

## TSA stops enforcing mandate on masks

*The Washington Post*

Federal officials stopped enforcement of a federal mask mandate Monday in transportation settings after a federal judge struck down the requirement, raising public health concerns and prompting several airlines to announce that face coverings are optional on domestic flights.

U.S. District Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle of the Middle District of Florida said the mandate exceeds the statutory authority of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Federal officials last week had extended the mask mandate for commercial flights and in other settings, including on buses, ferries and subways, until at least May 3.

The transportation mandate has been among the highest-profile mask requirements in the country, persisting after most school districts and other jurisdictions have allowed similar mandates to expire. Conflicts over masks have been particularly acute on airplanes, where some flight attendants have been physically attacked and verbally abused for enforcing mask rules.

The decision comes as coronavirus cases are again climbing in the Northeast as the

BA.2 omicron subvariant, which is more contagious than its predecessor, becomes the predominant strain in the United States. Health officials have said it's not clear whether the rise is the start of a larger surge.

The CDC's masking order has been enforced through directives issued by the Transportation Security Administration. A Biden administration official, who shared guidance with reporters on the condition of anonymity, said Monday evening that the court decision means the CDC's order is "not in effect at this time. Therefore, the TSA will not enforce its Security Directives" requiring the face coverings.

Airlines began announcing they were dropping the requirement, with some caveats for international destinations. In a statement, United Airlines said that "effective immediately, masks are no longer required at United on domestic flights, select international flights (dependent upon the arrival country's mask requirements) or at U.S. airports."

In the Washington region, Metro announced late Monday that masks are optional on its rail and bus systems for customers and Metro employees.

In her decision Monday, Mizelle, who was appointed by President Donald Trump and clerked for Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, said the CDC had relied on a 1944 law, the Public Health Service Act, to impose the mandate. But the government's argument that it put the mask requirement in place for the purpose of "sanitation" falls short, Mizelle argued.

"Wearing a mask cleans nothing. At most, it traps virus droplets. But it neither 'sanitizes' the person wearing the mask nor 'sanitizes' the conveyance," Mizelle wrote.

The case was brought on behalf of a legal group known as Health Freedom Defense Fund and airline passengers, including Ana Daza, who said she has anxiety aggravated by wearing a mask.

Mizelle found for the plaintiffs on three key issues, ruling that the CDC had exceeded its legal authority, that it had improperly avoided notice and comment procedures, and that its mandate was "arbitrary and capricious." In her ruling, Mizelle argued that the mask mandate wrongly curtailed passengers' freedom of movement.

The CDC said Monday it doesn't comment on pending litigation.

## Russia ratchets up fight for control of eastern Ukraine

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia ratcheted up its battle for control of Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland Tuesday, assaulting cities and towns along a boomerang-shaped front hundreds of miles long in what both sides described as a new phase of the war.

After a Russian push to overrun the capital failed, the Kremlin declared that its main goal was the capture of the mostly Russian-speaking eastern Donbas region, where Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Ukrainian forces for eight years.

If successful, that offensive would give President Vladimir Putin a vital piece of Ukraine and a badly needed victory in the now 7-week-old war that he could present to the Russian people amid mounting casualties and economic hardship caused by the West's sanctions.

It would also effectively slice Ukraine in two

and deprive it of the main industrial assets concentrated in the east, including coal mines, metals plants and machine-building factories.

Ukraine's military said early Tuesday that a "new phase of war" began a day earlier when "the occupiers made an attempt to break through our defenses along nearly the entire front line." Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that "another phase of this operation is starting now."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that massive numbers of Russian troops were committed to the campaign, though some observers noted that an escalation has been underway there for some time and questioned whether this was truly the start of new offensive.

Justin Crump, a former British tank commander now with the strategic advisory company Sibylline, said the Ukrainian comments could, in part, be an attempt to persuade allies to send more weapons.

"What they're trying to do by positioning this, I think, is ... focus people's minds and effort by saying, 'Look, the conflict has begun in the Donbas,'" Crump said. "That partly puts pressure on NATO and EU suppliers to say, 'Guys, we're starting to fight now. We need this now.'"

European and American arms have been key to bolstering Ukraine's defense, helping the under-gunned country to hold off the Russians. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte told Zelenskyy on Tuesday that the Netherlands would send "heavier material," including armored vehicles.

In what appeared to be an intensification of attacks, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said that air-launched missiles destroyed 13 Ukrainian troop and weapons locations, while the air force struck 60 other Ukrainian military facilities, including missile warhead storage depots.

# US: N. Korea must end tests, meet for talks

By DAVID CHOI  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — U.S. officials on Tuesday continued to call for North Korea to return to the negotiating table days after Pyongyang conducted another round of missile tests.

“We have made very clear that the door to diplomacy, the door to dialogue, remains open,” State Department spokesman Ned Price said at a Monday press briefing in Washington, D.C.

North Korea “needs to cease

its destabilizing actions and instead choose the path of engagement, something it has not yet done,” he said.

The North on Saturday fired two missiles that it described as part of a “new tactical guided weapon system,” its 12th round of tests so far this year.

