

Blinken: 'Russia is failing'; more aid set

Los Angeles Times

DNIPRO, Ukraine — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken declared Monday that “Russia is failing” in its war aims, as deadly new fighting flared in Ukraine’s eastern battle zone and Russian forces reportedly aimed a round of airstrikes at rail facilities in the country’s west and center.

Blinken’s remarks to reporters in Poland came hours after he and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin traveled to the Ukrainian capital for talks with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the first official U.S. visit to Kyiv since the war began two months ago.

In a show of support, the two announced a fresh infusion of \$300 million in military aid and a revived U.S. diplomatic presence in Ukraine.

“The first step in winning is believing that you can win,” Austin said after his and Blinken’s visit. “We believe that they can win if they have the right equipment, the right support, and we’re going to do everything we can ... to ensure that gets to them.”

Zelenskyy, posting images of the meeting

on his Telegram channel, thanked the Biden administration for what he called “unprecedented help” at a “crucial moment.”

The coming weeks will likely be critical militarily, analysts say, with Russia having announced its determination to seize the entire Donbas, Ukraine’s eastern industrial heartland. Moscow last week also signaled aspirations to win control of the country’s southern seacoasts, which would render Ukraine landlocked, crippling it economically.

The war, which has killed thousands and created an immense humanitarian disaster, has also created a refugee crisis whose scale has not been seen on the European continent since World War II.

Nearly 5.2 million Ukrainians have fled into exile, according to the latest figures from the United Nations refugee agency, and almost 8 million others are internally displaced, according to separate estimates from the U.N.’s International Organization for Migration.

The vast panorama of suffering, however, has not been reflected in major shifts on the

battlefield. In the week since Russia embarked on a redoubled offensive in the east, its forces have made only “minor advances” along a 300-mile battlefield, Britain’s military intelligence said in an assessment Monday.

“Without sufficient logistical and combat support enablers in place, Russia has yet to achieve a significant breakthrough,” the assessment said.

In his remarks in Poland, Blinken hammered on the theme that Moscow, despite superior firepower, has not succeeded in subduing its smaller neighbor. So far in the war, Russia has ravaged whole Ukrainian cities but also suffered setbacks, including a failed bid to capture Kyiv and the loss of its Black Sea flagship to what Ukrainian and Western officials said was a missile attack.

“When it comes to Russia’s war aims, Russia is failing. Ukraine is succeeding,” Blinken said. “Russia has sought as its principal aim to totally subjugate Ukraine, to take away its sovereignty, to take away its independence. That has failed.”

Military Space-A travel back in business after hiatus

By JOSEPH DITZLER

Stars and Stripes

Space-available flights for military-affiliated travelers are available again after a two-year pause due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Air Force’s Air Mobility Command announced Friday.

The choice to fly Space-A, always somewhat of a gamble, is more complicated still by varying medical restrictions still in place across the globe to curb the spread of COVID-19.

“Medical screening protocols may still apply for travelers heading outside the contiguous United States,” said a news release from Air Mobility Command at Scott Air Force Base, Ill. “Members traveling to a foreign country will need to follow

any testing requirements listed within the Electronic Foreign Clearance Guide.”

Many countries still require travelers to present proof of a negative test for COVID-19 and to quarantine upon arrival. Japan, for instance, still does not permit tourists, including U.S. military members without orders, to enter the country.

Japan increased its daily quota of eligible incoming travelers to 10,000 and also quietly began allowing family members from abroad to visit Japanese citizens or foreign residents, The Japan Times reported April 13.

However, under the status of forces agreement that governs the U.S. military in Japan, U.S. troops, civilian employees and

their families are treated apart from the normal visa requirements. SOFA members do not qualify under Japan’s requirements for visits from their family members outside Japan, according to an email Friday from USFJ spokesman Air Force Maj. Thomas Barger.

At Yokota Air Base, an airlift hub in western Tokyo and a stop for the Patriot Express, the contracted air service for military travel, Master Sgt. Roderick Jefferson II of the 21st Special Operations Squadron was happy to hear that Space-A is available again.

The flights allow eligible travelers, including service members, civilian DOD employees, retirees and their families, to travel aboard military

and contractor cargo and passenger aircraft at low or no cost.

Space-A is never guaranteed, and travelers sometimes get bumped.

Jefferson, 40, a native of San Jose, Calif., plans on attending his graduation from Trident University in July in Long Beach, Calif., and visiting his family, he told Stars and Stripes by phone Monday. The low cost of flying Space-A beats the commercial airfare from either of the two international airports serving Tokyo.

“Being able to hop on a Space-A flight rather than fly out of Narita or Haneda is awesome,” he said. “We’re a family of four and the airfares are pretty expensive, so I’m going to try and capitalize on that.”

Retired general faulted by Marines IG for slur

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTT GART, Germany — A former commander of U.S. Marines in Europe who used a racial slur when speaking to junior troops violated the Corps' standards for leadership, an internal investigation determined.

A report by the Inspector General of the Marine Corps details the July 2020 incident, which ultimately led to Maj. Gen. Stephen Neary's dismissal as head of U.S. Marine Forces Europe and Africa. A copy of the report was recently given to Stars and Stripes.

"Neary failed to demonstrate exemplary conduct, as defined by the standard, through his insensitive comments and lack of awareness and appreciation for how divisive his use of a racial slur would be on his organization and offensive to his Marines," the report stated.

