

US Navy sends ships off Sudan's coast

By DOUG G. WARE
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Navy is moving at least three ships to the eastern coast of Sudan in case the United States needs to evacuate American citizens caught in the middle of a bloody struggle for control of the African country, military officials said.

The USS Truxtun, an Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, is near Port Sudan now, and the USS Lewis B. Puller, an expeditionary mobile bases vessel, is en route to Sudan's coast, Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon's top spokesperson, said on Monday.

He said the Defense Department is assisting the State Department as needed and the ships could be used in various ways, including evacuations and medical treatment.

The Navy is also sending the USNS Brunswick, a fast transport vessel, 5th Fleet spokesman Cmdr. Tim Hawkins said in an email Tuesday. The Brunswick has a top speed of 40 mph, the Navy's website said.

U.S. 5th Fleet service members departed Bahrain on Tuesday morning and will join the crew of 25 civilians on the Brunswick,

which is en route to the Red Sea, Hawkins said.

For more than a week, fighting has raged in parts of Sudan between two powerful military factions that combined to overthrow the country's previous government in 2021. Together, the two forces mounted the coup, but tensions have been rising recently concerning power-sharing as the nation transitions to a new government.

More than 400 people have been killed since the fighting began earlier this month, according to news reports. American staffers at the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum were evacuated Sunday by U.S. special forces troops, but thousands of other American citizens are still believed to be in the country.

Ryder said the Pentagon moved U.S. forces into the region near Sudan last week, expecting that an evacuation of government personnel might be imminent. He also said the U.S. military has flown unmanned aerial vehicles over Sudan in order to support a U.N. convoy of evacuees during its 35-hour trek from Khartoum to Port Sudan.

"That is enabling us to support State Department efforts in terms of maintaining and

understanding the situation on the ground in order to, for example, look at potential land routes out of Sudan," Ryder told reporters Monday at the Pentagon.

The U.S. and other countries have been moving quickly in recent days to remove their citizens from Sudan as fighting intensified. The Pentagon said U.S. forces will remain there for as long as necessary.

"In the coming days, we will continue to work with the State Department to help American citizens who may want to leave Sudan," Christopher Maier, assistant secretary of defense for special operations and low-intensity warfare, said Sunday. "One of those ways is to potentially make the overland routes out of Sudan potentially more viable. So, [we are] considering actions that may include use of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities to be able to observe routes and detect threats."

Ryder said U.S. Africa Command has established a "deconfliction cell" in Germany that's designed to maintain communications between American forces and partners in Sudan to "keep them updated in terms of what the U.S. government is doing."

New US effort aims to deter N. Korean nuclear action

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden will use this week's celebratory state visit by South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol to underscore that the U.S. is ready to step up its efforts to deter a North Korean attack on South Korea, according to the White House.

Biden will announce specific new nuclear deterrence efforts as well as a new cyber security initiative, economic investments and an educational partnership, part of an effort to highlight the breadth and depth of the two countries' relationship as they mark the 70th anniversary of their alliance, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said.

White House officials say Biden hopes to put a particular emphasis on the United States' "iron clad" commitment to deterring nuclear action by North Korea as Pyongyang has stepped up ballistic missile tests,

including flight-testing a solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile for the first time earlier this month. The recent test is seen as a possible breakthrough in the North's efforts to acquire a more powerful, harder-to-detect weapon targeting the continental United States.

Sullivan didn't offer details on the new deterrence efforts ahead of the leaders' announcement, but said that the U.S. is looking to send a clear message to Pyongyang about its increasingly aggressive rhetoric.

"What I will say is that we believe that the statement will send a very clear and demonstrable signal of the United States' credibility when it comes to its extended deterrence commitments to the Republic of Korea and to the people of Korea," Sullivan said, using the formal name for South Korea.

Biden also hopes to use the visit, which began Tuesday, to underscore the importance of South Korea and Japan building on

their security ties.

Biden has sought opportunities to help the historic rivals improve their long, fraught relationship as the Indo-Pacific region becomes increasingly complicated. He held trilateral meetings with Yoon and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida that largely focused on the North Korea threat on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Cambodia last November and at the NATO summit in Madrid in June.

Last month, South Korea announced a plan to compensate Koreans who performed forced labor during Tokyo's colonial rule that doesn't require Japanese companies to contribute to the reparations.

Biden hailed the step as a "groundbreaking new chapter" in cooperation between the countries. Yoon followed up by visiting Tokyo later in March for talks with Kishida. It was the first summit between the two nations' leaders in Japan since 2011.

Russian missiles strike museum, worker killed

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — A Russian missile hit a museum building in a Ukrainian city on Tuesday, killing at least two people and wounding 10 others, part of a relentless barrage that comes as Ukraine is readying its forces for an expected spring counteroffensive.

Ukrainian officials said the Russian military used S-300 air defense missiles to attack Kupiansk in the Kharkiv region, hitting the museum of local history in the city center.