The country on Friday celebrated the 110th birthday of the regime’s founder, Kim Il Sung, a date it has marked previously with military parades and weapon displays.

The missiles launched Saturday flew 68 miles off North

Korea’s eastern coast at an estimated altitude of 15.5 miles, the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff said Sunday.

Pyongyang’s state-run media on Sunday described them as tactical weapons meant for long-range artillery units and the country’s “tactical nuclear operation.”

Their range is much shorter than that of an intercontinental ballistic missile that the North tested March 24, one capable in theory of striking the continental United States.

Pentagon press secretary

John Kirby said Monday the U.S. regards North Korea’s continued weapons tests as “provocations” and called on the regime to negotiate an end to its missile testing and nuclear weapons programs.

“North Korea continues to pursue a ballistic missile program and nuclear capabilities that, at least, we think, they believe will help intimidate and threaten our allies and partners in the region, and that includes the rest of the Korean Peninsula,” Kirby said.

## Japan: Pilots near flight record to meet China aircraft threat

By MATTHEW M. BURKE  
AND MARI HIGA  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Japanese fighter pilots responded to challenges by Chinese military aircraft during fiscal year 2021 at a pace second only to a record set five years earlier, according to data from Japan’s Ministry of Defense.

Japan scrambled fighters into its air defense identification zone 1,004 times, including 722 sorties to intercept approaching Chinese drones, fighters, bombers and surveillance planes, according to data released Friday.

Another 266 sorties responded to Russian aircraft and 16 to miscellaneous aircraft, the data said. The identification zone is the buffer used to identify aircraft before they reach a country’s territorial airspace.

In the third quarter, from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31, Japanese pilots flew more intercepts than in any quarter since before 2014. The fiscal year in Japan runs from April 1 to March 31.

During fiscal 2016, a peak

year for airborne challenges, the Japan Air Self-Defense Force launched 1,168 sorties in response to approaching aircraft, including 851 times for Chinese aircraft alone, the ministry said. A sortie is a single mission by a single plane.

“We take this matter seriously and will continue paying close attention,” a spokesman for Japan’s Joint Staff told Stars and Stripes by phone Monday. “We are determined to protect our territorial land and airspace no matter what.”

Japanese government spokespeople customarily speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

Chinese aircraft are actively gathering information on Japanese defenses, Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi said at a press conference on Friday.

“Chinese aircraft are diversified and sophisticated,” he said. “China seems to be rapidly promoting the development of drones.”

The Air Self-Defense Force flew 725 sorties in fiscal 2020, the ministry said.

## US officials head to Solomons over China military pact fears

*Associated Press*

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — The United States is sending two top officials to the Solomon Islands following a visit last week by an Australian senator over concerns that China could establish a military presence in the South Pacific island nation.

The White House said Monday that later this week, Kurt Campbell, the National Security Council Indo-Pacific coordinator, and Daniel Kritenbrink, the assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, will lead a delegation of U.S. government officials to the Solomon Islands, and will also visit Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin on Tuesday said Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Solomon Islands counterpart, Jeremiah Manele, officially signed a security agreement “the other day.” No specific date was given.

A draft of the pact, which was leaked online, said Chinese warships could stop in the Solo-

mon Islands and China could send police and armed forces there “to assist in maintaining social order.”

Wang told reporters at a daily briefing that the agreement covers “maintaining social order,” along with protecting lives and property, providing humanitarian assistance and responding to natural disasters.

“We are committed to helping the Solomon Islands to strengthen its capacity building to maintain national security,” Wang said. He said the agreement does not seek to supersede the South Pacific nation’s security ties with other nations.

The Solomon Islands has sought to downplay the significance of the agreement and says it won’t lead to China establishing a military base there, but many neighboring countries and Western nations remain worried.

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price said the agreement could destabilize the Solomon Islands and would set a concerning precedent for the wider Pacific region.

# Pair of Navy destroyers return to US

By ALISON BATH  
*Stars and Stripes*

Two Navy destroyers that were hurriedly deployed to Europe earlier this year as tensions rose in Ukraine are back in their U.S.-based homeports, naval officials said in separate recent announcements.

USS The Sullivans and USS Mitscher returned from January deployments to U.S. 6th Fleet on Monday and Saturday, respectively, the Navy said.

The ships' return comes about three months after they and two other destroyers, USS Donald Cook and USS Gonzalez, were deployed following the December order to the USS Harry S. Truman carrier strike group to remain in the Mediterranean Sea.

At the time, analysts called the rapid deployment of the four destroyers from their homeports unusual over the past 30 years.

U.S. officials said the deployments and the presence of the Truman along with oth-

er NATO ships in the Mediterranean was a signal to allies and partners of the American commitment to defend the alliance amid growing Russian aggression.

Late last year, Russia began amassing troops and heavy weaponry near Ukraine's borders. On Feb. 24, the Kremlin launched its ongoing full-scale invasion.

It was unclear Tuesday whether the Navy will send other destroyers to Europe, but four are forward-deployed to Rota, Spain, and five, including USS Gonzalez, are attached to the Truman.