It came in response to complaints from Marines who said Neary used the N-word in front of them after taking offense to the use of the word in a rap song that was being played during physical training outside MARFOREUR headquarters. Neary acknowledged his use of the N-word in that instance, according to his statements contained in the IG report.

"I was using this as a teaching moment, is what I was doing," Neary told the IG. "Because again, there is no place for discriminatory behavior at all, in our Marine Corps, across the board."

The IG said, however, that Neary's language, which it said also used the phrase "you people" when addressing Marines "under the guise of providing correction," made the situation worse.

The report, completed in December 2020, came two months after Neary was relieved of com-

mand by Gen. David H. Berger. Neary retired from the Marines earlier this year. The report was obtained Friday following a private individual's Freedom of Information Act request.

The incident, which took place at Devil Dog Field at Panzer Kaserne near Stuttgart, came at a time of upheaval and protest over police brutality cases in the United States, including the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

On the morning of July 22, 2020, Neary had just finished a run and was at the pullup bars doing physical training when he overheard rapper Big L's song "Put It On," which was being played by a separate group of Marines doing PT. Neary ordered the Marines to turn off the music, saying that allowing it to be played could give the impression that he and other Marines condoned the words in it.

"You cannot play songs that use the 'n-word' in it because it is counter to good order and discipline. ... We have a problem when we think it is acceptable. Look what is going on across our country," Neary said in his account to the IG of what he told Marines.

Junior Marines, however, said they were shocked by Neary's use of the full N-word and the tone of his admonishment.

"Neary said (the word) should never be used and it is a word of hate," according to a statement by one of the Marine witnesses.

The Marine's statement went on to say that Neary told the group that the N-word "is the reason 'you people' are doing riots in the U.S."

Neary acknowledged saying the N-word once but denied that he had repeated it, as other Marines alleged. He also denied saying "you people."

DOD to give Stripes reporter public records through FOIA

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department has agreed to fulfill 15 Freedom of Information Act requests it previously denied to a journalist because he works for a military publication.

In a court filing last week, the DOD, the Department of the Navy, the Marine Corps and U.S. Central Command said they will no longer refuse Stars and Stripes reporter Chad Garland's requests for public records made through FOIA requests filed from August 2020 through August 2021. The department did not say why it had suddenly changed course in the filing Wednesday, which came about two weeks after its lawyers filed an answer to Garland's lawsuit and appeared ready to litigate. Stars and Stripes was not a party

in the lawsuit.

It was unclear from the filing whether DOD intended only to fulfill Garland's requests or whether it would change the policy it cited in rejecting his requests and subsequent appeals.

"It looks like the government is not going to defend the DOD memos that have been used to block my FOIA rights, in which case that sounds like a positive development," said Garland. Garland made the requests as a private citizen and not in his capacity as a Stars and Stripes reporter.

Commercial newspapers have the legal right to make FOIA requests, but DOD policy bars Stars and Stripes and its reporters from using FOIA, under the rationale that the newspaper is administered through Defense Media Activity and thus is a federal agency.

Japanese troops disarm unexploded WWII bomb

By HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

An unexploded bomb from World War II was safely defused over the weekend by members of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, according to the city of Nagoya.

The fuse of a 550-pound incendiary bomb, believed to be American-made, was removed around 11:30 a.m. Sunday at a construction site near Nagoya Station, according to a city news release that day.

The bomb, about 4 feet long and 14 inches in diameter, was found on March 17, the release stated.

An area 1,312 feet in diameter was sealed off, and 951 people were evacuated Sunday morning while the bomb was disarmed, according to the release.

Roads and expressways were sealed off and 38 public buses were detoured.

Ordnance from World War II is frequently found in Japan. More than 600 unexploded munitions uncovered on Okinawa during dredging of Naha Port last year were disposed of by the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force in December and January.

During the war, 9,783 tons of mostly incendiary bombs were dropped on Nagoya, a major industrial center at the time, according to the Nagoya International Center website.

Nagoya, with about 2.3 million people, is the fourth-largest city in Japan. Only Tokyo, 220 miles to the east, was more heavily bombed than Nagoya by U.S. Air Forces during World War II.

Jurors reject defenses at Capitol riot trials

Associated Press

Jurors have heard — and rejected — an array of excuses and arguments from the first rioters to be tried for storming the U.S. Capitol. The next jury to get a Capitol riot case could hear another novel defense this week at the trial of a retired New York City police officer.

Thomas Webster, a 20-year veteran of the NYPD, has claimed he was acting in self-defense when he tackled a police officer who was trying to protect the Capitol from a mob on Jan. 6, 2021. Webster's lawyer has also argued that he was exercising his First Amendment free speech rights when he shouted profanities at police that day.

Webster, 56, will be the fourth Capitol riot defendant to get a jury trial. Each has presented a distinct line of defense.

An Ohio man who stole a coat rack from a Capitol office testified he was “following presidential orders” from Donald Trump. An off-duty police officer from Virginia claimed he only entered the Capitol in order to retrieve a fellow officer. A lawyer for a Texas man who confronted Capitol police accused prosecutors of rushing to judgment against somebody

prone to exaggerating.

Those defenses didn't sway the juries at their respective trials. Collectively, a total of 36 jurors unanimously convicted the three rioters of all 17 counts in their indictments.