The Russian military has repeatedly used S-300s, which Ukraine's air defenses can't intercept, to attack ground targets.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy posted a video from the site that shows the ruined building and emergency responders examining the damage.

"The terrorist country is doing everything to destroy us completely," Zelenskyy said. "Our history, our culture, our people. Killing Ukrainians with absolutely barbaric methods."

Zelenskyy said a museum worker was killed, and Kharkiv regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov later reported that the body of another victim was pulled from the rubble.

Syniehubov said three people were hospitalized and seven received minor injuries.

Kupiansk was captured by Russian forces in the earlier stages of the Russian invasion, but was reclaimed by Ukrainian forces in a surprise counteroffensive in September that saw the Russians driven out of broad swaths of the Kharkiv region.

A woman also died in Russian shelling of the town of Dvorichna, near Kupiansk, and two civilians were killed in the eastern Donetsk region, according to the Ukrainian presidential office.

The Ukrainian military is now preparing for a new massive counteroffensive, relying on the latest supplies of Western battle tanks and other weapons and fresh troops that were trained in the West.

Zelenskyy on Tuesday met with the top military brass to discuss the battlefield situation as well as prospects for new weapons supplies and the preparation of troops.

"We have to accelerate the pace of weapons supply, because every day of delay is the lives of our soldiers," Zelenskyy said on Facebook.

Ukraine's military intelligence chief, Maj. Gen. Kyrylo Budanov, in an interview with RBC-Ukraine released Monday, described the planned counteroffensive as a "landmark battle in Ukraine's modern history" that would see the country "reclaim significant areas."

USS Nimitz makes history with 350K arrested landings

By DOUG G. WARE

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The oldest active aircraft carrier in the Navy has reached a major milestone — 350,000 arrested plane landings in nearly a half-century, the service announced.

The USS Nimitz hit the historic mark Saturday in the South China Sea when an F/A-18F Super Hornet touched down on the deck.

"I am honored and humbled to land this historic milestone for our ship," said Capt. Craig Sicola, the Nimitz's commanding officer and lead pilot of the fighter that made the landing. "I dedicate this landing to the countless naval aviators who have flown before me."

An arrested landing — also known as a trap — is one where a landing plane contacts the aircraft carrier and its tailhook snags one of four cables that are laid across the deck. By catching one of the cables, the tailhook immediately decelerates the fighter jet's speed so that it can safely stop. The decks of aircraft carriers are not long enough for planes to land in traditional fashion.

The Nimitz is the first of the Navy's Nimitz-class carriers and entered service in 1975, making its first arrested landing that same year. It is now the oldest active aircraft carrier anywhere in the world, the Navy said.

Dem senator warns GOP on stalling DOD promotions

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Democratic chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee cautioned Monday that a Republican senator's stalling tactic on Defense Department promotions will eventually harm the military and deadlock the upper chamber's routine confirmation process for officer nominees.

Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., said the decision by Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., to block the nominations as protest over the Defense Department's abortion policies will ultimately have an accumulating "corrosive" effect on the military and pave the way for

similar obstruction.

"There's only really one rule in the United States Senate: what goes around, comes around," Reed said during an event held by the Center for a New American Security, a left-leaning Washington think tank. "So if there's a situation in the future where someone has a social policy you disagree with — free health care for all, etc. — 'Well if this succeeds, I'll just pull the plug on general officers.'"

Tuberville has been holding up the promotion of about 200 senior officers for months to force the Defense Department to rescind new abortion policies that provide leave and reimbursement for service mem-

bers traveling to obtain the procedure.

His blockade prevents the Senate from confirming hundreds of nominations in a unanimous voice vote and could force the Senate into voting on each nominee one by one, a process that would consume months of Senate floor time.

"This is a very serious and intrusion of politics into what should be a professional military decision," Reed said. "It's virtually unprecedented."

Reed said the Defense Department will be able to manage without the promotions for the next few months, but eventually those officers will tire of waiting and move on to other opportunities.

'Let's finish this job': Biden seeks 2nd term

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Tuesday formally announced that he is running for reelection in 2024, asking voters to give him more time to “finish this job” and extend the run of America’s oldest president for another four years.

Biden, who would be 86 at the end of a second term, is betting his first-term legislative achievements and more than 50 years of experience in Washington will count for more than concerns over his age. He faces a smooth path to winning his party’s nomination, with no serious Democratic rivals. But he’s still set for a hard-fought struggle to retain the presidency in a bitterly divided nation.

The announcement, in a three-minute video, comes on the four-

year anniversary of when Biden declared for the White House in 2019, promising to heal the “soul of the nation” amid the turbulent presidency of Donald Trump — a goal that has remained elusive.

“I said we are in a battle for the soul of America, and we still are,” Biden said. “The question we are facing is whether in the years ahead we have more freedom or less freedom. More rights or fewer.”

While the prospect of seeking reelection has been a given for most modern presidents, that’s not always been the case for Biden. A notable swath of Democratic voters have indicated they would prefer he not run, in part because of his age — concerns Biden has called “totally legitimate” but ones he did not address head-on in the launch vid-

eo.

