

China's catching up, USAF secretary warns

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

As American politicians have repeatedly haggled over federal budgets in recent years, often delaying critical funds for the military to start new weapons programs, the Chinese have built larger, more capable forces with an eye on challenging U.S. power, Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall warned senators on Tuesday.

"Time is my greatest concern," Kendall told the Senate's defense appropriations subpanel. "We are in a race for military technological superiority with a capable pacing challenge [in China]. Our cushion is gone. We are out of time."

The top civilian official for the Air Force and Space Force placed much of the blame on Congress, saying repeated stopgap funding measures in lieu of full yearly budgets in recent years have slowed his services' progression in new technology aimed at countering the growing capabilities of the Chinese in air

and space warfare, including in anti-satellite technologies and hypersonic weapons.

Kendall said the \$217.5 billion fiscal 2025 budget request for the Department of the Air Force was hamstrung by an agreement forged last year under the 2023 Fiscal Responsibility Act, which capped the Defense Department budget for 2025 at \$849.5 billion, a roughly 1% cut to the department's 2024 spending plan when adjusted for inflation.

The budget caps forced the Air Force to make "difficult choices" to slow the acquisition of major weapons — including the F-35A Lighting II stealth fighter jet and the F-15EX Eagle II fighter jet — to invest in developing the next generation of combat aircraft, including unmanned and autonomous fighters, said Gen. David Allvin, the service chief of staff.

Under the budget proposal, the Air Force's aircraft fleet would drop from almost 5,200 to about 4,900, the smallest inventory the service has seen in dec-

ades. Allvin defended the proposal as necessary under the budget constraints and because the Air Force is retiring older aircraft that it believes would be troubled in conflict.

"We've made tradeoffs to keep the Air Force's operational readiness today at the minimal acceptable to meet the nation's demands while seeking to preserve the previous year's advances in modernization," the general told lawmakers.

Meanwhile, the Chinese have boosted defense spending by at least 7% each year in recent years, Kendall and other defense officials have said. China already boasts the world's largest navy and could soon surpass the U.S. with the largest air force, Pentagon officials have projected.

Several of the subcommittee's senators said Tuesday that they shared Kendall's frustrations with the slow budget approval processes in recent years. The Pentagon has operated about five of the last 15 years under

continuing resolutions — the stopgap funding procedures that force the Pentagon to operate at the previous year's spending levels and halt work on new weapons programs and construction. The Defense Department operated roughly the first six months of fiscal 2024 under continuing resolutions.

Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., blasted the use of continuing resolutions to fund the government, noting the Senate's defense appropriations subcommittee had approved a defense appropriation for fiscal 2024 in July.

Tester also criticized the framework of the Fiscal Responsibility Act — forged by President Joe Biden and then-House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif. — as "totally inadequate" for defending the U.S.

"I think we've got to figure out a way to make sure in this dangerous time, which I believe is the most dangerous time in the world since the early 1960s, that we give you the money you need," the senator told Kendall.

Pre-K coming to most DODEA schools for first time

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Registration for prekindergarten at 80 Defense Department schools began Wednesday, marking the launch of the first full-day preschool program in most U.S. military communities worldwide.

A spending bill passed last month by Congress included \$75 million for universal prekindergarten, allowing the Department of Defense Education Activity to go ahead with a program that military parents have long desired.

The 80 schools preparing to welcome American 4-year-olds when the new school year starts in August include M.C. Perry Primary School in Iwakuni, Japan, which was the first in DODEA to offer prekindergarten this year.

All children eligible for DODEA schools who turn 4 on or before Sept. 1 may be registered, which can be done online at dodea.edu/registration.

An additional 10 schools will join the program in later phases, according to DODEA.

In the Pacific, all 23 primary

schools are preparing to open their doors to prekindergartners this fall.

In Europe, all but five of the 34 DODEA primary schools will have prekindergarten. Wiesbaden, Aukamm, Ansbach, Ramstein and Kleine Brogel elementary schools aren't equipped with the proper space or facilities to provide the program right away, said Jessica Tackaberry, a DODEA-Europe spokeswoman.

Prekindergarten start dates at those schools will be based on circumstances at each location,

Tackaberry said.

"Kleine Brogel will need modifications to current space and the remaining schools will need new facilities," she said.

About \$8.8 million of the \$75 million in federal funds for DODEA universal prekindergarten in fiscal year 2024 is for military construction, Tackaberry said. The remainder is for operations, a large portion of which will go toward pay and benefits.

DODEA has created 250 new teaching jobs to meet its goal of a student-to-teacher ratio of 18-to-1.

4 tons of fuel leak from Marine base into river

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP MUJUK, South Korea — Roughly four tons of diesel fuel from Camp Mujuk, 180 miles southeast of Seoul, leaked into a nearby stream last week, according to Pohang city officials and an environmental group.

