quarter.

"I think we came out with the wrong mentality. I thought we thought it was going to be easy, I guess, and we got flustered," Williams said. "They had great ball pressure. It wasn't like anything we've seen before this season. And we just couldn't get in a flow offensively."

McDonald pumped in two more from long range in the second quarter and the Wildcats led 32-22 at halftime. Bueckers was struggling to get any looks at the basket and finished the half with just four shots and three points.

McDonald cooled off in the third with just two points on two free throws. But she delivered big points late, and her three-point play in the final four minutes of the fourth put Arizona up by 10.

Cy Young winner Bauer wins debut with Dodgers

Associated Press

DENVER — Trevor Bauer took a no-hit bid into the seventh inning of his Los Angeles debut before allowing a pair of two-run homers, and the Dodgers held on after building a big lead to beat the Colorado Rockies 11-6 on Friday night.

The game had a little bit of everything, including a gray cat making a surprise appearance in center field before being ushered out by stadium personnel.

Bauer (1-0), the reigning NL Cy Young Award winner, purred along through six innings until Trevor Story broke up the no-hit bid with a single and Charlie Blackmon ended the shutout with a two-run

homer.

Ryan McMahon later followed with another two-run homer. David Price eventually replaced Bauer and gave up back-to-back homers to Dom Nunez and Sam Hilliard, suddenly turning a 10-0 rout into a 10-6 game.

It was the second time in Rockies history they homered four times in an inning.

Bauer went 6 1/3 innings and allowed four runs while striking out 10. The right-hander signed a \$102 million, three-year deal as a free agent in February after going 5-4 with a 1.73 ERA last season for Cincinnati.

Rockies starter Antonio Senzuela (0-1) uncharacteristically

scuffled at home, lasting 3 1/3 innings and allowing seven runs.

Padres 4, Diamondbacks 2: Blake Snell struck out eight before being pulled after 4 2/3 scoreless innings in his debut with his new team, and Eric Hosmer homered for the second straight game and drove in three runs as host San Diego beat Arizona.

White Sox 12, Angels 8: Yermín Mercedes got his first five major league hits and drove in four runs, and José Abreu hit a grand slam to power visiting Chicago past Los Angeles.

Orioles 3, Red Sox 0: John Means pitched seven innings of one-hit ball, allowing a single to lead off the game and retiring

his last 18 batters as visiting Baltimore blanked Boston in their rain-delayed opener.

Rays 6, Marlins 4: Joey Wendle hit a three-run homer, highlighting a four-run rally in the ninth inning that sent visiting Tampa Bay over Miami.

Astros 9, Athletics 5: Alex Bregman hit a three-run shot for his second homer in two games, and Yuli Gurriel also connected in visiting Houston's second consecutive victory over rival Oakland.

Giants 6, Mariners 3: Evan Longoria and Buster Posey both homered for the second straight game, and visiting San Francisco took advantage of Seattle's suspect bullpen.

Orlov's OT goal lifts Caps over Devils

Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — Dmitry Orlov scored on a length-of-the-ice rush with 21 seconds left in overtime and the Washington Capitals beat New Jersey 2-1 Friday night for their seventh straight win over the Devils this season.

Vitek Vanecek made three outstanding saves in the extra period, including a close-in redirection attempt by Travis Zajac seconds before Orlov skated up ice and ripped a shot over Mackenzie Blackwood.

John Carlson scored for the third time in two days as the Capitals bounced back from an embarrassing 8-4 loss to the New York Islanders on Thursday night. Vanecek finished with 22 saves in helping Washington move back into first place in the East Division, two points ahead of the Islanders and Penguins with 19 games left in the regular season.

Michael McLeod scored for New Jersey and Blackwood made 38 saves.

Avalanche 3, Blues 2: Nathan MacKinnon scored twice and Brandon Saad added another goal to lead host Colorado.

Jonas Johansson had 25 saves for his first win for the Avalanche in his second start since coming over from Buffalo in a trade on March 20. Gabriel Landeskog assisted on both of MacKinnon's goals for the Ava-

lanche, who have gone 11-0-2 in their last 13 games to take over first place in the West Division.

The Blues got goals from Mike Hoffman and David Perron and 36 saves from Jordan Binnington, but lost their fifth straight game (0-4-1).

Maple Leafs 2, Jets 1 (SO): Jason Spezza scored the only goal of the shootout to lift visiting Toronto past Winnipeg.