Webster faces the same fate if a federal judge's blistering words are any guide. U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta, who will preside over Webster's trial, has described his videotaped conduct as “among the most indefensible and reprehensible” that the judge has seen among Jan. 6 cases, with “no real defense for it.”

“You were a police officer and you should have known better,” Mehta told Webster during a bond hearing last June, according to a transcript.

But a dozen jurors, not the judge, will decide the case against Webster, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran who retired from the NYPD in 2011. Jury selection was scheduled to start Monday.

A wealth of video evidence and self-incriminating behavior by riot defendants has given prosecutors the upper hand in many cases. Mary McCord, a Georgetown University Law Center professor and former

Justice Department official, said jurors often won't have to rely on witness testimony or circumstantial evidence because videos captured much of the violence and destruction on Jan. 6.

“When I was a prosecutor trying cases, I would have loved to have had cases where the entire crime was on video. That just doesn't happen that often. But for jurors, it can be very powerful,” she said.

Webster's trial is the sixth overall. In a pair of bench trials, a different federal judge heard testimony without a jury before acquitting one defendant and partially acquitting another.

U.S. District Judge Trevor McFadden, a Trump nominee who acquitted Matthew Martin of all charges, said it was reasonable for the New Mexico man to believe that police allowed him to enter the Capitol. In the first bench trial, McFadden convicted New Mexico elected official Couy Griffin of illegally entering restricted Capitol grounds but acquitted him of engaging in disorderly conduct.

Stephen Saltzburg, a George Washington Law School professor and former Justice Department official, said it may be dif-

icult for prosecutors to secure convictions against defendants who merely entered the Capitol and didn't exhibit any violent or destructive behavior.

“I think the people with the best chances are those who say, ‘I was just there and I got swept up with everybody else.’ The government is going to have to have some way to show there's more than that or the government will lose,” he said.

More than 780 people have been charged with riot-related federal crimes. According to the Justice Department, over 245 of them have been charged with assaulting or impeding law enforcement. More than 250 riot defendants have pleaded guilty, mostly to nonviolent misdemeanors.

Jurors convicted two rioters of interfering with officers. One of them, Thomas Robertson, was an off-duty police officer from Rocky Mount, Va. The other, Texas resident Guy Wesley Reffitt, was also convicted of storming the Capitol with a holstered handgun.

The third Capitol rioter to be convicted by a jury was Dustin Byron Thompson, an Ohio man who said he was following Trump's orders.

Warren calls McCarthy a ‘liar’ and ‘traitor’ over Jan. 6 tape

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democratic Sen. Elizabeth Warren is slamming Rep. Kevin McCarthy as a “liar and a traitor” over recordings that show the House Republican leader — despite his denials — placing responsibility on then-President Donald Trump for the Capitol riot and suggesting Trump should resign.

It's unusually strong language to use against the House Republican leader, who is in line to become speaker — second in presidential succession — if Republicans win control of the House in the November elections.

But Warren's statement reflects a swell of Democratic criticism against McCarthy. They point to his recorded comments in January 2021 as proof that GOP lawmakers at

the highest levels have privately acknowledged Trump's role in the insurrection at the Capitol yet continue to defend him in public.

McCarthy, of California, denied a New York Times report last week that detailed phone conversations with House Republican leadership shortly after the riot that he thought Trump should resign. He called it “totally false.” But in an audio recording first posted Thursday by the newspaper and aired on Rachel Maddow's MSNBC show, McCarthy is heard discussing the possibility of urging Trump to leave office amid the Democratic push to impeach him.

Asked Sunday about her reaction, Warren, of Massachusetts, called the circumstances “outrageous.”

“Kevin McCarthy is a liar and a traitor,”

she told CNN's “State of the Union.”

“That is really the illness that pervades the Republican leadership right now, that they say one thing to the American public and something else in private,” Warren said. “They understand that it is wrong what happened, an attempt to overthrow our government and that the Republicans instead want to continue to try to figure out how to make [the] 2020 election different instead of spending their energy on how it is that we go forward in order to build an economy, in order to make this country work better for the people who sent us to Washington.”

“Shame on Kevin McCarthy,” she said.

There was no immediate response Sunday from McCarthy's office to a request for comment.

New tensions mark N. Korea military parade

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea began a much-anticipated military parade in its capital on Monday to mark the 90th anniversary of its army's founding, with outside experts saying it was likely to display powerful missiles and other weapons capable of targeting the United States and its allies.

South Korea's military said the march began late Monday evening in Pyongyang after a pre-parade ceremony. It didn't immediately provide other details, such as whether North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was present.

NK News, a North Korea-focused news site, cited unidenti-

fied sources as saying that 12 illuminated flying objects, possibly drones or helicopters, were seen in the sky above Pyongyang, followed by the sounds of fireworks.

In past parades, North Korea has often displayed newly built nuclear-capable missiles and goose-stepping soldiers in an attempt to intimidate its rivals and bolster internal unity. Kim has also given speeches highlighting his commitment to boosting the armed forces to cope with what he calls U.S. hostility.

The parade comes as Kim is reviving nuclear brinkmanship aimed at forcing the U.S. to accept North Korea as a nuclear

power and remove crippling economic sanctions. Analysts have said North Korea is exploiting a favorable environment to push forward its weapons program as the United Nations Security Council remains divided over Russia's war in Ukraine.