The Pentagon has since ordered the Truman strike group, which is operating in the Mediterranean Sea and nearby waters, to remain there for the foreseeable future. The Donald Cook was last reported in late March making a port call in Copenhagen.

USS The Sullivans, homeported at Naval Station Mayport in Jacksonville, Fla., sailed more than 20,000 nautical miles to operate in the Irish, North and Baltic seas

during its deployment, the Navy said Monday. The ship made port calls in Copenhagen; Rotterdam, Netherlands; Ponta Delgada, Portugal; and Rota.

It also participated in NATO Exercise Dynamic Guard in the North Sea and continued operating in Standing NATO Maritime Group 1, which included ships from the German, Dutch and Danish navies, according to the statement.

"Despite the dynamic schedule and demanding operational tasking, The Sullivans crew displayed resiliency, grit and determined self-sufficiency to accomplish all missions," said Cmdr. James Diefenderfer Jr., the ship's commanding officer.

The Mitscher, homeported in Norfolk, Va., joined the Truman in the Mediterranean during its deployment, performing operations and defense of the carrier with the Greek, Italian, Norwegian and Turkish navies, officials said in a Saturday statement.

## Army's top general tests positive for coronavirus

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Army's top general tested positive for the coronavirus on Sunday and was experiencing "very mild symptoms," according to a service spokeswoman.

Gen. James McConville, the Army chief of staff, was working remotely Monday after the positive test, said Lt. Col. Mary Ricks, his spokeswoman. She described his symptoms as seasonal allergy-like.

McConville, 63, is fully vaccinated against the coronavirus and has also received two booster shots, Ricks said in a statement. A

member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, McConville was adhering to all federal health protocols recommended by the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Some 129,734 active-duty soldiers have tested positive for the coronavirus since the pandemic swept across the globe in March 2020, according to Pentagon data.

About 97% of the service's roughly 486,000 active-duty soldiers have been fully vaccinated against the virus as of April 13, according to the service's most recent data.

Army leaders had removed 255 soldiers from the service for refusing the vaccine, ser-

vice officials said last week. Active-duty soldiers were required to become fully inoculated against the coronavirus by December, but the service did not begin removing active-duty soldiers from the Army until last month.

Meanwhile, the service has granted 22 permanent medical exemptions and two religion-based exemptions for soldiers seeking to remain in the Army without taking the shots. The service has denied 661 medical exemptions requests and 808 religious exemption requests. Army leaders were still evaluating some 4,900 exemption requests as of last week, according to service.

## US troops set to train Ukrainian forces on howitzers

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — American troops will train Ukrainian forces in the coming days on how to operate U.S. howitzers as the Pentagon sends them 18 of the cannons as part of the latest \$800 million in military aid, a senior U.S. defense official said Monday.

The training, which will occur outside Ukraine, will teach Ukrainian forces to operate the 155 mm howitzers. They will then return to the fight and train other Ukrai-

nians to use the American cannons, the official said. The aid package includes 40,000 artillery rounds.

"We have made some progress in terms of setting up some training for Ukrainians," the official told reporters at the Pentagon. "These are train-the-trainer [sessions], so training trainers outside of Ukraine in coming days on the howitzers, specifically."

The United States does not anticipate it will take very long to complete the instruction, chief Pentagon spokesman John Kirby

said Friday.

"It's not going to be exorbitant. It won't take a long time. It won't require a large pool of trainees," he said. "We don't believe that it's going to be an onerous task, or lengthy in time or in resources."

Ukraine already uses howitzers, such as the Soviet-era 152 mm mSATA-B and 122 mm D-30, but their troops will still need instruction on the American cannon, whose "basic outlines" are "not unlike other artillery," Kirby said Monday.



# Biden to bar US anti-satellite missile testing

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration said it is barring anti-satellite missile testing by the United States, a move White House officials said is meant to underscore its hopes of establishing new norms for military action in space.

The U.S. has sharply criticized Russia and China for conducting anti-satellite missile tests, although it also used an interceptor missile fired from a U.S. Navy warship more than 14 years ago to destroy a malfunctioning spy satellite.

The issue is one that's taken on greater urgency after Russia launched a missile to destroy a defunct Soviet-era satellite in November.

Vice President Kamala Harris, in a speech Monday at Vandenberg Space Force Base, Calif., to highlight the administra-

tion's move, criticized the Russian action as "reckless" and "irresponsible."

The strike created more than 1,500 pieces of space debris that increased risk to U.S. and Russian astronauts aboard the International Space Station and China's Tiangong space station, according to U.S. Space Command.

"Simply put, these tests are dangerous," Harris said. "And we will not conduct them."

The Russian test occurred as it was massing troops ahead of its latest invasion of Ukraine.

A similar weapons test by China in 2007 also resulted in widespread debris.

Harris stressed that the debris created by the missile tests threatens not only astronauts and U.S. military interests but also could impact commercial satellites that the world relies on

for weather forecasts, GPS systems that help drivers navigate streets, television broadcasts and critical infrastructure.

"A piece of space debris the size of a basketball, which travels at thousands of miles per hour, would destroy a satellite. Even a piece of debris as small as a grain of sand could cause serious damage," Harris said.