The spill was first reported April 2 by city residents who complained of a smell from the Gwangmyeongcheon, a stream that flows alongside Camp Mujuk, a Pohang city official said by phone Tuesday.

South Korean officials customarily speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

City investigators deduced the fuel came from Mujuk, less

than a quarter-mile from the stream, and began containing it with spill fences and absorbent pads, the official said. The fuel has since been contained and is nearly all collected, the official added.

A Marine Corps Forces Korea spokesman said the command was aware of a “diesel fuel incident” but provided no further details.

“Our focus is containment and fuel recovery,” Capt. Rocco Hipolito said in an email Tuesday. “The cause of the incident is under investigation.”

Each year about 4,000 Marines pass through Mujuk, the only Marine Corps base in South Korea, for amphibious exercises, according to Marines.mil

and the official Mujuk website.

Hipolito said the camp’s Environment and Facilities Office is monitoring the situation and working with local authorities.

In a letter to the base Tuesday, Pohang Mayor Lee Kang-deok said the city was “concerned about damage to local residents and environmental pollution.”

The mayor requested that the base install an oil spill berm to prevent another incident and to help remove nearby soil that may have been contaminated, according to a copy of the letter obtained by Stars and Stripes.

The Korean Federation for Environmental Movement, a non-governmental organization with 52 chapters across the country, said it estimated four

tons of fuel spilled and that city workers had collected 20 tons of water mixed with fuel from the stream.

Mujuk’s leaders “should get to the bottom of the accident and make an official apology,” the organization said in a news release Tuesday.

Nearly all the absorbent pads were gone from the stream Wednesday, though spill fences remained in several areas.

Jeon Jae-woo, the owner of a noodle shop next to the stream, said he recalled an oily smell last week.

“I was too busy with customers to investigate, but I remember seeing a rainbow-colored sheen along the water’s surface,” he said.

US signals plans for upgrades at Papua New Guinea base

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

Three U.S.-funded projects are in the works to refurbish a navy base built by American forces in Papua New Guinea during World War II.

The proposed upgrades, costing up to \$25 million, include a jetty renovation, maritime training center and small boat facility at Lombrum Naval Base on Manus Island, according to an April 2 announcement by Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Pacific.

“These ... projects will support the [Papua New Guinea Defence Force], mar-

itime security operations, U.S. military personnel participating in joint exercises, and the [U.S. Indo-Pacific Command] Theater Campaign Plan with various critical facilities,” the announcement said.

The projects follow visits to Papua New Guinea last year by Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin.

A defense cooperation agreement signed during Blinken’s visit in May increases security cooperation between the two countries amid concerns about growing Chinese influence in the South Pacific.

Lombrum has already been upgraded with a medical facility, security fencing, communications gear and a chapel as part of a 2018 deal between Australia and Papua New Guinea, The Australian newspaper reported at the time.

The new proposed projects include a 7,556-square-foot regional maritime training center, a 7,351-square-foot small boat facility and refurbishing a 118-foot-long jetty, according to Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Pacific.

The projects’ combined cost was estimated at between \$11 million and \$25 million, according to the notice.

2 contractors die in on-the-job incident at Navy base in Japan

By HANA KUSUMOTO
AND JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

Two Japanese contractors were declared dead Tuesday after they were pulled from a tank on a barge at a Navy base in southwestern Japan, a Sasebo Police spokesman said Wednesday.

The men were found unconscious aboard the commercial barge used to service a U.S. vessel, Sasebo Naval Base spokesman Aki Nichols told Stars and Stripes by email Wednesday.

The men — Takahiro Sasahara, 54, and Seitaro Hamada, 33 — were confirmed dead at off-base hospitals, the police spokesman

said by phone Wednesday. They were working on a sewage treatment system for the vessel.

The base called the Sasebo city fire department at 12:07 p.m. to report two men found in a 16-foot-deep tank and an odor of gas at the site, a spokesman for the city’s fire bureau said by phone Wednesday.

The men, in cardiac arrest, were lifted from the tank by base firefighters after the local firemen arrived, the bureau spokesman said.

“The base is assisting and cooperating fully with the Nagasaki Prefectural Police who have initiated an investigation into the incident,” Nichols said.

Arizona can enforce law criminalizing abortions

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Arizona will soon join 14 other states that have banned abortion at all stages of pregnancy after a state Supreme Court ruling Tuesday found that officials may enforce an 1864 law criminalizing all abortions except when a woman's life is at stake.

The court said enforcement won't begin for at least two weeks.

However, it could be up to two months, based on an agreement reached in a related case in Arizona, according to state Attorney General Kris Mayes and Planned Parenthood, the plaintiffs in the current case.

The law provides no exceptions for rape or incest.

