

Momentum builds for new police methods

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The guilty verdict in the murder of George Floyd has injected momentum into efforts by the White House and Congress to overhaul policing practices, with bipartisan talks picking up speed as President Joe Biden prepares to highlight the topic in his address to a joint session of Congress next week.

The chief GOP negotiator on the issue, Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, said Wednesday that his discussions with Democrats could wrap up in the “next week or two” as he sketched out potential areas of compromise, particularly on the sensitive matter of whether officers can be sued for misconduct. Democrats and civil rights activists, meanwhile, said they would push to pass legislation by the first anniversary of Floyd’s death on May 25.

The flurry of talks came as the White House sought to seize a potentially fleeting moment of opportunity on policing revisions, a priority that the president has embraced but that has often taken a back seat to others. The White House is strategizing with civil rights groups and police organizations, and Attorney General Merrick Garland on Wednesday announced

the Justice Department would launch an investigation into the practices of the Minneapolis Police Department.

Much of the activity is unfolding behind the scenes.

“There are times — and this is true in diplomacy, but also true in legislation — that ... the best strategy is to provide the space for those conversations to happen privately, and that’s part of our objective,” White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Wednesday.

The result is a sense of movement not seen since the immediate aftermath of Floyd’s murder last year by former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, a killing captured on video that spurred a nationwide reckoning on racial injustice against Black men and women.

“There’s an urgency in this country now. There’s an urgency last month. There’s been an urgency since I was a young Black man, in my teens getting pulled over by the police and scared for my life,” said Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., who was been working quietly with Scott and Rep. Karen Bass, D-Calif., on a potential compromise bill. “So we definitely have to get something done.”

Still, similar efforts to revise policing prac-

tices last summer fell victim to election-year politics. And it is far from clear that the policy differences that have stymied lawmakers can be bridged, including how aggressively to restrict the type of chokehold used by Chauvin on Floyd and whether to revise the “qualified immunity” standard that broadly protects police from lawsuits.

And some activists worried that lawmakers would take the Chauvin verdict as evidence that the system works and no change is needed, rather than as a sign of broad problems with policing.

For all his emphatic rhetoric about the need to pass legislation on the use of force in policing, Biden has taken a different approach in this area than he has on coronavirus relief or infrastructure — where he has hosted bipartisan groups of lawmakers with much fanfare in an effort to tangibly portray efforts at a compromise.

The lower-profile strategy is deliberate, White House officials have said, as a way to give breathing room for sensitive negotiations to take place without the president appearing to apply undue pressure or take credit for any progress.

Air Force will court-martial a general for first time

By **CHAD GARLAND**

Stars and Stripes

Former Air Force Research Laboratory commander Maj. Gen. William Cooley will face a court-martial on sexual assault charges, making him the first general officer to be prosecuted by the service.

Cooley is accused of making unwanted sexual advances by kissing and touching a civilian woman during an off-duty incident in Albuquerque, N.M., in August 2018. The woman is not a service member or Defense Department employee.

Gen. Arnold W. Bunch Jr., head of the Air Force Materiel Command, referred one charge against Cooley under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, including three specifications of sexual assault under Article 120, the command said in a statement Wednesday.

“I can assure you this was not a decision

made lightly, but I believe it was the right decision,” Bunch said in the AFMC statement. Both the research laboratory and the materiel command are headquartered at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio.

The court-martial of an Air Force general is unprecedented in the service’s 74-year history, Don Christensen, president of the organization Protect Our Defenders — which advocates for victims of sexual assault in the military — told the Dayton Daily News.

“I think the external pressure that has been put on the military to take sexual assault more seriously is one of the reasons, probably the sole reason, this case has gone to trial,” he said. “They knew they couldn’t just let another general walk.”

Bunch said he informed Cooley of his decision after a “comprehensive review of all the evidence” from an Air Force Office of

Special Investigations inquiry completed last year and a preliminary hearing held in February.

The Feb. 8 hearing, similar to a civilian grand jury, was presided over by a senior military judge who weighed the charges and testimony to determine if there was probable cause for the case against Cooley.

The two-star general was fired from command of the research lab in January 2020 following the accusations of misconduct. In October, Bunch appointed Lt. Gen. Gene Kirkland to independently review the evidence. Kirkland recommended the evidentiary hearing on the charge with and specifications.

Cooley’s accuser has said that he kissed her without her consent “with an intent to gratify his sexual desire,” but the general’s attorney says the kiss was consensual and there was no unwanted touching.

Senate confirms Indo-Pacific Command chief

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Adm. John Aquilino was confirmed by the Senate on Wednesday to be the next commander of Indo-Pacific Command, making him the top military officer in the strategically important region.

Aquilino, who is now the commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet, was confirmed by unanimous consent for the role. Adm. Phil Davidson, who is now commander of INDOPACOM, is expected to retire.

The Indo-Pacific Command covers 36 nations in a region that the Defense Department deemed its “priority theater” and “the single-most consequential region for America’s future” in a June 2019 Indo-Pacific strategy report issued amid simmering tensions with China.