The announcement of the anti-satellite missile testing ban comes months after Harris announced at a meeting in December that White House National Security Council officials would work with officials at the Pentagon, State Department, and other U.S. national security agencies to develop proposals for national security space norms.

The U.S. is the first country to announce such a ban. Harris said she hoped other nations would quickly follow.

The kind of direct-ascent weapon that the Biden administration is committing not to fire relies on interceptor missiles that travel from the Earth's surface to strike a satellite target hundreds of miles into space.

Since the 1960s, the U.S., China, India and Russia have conducted more than a dozen anti-satellite tests in space that destroyed satellites and created more than 6,300 pieces of orbital debris, according to the Secure World Foundation, a nongovernmental group that advocates for sustainable and peaceful uses of outer space.

At least 4,300 pieces of that debris are still in orbit today and pose long-term threats to science and national security missions, human spaceflight and the future economic development of space, according to the foundation.

## Greitens undeterred by claims of abuse in GOP Senate race

*Associated Press*

ST. LOUIS — Eric Greitens stepped aside as Missouri's governor in 2018 amid a scandal involving accusations of blackmail, bondage and sexual assault. As he attempts a political comeback this year with a U.S. Senate bid, his ex-wife has said Greitens physically abused her and one of their children.

It once took far less to end a political career. But at a recent meeting of the St. Charles County Pachyderm Club in a largely Republican area of suburban St. Louis, GOP voters engaged in genuine debate over whether they'd support Greitens in the August primary.

Bob Sullentrop, the club's 70-year-old president, dismissed Greitens as "damaged goods."

Others, including several women, weren't so sure. Sharon Kumnick, of Weldon Springs, said she'd vote for Greitens if he's the GOP nominee, noting

"everybody's divorce, when they want more than is offered, is contentious."

Tina Maloney, a real estate investor from St. Charles, said Greitens should stay in the race.

"I don't think just because you're accused of something in this day and age that you should drop out," Maloney said. "It shows character to fight."

That sentiment is reinforcing Greitens' refusal to leave the race. Greitens is convinced that by casting himself as a conservative fighter in the mold of former President Donald Trump, he can win the Republican nomination for Missouri's open U.S. Senate seat even though many of his political benefactors abandoned him and the party's establishment wishes he would just go away.

"I am going to win," Greitens said in an email, calling his ex-wife's accusations "false" and a "political hit job."

## Liver disease outbreak in kids spreads to Europe, US

*Associated Press*

LONDON — Health officials said they have detected more cases of a mysterious liver disease in children that was first identified in Britain, with new infections spreading to Europe and the United States.

Last week, British officials reported 74 cases of hepatitis, or liver inflammation, found in children since January. The usual viruses that cause infectious hepatitis were not seen in the cases, and scientists and doctors are considering other possible sources, including COVID-19, other viruses and environmental factors.

In a statement on Tuesday, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control said additional cases of hepatitis had been identified in Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain, without specifying exactly how many cases were found. It said

U.S. officials spotted nine cases of acute hepatitis in Alabama in children aged 1 to 6.

"Mild hepatitis is very common in children following a range of viral infections, but what is being seen at the moment is quite different," said Graham Cooke, a professor of infectious diseases at Imperial College London. Some of the cases in the United Kingdom have required specialist care at liver units, and a few have needed a liver transplant.

Cooke was not convinced COVID-19 was responsible.

"If the hepatitis was a result of COVID, it would be surprising not to see it more widely distributed across the country given the high prevalence of (COVID-19) at the moment," he said.

"At present, the exact cause of hepatitis in these children remains unknown," the European CDC said.

**AMERICAN ROUNDUP**

**102-year-old celebrates birthday on a Harley**

**NV** DAYTON — A 102-year-old northern Nevada woman known locally as “Motorcycle Mama” celebrated her latest birthday on the back of a Harley-Davidson.

Velma Thornburgh’s daughter organized the trek in Dayton on U.S. Highway 50 east of Carson City with a local motorcycle club.

“I just can’t believe it,” Thornburgh said as members of the Templar Crusaders Motorcycle Club Northern Nevada gathered to celebrate her 102nd birthday.

Born April 10, 1920, Thornburgh, of Dayton, used to ride with her father when she was young, said her daughter, Sandra Bell, 77. She rode horses and bikes well into her 80s and traditionally made an annual trip on her birthday until it was put on hold in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bell told the Nevada Appeal.

**Man runs over body parts during hit-and-run probe**

**FL** DADE CITY — A Florida man alleged to be driving drunk sped through a hit-and-run investigation Sunday, running over the detached legs of a victim and nearly striking two deputies before leading officers on a high-speed chase, according to the Florida Highway Patrol.

Authorities were investigating the death of a 49-year-old woman who was walking along a grassy shoulder of a Dade City roadway before being struck by a hit-and-run driver. Authorities found her torso on the shoulder and her legs in the roadway.

Thomas Krummen, 23, ap-

proached the scene at a high speed, driving directly at investigators. He ignored commands to stop, ran over the victim’s legs and fled. Troopers chased him and used a maneuver with a patrol car to force him to stop, the highway patrol said.