North Korea has conducted 13 rounds of weapons tests this year, including its first flight test of an intercontinental ballistic missile since 2017. There are also signs the country is rebuilding tunnels at a nuclear testing ground that was last active in 2017, possibly in preparation for a resumption of testing. It could also conduct a banned launch of a long-range

rocket to put a spy satellite into orbit or test-fly missiles over Japan, experts have said.

North Korean state media did not immediately report the parade. Earlier Monday, official newspapers ran editorials calling for stronger public support of Kim.

"The respected Comrade Kim Jong Un is the symbol of the mightiness of our party, state and revolutionary armed forces and the representative of their great dignity," the main Rodong Sinmun newspaper said in an editorial. "All happiness and rosy future lie in following the respected General Secretary Kim Jong Un."

Macron wins reelection in France as far-right gains

Associated Press

PARIS — French President Emmanuel Macron comfortably won a second term Sunday, triggering relief among allies that the nuclear-armed power won't abruptly shift course in the midst of the war in Ukraine from European Union and NATO efforts to punish and contain Russia's military expansionism.

The second five-year term for the 44-year-old centrist spared France and Europe from the seismic upheaval of having firebrand populist Marine Le Pen at the helm. Macron's presidential runoff challenger quickly conceded defeat but still scored her best-ever electoral showing.

Acknowledging that "numerous" voters cast ballots for him simply to keep out the fiercely nationalist far-right Le Pen, Macron pledged to reunite the country that is "filled with so many doubts, so many divisions" and work to assuage the anger of French voters that fed Le Pen's campaign.

"No one will be left by the side of the road," Macron said in a vic-

tory speech against the backdrop of the Eiffel Tower and a projection of the blue-white-and-red tricolor French flag. He was cheered by several hundred supporters who happily waved French and EU flags.

"We have a lot to do, and the war in Ukraine reminds us that we are going through tragic times where France must make its voice heard," Macron said.

During her campaign, Le Pen pledged to dilute French ties with the 27-nation EU, NATO and Germany, moves that would have shaken Europe's security architecture as the continent deals with its worst conflict since World War II. Le Pen also spoke against EU sanctions on Russian energy supplies and faced scrutiny during the campaign over her previous friendliness with the Kremlin.

Macron won with 58.5% of the vote to Le Pen's 41.5% — significantly closer than when they first faced off in 2017. Le Pen called her result "a shining victory," saying that "in this defeat, I can't help but feel a form of hope."

Trump ruled to be in contempt amid legal battle with NY AG

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A New York judge found former President Donald Trump in contempt of court Monday for failing to adequately respond to a subpoena issued by the state's attorney general as part of a civil investigation into his business dealings.

Judge Arthur Engoron ordered Trump to pay a fine of \$10,000 per day.

"Mr. Trump, I know you take your business seriously, and I take mine seriously," Engoron said before issuing the ruling from the bench in a Manhattan courtroom, following a hearing.

New York Attorney General Letitia James, a Democrat, had asked the court to hold Trump in contempt after he missed a March 31 court-imposed deadline to turn over documents. The judge said a contempt finding was appropriate because Trump and his lawyers' hadn't shown that they had conducted a proper search for the records sought by the subpoena.

Trump, a Republican, has been fighting James in court

over her investigation, which he has called a politically motivated "witch hunt."

James has been conducting a lengthy investigation into the Trump Organization, the former president's family company, centering around what she has claimed is a pattern of misleading banks and tax authorities about the value of his properties.

The contempt finding by the judge came despite a spirited argument by Trump lawyer Alina Habba, who insisted repeatedly that she went to great lengths to comply with the subpoena, even traveling to Florida to ask Trump specifically whether he had in his possession any documents that would be responsive to the demand.

"The contempt motion is inappropriate and misleading," she said. "He complied. ... There are no more documents left to produce by President Trump."

"My client is an honest person, much to the dismay of certain people in this room," Habba said in Manhattan Supreme Court, according to the New York Daily News report.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Authorities seize nearly 100 pounds of fentanyl

CA SAN FRANCISCO — Authorities near San Francisco said they seized nearly 100 pounds of illicit fentanyl worth over \$4 million, blocking it from being sold on streets across the Bay Area.

“This is a glimpse of the fentanyl epidemic,” the Alameda County Sheriff’s Office said in a tweet Saturday that showed a picture of the drugs in dozens of baggies after being seized.

Sheriff’s detectives with partners from the county Narcotics Task Force discovered a fentanyl manufacturing lab Friday after serving two search warrants in the cities of Oakland and Hayward, said Lt. Ray Kelly, a spokesman for the sheriff’s office.

Detectives seized 92.5 pounds of illicit fentanyl and arrested one suspect, Kelly said. Authorities are searching for a second suspect.

Deputy rescues toddler from apartment fire

FL ORLANDO — A sheriff’s deputy in Florida climbed up a balcony and plucked a 1-year-old girl to safety from a third-story apartment that had caught fire, the dramatic rescue captured on the deputy’s body-worn camera.

Deputy William Puzynski climbed to the second-floor balcony early Saturday and asked the mother to hand off the baby in diapers as flames shot from the apartment one floor above. He then brought the baby down before the mother and grandmother were subsequently rescued by firefighters.

The video posted online captures Puzynski telling the woman “hand me the baby, hand me the baby. We are coming,” as he goes up and balances himself on the railing before she extends the crying baby to him. “Please, come get me,” she pleads afterward.