Under a near-total ban, the number of abortions in the state is expected to drop from about 1,100 monthly — as esti-

mated by a survey for the Society of Family Planning — to almost zero. The forecast is based on what has happened in other states that ban abortion at all stages of pregnancy.

Arizona Sen. Eva Burch, who has had an abortion since announcing on the Senate floor last month that she was seeking one because her pregnancy wasn't viable, criticized GOP lawmakers who back the ban.

"The fight for reproductive rights is not over in Arizona," she said, referring to a statewide petition campaign to put the issue on the ballot this fall. "This moment must not slow us down."

According to AP VoteCast, 6 out of 10 Arizona voters in the 2022 midterm elections said they would favor guaranteeing access to legal abortion nationwide.

Planned Parenthood officials vowed to continue providing abortions for the short time they are still legal and said they will reinforce networks that help women travel out of state to places like New Mexico and California to access abortion.

"Even with today's ruling, Planned Parenthood Arizona will continue to provide abortion through 15 weeks for a very short period of time," said Angela Florez, president of the organization's Arizona chapter.

Arizona State University student Katarina White welcomed the ruling.

"I was overcome by joy and happy to know that all these babies that could potentially be aborted aren't going to be aborted," the Tempe resident said. "It just made me really proud to be an Arizonan."

Greene threatens House Speaker

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Hard-right Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene escalated her criticism Tuesday of House Speaker Mike Johnson, blistering his leadership in a lengthy letter to colleagues and renewing threats of a snap vote that could remove him from office.

As lawmakers returned to work from a two-week spring recess, the fresh onslaught from the Georgia congresswoman dragged the still-new speaker back into the Republican chaos that has defined GOP House control and threatens to grind work to a halt. Johnson may very well be unable to execute the basics of his job.

"Today, I sent a letter to my colleagues explaining exactly why I filed a motion to vacate against Speaker Johnson," Greene said on social media about the procedural tool that could force the quick vote.

Greene in stark terms warned Johnson not to reach across the aisle to Democrats for votes he would need to pass pending legislation that hard-right Republicans oppose, particularly aid to Ukraine. That aid package as well as other agenda items are in grave doubt.

"I will not tolerate this type of Republican 'leadership,'" wrote Greene, a top ally of presumptive presidential nominee Donald Trump, in the five-page letter first reported by The New York Times.

The standoff threatens to mire the House in another standstill, saddling the Republican majority with a do-nothing label after months of turmoil that has sent some seasoned lawmakers heading for the exits.

Biden administration imposes some drinking water limits on toxic PFAS

Associated Press

The Biden administration on Wednesday finalized strict limits on certain so-called "forever chemicals" in drinking water that will require utilities to reduce them to the lowest level they can be reliably measured. Officials say this will reduce exposure for 100 million people and help prevent thousands of illnesses, including cancers.

The rule is the first national drinking water limit on toxic PFAS, or perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, which are widespread and long lasting in the environment.

Health advocates praised the Environmental Protection Agency for not backing away

from tough limits the agency proposed last year. But water utilities took issue with the rule, saying treatment systems are expensive to install and that customers will end up paying more for water.

Water providers are entering a new era with significant additional health standards that the EPA says will make tap water safer for millions of consumers — a Biden administration priority. The agency has also proposed forcing utilities to remove dangerous lead pipes.

Utility groups warn the rules will cost tens of billions of dollars each and fall hardest on small communities with fewer resources. Legal challenges are

sure to follow.

EPA Administrator Michael Regan says the rule is the most important action the EPA has ever taken on PFAS.

"The result is a comprehensive and life changing rule, one that will improve the health and vitality of so many communities across our country," said Regan.

PFAS chemicals are hazardous because they don't degrade in the environment and are linked to health issues such as low birth weight and kidney cancer.

They've been used in everyday products including nonstick pans, firefighting foam and waterproof clothing.

School shooter's parents sentenced to 10 years in jail

Associated Press

PONTIAC, Mich. — The first parents convicted in a U.S. mass school shooting were sentenced to at least 10 years in prison Tuesday as a Michigan judge lamented missed opportunities that could have prevented their teenage son from possessing a gun and killing four students in 2021.

"These convictions are not about poor parenting," Oakland County Judge Cheryl Matthews said. "These convictions confirm repeated acts, or lack of acts, that could have halted an oncoming runaway train."

The hearing in a crowded, tense courtroom was the climax of an extraordinary effort to make others besides the 15-year-old attacker criminally responsible for a school shooting.

Jennifer and James Crumbley did not know Ethan Crumbley had a handgun — he called it his "beauty" — in a backpack when he was dropped off at Oxford High School. But prosecutors convinced jurors the parents still played a disastrous role in the violence.