**Prison guard faces meth smuggling charges**

**MN** MINNEAPOLIS — Washington County prosecutors have charged a prison guard with smuggling methamphetamine to an inmate.

The Minneapolis Star Tribune reported that Faith Rose Gratz, 24, faces one count of methamphetamine possession with intent to sell and one count of possession of 50 grams or more. Both charges are felonies.

According to a criminal complaint, investigators discovered the scheme after they confiscated a cellphone from an inmate at Minnesota Correctional Facility-Stillwater in Bayport. They learned Gratz had given the inmate the phone and messages on it included the two of them laying out delivery plans.

**Damaged line leads to sewage spill into lake**

**NC** CORNELIUS — An internet, cable television and phone provider has apologized after a fiber subcontractor’s damaged an underground line and sent raw sewage into a North Carolina lake.

Jennifer Frost, a Charlotte Water spokeswoman, told The Charlotte Observer that a Spectrum subcontractor installing fiber damaged a line from which sewage spilled into the lake.

Charlotte Water crews re-

sponded to the spill on Spinnakers Reach Drive in Cornelius, according to a news release that said the spill resulted from “construction damage.” About 400 gallons reached Lake Norman out of 630 gallons that poured from the broken line, according to the news release.

The company immediately notified the town of Cornelius, and repairs were made, according to the statement.

**Arrest after truck with SWAT gear stolen**

**CA** SANTEE — A stolen pickup truck with police SWAT gear and weapons inside was recovered and a suspect was arrested after a pursuit near San Diego, authorities said.

The silver Ford F-150 was reported stolen — or possibly carjacked — from near a 7-Eleven store in Santee, said San Diego County sheriff’s Lt. Scott Roller

Among the items believed to be inside a lockbox in the truck were a bulletproof vest and “possible firearms,” Roller told the San Diego Union-Tribune. The property was believed to be the property of the El Cajon Police Department or an officer from that agency, he said.

The truck was spotted in eastern San Diego County about three hours later and the driver led law enforcement on a high-speed pursuit before crashing into a fire hydrant, the Union-Tribune reported. The driver was arrested after a short foot chase.

**County bans for-profit display of human remains**

**OR** PORTLAND — The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners in Portland, Ore., has unanimously

moved to ban the for-profit display of human remains.

The move came after the body of a Louisiana World War II veteran — whose wife thought she donated his body to science — was dissected in front of a paying audience at a Portland hotel, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

The ordinance is expected to be formally approved and institutes a \$1,000 fine per violation, per day. County attorney Rob Sinnott said those who violate the ordinance must also turn over any resulting profits. Displays of human remains for “legitimate ceremonial and educational purposes” are exempt.

**‘One Mississippi’ replaces song with racist roots**

**MS** JACKSON — Mississippi is ditching a state song that’s based on the campaign tune of a former governor who pledged to preserve segregation.

The current governor, Tate Reeves, signed a bill to replace “Go, Mississippi” with a new song called “One Mississippi.” The change will happen July 1 — two years after Mississippi retired a Confederate-themed state flag.

“Go, Mississippi” uses the tune, but not the lyrics, from a 1959 campaign jingle of Gov. Ross Barnett. “Roll With Ross” included the lyrics, “For segregation, 100%. He’s not a moderate, like some of the gents.”

The new state song was composed by country music singer and songwriter Steve Azar, who’s a Mississippi native, for the state’s 2017 bicentennial celebration.

— From wire reports



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**Reporting World, National and Military News**

# Warriors take 2-0 lead over Nuggets

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Stephen Curry drove to the basket with fervor and knocked down a three-pointer while falling to the ground getting fouled to convert a key four-point play, exhibiting all the signs he's his healthy former self at last.

And the raucous home crowd loved every minute of No. 30's galloping, grinning, body-shaking show.

Curry came off the bench for a second straight game following a month-long absence with a foot injury, scoring 34 points to lead the Golden State Warriors past the Denver Nuggets 126-106 on Monday night for a 2-0 lead in their best-of-seven playoff series.

He was only on the floor 3 seconds shy of 23 minutes, and no player in the shot clock era had scored as many as 30 points in 23 or fewer minutes in a playoff game, according to Elias.

"It didn't surprise me because we've been watching this for a long time with Steph,"

coach Steve Kerr said. "You never really are surprised when he has an outburst like that. It's great to see."

Nikola Jokic had 26 points and 11 rebounds before being ejected with 7 minutes left after a second technical and was held back from a referee, after his first technical came with 2:31 to go in the third. The MVP candidate's emotions ran high all night. In the first quarter, Golden State guard Gary Payton II patted Jokic on the backside and the big man turned and came toward Payton when Curry stepped in and held the 7-footer back and Jordan Poole came in to help.

Draymond Green's defense flustered Jokic all night.

"If you feel like you're getting under their skin you press up a little more," Green said. "If you don't feel like you're getting under their skin, you press up a little more."

Poole started for Curry again and contributed 29 points — just missing a chance to become the first Warriors player ever to

score 30 in his first two playoff games.