The veteran forward corralled a rolling puck before deking Connor Hellebuyck and tucking it in the small gap between the goaltender's outstretched pad and the post.

Kyle Connor, Pierre-Luc Dubois and Mark Scheifele were unable to beat Toronto goaltender Jack Campbell in the tiebreaker as he improved to 8-0-0 on the season.

Travis Dermott scored in regulation for the North Division-leading Maple Leafs. Campbell finished with 31 saves.

Andrew Copp had the lone goal for the Jets. Hellebuyck had 37 saves.

Coyotes 4, Ducks 2: Phil Kessel got the tiebreaking goal 12 minutes into the third period, Lane Pederson scored in his NHL debut and visiting Arizona beat Anaheim.

Johan Larsson and Nick Schmaltz also scored for the Coyotes, who have won four of their last five games to move back into

the final playoff spot in the West Division. Adin Hill made 27 saves.

Alexander Volkov, who was playing his first game for Anaheim, and Jakob Silfverberg tallied Anaheim's goals. Anthony Stolarz stopped 27 shots.

Sharks 3, Kings 0: Tomas Hertl had a goal and an assist, Martin Jones made 30 saves for his first shutout of the season and visiting San Jose beat Los Angeles.

Timo Meier and Rudolfs Balcers also scored for the Sharks, who have won three straight and five of seven. Jones got his 25th career shutout and first since Feb. 29, 2020 against Pittsburgh.

Cal Petersen made 33 saves for the Kings, who have lost four of five.

Oilers 3, Flames 2: Connor McDavid scored the tiebreaking goal in the third period to lead host Edmonton.

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and Dominik Kahun also scored for the Oilers, and Leon Draisaitl had two assists. Mike Smith stopped 24 shots.

Michael Stone and Matthew Tkachuk scored for Calgary, and Jacob Markstrom had 22 saves while losing his fifth straight start.

Edmonton beat Calgary for the fifth time in seven meetings this season with three more remaining.

Raptors blow out short-handed Warriors

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Pascal Siakam scored 36 points in three quarters and the Toronto Raptors routed the Golden State Warriors 130-77 Friday with the largest margin of victory in the NBA this season.

Toronto shot 53.4% in the game and won for just the second time in 15 games. The Raptors pushed their lead to 61 points when Malachi Flynn hit a short jump shot with 6:29 remaining.

Gary Trent Jr. finished with 24 points and OG Anunoby added 21.

The 53-point win was the biggest in the NBA this season, two points wider than the final margin of Dallas' 124-73 win over the Los Angeles Clippers on Dec. 27. The last time an NBA game was decided by more: Dec. 8, 2018, when Boston beat Chicago 133-57.

It was the seventh loss in eight games for the Warriors, who played without Steph Curry and Draymond Green, a late scratch

with a left finger injury.

Suns 140, Thunder 103: Devin Booker scored 32 points, Chris Paul had 17 points and 12 assists, and Phoenix built a 30-point lead by the end of the first quarter en route to a rout of visiting Oklahoma City.

Celtics 118, Rockets 102: Jayson Tatum scored 26 points, Robert Williams had a career-high 20 points, nine rebounds and eight assists, and host Boston defeated Houston.

Mavericks 99, Knicks 86: Luka Dončić scored 26 points and visiting Dallas beat New York.

The Mavericks were without coach Rick Carlisle, who tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday morning.

Hornets 114, Pacers 97: Reserve guard Miles Bridges scored a season-high 23 points and short-handed Charlotte overcame another injury and beat host Indiana.

Grizzlies 120, Timberwolves 108: Jonas Valanciunas had 19 points and 11 rebounds, eight Grizzlies scored in double-figures and Memphis used a second-half burst for a victory over visiting Minnesota.

Hawks 126, Pelicans 103: Bogdan Bogdanovic scored 26 points, Kevin Huerter added 24 and five other Atlanta players scored in double figures to beat injury-slowed host New Orleans.

Jazz 113, Bulls 106: Donovan Mitchell scored 26 points and Utah beat Chicago for its 21st straight home victory, a franchise record.

Lakers 115, Kings 94: Kyle Kuzma scored 10 of his season-high 30 points in the fourth quarter and short-handed Los Angeles thumped host Sacramento.

Bucks 127, Trail Blazers 109: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 47 points and 12 rebounds, and Milwaukee snapped visiting Portland's four-game winning streak.