The Crumbleys were accused of not securing the newly purchased gun at home and acting indifferently to signs of their son's deteriorating mental health, especially when confronted with a chilling classroom drawing earlier that same day.

The Crumbleys earlier this year were convicted of involuntary manslaughter.

"The blood of our children is on your hands, too," Craig Shilling told the couple, wearing a hoodie with the image of son Justin Shilling on his chest.

Nicole Beausoleil, the mother of shooting victim Madisyn Baldwin, said the Crumbleys had

failed at parenting.

"While you were purchasing a gun for your son and leaving it unlocked," Beausoleil said, "I was helping her finish her college essays."

Prosecutor Karen McDonald asked the judge to stretch beyond the sentencing guidelines and order a minimum 10-year prison sentence.

Defense attorneys sought to keep the Crumbleys out of prison, noting they have already spent nearly 2½ years in jail, unable to afford a \$500,000 bond.

They will get credit for that jail time and become eligible for parole after serving 10 years in custody. If release from prison is denied, they could be held for up to 15 years.

Five deputies in the suburban Detroit courtroom stood closely over the couple, and more lined the walls. James Crumbley, 47, had been recorded in jail making threats toward McDonald.

Before being sentenced, he stood and insisted he did not know his son was deeply troubled.

"My heart is really broken for everybody involved. ... I have cried for you and the loss of your children more times than I can count," he said.

Relatives of the victims were not impressed by the Crumbleys' courtroom comments. Beausoleil said they were portraying themselves as victims.

The judge will decide later whether the Crumbleys will be allowed to have contact with their son while the three are in separate state prisons, though McDonald, the prosecutor, said the Corrections Department typically prohibits communication between co-defendants.

Ex-school official charged with neglect in shooting

Associated Press

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. — A former assistant principal at a Virginia elementary school has been charged with felony child neglect more than a year after a 6-year-old boy brought a gun to class and shot his first-grade teacher.

A special grand jury in Newport News found that Ebony Parker showed a reckless disregard for the lives of Richneck Elementary School students on Jan. 6, 2023, according to indictments unsealed Tuesday.

Parker and other school officials already face a \$40 million negligence lawsuit from the teacher who was shot, Abby Zwerner. She has accused Parker and others of ignoring multiple warnings the boy had a gun and was in a "violent mood" the day of the shooting.

Criminal charges against school officials following a school shooting are quite rare, experts have said. Parker, 39,

faces eight felony counts, each of which is punishable by up to five years in prison.

The Associated Press left a message seeking comment Tuesday with Parker's attorney, Curtis Rogers.

Court documents filed Tuesday reveal little about the criminal case against Parker, listing only the counts and a description of the felony charge. It alleges that Parker "did commit a willful act or omission in the care of such students, in a manner so gross, wanton and culpable as to show a reckless disregard for human life."

The lawsuit alleges that Parker "had no response, refusing even to look up" when Zwerner expressed her concerns.

A guidance counselor also asked Parker for permission to search the boy, but Parker forbade him, "and stated that John Doe's mother would be arriving soon to pick him up," the lawsuit stated.

Idaho man faces terrorism charge in church hit plan

Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — An 18-year-old man planned to attack churches in a northern Idaho city using a metal pipe, butane fuel, a machete and, if he could get them, his father's guns, according to federal prosecutors who charged him with attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State.

Authorities said Alexander Scott Mercurio adopted the Muslim faith against his Christian parents' wishes and was in contact with FBI informants posing as ISIS supporters.

Mercurio was arrested Saturday, the day before investigators believe he planned to carry out the attack. Phone messages left for a relative and for his defense attorneys at the Federal

Defenders of Eastern Washington & Idaho were not immediately returned Tuesday. Mercurio did not immediately respond to an email.

Mercurio told one informant he intended to incapacitate his father with the pipe, handcuff him and steal his guns and a car to carry out the attack in Coeur d'Alene, according to an FBI agent's sworn statement in the case unsealed Monday in U.S. District Court.

The guns included rifles, handguns and ammunition his father kept in a locked closet, but Mercurio still planned to attack with the pipe, fire and knives if he couldn't get the firearms, alleged the sworn statement by FBI task force officer John Taylor II.

Biden blasts war conduct as Israel rift grows

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — President Joe Biden called Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's handling of the war in Gaza a mistake and called for his government to flood the beleaguered territory with aid, ramping up pressure on Israel to reach a cease-fire and widening a rift between the staunch allies.

Palestinians in Gaza marked a muted Eid al-Fitr holiday ending the holy fasting month of Ramadan, visiting the graves of loved ones killed in the war. In the Jabaliya refugee camp near Gaza City, people sat quietly by graves surrounded by buildings destroyed by Israel's offensive in response to the deadly Hamas attack on Oct. 7.