Yet few things have unified Democratic voters like the prospect of Trump returning to power. And Biden’s political standing within his party stabilized after Democrats notched a stronger-than-expected performance in last year’s midterm elections. The president is set to run again on the same themes that buoyed his party last fall, particularly on preserving access to abortion.

“Freedom. Personal freedom is fundamental to who we are as Americans. There’s nothing more important. Nothing more sacred,” Biden said in the launch video, depicting Republicans as trying to roll back access to abortion, cut Social Security, limit voting rights and ban books they disagree with. “Around the country, MAGA extremists are lining

up to take those bedrock freedoms away.”

As the contours of the campaign begin to take shape, Biden plans to campaign on his record.

The president also has multiple policy goals and unmet promises from his first campaign that he’s asking voters to give him another chance to fulfill.

“Let’s finish this job. I know we can,” Biden said in the video, repeating a mantra he said a dozen times during his State of the Union address in February.

For now, Trump, 76, is the favorite to emerge as the GOP nominee, creating the potential of a sequel to the bitterly fought 2020 campaign. But Trump faces significant hurdles of his own, including the designation of being the first former president to face criminal charges.

Transgender lawmaker again silenced at Mont. Statehouse

Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. — Montana Republicans persisted in forbidding Democratic transgender lawmaker Zooey Zephyr from participating in debate for a second week and her supporters brought the House session to a halt Monday — chanting “Let her speak!” from the gallery before they were escorted out.

Zephyr defiantly hoisted her microphone into the air as her supporters interrupted proceedings for nearly half an hour in protest of Republicans denying her requests to speak on a proposal that would restrict when children can change the names and pronouns they use in school and require parental consent.

The interruption — hours after supporters rallied on the Capitol steps — was the latest development in a standoff over Zephyr’s remarks against lawmakers who support a ban on gender-affirming care for mi-

nors. Zephyr, a first-term Democrat from Missoula, hasn’t spoken on the Statehouse floor since last Tuesday when she told Republican colleagues they would have “blood on their hands” if they banned gender-affirming medical care for transgender youth.

Law enforcement escorted Zephyr’s supporters from the gallery above the House floor, including several by force. Seven were arrested for criminal trespass, the sheriff said. They were going to be booked and released.

The disruption drew the ire of Republican leaders, who described it as a “riot” and an “insurrection.”

Leaders cut the sound on the video feed, and Zephyr remained on the floor holding her microphone as supporters also chanted “Whose House? Our House!” The sergeant-at-arms asked Zephyr to help settle things down — a request he said she rebuffed.

Famous Twitter users disavow Musk over verification return

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Celebrities, professional athletes and other high-profile Twitter users are once again being verified by the social media platform and they don’t know why their blue check marks reappeared — nor do they seem too happy about it.

Twitter removed the blue marks last week from accounts that don’t pay a monthly fee. But the check marks mysteriously returned for many highly followed accounts over the weekend, leading some prominent users to disavow what’s become a divisive symbol of Twitter owner Elon Musk’s erratic changes to the platform.

The account belonging to the Auschwitz Memorial, which has 1.5 million followers and tweets out photos and names of Holocaust victims, tweeted Sunday that after two days of no blue check mark, its account was reverified. The Memorial said it was “obliged to clarify” that it never subscribed and paid for

Twitter Blue as the icon implies.

Other high-profile accounts with more than 1 million followers also took to Twitter to make clear they didn’t pay to get their blue check back. Those who chimed in included writer Neil Gaiman and rapper Lil Nas X.

“On my soul i didn’t pay for twitter blue, u will feel my wrath tesla man!” wrote the rapper who has 8 million followers. Added Gaiman, who has 3 million followers: “What a sad, muddled place this has become.”

Under the original blue-check system, Twitter had roughly 400,000 verified users. In the past, the checks meant that Twitter had verified that users were who they said they were, as a method to prevent impersonation and the spread of misinformation. But now anyone can buy a Twitter Blue subscription starting at \$8 a month. It no longer means the user is verified, other than confirming a phone number.

College board: Black history classes to undergo changes

Associated Press

The College Board says changes will be made to its new AP African American studies course, after critics said the agency bowed to political pressure and removed several topics from the framework, including Black Lives Matter, slavery reparations and queer life.

In a statement on Monday, the College Board said the development committee and experts charged with authoring the Advanced Placement course “will determine the details of those changes over the next few months.”

“We are committed to providing an unflinching encounter with the facts and evidence of African American history and culture,” the company said.

It remains unclear what the changes are or when they will be made public.

The course gained national attention this winter when Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a possible Republican presidential candidate in 2024, said he would ban the course in his state because it pushed a political agenda.

“In the state of Florida, our education standards not only don’t prevent, but they require teaching Black history, all the important things. That’s part of our core curriculum,” DeSantis previously said. “We want education and not indoctrination.”

But the official curriculum for the course, released after DeSantis’ administration rejected it, downplayed some components that had drawn

objections from the governor and other conservatives. The College Board faced an onslaught of criticism from activists and African American scholars outraged at the notion the course changed because of political controversy.