Firefighters using a ladder brought the mother and grandmother down from the third-floor apartment safely. They also evacuated other residents while responding to the fire at an apartment building in Orlando.

City puts the brakes on its largest road race

GA SAVANNAH — Officials in Savannah have put the brakes on the city’s largest road race.

The Rock ‘n’ Roll Marathon has brought tens of thousands of runners to Georgia’s picturesque founding city since first adding Savannah to its race roster in 2011. But Mayor Van Johnson said the city won’t be granting marathon organizers a permit, or paying them the required \$25,000 contract fee, this year.

Organizers released a statement saying a comeback in 2023 appears unlikely. They had intended to return to Savannah this fall and runners had been registering for the race before City Hall announced its decision Monday.

Johnson told news outlets Savannah needs a break from the marathon to evaluate whether it’s worth the cost — not just in taxpayer money for sanitation and extra police, but also in hassles to residents and businesses impacted by street closures. He said the city has recouped “a relatively very small percentage”

of what it has spent on the event.

Man pleads not guilty to killing lover in bathtub

HI HONOLULU — A 23-year-old man man accused of killing his 73-year-old lover and pouring cement over his body in a bathtub in one of Hawaii’s most exclusive gated communities has pleaded not guilty to murder.

A public defender for Juan Baron entered the plea during an arraignment Thursday, according to court records.

Gary Ruby’s decomposing body was excavated by authorities last month from a standalone soaking tub in Ruby’s Hawaii Loa Ridge home. Police said Baron covered the cement with coffee grounds to mask the smell, and that he had planned to fraudulently take ownership of Ruby’s car and home.

U.S. Marshals and Los Angeles police later arrested Baron after finding him in a crawl space at the back of a Mexico-bound bus in Anaheim, Calif. Baron was extradited to Honolulu.

Judge is removed from bench for abusing power

KY OWENSBORO — A Kentucky judge was ordered to be removed from the bench on Friday for abusing her position, in particular attempting to influence criminal cases involving her adult son.

The Judicial Conduct Commission voted unanimously to permanently remove Daviess Family Judge Julie Hawes Gordon, writing that she abused her position “over an extended period of time and over her entire

tenure as judge,” The Messenger-Inquirer reported.

The ruling goes into effect 10 days from Friday, unless Gordon files an appeal. Gordon’s attorney said on Friday they are reviewing the ruling.

Among the findings, the conduct commission panel said Gordon had tried to arrange for the release of her son, Dalton Gordon, and tried to influence both the judge and prosecutor in his case to get the outcomes she wanted. Commissioners also found Gordon had used her position to get special visitation with her son while he was incarcerated in the Daviess County Detention Center and had appointed her son’s defense attorney as a paid guardian ad litem in family court where she presided.

Black bear is a perfect downtown pedestrian

NC ASHEVILLE — A smarter-than-average bear took a tourist jaunt through downtown Asheville — even taking care to use crosswalks at intersections — before police guided it back to nature.

Asheville Police said the call they received Thursday about a bear milling through downtown is the third such call they’ve received in the last three weeks.

Video posted by the police department on their Facebook page Friday shows the bear waiting at a crosswalk and looking both ways before crossing the intersection. In another clip he climbs a tree in a small park space.

Officers guided the bear, which was wearing a tracking collar, back into a wooded area.

— From wire reports

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Hutchinson carrying on a proud legacy

Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Aidan Joseph Bernardi Hutchinson is an impressive reflection of his parents, and his middle names honor a great-grandfather who was part of the World War II jungle fighting unit known as “Merrill’s Marauders.”

Jacksonville is expected to select Hutchinson, who appears to be the total package as a player and person, with the No. 1 pick in the NFL draft next Thursday.

It’s easy to see why the Jaguars would want him after watching what Hutchinson did last year at Michigan, where he set a single-season school record with 14 sacks.

Scouts who searched for more about his background found out Chris and Melissa raised a well-rounded son, uniquely shaped by a close-knit family that includes two older sisters, Mia and Aria.

Few, though, seem to know Hutchinson can

trace his lineage to the late Joseph Bernardi, an Army Ranger who was part of a secret mission in 1944 that began with 2,000 U.S. soldiers behind enemy lines in Japanese-occupied Burma and ended with approximately 200 Americans surviving.

Bernardi battled hunger, disease and enemy troops while trekking roughly 1,000 miles to capture a Japanese-held airfield and was posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

“He was one of the very few that made it out alive,” Hutchinson said in an interview with The Associated Press. “And, that is just an insane story.”

Hutchinson wore his great-grandfather’s dog tag against Ohio State during his freshman year, but was afraid of losing it and didn’t wear them in a game again. His mother, meanwhile, had her grandfather’s dog tag with her at every Michigan game the past

three seasons.

Bernardi, who was born in Medeglia, Switzerland, died 15 years ago at the age of 84.

Back then, Hutchinson dreamed of playing at Michigan, as his father did as a captain and Big Ten defensive lineman of the year in 1992 after matching a then-school record with 11 sacks. Hutchinson’s mother, Melissa, an artistic photographer and former model, treasures images she made of her young son wearing Chris’ battered maize winged helmet and a kid-sized jersey with No. 97, his father’s and his future number with the Wolverines.

Hutchinson’s next step in life in the league will likely be his biggest, and yet he knows that counting on his family is a source of comfort in the chaos.