“[China] seeks to reorder the region to its advantage by leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce other nations,” then-acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan wrote in the report. “We will not accept policies or actions that threaten or undermine the rules-based international order.”

The region is “a vital driver of the global economy and includes the world’s busiest international sea lanes and nine of the 10 largest ports,” according to the INDOPACOM website. It also is home to seven of the world’s 10 largest standing militaries and five nuclear-armed nations.

During Aquilino’s confirmation hearing, he agreed the United States needed to bolster its funding for the region, including for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative,

in order to challenge Chinese influence and increase cooperation with allies and partners.

The Pacific Deterrence Initiative is designed to enhance budget oversight and funnel resources to key military capabilities to deter China. Congress funded \$2.2 billion for the PDI in fiscal year 2021, which ends Sept. 30. Aquilino supported additional funding for the initiative for 2022.

Aquilino also warned during the hearing that China’s nuclear stockpile is “increasing at a rate that is faster than anyone previously believed,” but he downplayed the concern over the number of warheads that the Chinese possess. The Defense Department has estimated the Chinese stockpile is “in the low-200s” compared to the U.S.

inventory of nuclear warheads at 5,800.

Sen. Jim Inhofe, of Oklahoma, the ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, tweeted Wednesday that he was glad the Senate confirmed Aquilino to lead INDOPACOM.

“He is the right leader to defend against China and implement our National Defense Strategy. I am grateful for his service,” he wrote.

Aquilino is a Naval Academy graduate and naval aviator who spent his early career flying the F-14 Tomcat and the F-18 Hornet, according to his Navy biography. His résumé also includes time as the Pacific Fleet’s director of maritime operations, deputy chief of naval operations for operations, plans and strategy, and 5th Fleet commander.

Third fast-response Coast Guard cutter heads to Guam

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The Coast Guard’s newest fast-response cutter sailed out of Key West, Fla., early Wednesday, beginning a roughly 70-day voyage to its future homeport on Guam.

The 154-foot Sentinel-class cutter Frederick Hatch is expected to arrive at the U.S. island territory in early July, according to a Coast Guard statement provided to Stars and Stripes. It will join two similar cutters — Myrtle Hazard and Oliver Henry — that arrived there in the latter half of 2020.

The Frederick Hatch will make port calls along the way for maintenance, refueling and resupplying, the Coast Guard said.

The trio of fast-response cutters replace the service’s 110-foot patrol boats previously stationed on Guam and possess advanced technology in communications

and surveillance systems, the Coast Guard said in a statement in February when it took delivery of the Frederick Hatch from the builder, Bollinger Shipyards.

The fast-response cutters are designed for missions beyond the traditional search-and-rescue work for which the Coast Guard is best known. They can reach speeds up to 28 knots, remain at sea for five days and cover over 2,500 nautical miles during that time, according to the Coast Guard.

Armed with four .50-caliber machine guns and a remote-controlled 25 mm cannon, the cutters can be used for drug interdiction, defense operations, maritime law enforcement, search and rescue and environmental protection.

The Coast Guard’s beefed-up fleet in the Pacific is aimed in part at countering China’s growing sea power.

Russia orders troops back after huge drills in Crimea

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russia’s defense minister on Thursday ordered troops back to their permanent bases following massive drills in Crimea that involved dozens of navy ships, hundreds of warplanes and thousands of troops in a show of force amid tensions with Ukraine.

After watching the drills, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu declared the maneuvers over and ordered the military to pull the troops taking part in maneuvers in Crimea and western Russia back to their bases.

“I consider the goals of the snap check of readiness fulfilled,” Shoigu said. “The troops have shown their defense capability and I decided to complete the drills in the South and Western military districts.”

Shoigu said the troops should

return to their bases by May 1, but he also ordered the heavy weapons deployed to western Russia to remain as part of the drills for another massive military exercise.

Shoigu said they should remain at the Pogonovo firing range in the southwestern Voronezh region. The sprawling range is located about 100 miles east of the border with Ukraine.

The Russian troop buildup near Ukraine that came amid increasing violations of a cease-fire in Ukraine’s east has raised concerns in the West, which urged the Kremlin to pull its forces back.

The Russian military hasn’t reported the number of additional troops that have been moved to Crimea and parts of southwestern Russia near Ukraine, and it wasn’t immediately clear from Shoigu’s statement if all of them will now be pulled back.

Summit draws climate vows from leaders

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden convened leaders of the world's most powerful countries on Thursday to try to spur global efforts against climate change, drawing commitments from Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin to cooperate on cutting emissions despite their own sharp rivalries with the United States.

"Meeting this moment is about more than preserving our planet," Biden declared, speaking from a TV-style set for a virtual summit of 40 world leaders. "It's about providing a better future for all of us," he said, calling it "a moment of peril but a moment of opportunity."

"The signs are unmistakable. The science is undeniable. The cost of inaction keeps mounting," he added.

Biden's own new commit-

ment, timed to the summit, is to cut U.S. fossil fuel emissions up to 52% by 2030, marking a return by the U.S. to global climate efforts after four years of withdrawal under President Donald Trump. Biden's administration is sketching out a vision of a prosperous, clean-energy United States where factories churn out cutting-edge batteries for export, line workers re-lay an efficient national electrical grid and crews cap abandoned oil and gas rigs and coal mines.