The course was launched in 60 schools in the U.S. and will be expanded to 800 schools and 16,000 students this upcoming school year.

The nonprofit testing company previously said revisions to the course were substantially complete and not shaped by political influence before DeSantis shared his objections.

College Board officials said developers consulted with professors from more than 200 colleges, including several historically Black institutions, and took input from teachers piloting the class.

The company said Monday the creation of the course had prioritized access to a discipline that is not widely available to high schoolers, plus bringing that content to as many students as possible — a possible reference to students in states run by conservatives. “Regrettably,” the nonprofit testing company said, those two goals “came into conflict.”

The College Board offers AP courses across the academic spectrum, including in math, science, social studies, foreign languages and fine arts. The courses are optional and taught at a college level. Students who score high enough on the final exam usually earn course credit at their university.

Bullet train receives bipartisan backing

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — A bipartisan congressional group from Nevada and California asked the Biden administration Monday to fast-track federal funds for a private company to build a high-speed rail line between Las Vegas and the Los Angeles area.

All six of Nevada’s elected federal lawmakers and four House members from California sent the letter to U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. They said they’re on board with a proposal from Brightline West to spend more than \$10 billion to lay tracks along the Interstate 15 corridor.

Traffic jams on the interstate often stretch for 15 miles near the Nevada-California line as motorists head home after a weekend or holiday travel to Las Vegas. The Mojave Desert is largely open space, and the electric-powered trains could potentially cut the four-hour trip in half, carrying passengers at speeds of nearly 200 mph.

“This project is a major priority because it will make southern Nevada more accessible to millions of visitors each year,” said U.S. Sen. Jacky Rosen, the Nevada Democrat leading the group. She said it “will boost our economy and create more good-paying jobs.”

Brightline West is seeking \$3.75 billion in federal funding from the Biden administration-backed federal infrastructure law. The project could be “the blueprint for how we can connect major city pairs that are too short to fly and too far to drive,” said Mike Reininger, CEO of Florida-based Brightline Holdings LLC, the only privately owned and operated intercity passenger railroad in the United States.

Pot legalization moves closer to reality in Minnesota Legislature

AP/Report for America

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Recreational marijuana could soon be legalized and regulated in Minnesota under bills that are entering the final rounds of debate at the Legislature.

The House, where Democrats comfortably outnumber Republicans, debated its marijuana bill late into the night Monday before breaking around midnight, and was expected to pass it Tuesday after green-lighting similar legislation in 2021. The Senate, where Democrats hold only a one-seat majority, is scheduled to vote Friday on its own version.

“Today is a big day because we are now at the five-yard line” for legalizing cannabis, the lead

author, Democratic Rep. Zack Stephenson, of Coon Rapids, said at a news conference ahead of a debate that was expected to run late into the evening.

The bill has an emphasis on social equity, Stephenson said, and the overall focus is to make sure that people who have been harmed most by previous marijuana laws would benefit most through jobs and opportunities in the new, legal cannabis market.

Across the country, Black and Hispanic Americans have been disproportionately burdened by state convictions for marijuana-related offenses.

At least 21 other states have passed laws legalizing recreational use of marijuana by adults.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Ex-Disney worker admits taking videos up skirts

FL ORLANDO — A former Walt Disney World employee is facing a charge that he surreptitiously took a video up the skirt of a female customer, allegedly telling investigators he had done it more than 500 times over the past six years.

Jorge Diaz Vega, 26, worked at the Star Wars gift shop inside Disney World's Hollywood Studios theme park in Florida until his recent arrest on one count of video voyeurism, a third-degree felony punishable by up to five years in prison.

According to court records filed by Orange County Sheriff's detectives, Vega was spotted by a witness shooting a video up an 18-year-old woman's skirt. She later told security officers she was not aware of Vega's actions.

Detectives said that Vega volunteered during questioning that he takes the videos as a "guilty pleasure." Vega was arrested March 31 and released on \$2,500 bail.

Disney World said Sunday that Vega doesn't currently work for the company.

States urge Kia, Hyundai recall as thefts rise

CA SACRAMENTO — Attorneys general in 17 states urged the federal government to recall millions of Kia and Hyundai cars because they are too easy to steal, a response to a sharp increase in thefts fueled by a viral social media challenge.

Some Kia and Hyundai cars sold in the United States over the last decade do not have engine immobilizers, a standard

feature on most cars that prevents the engine from starting unless the key is present.

Videos circulating on TikTok have shown how people can start Kia and Hyundai models by using only a screwdriver and a USB cable. In Los Angeles, thefts of Hyundai and Kia cars increased by about 85% in 2022, now accounting for 20% of all car thefts in the city, according to the California attorney general's office.

"The bottom line is, Kia's and Hyundai's failure to install standard safety features on many of their vehicles have put vehicle owners and the public at risk," California Attorney General Rob Bonta said in a news release.