“With my parents, they’ve been my support system since Day 1 and having them at my back is so beneficial for me and my whole career,” Hutchinson said.

Teams with back-to-back No. 1 picks have struggled

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Jacksonville Jaguars general manager Trent Baalke turned toward coach Doug Pederson, smiled widely and said, “I’m pretty confident this will be the last time that I’ll be making the first pick.”

History indicates he’s right.

No team or general manager in the NFL’s modern era (since 1970) has drafted No. 1 in three straight years. Tampa Bay would have done it as a fledgling expansion franchise in 1976-78, but the Buccaneers traded the top pick in 1978 to Houston. The Oilers then selected Pro Football Hall of Fame running back Earl Campbell.

Jacksonville will be the fourth franchise — two of the others have accomplished the dubious feat twice — with the first pick in back-to-back years when the Jaguars open the NFL draft Thursday night in Las Vegas.

Here’s a look at how the others panned out:

Cleveland (2017-18): The Browns chose Oklahoma quarterback and 2017 Heisman Trophy winner Baker Mayfield one

year after going with Texas A&M standout defensive end Myles Garrett.

Mayfield, picked ahead of Buffalo’s Josh Allen and Baltimore’s Lamar Jackson, looked like he might end the team’s decades-long search for a franchise QB while leading the Browns to a playoff victory in 2020. But he regressed last year and is now on the trading block. Cleveland pursued Deshaun Watson, prompting Mayfield to request a trade, and then signed the embattled Houston star to a \$230 million contract.

Garrett, meanwhile, has developed into one of the league’s top pass rushers. The three-time Pro Bowl selection has 58 ½ sacks in five seasons.

Cleveland (1999-2000): The Browns took Kentucky quarterback Tim Couch and Penn State defensive tackle Courtney Brown in back-to-back years. Both played well as rookies before having their careers cut short by injuries.

The picks look worse when considering who the Browns could have taken instead. Donovan McNabb went second to Phi-

adelphia in 1999; Washington landed linebacker LaVar Arrington at No. 2 in 2000.

Cincinnati (1994-95): The Bengals went with Ohio State defensive tackle Dan Wilkinson and Penn State running back Kijana Carter in consecutive years, drafting both over future Hall of Famers (running back Marshall Faulk in 1994; left tackle Tony Boselli in 1995).

Although “Big Daddy” Wilkinson never made a Pro Bowl, he enjoyed a 13-year NFL career in which he played 195 games. Most of those came in another uniform. The Bengals traded Wilkinson in 1998 after he called Cincinnati a racist city.

Carter, meanwhile, is widely regarded as one of the worst No. 1 picks in NFL history, in the same group as Oakland quarterback Jamaricus Russell (2007) and Indianapolis defensive end Steve Emtman (1992). Carter tore a knee ligament in his first preseason game and missed most of two more seasons with the Bengals because of injuries.

Tampa Bay (1986-87): The Buccaneers took Heisman Trophy winners Bo Jackson and Vin-

ny Testaverde in back-to-back years, but only one of them ever played a down for Tampa Bay.

The Bucs drafted Jackson in 1986 despite Auburn’s two-sport star repeatedly telling them before the draft he would never play for Tampa Bay.

Jackson turned down a \$7.6 million contract offer from the Bucs and chose to play baseball for considerably less in Kansas City. Tampa Bay forfeited Jackson’s draft rights the following year, and the Los Angeles Raiders used a late-round flier on Jackson. He became a full-time baseball player and part-time football player for four years before a dislocated hip derailed his career.

Testaverde did little to help Tampa Bay offset the sting of missing out on Jackson.

Tampa Bay (1976-77): The Bucs had a chance to hit a pair of home runs after landing Hall of Famer Lee Roy Selmon with the team’s inaugural pick in 1976. But coach John McKay went with USC running Ricky Bell over Pittsburgh star and 1976 Heisman Trophy winner Tony Dorsett the following year.

Pelicans overwhelm Suns, tie series

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — New Orleans started its season 3-16. Now, the pesky Pelicans are proving to be a handful for the Phoenix Suns in the Western Conference playoffs.

Brandon Ingram scored 16 of his 30 points in the third quarter and New Orleans beat the Suns — playing without injured star Devin Booker — 118-103 in Game 4 on Sunday night to tie the first-round series. Game 5 will be Tuesday night in Phoenix.

“Brandon is playing some of his best basketball of the season, and he’s doing it on the biggest stage, and it’s great to see,” said Pelicans coach Willie Green, a rookie head coach who kept his young team together in the midst of its early season struggles and now has forced a best-of-three playoff match with the top-seeded Suns. “I’m just trying to move out of the way and let him do his thing.”

Ingram says it feels like it is his team’s time.

“We’ve worked so hard throughout the year to become a better team,” Ingram said. “My teammates put me in the right spots and are making me look good.”

Jonas Valanciunas reasserted himself in the middle with 26 points and 15 rebounds, and rookie guard Herb Jones, a defensive specialist, played smothering defense against Chris Paul.

Paul, who had 19-point fourth quarters in

Phoenix’s two playoff wins, was held to four points in 35 minutes. He had 11 assists, but committed three turnovers.

It was a physical game. New Orleans converted 32 of 42 free throws while the Suns went to the line only 15 times and made 10.