Klay Thompson added 21 points, while Curry shot 12-for-17 with five threes as the Nuggets again had no answer defensively for all of Golden State's dangerous perimeter threats.

The series shifts to Denver for Game 3 on Thursday night. Will Curry start?

"We'll see," Kerr said.

The Warriors are rolling with the backing of their adoring fans, winning their seventh in a row overall following a five-game winning streak to close the regular season.

Golden State used runs of 16-0 and 23-4 late in the second quarter to erase a 43-31 deficit and take a 57-51 lead at the break. On one particularly dazzling sequence, Green bounced a pass to Poole, who threw it behind his back to Thompson for a layup that made it 54-47.

Austin Rivers grabbed at his left hip and went down hard after getting hurt on a drive then Thompson hit a jumper on the

other end in the 5-on-4 advantage before Rivers exited with 10:04 left in the second quarter. He returned with 46.7 seconds to go in the half.

Denver went ahead 43-31 on Monte Morris' layup at the 7:25 mark of the second quarter and the Warriors answered with 16 straight points. The Chase Center crowd went crazy on Poole's three with 3:38 remaining.

Curry entered for the first time at the 6:32 mark of the first to a roaring ovation and immediately hit a jumper. With 16 first-half points he became the 27th player in NBA history to score 3,000 career postseason points.

He showed a full range of moves including driving to the basket with a fervor and making a three-pointer while falling to the ground.

The Nuggets took a 7-0 lead 90 seconds into the game as Jokic made four quick free throws. But the teams combined to start 6-for-21 with three field goals apiece — and Golden State was 1-for-7 on threes.

## Brunson scores 41, Mavs make 22 threes to top Jazz

Associated Press

DALLAS — Jalen Brunson, Maxi Kleber and the Dallas Mavericks got even in their first-round playoff series with a bunch of a three-pointers, their fewest turnovers ever in a postseason game, and without injured superstar Luka Doncic.

Brunson scored a career-high 41 points, Maxi Kleber had 25 with eight of their playoff-record 22 made three-pointers and the Mavericks, with only three turnovers, beat the Utah Jazz 110-104 in Game 2 on Monday night.

In danger of dropping the first two games after opening the playoffs with home-court advantage for the first time since their NBA title 11 years

ago, Dallas even overcame a 10-point deficit after halftime.

Kleber, who had made only 19% of his three-point attempts since the All-Star break, was 8-for-11 from beyond the arc and put the Mavs ahead to stay with 4:21 left, then added another three on the next possession.

"I started this morning, I was talking to (Dorian Finney-Smith) and I told him, 'Doe, I'm going to let 10 threes fly tonight.' And he said, 'That's my dog.' And that kind of set the tone for the day," Kleber said. "The mindset is we know they're going to leave certain guys open to shoot. We've just got to let it fly."

Game 3 is Thursday night in

Utah, where Dallas has lost its last 11 games.

"We did what we had to do, which was win tonight. But we were only focused on tonight," Mavericks coach Jason Kidd said. "We understand what's in front of us, what's coming. It's going to be a hostile environment."

Brunson, the starting point guard with Doncic out, became the fifth Dallas player to score 40 points in a playoff game. He is the first Mavericks player to do that without committing a turnover. The other 40-point scorers were Doncic, Dirk Nowitzki, Rolando Blackman and Nick Van Exel.

Donovan Mitchell had 34 points for the Jazz, while Bojan

Bogdanovic had 25 and Jordan Clarkson 21. Rudy Gobert had eight points and 17 rebounds.

"We tried to go out there and take both (games). Didn't happen. You know we're not going to overreact. We're going to go home, and we've got to take care of business. Simple as that," Mitchell said. "At the end of the day, we're happy we took a game and go back and take care of business."

Dallas had led only once in the second half until a 10-0 run capped by a go-ahead three by Finney-Smith and a jumper by Brunson. Royce O'Neale then hit a tying three-pointer and Mitchell made a short jumper to put Utah back in front before Kleber's back-to-back threes.



# Embiid, Sixers go up 2-0 on Raptors

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Joel Embiid took a stiff arm moments after tipoff and the 7-footer pushed back. Trying to keep his composure, Embiid absorbed a few more deliberate blows from a Raptors defense clearly trying to bully the big guy.

Coach Doc Rivers gave Embiid a quick message: “No, Jo, you be the dominant guy.”

The NBA MVP finalist quit deferring and started dominating.

Embiid took his lumps and powered his way to 31 points and 11 rebounds, Tyrese Maxey showed he was no one-game post-season wonder and the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Toronto Raptors 112-97 on Monday night for a 2-0 lead in the first-round series.

“They put me on the floor a few times and to me, this is where it gets interesting,” Embiid said. “I’m like, cool. I’m going to come back with more power and make you foul me.”

Embiid took foul after foul — he rubbed parts of his shoulders and elbows and shook

off at least one foot injury — and made 12 of 14 free throws. He made 9 of 16 shots from the floor for the game.

“That’s what we need from the Big Fella,” Maxey said.

Maxey had 23 points, nine rebounds and eight assists. Tobias Harris had 20 points and 10 rebounds. James Harden scored 14.