Japan announced its own new 46% emissions reduction target Thursday, and South Korea said it would stop public financing of new coal-fired power plants, as the U.S. and its allies sought to build momentum via the summit.

The coronavirus pandemic compelled the summit to play out as a climate telethon-style

livestream, limiting opportunities for spontaneous interaction and negotiation. The opening was rife with technological glitches, including echoes, random beeps and off-screen voices.

But the U.S. summit also marshaled an impressive display of the world's most powerful leaders speaking on the single cause of climate change.

China's Xi, whose country is the world's biggest emissions culprit, followed by the United States, spoke first among the other global figures. He made no reference to nonclimate disputes that had made it uncertain until Wednesday that he would even take part in the U.S. summit, and said China would work with America in cutting emissions.

"To protect the environment is to protect productivity, and to boost the environment is to

boost productivity. It's as simple as that," Xi said.

Putin, whose government has been publicly irate over Biden's characterization of him as a "killer" for Russia's aggressive moves against its opponents, made no mention of his feuding with Biden in his own climate remarks, a live presentation that also saw moments of dead air among production problems.

"Russia is genuinely interested in galvanizing international cooperation so as to look further for effective solutions to climate change as well as to all other vital challenges," Putin said. Russia by some measures is the world's fourth-biggest emitter of climate-damaging fossil fuel fumes.

However, Russia and China announced no specific new emissions cuts themselves.

DC statehood OK'd by House as Senate fight looms

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A decadeslong movement to reshape the American political map took a further step Thursday as the House of Representatives approved a bill to make the nation's capital the 51st state.

Voting along party lines with minority Republicans in opposition, the House approved the bill 216-208. That's likely the easy part, though. The proposal faces a far tougher fight in the Senate, where simple Democratic control of the chamber won't be enough.

The legislation proposes creating a 51st state with one representative and two senators, while a tiny sliver of land including the White House, the U.S. Capitol and the National Mall would remain as a federal district. Instead of the District of Columbia, the new state would be known as Washington, Douglass Commonwealth — named after famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who lived in Washington from 1877 until his death in 1895.

An identical statehood bill passed the House in 2020, but it quickly died in the then-Republican-controlled Senate. Now, with the 2020 elections leaving Democrats

in control of both chambers and the White House, Republican senators may resort to a filibuster to stymie the statehood bill.

For lifelong statehood proponents like Eleanor Holmes Norton, D.C.'s long-serving and nonvoting delegate in the House, Thursday's vote was a culmination of a life's work.

"My service in the Congress has been dedicated to achieving equality for the people I represent, which only statehood can provide," Norton said at a Wednesday news conference. "My life as a third-generation Washingtonian has marched toward this milestone."

The measure has received strong support from President Joe Biden's White House, which released a statement Tuesday calling Washington's current status "an affront to the democratic values on which our Nation was founded."

The White House praised Washington as worthy of statehood, with "a robust economy, a rich culture, and a diverse population of Americans from all walks of life who are entitled to full and equal participation in our democracy."

The bill is certain to face GOP pushback,

given that the proposed 51st state would be overwhelmingly Democratic. That opposition was on display during Thursday morning's floor debates in advance of the vote.

The country's Founding Fathers, "never wanted D.C. to be a state and then specifically framed the Constitution to say so," said Georgia Republican Rep. Jody Hice. "This is absolutely against what our founders intended and it ought to be soundly rejected."

But Virginia Democratic Rep. Gerald Connolly pointed out that Kentucky was once a part of Virginia, and was carved out as a state by a simple act of Congress. He argued that the federal district was a theoretical concept when first conceived, not a community with a higher population than two U.S. states.

"When the Constitution was written, this place didn't exist," he said. "When people say this is not about race and partisanship, you can be sure it's about race and partisanship."

D.C. has long chafed under its relationship with Congress, which has the power to essentially veto or alter any local laws.

US jobless claims at pandemic low of 547K

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment aid fell last week to 547,000, a new low since the pandemic struck and a further encouraging sign that layoffs are slowing on the strength of an improving job market.

The Labor Department said Thursday that applications declined 39,000 from a revised 586,000 a week earlier. Weekly jobless claims are down sharply from a peak of 900,000 in early January. At the same time, they're still far above the roughly 250,000 level that prevailed before the viral outbreak ripped through the economy in March of last year.

About 17.4 million people were continuing to collect unemployment benefits in the week that ended April 3, the lat-

est period for which data is available, up from 16.9 million in the previous week.

The overall job market is making steady gains. Last month, the nation's employers added 916,000 jobs, the most since August, in a sign that a sustained recovery is taking hold. The unemployment rate fell from 6.2% to 6%, well below the pandemic peak of nearly 15%.

Yet the still-high number of ongoing recipients shows that even as the economy has strengthened in recent weeks, millions of people — disproportionately low-income workers and people of color — continue to endure a loss of a job or income and have struggled to pay bills or rent.