“It was like the old NBA,” said Paul, who was picked up in the back court by Jones nearly the entire game. “I told the refs, ‘Are we playing old NBA or new NBA?’ I was fortunate enough to play in both. Regardless, whatever it is, you’ve got to adjust early in the game and figure it out.”

Jones said he simply tried to be more aggressive against Paul and not give him room to maneuver.

“We were trying to be more disruptive and more physical,” Jones said. “I feel like that’s been a huge part of our game, especially in the playoffs. You’ve got to play with a little more fire.”

Phoenix coach Monty Williams did not want to take away from the Pelicans’ effort, but he was upset by the disparity in foul shots.

“Forty-two to 15 in free throws — slice it any way you like to, in a playoff game that’s physical, that’s amazing,” Williams said. “Coaches shouldn’t have to come up to the microphone and feel like they’re going to get their head cut off for speaking the truth. It’s not like we didn’t attack the basket. That’s re-

ally hard to do. They outplayed us and they deserved to win, but that’s a free-throw disparity.”

The Suns played their second straight game without Booker, their leading scorer, who strained his right hamstring after scoring 31 first-half points in the Suns’ Game 2 loss. He is out indefinitely.

“We can’t worry about that,” Williams said. “The guys who are on the floor just did it (win) the other day when we played hard and didn’t shoot the three-ball well but still won the game. (The Pelicans) played much harder.”

Deandre Ayton led Phoenix with 23 points and eight rebounds, and fellow center JaVale McGee had 14 points.

The Pelicans led 89-85 with 8:05 left and used a 12-0 run to ice it. Valanciunas, limited to six points in a Game 3 loss, scored 10 points in a 3:34 span of the fourth quarter to help the Pelicans pull away. He punctuated his scoring spree with a 3-pointer from the left wing.

“We showed aggressiveness and we were physical out there,” Valanciunas said. “(The Suns are) a physical team and their defense is good, and matching their physicality is the key.”

New Orleans had a 35-23 advantage in the third quarter. Ingram was the catalyst, making 7 of 10 shots and assisting on two other baskets as New Orleans took an 84-74 lead.

Nuggets beat Warriors to avoid series sweep

Associated Press

DENVER — Nikola Jokic scored 37 points and fed Will Barton for a three-pointer from the left corner with 8.3 seconds left, helping the Denver Nuggets avoid a series sweep with a 126-121 victory over the Golden State Warriors on Sunday.

Monte Morris’ 7-footer broke a 121-all tie with 33.5 seconds left after the Nuggets blew a 17-point lead. Austin Rivers then stole Otto Porter Jr.’s pass.

Morris finished with 24 points. He hit five three-pointers in the third quarter, the most in a quarter by any player in these NBA playoffs.

Steph Curry led the Warriors with 33 points. Klay Thompson scored 22 of his 32 points after

picking up his fourth foul in the final second of the first half. Jordan Poole had 11 after averaging 27.8 in the first three games of the series.

The series shifts back to San Francisco for Game 5 on Wednesday night.

Bucks 119, Bulls 95: Grayson Allen set playoff career highs with 27 points and six three-pointers, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 32 points and 17 rebounds and Milwaukee won at Chicago to take a 3-1 lead.

Jrue Holiday scored 26 points, and the Bucks made it look easy again after beating the Bulls by 30 and handing them the most-lopsided home playoff loss in franchise history. The defending NBA cham-

pions led by 22 early in the third quarter.

Bobby Portis added 14 points and 10 rebounds in his second straight start with Khris Middleton out with a sprained left knee to help Milwaukee beat Chicago for the 19th time in 21 games.

Zach LaVine led Chicago with 24 points and 13 assists, DeMar DeRozan scored 23 points and Patrick Williams had 20 points and 10 rebounds.

Game 5 is Wednesday night in Milwaukee.

Heat 110, Hawks 86: Jimmy Butler scored 13 of his 36 points in a dominant second quarter and Miami won at Atlanta to take a 3-1 series lead.

Miami can wrap up the Series

in Game 5 on Tuesday night in Miami.

Butler overcame a slow start. He made only 1 of 7 shots before hitting his final five shots of the first half to lead the turnaround.

Miami outscored Atlanta 30-15 in the second period, holding the Hawks to a season scoring low for the period. Butler had 10 rebounds, four assists and blocked a shot.

Atlanta’s Trae Young scored only nine points with five assists and five turnovers as he was shut down by Miami’s defense for the second time in four games. Young was held to eight points in Miami’s 115-91 Game 1 win.

De’Andre Hunter led the Hawks with 24 points.

Cole, Rizzo help Yanks sweep Guardians

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Gerrit Cole bounced back from the shortest start of his career, Anthony Rizzo powered an early offensive barrage and the New York Yankees pounded the Cleveland Guardians 10-2 Sunday to complete a three-game sweep in a series marred by fan misbehavior.

Cole (1-0) struck out nine in 6⅓ scoreless innings, and Rizzo's two-run drive in the first inning tied him for the AL lead with five homers. New York won for the fifth time in six games.

Cleveland outfielders struggled a day after fans threw bottles, cans and other debris at them immediately following the Yankees' walk-off victory. Myles Straw and Oscar Mercado were heckled after misplays, and breakout rookie Steven Kwan left early with right hamstring tightness.

Reds 4, Cardinals 1: First-round draft pick Nick Lodolo got his first major league win as host Cincinnati beat St. Louis to end an 11-game skid, its worst in six years.