Biden has been an outspoken supporter of Israel's war against

Hamas. But in recent weeks his patience with Netanyahu has appeared to wane and his administration has taken a more stern line with Israel, rattling the countries' decades-old alliance and deepening Israel's international isolation over the war.

The most serious disagreement has been over Israel's plans for an offensive in the southernmost Gaza city of Rafah. The rift was worsened by an Israeli airstrike last week on an aid convoy that killed seven workers with the World Central Kitchen charity, most of them foreigners. Israel said the deaths were unintentional but Biden was outraged.

Biden's latest comments, made in an interview that aired late Tuesday and recorded two days after the WCK strike, highlight the differences between Israel

and the U.S. over humanitarian aid to people in Gaza, where the war has led to warnings of imminent famine for more than a million people.

"What he's doing is a mistake. I don't agree with his approach," Biden told Spanish-language broadcaster Univision when asked if Netanyahu was prioritizing his political survival over Israel's interest.

Biden said Israel should agree to a cease-fire, flood beleaguered Gaza with aid for the next six to eight weeks and allow other countries in the region to help distribute aid. "It should be done now," he said.

On Wednesday, three sons of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh were killed in an Israeli airstrike in the Gaza Strip, relatives and official Hamas media said, with Ha-

niyeh accusing Israel of acting in "the spirit of revenge and murder."

Haniyeh confirmed the deaths Wednesday in an interview with the Al Jazeera satellite channel, saying his sons "were martyred on the road to liberating Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque."

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli army.

Ismail Haniyeh lives in exile in Qatar, where Al Jazeera is based. He said the killings would not pressure Hamas into softening its positions.

Israel and Hamas are engaged in talks meant to bring about a cease-fire in exchange for the release of hostages captured by Hamas and others on Oct. 7. But the sides remain far apart on key issues, including the return of Palestinians to northern Gaza.

At White House, Biden and Japan's leader talk security

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden hailed Prime Minister Fumio Kishida for bold leadership as he welcomed the Japanese leader to the White House on Wednesday for talks on the delicate security situation in the Pacific and for a glitzy state dinner.

Kishida's official visit completes the administration's feting of the leaders of the Quad, the informal partnership between the U.S., Japan, Australia and India that the White House has focused on elevating since Biden took office. As administration officials put it, they saved the most pivotal relationship for last.

"The unbreakable alliance between Japan and the United States is the cornerstone of peace, security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and around the world," Biden said as he welcomed Kishida to a pomp-filled arrival ceremony on the White House South Lawn.

The visit also marks the realization of Japan's transformation from regional player to that of global influencer — with senior Biden administration officials noting appreciatively there is little the U.S. does across the globe that Tokyo doesn't support. They pointed to Japan's eagerness to take a leading role in trying to bolster Ukraine against Russia's invasion and with the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

"The cooperation between our countries bound together by common values and commitment has become a global one with the scope and depth covering outer space and the deep sea," Kishida said.

Biden and Kishida are both confronting difficult political headwinds on the home front while trying to navigate increasingly complicated problems on the global stage. Like Biden, Kishida has been dogged by low approval ratings for much of his tenure.

'Help' sign leads US forces to stranded Micronesians

BY JOSEPH DITZLER

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Navy and Coast Guard found and rescued three men Tuesday from a tiny atoll south of Guam, where they spent more than a week after they were left stranded.

The men, all in their 40s, set sail from Polowat Atoll, Micronesia, on March 31 in a small, open 20-foot skiff powered by an outboard motor, according to a news release from Coast Guard Forces Micronesia, Sector Guam. The men had experience navigating in those seas.

The skiff was damaged, though the release did not specify how or when, and the motor rendered inoperative.

A week later, on April 6, a relative "reported her three uncles had not returned from Pikelot Atoll," approximately 115 miles northwest of Polowat Atoll, a part of Chuuk State in the Federated States of Micronesia.

Joint Rescue Sub-Center

Guam mobilized a search that drew a U.S. Navy P-8 Poseidon patrol aircraft from Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, and the Guam-based Coast Guard cutter Oliver Henry.

The Poseidon crew found the three Sunday thanks to a message they left on the Pikelot beach.

"In a remarkable testament to their will to be found, the mariners spelled out 'HELP' on the beach using palm leaves, a crucial factor in their discovery," Coast Guard Lt. Chelsea Garcia, the search and rescue mission coordinator, said in the release. "This act of ingenuity was pivotal in guiding rescue efforts directly to their location."

The Poseidon crew left the men survival packages, and the Oliver Henry was rerouted to Pikelot, the release said. The Oliver Henry arrived Tuesday morning, took the men and their equipment, including their skiff, aboard and returned them to Polowat, according to the Coast Guard.

Calipari leaves Kentucky after 15 years

Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — There were too many people for John Calipari to thank by name, and too many moments to single out from one of the most fulfilling chapters of his career.