The weekly data on applications for unemployment benefits is generally seen as a rough measure of layoffs because only

people who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own are eligible. But during the pandemic, the numbers have become a less reliable barometer.

Many states have struggled to clear backlogs of unemployment applications, and suspected fraud has clouded the actual volume of job cuts. In addition, a supplemental \$300-a-week federal jobless payment, on top of regular state unemployment aid, might have encouraged more people to apply for benefits.

For now, the economy is showing steady signs of recovering. Sales at retail stores and restaurants soared 10% in March — the biggest increase since last May. Federal stimulus checks of \$1,400 have been sent to most adults. And Americans who have kept their jobs

have accumulated additional savings, part of which they will likely spend now that states and cities have loosened business restrictions and the virus wanes.

Economic growth is accelerating so fast that the principal concerns surrounding the economy have shifted from a high unemployment rate and anemic spending to bottlenecks in company supply chains and the difficulty some businesses say they are having in finding enough workers.

Those issues, in turn, have fed concerns that the Federal Reserve's low-interest rate policies could fuel a spike in inflation. Last month, wholesale prices jumped 4.2% compared with a year earlier, the biggest 12-month increase in nearly a decade.

Lacking in beds and oxygen, India adds 314K virus cases

Associated Press

NEW DELHI — India reported a global record of more than 314,000 new infections Thursday as a grim coronavirus surge in the world's second-most populous country sends more and more sick people into a fragile health care system critically short of hospital beds and oxygen.

The 314,835 infections added in the past 24 hours raise India's total past 15.9 million cases since the pandemic began. It's the second-highest total in the world next to the United States. India has nearly 1.4 billion people.

Fatalities rose by 2,104 in the past 24 hours, raising India's overall death toll to 184,657, the Health Ministry said.

A large number of hospitals are reporting acute shortages of beds and medicine and are running on dangerously low levels of oxygen.

The New Delhi High Court on Wednesday ordered the government to divert oxygen from industrial use to hospitals to save people's lives. "You can't have people die because there is no oxygen. Beg, borrow or steal, it is a national emergency," the judges

said, responding to a petition by a New Delhi hospital seeking the court's intervention.

The government is rushing oxygen tankers to replenish supplies to hospitals.

Indian Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Thursday that "demand and supply is being monitored round the clock." He said in a tweet that to address the exponential spike in demand, the government has increased the quota of oxygen for the seven worst-hit states.

Lockdowns and strict curbs have brought pain, fear and agony to many people in New Delhi and other cities.

In scenes familiar across the country, ambulances are rushing from one hospital to another, trying to find an empty bed. Grieving relatives line up outside crematoriums where the number of dead bodies has jumped several times.

The Health Ministry said that of the country's total production of 8,300 tons of oxygen per day, 7,275 tons was being allocated for medical use. It also said that 75 railroad coaches in the Indian capital have been turned into hospitals providing an additional 1,200 beds for COVID-19 patients.

Indonesia looking for sub that may be too deep to rescue

Associated Press

JAKARTA — Indonesia's navy ships on Thursday were intensely searching for a submarine that likely fell too deep to retrieve, making survival chances for the 53 people on board slim. Authorities said oxygen in the submarine would run out by early Saturday.

The diesel-powered KRI Nanggala 402 was participating in a training exercise Wednesday when it missed a scheduled reporting call. Officials reported an oil slick and the smell of diesel fuel near the starting position of its last dive, about 60 miles north of the resort island of Bali, though there has been no conclusive evidence that they are linked to the submarine.

"Hopefully we can rescue them before the oxygen has run out" at 3 a.m. on Saturday, Indonesia's navy chief of staff, Adm. Yudo Margono, told reporters.

He said rescuers found an unidentified object with high magnetism in the area, and that officials hope it's the submarine.

The navy believes the submarine sank to a depth of 2,000-2,300 feet — much deeper than its collapse depth estimated at 656 feet by a firm that refitted the vessel in 2009-12.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man bitten while trying to remove rattlesnake

CA CORONA — A Southern California man is recovering after he was bitten by a rattlesnake when he tried to pick up the poisonous reptile using barbecue tongs, authorities said.

The man spotted the snake Saturday evening near his home in the Sycamore Creek community of Corona and was worried about it coming into contact with children, according to a statement from Riverside County Animal Services.

When he tried to remove the rattler using the tongs, the snake struck and bit him on the hand, Animal Services spokesman John Welsh said. The man was treated at a hospital and later released.

Rattlesnake bites are painful and in rare cases can be fatal.

Animal Services Officer Mike McGee removed the snake, which was later euthanized.

Rancher gets prison term for fraud schemes

AZ TUCSON — An Arizona rancher has been sentenced to nearly 3½ years in federal prison for his role in embezzlement and wire fraud schemes.

Prosecutors said Donald Hugh Nichols, 62, of Coolidge, received a 41-month prison term after he pleaded guilty to wire fraud in U.S. District Court in Tucson. Between 2013 and 2017, prosecutors said, Nichols engaged in a scheme to steal cattle from the Marana Stockyards and Livestock Market, which hosts weekly livestock auctions for Arizona ranchers.