Game 3 in the Eastern Conference series is Wednesday in Toronto.

The Raptors trailed by 27 points but showed some life in the fourth, cutting it to 11 until Maxey, the Game 1 star, buried a three-pointer that got the Sixers rolling again.

OG Anunoby led Toronto with 26 points. Pascal Siakam and Fred VanVleet each had 20.

The Raptors came ready to rumble after coach Nick Nurse accused the officials of letting the Sixers get away with hard fouls in Game 1. Not even 2 minutes into the game, Anunoby shoved Embiid, Embiid shoved back and both teams had to be separated as the crowd erupted. Anunoby and Embiid

were both whistled for technical fouls.

“I didn’t really want them to set that tone,” Embiid said. “I wanted myself and us to set that tone. That’s why I picked up that early technical foul.”

Toronto raced to an 11-2 lead and had the first six fouls to none for the 76ers.

“They wanted to muck the game up and play physical,” Rivers said. “I just told our guys to just play through it.”

Embiid, the NBA scoring champion who had only 19 points in Game 1, was fouled hard by Siakam and made a free throw — one of the 11 he made in the quarter on 12 attempts. He matched his Game 1 total with 19 points in the quarter.

Embiid told Nurse in the waning moments of the game that he was going to keep making all the free throws if Toronto continued to foul him.

Nurse’s retort? “You might have to.”

Embiid laughed and said he told Nurse, “respectfully, to stop b—ing about calls.”

VanVleet scored 17 points in the half and tried to keep the Raptors in the game.

## Flames top Blackhawks

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Johnny Gaudreau, Dillon Dube and Blake Coleman scored in the first period, and the Calgary Flames beat the Chicago Blackhawks 5-2 on Monday.

Jacob Markstrom made 22 saves as playoff-bound Calgary won for the seventh time in eight games. Gaudreau and Oliver Kylington tacked on long empty-netters for the Pacific Division leaders in the final 1:32.

Chicago lost for the 10th time in 11 games. Tyler Johnson and Alec Regula scored, and Kevin Lankinen made 30 stops.

**Kraken 4, Senators 2:** Matty Beniers scored in his second straight game to become the third NHL rookie this season to record a point in his first three contests as host Seattle beat Ottawa.

Daniel Sprong, Victor Rask and Jordan McCann also scored for Seattle. McCann’s empty-netter with 1:11 left sealed the Kra-

ken’s second straight victory.

**Hurricanes 5, Coyotes 3:** Sebastian Aho scored his 36th goal midway through the third period, and Carolina snapped a two-game skid with a victory at Arizona.

Nino Niederreiter, Max Domi, Vincent Trocheck and Jesper Fast also scored for the Hurricanes, who weathered a Coyotes comeback try and strengthened their hold on first place in the Metropolitan Division.

**Devils 3, Golden Knights 2:** Nathan Bastian had a goal and an assist, and visiting New Jersey earned its 13th win in the last 40 games.

Vegas blew its chance to gain ground on the Los Angeles Kings in the Pacific Division, and its playoff hopes lessened severely with just five games left to play.

**Canucks 6, Stars 2:** Elias Pettersson had two goals and an assist, and host Vancouver extended its winning streak to six games with a win over Dallas.

## Johansson lifts Caps, ends Avs’ streak at 9

Associated Press

DENVER — Marcus Johansson scored the go-ahead goal with 9:14 remaining, Ilya Samsonov stopped 24 shots and the playoff-bound Washington Capitals snapped the Colorado Avalanche’s nine-game winning streak with a 3-2 victory Monday night.

Alex Ovechkin and Garnet Hathaway also added goals for a Washington team that clinched an Eastern Conference playoff spot the night before, courtesy of Toronto beating the New York Islanders. The Capitals have qualified for the postseason in eight straight seasons. It’s the second-longest active streak behind Pittsburgh (16).

“This is the way we want to play. It’s going to be like this in the playoffs,” Johansson said. “It was a fun atmosphere out

there tonight.”

Valeri Nichushkin and Artturi Lehkonen had goals for Colorado, which leads the NHL with 116 points. It is two shy of matching the team mark set by the 2000-01 squad that won the Stanley Cup.

“I liked our competitiveness. I didn’t like our execution,” Avalanche coach Jared Bednar said. “We didn’t have the puck enough in my opinion. We didn’t get on the attack enough, but it was a hard-fought game. Some of those games, you’ve got to just grind through it. They’re checking you hard. They’re not giving you a lot of space. They had really good sticks and you’ve got to just find a way to get enough to win. That’s where that game was going.

“We just couldn’t do it.”

Darcy Kuemper finished with 24 saves.

# Alvarez hits 2 HRs in Astros' victory

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Yordan Alvarez homered twice after missing five games because of COVID-19 protocols, and the Houston Astros beat the Los Angeles Angels 8-3 in their home opener Monday night.

Houston second baseman Jose Altuve exited in the eighth inning with a strained left hamstring. He fell to the ground after legging out an infield single.

Altuve will be examined by a doctor and is expected to have tests Tuesday.

Alvarez hit a 417-foot shot to the second deck off Michael Lorenzen (1-1) in the first inning, scoring Michael Brantley. Another two-run drive in the seventh made it 7-3.