He used this moment to say goodbye.

Calipari stepped down as Kentucky's men's basketball coach after 15 years on Tuesday, saying that the "program probably needs to hear another voice" the day before being hired by Arkansas to take over that Southeastern Conference program.

Calipari posted a video on X, formerly Twitter, in which he said that after talking with his wife, Ellen, he decided a change was needed. He added, "We've loved it here, but we think it's time for us to step away and step away completely from the program."

Calipari leaves a Wildcats program he guided to the 2012 NCAA championship among four Final Four appearances. He went 410-123 in 15 seasons. The past few seasons have been disappointing by Ken-

tucky standards, with a 1-3 mark in its last three NCAA Tournament trips, including first-round losses to No. 14 seed Oakland last month and No. 15 seed Saint Peter's two years ago.

The Wildcats' most recent loss set off immediate calls to fire Calipari before athletic director Mitch Barnhart said days later that Calipari would return next season. Firing Calipari would've triggered a buyout of more than \$33 million under the terms of a 10-year, so-called lifetime contract signed in 2019.

Barnhart said in a statement that Kentucky would work diligently to hire "a proven, highly dedicated coach who embraces the importance of this program to our fans and the state of Kentucky."

The AD added: "We're appreciative of John Calipari leading our program for the last 15 years, adding to the legacy of championship success at Kentucky. We're grateful to John for his many contributions to the university, and our state, both on and off the court."

The list of possible candidates includes

Baylor's Scott Drew, who guided the Bears to a national title in the 2020-21 COVID-19 season. UConn's Dan Hurley, who guided the Huskies to their second consecutive NCAA championship, also has been mentioned along with Chicago Bulls coach Billy Donovan, a former Kentucky assistant whose Florida squads were the NCAA's last back-to-back champs before UConn.

Donovan said before Chicago hosted New York on Tuesday night that he has not been contacted by Kentucky, and he reiterated his commitment to the Bulls and their quest for a playoff berth.

"A lot of this stuff I think sometimes turns out to be speculation," he said. "But I have not had any contact with anybody and my commitment's here."

Calipari didn't specifically mention the Arkansas job he was linked to since multiple reports surfaced Sunday night about negotiations with the school. The Hall of Famer simply said, "There have been opportunities that have been presented to us, so we're discussing them as a family."

Warriors connect on 26 3-pointers to beat Lakers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Klay Thompson scored 27 points, Stephen Curry had 23 and the Golden State Warriors capitalized on Anthony Davis' injury absence for a 134-120 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday night.

Andrew Wiggins had 17 points for the 10th-place Warriors, who hit 26 of their 41 3-point attempts — including an astonishing 16-for-23 from Curry, Thompson and Draymond Green, who went 5-for-5 in the first half by himself.

Golden State's 26 3s were the most ever allowed in a game by the Lakers.

The Warriors (44-35) have won eight of nine down the stretch to move within a half-game of ninth-place Los Angeles (45-35). Golden State also won the head-to-head tiebreaker between the rivals, putting home-court advantage for a potential 9-10 play-in game next week in the Warriors' hands over their final three regular-season games.

Mavericks 130, Hornets 104: Luka Doncic had 39 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists, and visiting Dallas continued its surge heading into the postseason, beating Charlotte for its 15th win in 17 games.

76ers 120, Pistons 102: Joel Embiid had 37 points and 11 rebounds and host Philadelphia extended its winning streak to six games with a victory over Detroit.

Pacers 140, Raptors 123: Tyrese Haliburton scored 30 points, Pascal Siakam added 16 points in 26 minutes in his second game back in Toronto and Indiana pulled away early in the second half.

Heat 117, Hawks 111 (2OT): Tyler Herro scored four of his 33 points in the second overtime and visiting Miami outlasted Atlanta.

Bucks 104, Celtics 91: Giannis Antetokounmpo left late in the third quarter with a calf injury, but host Milwaukee hung on to beat Boston in a game that featured an NBA record-low total of two free-throw attempts.

Nicks 128, Bulls 117: Jalen Brunson scored 45 in his second straight 40-point game, and visiting New York beat Chicago.

Rockets 118, Magic 106: Fred VanVleet scored a season-high 37 points and host Houston snapped a five-game skid with a victory over Orlando.

Spurs 102, Grizzlies 87: Victor Wembanyama had 18 points, seven blocks, seven rebounds and six assists, Julian Cham-

paigne added 17 points, and visiting San Antonio rode a third-quarter burst to a victory over Memphis.

Timberwolves 130, Wizards 121: Anthony Edwards scored a career-high 51 points and host Minnesota overcame an early 21-point deficit with a dominant second half to beat Washington.