As a cattle broker for third-party buyers, Nichols also illegally bid on his own cattle without the buyers' knowledge or consent.

As a result of these fraud schemes, Marana Stockyards lost more than \$1 million.

Police ticket man who accidentally shot himself

NE LINCOLN — A Lincoln man who accidentally shot himself in the foot with a rifle last week saw metaphorical salt rubbed into the wound when police ticketed him for the incident.

The shooting happened last Friday night, when a 27-year-old man went to a Lincoln hospital after shooting himself in the foot with a .22 caliber rifle, the Lincoln Journal Star reported. By Saturday night, police had cited the man for discharging a firearm and possession of a firearm by a prohibited person, both misdemeanors.

Conveyor belt spreads fire at sugar plant

MD BALTIMORE — A fire at the Domino Sugar plant sent white smoke billowing over the Inner Harbor in Baltimore on Tuesday, but no injuries were immediately reported, a fire department spokeswoman said.

A conveyor belt apparently carried a burning substance from a silo to other parts of the facility, said Baltimore City Fire Department spokeswoman Blair Adams. Fire and smoke was coming through the roof when firefighters arrived, and the silo collapsed after they entered the building, according to the department.

All of the employees safely escaped from the building, and no injuries to firefighters were immediately reported, Adams said.

The 99-year-old refinery, which employs 510 full-time workers and is in the midst of replacing its massive, beloved neon rooftop "Domino Sugars" sign with an LED replica, processes about 6.5 million pounds of raw cane sugar a day, The Baltimore Sun reported.

Creamery area evacuated amid fire, ammonia in air

OR MCMINNVILLE — A fire and related ammonia in the air at the Organic Valley Creamery in McMinnville on Tuesday prompted an evacuation order for everyone within a half mile of the business.

McMinnville Police announced the evacuation at about 2:30 p.m. Tuesday because of "anhydrous ammonia" being released as the fire burned, KATU-TV reported. Anhydrous ammonia is a colorless gas with a pungent, suffocating odor, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

No injuries were reported.

Sheriff: Woman purposely drove into teens in yard

NC GREENVILLE — A North Carolina woman was charged with driving her car into a yard where three teenagers were playing basketball, injuring one of them.

A Pitt County Sheriff's Office news release said deputies responded Sunday to a report of a child intentionally hit by a car in Greenville.

The news release said that Daina Renee Forrest, 35, of

Greenville, had been driving around and threatening the three teens by waving a knife and cursing. The release said Forrest "intentionally veered her car off the roadway and partially into the yard to strike the children."

One teen was taken to the hospital for treatment and Forrest's car had damage to the front that was consistent with hitting a person, according to the release. Sgt. Lee Darnell, a sheriff's spokesman, said the injuries appeared to be minor.

Deputies said when they searched her car, they found marijuana, crack cocaine and a knife.

Forrest was charged with three counts of assault with a deadly weapon and a count of felony cocaine possession.

US sets aside habitat for survival of rare songbird

NM ALBUQUERQUE — U.S. wildlife managers have set aside vast areas across several states as habitat critical to the survival of a rare songbird that migrates each year from Central and South America to breeding grounds in Mexico and the United States.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the final habitat designation for the western yellow-billed cuckoo Tuesday.

It covers 467 square miles along hundreds of miles of rivers and streams in the western states.

Most breeding in the U.S. occurs in Arizona and New Mexico, but the habitat designation also includes areas in California, Colorado, Utah, Texas and Idaho.

— From wire reports



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Gallo getting on base without homers

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Joey Gallo is getting on base a lot for the Texas Rangers without going out of the park.

That is quite a shift for the 6-foot-5 slugger who homered in the only pitch he's faced in an MLB All-Star Game and got to 100 career homers quicker than any player in American League history, at a time when he had only 93 singles.

Gallo reached base in each of his first 18 games this season, his only homer being an impressive 450-foot drive to center in the opening series at Kansas City. His other 12 hits were all singles and he had an MLB-high 20 walks. He got on three other times when hit by a pitch and was the only Texas base runner

in the game where Joe Murogrove plunked him while throwing the first no-hitter in San Diego Padres history.

"When I was younger, I thought it was really cool to hit 40 home runs. And then I remember everyone's just kind of like bashing me, saying I'm the worst 40 home run hitter," said Gallo, 27. "And I was like, all right, I guess it's not that cool to hit 40 home runs. It's something that I don't really focus on anymore. But I think it's cool that I'm kind of doing the complete opposite of what I'm known for."

Gallo had 40 homers in each of his first two full big league seasons (2017-18), but he hit only .208 overall, with 127 of his 197 hits being for extra bases.

His .455 on-base percentage this season is sixth in the majors going into Friday's game at the Chicago White Sox, even while hitting .222 (108th out of 178 qualified batters) with a .278 slugging percentage (146th).

"If he's still able to get on base at almost a 50% clip, that speaks volumes of what this guy is as a hitter right now," Rangers manager Chris Woodward said. "He's not even hitting homers and they're still walking him."