Luis García (1-0) allowed four hits and three runs with seven strikeouts in 5½ innings.

**Twins 8, Red Sox 3:** Jorge Polanco and Kyle Garlick hit early two-run homers over the Green Monster to back Dylan Bundy, and visiting Minnesota

won in Boston's annual Patriots' Day game.

Polanco added a two-run single in a four-run eighth inning and Gio Urshela had three singles for the Twins, who won the series finale for a four-game split.

Bundy (2-0) gave up one run and five hits in 5½ innings with six strikeouts and no walks.

**Cubs 4, Rays 2:** Rookie Seiya Suzuki extended his hitting streak to nine games, tying Akinori Iwamura for the longest streak by a Japanese-born player at the start of a major league career, and host Chicago beat Tampa Bay.

Suzuki matched the mark that Iwamura set with the Rays in 2007. He is batting .429 after going 2-for-3 on a cold night.

**Brewers 6, Pirates 1:** Christian Yelich belted a grand slam for his first homer of the season and host Milwaukee beat Pittsburgh.

Yelich's two-out slam capped a five-run rally off Pirates starter Zach Thompson (0-1) in

the fourth inning. The 429-foot blast was Yelich's fourth career grand slam.

**Rockies 4, Phillies 1:** Chad Kuhl pitched six scoreless innings during his home debut with Colorado before leaving with a tight right hip flexor and right hamstring, and Charlie Blackmon hit a go-ahead homer to lead the team past Philadelphia.

Kuhl (1-0) allowed a pair of singles, struck out four and walked one, throwing 42 of 68 pitches for strikes. He went to the mound to warm up for the seventh but didn't start the inning.

**Padres 4, Reds 1:** Manny Machado had a two-run homer among his three hits and Sean Manaea pitched six strong innings as host San Diego handed Cincinnati its seventh straight loss.

The Padres extended their major league record with 12 consecutive errorless games to open a season.

**Athletics 5, Orioles 1:** Fran-

kie Montas allowed two hits in six innings, and host Oakland threw out two runners at the plate to beat Baltimore in its home opener.

A crowd of 17,503 weathered chilly temperatures to view a matchup between the teams with the two lowest payrolls in the major leagues. Attendance was the lowest for an A's home opener without COVID-19 restrictions in at least 30 years.

**Dodgers 7, Braves 4:** Freddie Freeman slugged his first home run in his new team's uniform, Trea Turner's bases-loaded double highlighted a five-run fourth inning, and host Los Angeles beat Atlanta for its seventh consecutive victory.

Freeman didn't wait to tee off against his old team, sending a shot to the left-field pavilion in the first off Huascar Ynoa (0-2). That triggered chants of "Freddie! Freddie!" from the sellout crowd of 52,052 as the first baseman pumped his right arm coming into home plate.

## Griner ordeal weighs heavily on teammates' minds

Associated Press

PHOENIX — While the practice facility for the WNBA's Phoenix Mercury was filled with laughter and the echoes of bouncing basketballs during the team's preseason workout, there was no denying the presence and spirit of 6-foot-9 center Brittney Griner was missing.

"I definitely wake up in the middle of the night sometimes, worrying about BG," first-year Mercury coach Vanessa Nygaard said.

"BG" is one of the nicknames for Griner, who remains in Russia after being detained following her arrival at a Moscow airport in mid-February. Russian authorities said a search of her luggage revealed vape cartridges that allegedly contained oil derived from cannabis, which could carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison.

"We've just got to keep praying for her," Mercury teammate Sophie Cunningham said. "We hope she's well. That's all we know, you guys know as much as we do. No

one wants to be in her situation. We miss her like crazy."

The two-time Olympic gold medalist recently had her detention extended to May 19.

Her arrest came at a time of heightened political tensions over Ukraine. Since then, Russia has invaded Ukraine and remains at war.

Phoenix guard Diana Taurasi, who also has played in Russia, said Monday afternoon that the sensitive nature of Griner's situation — being played out on a diplomatic stage rather than a basketball court — has made things even more difficult.

Taurasi and Cunningham want to show their support — verbal and otherwise — but realize their words carry weight. Nobody wants to say anything that could potentially complicate the situation.

"I spent 10 years there, so I know the way things work," Taurasi said. "It's delicate."

Griner's ordeal continues as WNBA

teams opened preseason camp Sunday and Monday. The WNBA also is taking a cautious approach in its support of Griner, though Commissioner Kathy Engelbert said there will be a league-wide charity initiative spearheaded by the Mercury to support Griner's philanthropic project, called BG's Heart and Sole Shoe Drive.

Cunningham stressed her concerns are about Griner the person and not about how the situation affects the Mercury's season.

"It's BG, there's no one like her in the whole world," Cunningham said. "We definitely miss her, but it's not even about basketball anymore. We just want her to be well as a human being. She has a big stage, a lot of people know her, so we want her to be on the court."

"Everyone who loves her just wants her to be home safe."

Griner was returning to the country after the Russian League took a break for the FIBA World Cup qualifying tournament.