Thunder 112, Kings 105: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 40 points in his return from injury, and host Oklahoma City rallied from a 20-point deficit to defeat Sacramento and halt Domantas Sabonis' double-double streak at 61 games.

Nuggets 111, Jazz 95: Jamal Murray scored 28 points, Nikola Jokic tallied 28 points and 13 rebounds, and visiting Denver pushed past shorthanded Utah.

Clippers 105, Suns 92: Russell Westbrook had 16 points, 15 rebounds and 15 assists for his first triple-double of the season and 199th of his career, and visiting Los Angeles built a 31-point lead in the first quarter before holding on late for a victory over Phoenix.

Pelicans 110, Trail Blazers 100: Trey Murphy III had 31 points and eight rebounds, and visiting New Orleans beat Portland.

Tigers rally in 9th with 4 runs to beat Pirates

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Gio Urshela, Kerry Carpenter and Jake Rogers delivered RBI singles in the ninth inning as the Detroit Tigers rallied past the Pittsburgh Pirates 5-3 on Tuesday.

Detroit won for just the second time in six games by getting to Pirates closer David Bednar (1-1), who blew his third save opportunity in four tries.

Pittsburgh led 3-1 heading to the ninth before the Tigers broke loose against Bednar, a two-time All-Star who missed most of spring training with a lat injury.

Bednar walked Greene leading off the inning, then hit Spencer Torkelson. Urshela singled and both runners scored when Michael A. Taylor's wayward throw from center to third base skipped into the netting near the Pittsburgh dugout.

"I mean, what we've seen over the past couple of years is he had elite command," Pittsburgh manager Derek Shelton said. "Over the last three or four outings, that just hasn't been there. I mean, even with the curveball, hitting Torkelson. Just, we have to clean up the command issue."

Yankees 3, Marlins 2: Carlos Rodón allowed two unearned runs in six-plus innings, Alex Verdugo homered and host New York beat Miami to match its best 12-game start.

Miami dropped to 1-11 for the first time since losing 11 in a row after an opening victory in 1998. The Marlins are the first team to lose 11 of their first 12 since Baltimore in 2010.

Orioles 7, Red Sox 1: Colton Cowser drove in four runs and Corbin Burnes allowed two hits over seven innings as visiting Baltimore won in Boston's home opener.

Cowser had a pair of RBI doubles, the second driving in two runs in the fourth to break a 1-1 tie. He added a sacrifice fly in the eighth to help the Orioles stop a two-game skid.

White Sox 7, Guardians 5: Dominic Fletcher hit a two-run double in the eighth inning as Chicago snapped a five-game losing streak with its first road win over Cleveland.

Fletcher's shot to right-center off Scott Barlow (0-2) broke a 5-5 tie as the White Sox finally broke out of an early season offensive funk.

Brewers 9, Reds 5: Christian Yelich and Blake Perkins each drove in three runs, helping Joe Ross and visiting Milwaukee beat Cincinnati.

Perkins and Sal Frelick each had three of Milwaukee's 13 hits. Jake Bauers had two RBIs.

Blue Jays 5, Mariners 3: Bo Bichette hit a two-run homer, Chris Bassitt pitched 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ effective

innings to win for the first time in three starts this season and host Toronto beat Seattle.

Isaiah Kiner-Falefa had three hits and an RBI, Cavan Biggio reached base three times and George Springer drove in a pair as the Blue Jays won their second straight.

Dodgers 6, Twins 3: Tyler Glasnow tied his career high with 14 strikeouts in seven scoreless innings, and visiting Los Angeles beat Minnesota.

James Outman and Will Smith each hit a three-run homer as Los Angeles won for the third time in four games. Mookie Betts walked three times and scored a run.

Braves 6, Mets 5: Ronald Acuña Jr. scored three runs and stole three bases, Reynaldo López threw six scoreless innings and host Atlanta held off New York.

The Braves led 6-0 before Pete Alonso hit a three-run homer off Tyler Matzek in the eighth. Atlanta closer Raisel Iglesias gave up two runs in the ninth, including Omar Narváez's run-scoring double, but earned his second save. Iglesias struck out Alonso with a runner on to end the game.

Cardinals 3, Phillies 0: Sonny Gray tossed five innings in his St. Louis debut and shut out visiting Philadelphia.

Gray (1-0) allowed five hits, struck out five and walked none. The 34-year-old right-hander threw 43 of his 64 pitches for strikes.

Royals 4, Astros 3 (10): Salvador Perez hit a game-ending single in the 10th inning, and host Kansas City beat Houston for its fifth consecutive victory.

Athletics 4, Rangers 3: Shea Langeliers hit three home runs, including a two-run drive in the ninth inning that lifted visiting Oakland over Texas.