Prison commutations halted amid uproar

CT HARTFORD — Connecticut has paused all prison commutations in the wake of an uproar over a drastic rise in the number of inmates having their sentences reduced, the governor announced.

Conservative lawmakers and victims' rights advocates had called for the suspension of commutations and a review of the state's Board of Pardons and Paroles policies after it was revealed that 71 commutations were granted in 2022. Just three were approved between 2017 and 2021.

Those getting sentence reductions included 44 convicted murderers, who had an average of 15 years shaved off their sentences, according to lawmakers.

Richard Sparaco, the board's executive director, said the board would review aspects of its policy that drew criticism, including protocols for notifying

victims and a rule allowing people denied commutation to reapply after three years, according to Hearst Connecticut Media.

State secures 3-year supply of abortion meds

OR SALEM — Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek said she has directed the state to obtain a supply of the most commonly used abortion medication in the U.S. amid fears that a court ruling could restrict access to it.

The Democratic governor said patients in Oregon will have access to mifepristone for years.

"I will make sure that patients are able to access the medication they need and providers are able to provide that medication without unnecessary, politically-motivated interference and intimidation," Kotek said in a statement.

According to Kotek's office, the state is partnering with Oregon Health & Science University to obtain 22,500 doses of mifepristone. The state joins Washington, California, New York and Massachusetts in buying bulk amounts of abortion medication in recent weeks.

Freeway the sea lion euthanized after falling ill

CA SAN DIEGO — Freeway, the sea lion rescued after wandering inland from his ocean home and crossing busy San Diego thoroughfares, has been euthanized after falling ill.

The sea lion earned his name in January 2022 after being found on State Route 94, a freeway several miles from shore,

the San Diego Union-Tribune reported.

Since being rescued last year, Freeway had contracted a "progressive disease that our animal care experts diagnosed," SeaWorld said in statement.

"Despite extensive treatment, the disease caused his health to deteriorate over time," the statement said.

Given his decline, the team made the decision to humanely euthanize him, SeaWorld said.

Sports betting growth outpaces online gambling

NJ ATLANTIC CITY — While two-thirds of the country now offers legal sports betting, only six states offer online casino gambling, confounding industry hopes that the rapid growth of sports betting would also bring internet casino wagering along with it.

Speaking at the East Coast Gaming Congress in Atlantic City, industry executives and legislators from gambling states offered various explanations for why internet gambling has yet to expand beyond a handful of eastern states.

Internet gambling is legal in New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware, Michigan, Pennsylvania and West Virginia; Nevada offers online poker but not casino games.

By contrast, 33 states plus Washington, D.C. offer legal sports betting.

"It's a mystery to me why we have 30 or so states that have sports wagering, and only six that allow I-gaming," said Lloyd Levenson, an attorney who represents many Atlantic City casino companies. "You have to scratch your head as to why."

— From wire reports

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Jets, Packers agree on deal for Rodgers

Associated Press

After six weeks of waiting, Aaron Rodgers is leaving behind his brilliant legacy in Green Bay and heading to the bright lights — and massive expectations — of the Big Apple.

The New York Jets agreed on a deal Monday to acquire the four-time NFL MVP from the Packers, according to a person with knowledge of the trade. The person spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because the teams had not officially announced the deal.

Packers general manager Brian Gutekunst said at a pre-draft news conference that the deal hasn't been finalized, but should be completed before the draft begins Thursday.

"We were expecting it to be done very quickly, hopefully soon," Gutekunst said. "A lot of

things have been agreed upon. Some things to go through."

The Jets will receive Rodgers, the No. 15 overall pick and a fifth-rounder this year from the Packers, according to another person with knowledge of the trade. In exchange, Green Bay will get the 13th overall selection, a second-rounder (No. 42) and a sixth-rounder this year and a conditional 2024 second-round pick that can become a first-rounder if Rodgers plays 65% of plays for New York this season.

ESPN first reported the agreement on terms.

The 39-year-old Rodgers spent a few days in February contemplating his life and playing future during a retreat in Oregon — while fans and reporters speculated about what he would decide.

He emerged and deliberated

some more before deciding on March 10 he intended to play again — and for the Jets. Rodgers made his intentions official during an appearance on "The Pat McAfee Show" on YouTube and Sirius XM on March 15. That came after New York had sent a contingent that included owner Woody Johnson, coach Robert Saleh and general manager Joe Douglas to Rodgers' home in Southern California in early March.

And then he and the sports world waited — and waited — for the Packers and Jets to complete a deal.

"We've been working on this for a while," Gutekunst said. "To get beyond the draft I think would have been tough for both teams."

The sides were finally able to agree on compensation. And the deal puts the one-time Super

Bowl champion in New York after Zach Wilson, the No. 2 overall draft pick in 2021, struggled mightily in his first two seasons.

New York was 7-10 last season, finishing on a six-game losing streak that extended the NFL's longest active playoff drought to a franchise-record 12 straight years.

With the Jets, Rodgers reunites with offensive coordinator Nathaniel Hackett to try to jump-start an offense that was among the NFL's worst.