Colin Moran drove in two runs for the Reds, who had been 0-4 at home this year and had not won anywhere since April 10. Cincinnati is a majors-worst 3-13.

Lodolo (1-2) allowed three hits, struck

out seven and walked none in 5 1/3 scoreless innings. Adam Wainwright (2-2) allowed four runs, eight hits and three walks in five-plus innings.

Twins 6, White Sox 4 (10): Byron Buxton hit his second homer of the game, a 469-foot, three-run drive in the 10th inning, and host Minnesota sent Chicago to its seventh straight loss.

Dodgers 10, Padres 2: Cody Bellinger homered twice and drove in four runs, leading Clayton Kershaw and Los Angeles won at San Diego.

Brewers 1, Phillies 0: Eric Lauer struck out a career-high 13 in six innings, Christian Yelich hit a sacrifice fly in the ninth and Milwaukee won at Philadelphia.

Giants 12, Nationals 3: Joc Pederson homered twice, doubled and drove in three runs as visiting San Francisco completed a three-game sweep of Washington.

Angels 7, Orioles 6: Jo Adell hit a grand slam, Shohei Ohtani scored the go-ahead run on a bases-loaded walk, and host Los Angeles beat Baltimore despite blowing a six-run, first-inning lead.

Rays 5, Red Sox 2: Shane McClanahan beat visiting Boston to become Tampa Bay's first starting pitcher to get a win this season.

Astros 8, Blue Jays 7 (10): Rookie Jeremy Peña hit a two-run homer in the 10th inning and host Houston beat Toronto to avoid a sweep.

Mariners 5, Royals 4 (12): Jesse Winker capped an 11-pitch at-bat with a broken-bat single to score Adam Frazier in the 12th inning, and host Seattle completed a three-game sweep of Kansas City.

Athletics 2, Rangers 0: Cole Irvin and three relievers combined on a four-hitter, Stephen Piscotty homered in his second game back from the COVID-19 injured list and host Oakland beat Texas to avoid a sweep.

Mets 6, Diamondbacks 2: Tylor Megill threw 6⅓ impressive innings, Francisco Lindor added a pair of hits and visiting New York took two of three from Arizona.

Marlins 5, Braves 4: Garrett Cooper had three hits and two RBIs, Avisail García hit a go-ahead double in the fifth inning and host Miami took two of three from Atlanta.

Rockies 6, Tigers 2: Randal Grichuk had three hits, including his first home run of the season, and Colorado won at Detroit.

Pirates 4, Cubs 3: Dillon Peters keyed a solid performance by Pittsburgh's bullpen and Kevin Newman had two hits in a win at Chicago.

Ovechkin injured in Capitals' loss to Maple Leafs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON— There's much for the Washington Capitals to evaluate after a tough loss late in the season and an injury that could cloud their entire playoff outlook.

Alex Ovechkin was injured early in the third period of a 4-3 shootout loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs on Sunday night, crashing into the boards and getting ruled out with an upper-body injury. In the aftermath of that, his teammates built and blew a two-goal lead to miss a major opportunity to move up the standings.

Ovechkin's uncertain status is the most alarming situation facing the Capitals with the playoffs beginning in just over a week.

"I haven't talked to the trainer yet, so we'll get an evaluation on

him," tight-lipped coach Peter Laviolette said. "We'll get an evaluation and see where he's at."

Ovechkin tripped over Toronto goaltender Erik Kallgren's stick after failing to score on a breakaway attempt. His left arm and shoulder made contact with the boards, and the 36-year-old remained on the ice for several seconds while the arena went silent.

Lightning 8, Panthers 4: Nikita Kucherov and Steven Stamkos each had two goals and two assists, Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 37 shots and visiting Tampa Bay snapped Florida's franchise-record 13-game winning streak.

Hurricanes 5, Islanders 2: Max Domi scored the go-ahead goal early in the third period and visiting Carolina got help

from a rookie goaltender, boosting their Metropolitan Division lead by beating New York.

Blues 6, Ducks 3: Ryan Getzlaf scored his final NHL point with a behind-the-back pass to Adam Henrique for a goal with 2:41 to play, and the longtime Anaheim captain wrapped up a 17-year career spent entirely with the Ducks in a loss to visiting St. Louis.

Wild 5, Predators 4 (OT): Dmitry Kulikov scored with 1.3 seconds remaining in overtime to give visiting Minnesota a win over Nashville.

Jets 4, Avalanche 1: Adam Lowry, Blake Wheeler and Kyle Connor all scored in a span of 3:21 in the third period to help host Winnipeg beat Colorado, handing the Avalanche their season-high fourth straight loss.

Blue Jackets 5, Oilers 2:

Rookie Nick Blankenburg scored his first NHL goal and added an assist to help host Columbus beat Edmonton, breaking a five-game losing streak and keeping the Oilers from clinching second place in the Pacific Division.

Flyers 4, Penguins 1: Noah Cates had two goals and an assist and Martin Jones made 37 saves in host Philadelphia's win over Pittsburgh.

Red Wings 3, Devils 0: Alex Nedeljkovic had 17 saves, Oskar Sundqvist and Tyler Bertuzzi each had a goal and assist, and Detroit handed New Jersey its seventh straight loss at home.

Sharks 5, Golden Knights 4 (SO): Thomas Bordeleau scored the only goal in a shootout, and visiting San Jose snapped an 11-game losing streak against Vegas.