Opposing teams also employ drastic defensive shifts against the left-handed slugger, who has gotten used to "people running around crazy" when he's at the plate. Tampa Bay used an alignment with five defenders in the outfield, but Gallo was able to beat that with a bloop

single up the middle.

"You kind of have to come up with a counter approach for it. I wasn't going to be able to hit a double or a ball in the gap," he said. "So I had to hit the ball on the ground. I had to hit bloopers, I had to work the count and try to walk, or hit it over the fence ... It was either kind of a singles, a walk or a home run approach."

Woodward knows Gallo will eventually have to hit more homers, and the manager has full faith "he will because he has a ton of power." Gallo homered in five of his first 14 at-bats this spring.

But Woodward doesn't want Gallo stressing out about trying to go deep to the point that he starts pulling off pitches or chasing them.

Braves get 4 hits, still beat Yankees, thanks to Anderson

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A Red Sox fan from upstate New York, Ian Anderson imagined he might one day win at Yankee Stadium.

He probably wasn't picturing a Bronx Bombers lineup so thoroughly lacking in punch, however.

Anderson took a shutout into the seventh inning, Austin Riley homered and the Atlanta Braves scraped by with just four hits to beat listless New York 4-1 Wednesday night.

Corey Kluber (0-2) kept New York in it with his best start yet in pinstripes, but the Yankees lost for the sixth time in seven games due to a star-studded lineup that has almost entirely spaced out.

Anderson (1-0) limited the Yankees to four hits and four walks in 6 2/3 innings, striking out four against the club he also beat in his major league debut last season.

The 22-year-old right-hander from Clifton Park, N.Y. — just north of Albany — had family in

the stands, including his grandmother, who hadn't seen him pitch in person since high school. He threw 97 pitches as temperatures dipped into the low 40s in the late innings.

"I felt right at home out there in the cold," he said.

New York loaded the bases against Anderson with two outs in the seventh, but reliever A.J. Minter got DJ LeMahieu to hit an inning-ending grounder to third. Will Smith allowed a run in the ninth but closed out the five-hitter.

At 6-11, the Yankees are off to their worst start since 1991. Their 58 runs are the fewest in the AL and their .334 slugging percentage is the lowest in the major leagues.

Cubs 16, Mets 4: Javier Báez hit a grand slam and Chicago took advantage of a season-high four errors by New York in a romp on a chilly night at Wrigley Field.

Phillies 6, Giants 5: Andrew Knapp hit the winning single in the ninth inning, Bryce Harper

had a tying solo homer in the seventh and host Philadelphia beat San Francisco.

Nationals 1, Cardinals 0: Max Scherzer struck out nine in six innings to move up to No. 21 on the career list, and Alex Avila drove in the lone run with one of his two doubles, helping host Washington edge St. Louis.

Rockies 6, Astros 3: Austin Gomber got his first victory for Colorado, allowing two hits over six innings on a wintry afternoon to send visiting Houston to its ninth loss in 10 games.

Rangers 7, Angels 4: Adolis García hit a go-ahead, three-run homer in the eighth inning in Texas' victory at Los Angeles.

Marlins 3, Orioles 0: Rookie Trevor Rogers didn't allow a runner past second base while pitching a career-high seven innings in his 11th major league start, and host Miami split the two-game series with Baltimore.

Brewers 4, Padres 2: Omar Narvaez hit a two-run homer,

Jace Peterson added a solo shot and Milwaukee won at San Diego to complete a three-game sweep.

Royals 9, Rays 8: Salvador Perez hit a game-ending RBI single and host Kansas City beat Tampa Bay to avoid a series sweep.

Pirates 3-2, Tigers 2-5: Tyler Anderson pitched five solid innings and visiting Pittsburgh beat Detroit in the first game of a doubleheader.

The host Tigers rallied to win the second game, with Jonathan Schoop hitting a go-ahead home run in a three-run fifth inning.

Diamondbacks 5-8, Reds 4-5 (10, second game): Josh VanMeter hit a tying three-run homer in the ninth inning against his former team and Arizona beat host Cincinnati for the second time Wednesday.

In the conclusion of Tuesday's night's suspended game, Arizona held on for the victory. Stefan Crichton pitched a scoreless ninth inning for his second save.

Paul paces road-tested Suns past 76ers

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Chris Paul scored 28 points, Devin Booker had 19 and Mikal Bridges 18 to lead the Phoenix Suns to a 116-113 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers on Wednesday night.

Joel Embiid, who had 38 points and 17 rebounds, heaved a full-court shot at the horn that rattled around the rim and put the All-Star center on his back in disbelief over the near-make.

No matter, the Suns walked off winners on the road for the second time this week against one of the top teams in the East. They are an NBA-best 19-7 on the road and second overall behind Utah at 42-16.

Paul hit five threes and Bridges, a former Villanova standout, continued to haunt the Sixers three years after an ill-fated draft-night deal. The Sixers selected Bridges with the 10th overall pick in 2018 — a feel-good story because of the Nova connection and his mother worked for the 76ers' parent company. Zhaire Smith, the player he was traded for, played only 13 NBA games and is out of the league while Bridges turned into a breakout star for the blossoming Suns.