Rodgers joins some promising young playmakers on offense, such as wide receiver Garrett Wilson, the AP Offensive Rookie of the Year, and running back Breece Hall.

Saleh said the Jets remain committed to developing Wilson, the second overall pick in 2021. But the 23-year-old will do so as a backup to Rodgers.

Braves' Strider takes no-hitter vs. Marlins into 8th

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Spencer Strider sensed it could be a special night once he got through the fourth inning without issuing a walk.

He didn't know he would soon be flirting with a perfect game and then a no-hitter.

"It started to become aware to me that I had a chance to go deep in the game, if nothing else, pretty early on and I felt like each inning I could get going from the first pitch on," he said. "I didn't fall behind 2-0 a lot to the first hitter."

Strider took a no-hitter into the eighth and struck out a season-high 13 as the Atlanta Braves snapped a four-game skid Monday, hitting five home runs in an 11-0 victory over the Miami Marlins.

Fans booed when Jean Segura singled to left field to end Strider's no-hit bid with one out in the eighth, and Jon Berti followed with a single. But the

right-hander fanned the next two batters to finish his dominant outing with a flourish.

Strider had a perfect game going until Gold Glove first baseman Matt Olson made a fielding error on a leadoff grounder by Jazz Chisholm Jr. in the seventh.

"He didn't have any stressful innings," Braves manager Brian Snitker said. "He was flowing. It was just so smooth, and the ball was coming out really hot, too."

Rays 8, Astros 3: Rookie Taj Bradley won his third consecutive start to begin his big league career and host Tampa Bay set a modern-era MLB record with its 14th consecutive home win to begin a season.

The Rays are 20-3 overall. Only the 1911 Detroit Tigers and 1955 Brooklyn Dodgers had better starts at 21-2 since 1901.

The 22-year-old Bradley (3-0) allowed three runs and four hits with six strikeouts and no walks

in five innings.

Tigers 4, Brewers 2: Nick Maton had a three-run homer and Matthew Boyd pitched effectively for five innings to lead visiting Detroit over Milwaukee.

Reds 7, Rangers 6: TJ Friedl drove in the game-winning run with a ninth-inning single and host Cincinnati snapped a six-game losing streak.

Orioles 5, Red Sox 4: Ramón Urías hit a two-run double in the fourth inning, and host Baltimore rallied from a four-run deficit for its seventh straight victory.

Blue Jays 5, White Sox 2: Chris Bassitt pitched 6½ innings before leaving because of a sore lower back, Cavan Biggio hit a three-run home run and host Toronto beat Chicago.

Twins 6, Yankees 1: Sonny Gray pitched seven scoreless innings and Joey Gallo homered as the two former Yankees helped host Minnesota beat

New York.

Diamondbacks 5, Royals 4: Christian Walker scampered home for the go-ahead run in the eighth inning on Nick Ahmed's infield single, leading host Arizona past Kansas City.

Rockies 6, Guardians 0: Austin Gomber bounced back from a hideous start to get his first win, Jurickson Profar drove in three runs and visiting Colorado won for just the second time in 13 games.

Giants 4, Cardinals 0: Alex Cobb pitched his first shutout in 11 years and J.D. Davis hit a three-run homer, leading host San Francisco over St. Louis.

Athletics 11, Angels 10 (10): Ryan Noda hit a two-run double in the 10th inning, Brent Rooker and Jesús Aguilar became the first Oakland teammates to hit back-to-back homers twice in one game as the visiting Athletics rallied past Los Angeles after blowing an early six-run lead.

LeBron leads Lakers past Grizzlies in OT

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — When LeBron James got back to the Los Angeles locker room after Game 4, his fellow Lakers greeted him with a symphony of bleats.

They were simply saluting the G.O.A.T. in his own language to celebrate a performance that was anything but old — and a gritty win that put the Lakers on the brink of the second round.

James made the tying layup with 0.8 seconds left in regulation before scoring four of his 22 points in overtime, and the Lakers surged to a 3-1 lead in their first-round playoff series

with a 117-111 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies on Monday night.

The 38-year-old James also grabbed a career playoff-high 20 rebounds for the first 20-20 game of his 20-year career. The top scorer in NBA history added seven assists and two blocked shots while committing just one turnover in his record 270th playoff game.

“I just try to be as great as I can be offensively, but more importantly on the defensive end,” James said. “That was the mindset tonight. I was able to make a couple of plays. ... My teammates told me I had 20 and 20. It’s the first time I’ve done it

in my career, so that’s pretty cool, I guess.”

James never responded with words after Dillon Brooks dismissed him as “old” following Game 2 last week, but his play has continued to make the Grizzlies’ agitator look just as hubristic and foolish as he sounded. It has also put the second-seeded Grizzlies on the precipice of first-round elimination.

Austin Reaves scored 23 points and Anthony Davis had five of his 12 in overtime for the seventh-seeded Lakers, who won two straight home games to move one win shy of their first playoff series victory outside the Florida bubble since 2012.