Philadelphia again played without starters Ben Simmons (unspecified illness) and Tobias Harris (right knee). Seth Curry also missed the game with a left hip flexor. Phoenix was coming off an overtime win in Mil-

waukee to open its five-game trip.

Knicks 137, Hawks 127 (OT): Julius Randle had 40 points and 10 rebounds and host New York beat Atlanta in overtime for its eighth straight victory.

Randle's driving layup with eight seconds left in regulation gave the Knicks a 122-119 lead, but Bogdan Bogdanovic hit a three-pointer with 6.2 seconds left to send the game into overtime.

Jazz 112, Rockets 89: Jordan Clarkson scored 22 points, Joe Ingles had 21 and Utah won at Houston.

The Jazz have won four of their last five games. The 23-point margin was Utah's most-lopsided victory over Houston since a 118-91 blowout Dec. 6, 2018.

Clippers 117, Grizzlies 105: Luke Kennard scored a season-high 28 points and short-handed Los Angeles overcame an 18-point, first-quarter deficit to beat visiting Memphis.

Marcus Morris added 25 points and Terance Mann had 19 points in helping the Clippers win their third in a row and 10th in 11 games despite being without starters Kawhi Leonard (sore foot), Paul George and Reggie Jackson, who both rested.

Wizards 118, Warriors 114: Stephen Curry had his first rough night for Golden State in a month, and Bradley Beal rallied host Washington in the fourth quarter for its season-best sixth straight victory.

Coming off a historic 11-game stretch in which he made 78 three-pointers and surpassed Beal as the NBA's scoring leader, Curry scored 18 points on 7-of-25 shooting, including 2 of 14 on threes.

Raptors 114, Nets 103: Pascal Siakam had 27 points and nine rebounds, OG Anunoby scored 25 points and Toronto beat visiting Brooklyn for its fourth straight victory.

Kyrie Irving had 28 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists for the Nets, and Bruce Brown added 21 points and 14 rebounds.

Pacers 122, Thunder 116: Malcolm Brogdon had 29 points, 15 rebounds and seven assists, and Caris LeVert scored 28 points and severely short-handed Indiana beat visiting Oklahoma City.

Mavericks 127, Pistons 117: Luka Doncic had 30 points and 10 rebounds, Kristaps Porzingis added 19 points and seven boards and host Dallas beat Detroit to stop a four-game home losing streak.

Cavaliers 121, Bulls 105: Collin Sexton scored 30 points, Darius Garland added 25 and Cleveland beat Chicago to snap a five-game home losing streak.

Kings 128, Timberwolves 124: Buddy Hield hit a three-pointer with 8.8 seconds remaining and scored 29 points in Sacramento's victory over visiting Minnesota.

Heat 107, Spurs 87: Bam Adebayo scored 23 points, Jimmy Butler had 18 points and 11 assists and Miami won at San Antonio.

Knights win 8th straight to wrap up playoff berth

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The Vegas Golden Knights are no longer the new kids on the NHL block.

They're a perennial powerhouse.

Jonathan Marchessault scored twice and the Golden Knights became the first NHL team to clinch a playoff berth, beating the San Jose Sharks 5-2 Wednesday night for their eighth straight victory.

Vegas, which leads the NHL with 33 wins and 68 points, also became the fourth franchise in NHL history to make the playoffs in each of its first four seasons. The Golden Knights lost to the Washington Capitals in the 2018 Stanley Cup Final in their inaugural season.

"It's an accomplishment in this

league; 31 teams to make the playoffs," said Peter DeBoer, who has led two teams to Stanley Cup Final appearances during his coaching career. "What this franchise has done so far is unheard of. I don't know if you'll ever see that again out of an expansion team.

"I wouldn't trade our group for any other group out there."

The Golden Knights improved to 15-1-3 all-time against the Sharks in regular-season meetings — including a perfect 7-0-0 this season. Vegas also improved to 18-4-2 at home this season.

"We've been doing good against (San Jose)," Marchessault said. "We seem to be playing the right way. It's good to have success against a divisional team like that."

Wild 4, Coyotes 1: Kirill Kripirov scored a dazzling goal to break his team's rookie record, Cam Talbot stopped 39 shots and visiting Minnesota beat Arizona to stretch its winning streak to five games.

The Wild withstood a big initial flurry by Arizona and an early goal by Christian Dvorak in a tight-checking game. Kevin Fiala and Marcus Foligno each scored to put the Wild up, then Kiprizov deked goalie Darcy Kuemper out of the crease and scored on a wraparound.

Blackhawks 5, Predators 4 (OT): Brandon Hagel scored three minutes into overtime to lift host Chicago past Nashville.

Hagel also had two assists to help Chicago beat Nashville for

the first time in seven games this season. Pius Suter and Vinnie Hinostroza each had a goal and an assist, Wyatt Kalynuk and Dominik Kubalik added goals, and Malcolm Subban made 35 saves. The Blackhawks trailed 4-1 after Luke Kunin scored 58 seconds into the third.

Canadiens 4, Oilers 3: Josh Anderson had two goals, and visiting Montreal beat Edmonton to split a two-game series.

Tyler Toffoli and Artturi Lehkonen also scored for Montreal (20-15-9). Jake Allen made 22 saves as the Canadiens picked up just their third win in nine games. Montreal moved eight points clear of Calgary for the North Division's fourth and final playoff spot.

Indy 500 allowing 135,000 spectators

Associated Press

The Indianapolis 500 is set to be the largest sporting event in the world since the start of the pandemic with 135,000 spectators permitted to attend “The Greatest Spectacle in Racing” next month.

Indianapolis Motor Speedway said Wednesday it worked with the Marion County Public Health Department to determine that 40% of venue capacity can attend the May 30 race on Memorial Day weekend. The speedway is the largest sporting facility in the world with more than 250,000 grandstand seats and the ability to host close to 400,000 on race day throughout the entire property.

The attendance figure was determined after Indianapolis hosted the NCAA men’s basketball tournament through March and into April with limited attendance. The NCAA allowed 8,000 fans at Lucas Oil

Stadium for the April 5 men’s championship game.

The Alabama spring football game last weekend hosted 47,218 fans, nearly 10,000 more than a recent Texas Rangers baseball game; an Australian Rules cricket match in Melbourne drew 51,723 in March.

Roger Penske, in his second year as owner of Indianapolis Motor Speedway, had hoped for full attendance, but IndyCar and speedway officials are taking pride in the upcoming milestone.

“This event and this place means so much to everybody we see every day and we hear from every day, whether they are Hoosiers or race fans from around the world,” Mark Miles, president and CEO of Penske Entertainment Corp., told The Associated Press.

“We feel a real responsibility to protect that legacy and to grow it and to have the race,” Miles said. “We’re ready to take

the next step in bringing back the economy and a lot of that in this city and state is driven by sports events, which has been shut down for so many months. March Madness was incredibly successful, this is the next step and it just so happens this will probably be the biggest sporting event of the year.”

The speedway will be open to spectators every day cars are on the track beginning with the May 15 road course event. The viewing mounds in the infield will be closed, and general admission infield tickets will not be made available.

The infield’s raucous “Snake Pit” will be closed and all the traditional concerts will not be held, including on Carb Day and Legends Day. There will be suite seating and the Pagoda will be open to those with tickets, but the midway will be closed.

Grandstand seating will be socially distanced; fans will

have an option to return their tickets for an account credit.

Face coverings will be required on track property and temperature checks will be given at the entrances. IMS will also extend its vaccination clinics through the end of May with the ability for spectators to receive a vaccination on speedway grounds throughout the month.

Miles anticipated about 60% of those in attendance will have been vaccinated. IMS has vaccinated approximately 100,000 people since it began operating as a site.

“Roger Penske and everyone associated with Penske Entertainment and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway have been incredible partners with us throughout the pandemic,” said Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb. “It is high time for fans to return to the greatest motor speedway in the world with this safety plan in place.”

Discontent lingers in England over Super League

Associated Press

A pronouncement from Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola that the abandoned Super League was a “closed chapter” is proving way wide of the mark.

The ripples of discontent from the failed power-grab by England’s so-called “Big Six” were continuing to be felt on Thursday, when a group of Manchester United fans unhappy at the club’s involvement in the scheme gained access to its training ground.

The protesters, reportedly numbering about 20, carried banners with messages including “Glazers out” — a reference to the Glazer family that owns United — and “We decide when you play.”

Eventually, they got to speak to United manager Ole Gunnar

Solskjaer and members of his backroom staff.

“Buildings were secure and the group has now left the site,” United said in a statement about an incident that took place at 9 a.m. local time at the Carrington practice complex, before the team trained.

There were fan protests this week outside soccer grounds for matches featuring Liverpool, Chelsea and Tottenham, three of the other English teams who signed up to join a breakaway Super League also involving three clubs from Spain and another three from Italy.

The English teams all withdrew late Tuesday — less than 48 hours after the proposals were announced — following heavy pressure from the British government and supporters.

Players and coaches haven’t

hidden their contempt for the Super League, details of which were kept quiet by the clubs’ owners, and the manager of Arsenal — the sixth English team involved — said on Thursday disgruntled fans “sent probably the strongest message that has ever been sent in the football world.”

“This has given big lessons and it shows the importance of football in the world,” Mikel Arteta said.

“And it shows that the soul of this sport belongs to the fans — and that’s it. During this pandemic, for a year, we have been trying to sustain this industry with no fans in the stadium. But when the fans have to come out and talk, they’ve done it really loud and clear.”

Arteta received a personal apology from the club’s American ownership for the club’s part

in the plan to form a largely closed European competition.

“They have the maximum responsibility to run the football club and what they said was, ‘Apologies for disturbing the team, we did it without the capacity to communicate in a different way earlier, and pass on my message to the players,’ ” Arteta said.

“That is all you can ask for.” United co-owner Joel Glazer and Liverpool owner John Henry issued apologies on Wednesday, when Man City chief executive Ferran Soriano also sent a letter of apology to the club’s fans.

Guardiola said he didn’t need to speak directly to the City hierarchy even though he and his players went through a distracting week of uncomfortable questions.