“He just took over down the stretch,” Davis said of James. “Got us a bucket to get to overtime. ... All our guys, it was a good team effort. This team is not going to go away.”

Los Angeles surged back from a seven-point deficit with five minutes left in regulation with a rally that abruptly began when D’Angelo Russell hit three consecutive three-pointers, and the Lakers never trailed in OT.

“I’m so proud of our guys, the way we fought,” Lakers coach Darvin Ham said. “We found a way.”

Game 5 is Wednesday night in Memphis.

Butler scores 56, Heat push Bucks to brink of elimination

Associated Press

MIAMI — Jimmy Butler had the game of his life, and the Miami Heat had a comeback for the ages.

Butler scored 56 points — tying the fourth-best scoring performance ever in an NBA playoff game — and the Heat roared back from 14 points down in the final quarter to stun the Milwaukee Bucks 119-114 on Monday night to put the NBA’s top overall seed on the brink of early elimination.

The 56 points is also Butler’s career high, as well as a franchise playoff record. And the 14-point fourth-quarter comeback is Miami’s biggest of the season, at the absolute biggest time.

“We knew what we were capable of, even if nobody outside of this building, outside of this roster and outside of this organization believed in us,” Butler said. “That’s fine. We just want to continue to do what we know is possible.”

It is a statistically improbable story: The No. 8 seed now leads the No. 1 seed 3-1, something that has only happened four other times since the NBA went to the 16-team playoff format in 1984.

But Butler has willed them there. He was 19-for-28 from the field, 15-for-18 from the foul line and added nine rebounds.

“We deserved to win that game,” Heat center Bam Adebayo said, “because he played incredible.”

Brook Lopez scored 36 points and grabbed 11 rebounds for Milwaukee. Gian-

nis Antetokounmpo returned from a two-game absence with a bruised back and had a triple-double — 26 points, 10 rebounds and 13 assists.

The Bucks — who now need to win three straight, starting with Game 5 at Milwaukee on Wednesday — led almost the whole way, until the Heat roared back in the final minutes. Miami was 8-for-9 from the floor in the final six minutes, Milwaukee was 4-for-13, and the Heat outscored the Bucks 30-13 in that game-ending stretch.

“We didn’t make enough plays on either end,” Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said. “And they did.”

Butler had 21 of his points in the fourth, and the Heat still trailed 101-89 after a layup by Lopez with 6:09 left.

That’s when a 13-0 run, capped by a Butler dunk off a Bucks turnover, put Miami up for the first time all night with 3:17 left — 102-101.

The lead changed hands four more times, and Butler’s three-pointer with 1:20 left put Miami ahead for good. He added a step-back jumper on Miami’s next possession, punched the air in celebration, and the Heat knew they would soon be leaving with a 3-1 lead.

“For 40 minutes of this game, it was frustrating. ... It just shows you that when you have the right grit and perseverance, you can win,” Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. “And then it always helps to have a guy like him.”

The only players to score more in a playoff game: Michael Jordan had 63 in 1986, Elgin Baylor had 61 in 1962 and Donovan Mitchell had 57 in 2020. Butler became the fourth with 56, joining Jordan, Wilt Chamberlain and Charles Barkley.

“He obviously played great,” Lopez said. “He’s been great all series long. He’s been aggressive. He’s been knocking down shots, shooting the three extremely well. There hasn’t been a thing he hasn’t been doing. It’s a tough draw, but we have to keep getting better, keep making life tough for him, one game at a time.”

Adebayo scored 15, Caleb Martin had 12 and Gabe Vincent scored 10 for the Heat.

Antetokounmpo missed Games 2 and 3 of the series — and most of Game 1 — with a bruised lower back. He worked out Sunday, went through shootaround with the Bucks on Monday, got cleared to play and looked good as new.

But Butler was better than ever.

He set the tone early — with the highest-scoring quarter of his career. He had 22 of Miami’s 28 first-quarter points, including 20 in a row over a span of 5:45 late in the period.

And in the fourth, he had 21 more — leading a massive comeback, one that put a team that won an NBA-best 58 games this season squarely on the ropes in Round 1.

“The series is still going,” Spoelstra said. “And we have great respect for the championship DNA that group has.”

Eberle lifts Kraken past Avs to even series

Associated Press

SEATTLE — As one of the originals from Seattle's difficult opening season, Jordan Eberle found himself joking with some of his teammates of Game 4 against the defending Stanley Cup champions of being the biggest game to date in the brief history of the Kraken.

It will forever be memorable for the Kraken. First overtime playoff game. First overtime playoff win. And an unexpectedly tied series headed back to Denver.

Eberle scored on the power play 3 minutes into overtime and the Seattle Kraken beat the Colorado Avalanche 3-2 on Monday night to even their best-of-7 series at 2-2.

Eberle collected a deflection and buried his first goal of the playoffs past Colorado goalie Alexandar Georgiev. Seattle was on the power play after Josh Manson was called for tripping Jaden Schwartz on a breakaway attempt in the open-

ing moments of OT.

"We've been kind of the underdog from day one and we're just trying to fight back in this series," Eberle said. "We still have a lot of work ahead of us."

Seattle's first playoff overtime victory ensured there would be at least one more game played at home this season for the Kraken.

But the Kraken will be short-handed for Game 5 after Seattle coach Dave Hakstol said leading scorer Jared McCann won't play in Denver. McCann was injured on a questionable hit from Colorado's Cale Makar midway through the first period.

"Late hit, really late, no puck in play. Our 40-goal scorer not available for the rest of the game and is not going to be available going forward here," Hakstol said.

Will Borgen and Daniel Sprong scored in the first period to give Seattle a 2-0 lead. Mikko Rantanen scored twice in the second period for Colora-

do to pull even.

Rantanen now has five goals in four games, but the rest of Colorado's stars were held in check.

"You knew it was going to be tougher and tougher as the series goes on. Space is going to be less available, and you have to go earn every inch of ice," Colorado coach Jared Bednar said. "We didn't do a good enough job early in the hockey game taking care of our side of the ice."

Seattle dominated play in the offensive zone most of the night, outshooting Colorado 43-22. But after taking a 2-0 lead, the Kraken were unable to extend their advantage thanks largely to Georgiev. Colorado's goalie made 39 saves and kept the Avalanche from getting over-run in the first period.

But in the extra session, Manson's penalty at 1:59 provided the Kraken a chance to end their overtime debut quickly. Schwartz had his shot in front of the net blocked, but it fell to

Eberle's stick and he didn't miss the open net after being held in check for most of the series.

"It happened fast. I can't really remember before that but it was obviously really exciting," Schwartz said.

Seattle goalie Philipp Grubauer made 20 saves and came through when needed in the third period with a couple of key stops to deny Colorado a comeback victory.

For the second time in the series, Seattle was unable to make a 2-0 first-period lead stand.

Rantanen scored his first on a three-on-two rush that was set up by Nathan MacKinnon. His second came in the dying seconds of Colorado's first power play of the game, snapping a shot through a screen and past Grubauer with 2 seconds remaining on the man-advantage. It was Colorado's first power-play goal in 15 chances against Seattle, regular and postseason combined.

Maple Leafs rally, top Lightning in OT to lead series 3-1

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Auston Matthews knows as well as anyone that Toronto's job is not finished.

The Maple Leafs took advantage of another late collapse by the Tampa Bay Lightning, moving to the brink of their first playoff series win in nearly two decades Monday night with a 5-4 overtime win in Game 4 of the best-of-seven matchup.

Toronto hasn't won a playoff series since 2004 and has been ousted from the first round each of the past six postseasons, including a year ago when Tampa Bay rallied from 2-1 and 3-2 deficits to advance in seven games.

"The fourth one is the hardest to get," Matthews said after Alexander Kerfoot scored on the power play at 4:14 of overtime to give the Maple Leafs a 3-1 series lead.

"I'm obviously very hopeful we look at it as a positive sign with the spirit of our team, what we're capable of and what we can overcome that it just feels different," coach Sheldon Keefe said, though he also noted it's important for the team not to get ahead of itself.

"We've got a tough task," the coach added, looking ahead to Game 5 in Toronto on Thursday night.

The Lightning have won 11 of 12 playoff series over the past three postseasons, advancing to the Stanley Cup Final three straight years and winning the championship twice.

"We know what we're up against, what they've accomplished," Matthews said.

Golden Knights 4, Jets 2: William Karlsson and Ivan Barbashev scored 47 seconds apart in the second period, and visiting Vegas held on to beat Winnipeg and take a 3-1 lead in their first-round playoff series.

The Golden Knights could eliminate Winnipeg in Game 5 of the best-of-seven series on Thursday night in Las Vegas. Teams that take a 3-1 lead in a best-of-seven series hold a series record of 299-31.

Winnipeg lost more than the game when veteran star center Mark Scheifele left the ice early in the first period and the team announced he wouldn't return because of an upper-body injury.

Manitoba-born forward Brett Howden

scored twice for the Golden Knights, including one into an empty net. Chandler Stephenson and Shea Theodore each had two assists. Laurent Brossoit made 24 saves.

Blake Wheeler had a goal and assist, and Pierre-Luc Dubois also scored for Winnipeg. Neal Pionk added two assists, extending his point streak to seven assists in four games. Connor Hellebuyck stopped 26 of the 29 shots he faced for Winnipeg.

Devils 3, Rangers 1: Jonas Siegenthaler scored the tiebreaking goal in the third period, Akira Schmid had 22 saves in another shut-down start and visiting New Jersey beat New York to even the first-round playoff series at two games apiece.

Jack Hughes and Ondrej Palat also scored for New Jersey, which got its second straight tight win at Madison Square Garden after a pair of lopsided losses at home.

Vincent Trocheck scored for the Rangers, and Igor Shesterkin stopped 20 shots. New York has totaled just two goals in the last two games after scoring five each in the first two.

Game 5 is in Newark, N.J., on Thursday.