Diamondbacks 3, Rockies 2: Corbin Carroll homered on the second pitch of the game, Merrill Kelly tossed six solid innings and visiting Arizona gave manager Torey Lovullo his 500th career victory with a win over Colorado.

Rays 6, Angels 4: José Caballero had three hits and two RBIs, Isaac Paredes homered and visiting Tampa Bay beat Los Angeles despite Mike Trout's sixth home run.

Nationals 5, Giants 3: CJ Abrams homered and drove in three runs after missing three games with a bruised left pinkie, and visiting Washington beat San Francisco.

Cubs 5, Padres 1: Christopher Morel hit his first career grand slam and Yan Gomes also connected for visiting Chicago in a win over San Diego.

Stanford's VanDerveer retires as winningest NCAA coach

Associated Press

STANFORD, Calif. — Tara VanDerveer lent her time and energy to a young Dawn Staley behind the scenes years before the South Carolina coach started winning championships or delivering an improbable undefeated season.

The Hall of Fame Stanford coach did the same for her Pac-12 rivals.

For Cori Close. For Lindsay Gottlieb. For Charmin Smith. For Charli Turner Thorne. And for Kate Paye, who will become VanDerveer's successor now that the 70-year-old women's basketball pioneer is retiring.

Nearly everybody has a story of how Van-

Derveer went out of her way to do something kind along the way during her decorated, four-decade career. She cherished her role in helping the sport any way she could. And now, she is leaving on a high note.

The winningest basketball coach in NCAA history announced her retirement Tuesday night after 38 seasons leading the Stanford women's team and 45 years overall.

VanDerveer surpassed Mike Krzyzewski for the wins record in January. She departs with 1,216 victories at Idaho, Ohio State and Stanford.

"Basketball is the greatest group project there is, and I am so incredibly thankful for every person who has supported me and our teams throughout my coaching career," VanDerveer said in a statement. "I've been spoiled to coach the best and brightest at one of the world's foremost institutions for nearly four decades."

And as has been the plan for years, top Cardinal assistant Paye is set to take over the program, and Stanford said in a statement that negotiations with Paye are underway. Paye played for VanDerveer from 1991-95 and has coached on her staff for 17 years.

Panthers get boost, shut out Senators

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Anthony Stolarz stopped 25 shots and had an assist, Anton Lundell and Nick Cousins scored, and the Florida Panthers shut out the Ottawa Senators for the third time this season with a 2-0 victory on Tuesday night.

It was the second instance of Florida shutting out a team three times in one season, the other coming when the Panthers blanked Montreal three times in 2017-18. And it was a needed win for playoff-bound Florida, with the Panthers winning for just the fourth time in their last 13 games (4-7-2).

Joonas Korpisalo stopped 27 shots for Ottawa, which has four games left and will miss the playoffs for the seventh consecutive season. The Senators were 0-3-1 against Florida this season, getting outscored 16-2 in those contests.

Capitals 2, Red Wings 1: Alex Ovechkin and Dylan Strome scored a minute apart late in the second period, Charlie Lindgren finished with 42 saves and visiting Washington held on to beat Detroit in a matchup of teams vying for a spot in the Eastern Conference playoffs.

The Capitals moved a point past Detroit for the conference's second wild card and

snapped a season-long, six-game losing streak. The Red Wings have lost six of their last eight games, hurting their chances of ending an eight-year playoff drought.

Maple Leafs 5, Devils 2: Auston Matthews scored his 66th goal and inched closer to becoming the ninth player in NHL history to tally 70 in a season in helping visiting Toronto end disappointing New Jersey's playoff hopes.

Mark Giordano and Tyler Bertuzzi scored in a 9-second span late in the second period to give the Maple Leafs a 3-2 lead en route to their sixth win in seven games.

Islanders 4, Rangers 2: Bo Horvat had a goal and an assist, Noah Dobson added two assists and the host New York Islanders used a three-goal first period to propel them to a win against the Eastern-Conference leading New York Rangers.

Semyon Varlamov finished with 32 saves, Mike Reilly, Kyle Palmieri and Anders Lee also scored goals and the Islanders extended their winning streak to five games, inching closer to a spot in the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

Lightning 5, Blue Jackets 2: Steven Stamkos had three goals and an assist, NHL points leader Nikita Kucherov picked up his fourth straight three-point

game with three assists, and playoff-bound Tampa Bay beat visiting Columbus.

The Lightning hold the top Eastern Conference wild card and trail Toronto by six points for third place in the Atlantic Division.

Canadiens 9, Flyers 3: Juraj Slafkovsky scored his first career hat trick, and host Montreal dealt stumbling Philadelphia its eighth straight loss.

Hurricanes 4, Bruins 1: Andrei Svechnikov opened the scoring with a lacrosse-style goal and visiting Carolina beat Boston.

The Hurricanes reached 50 wins and pulled within three points of the New York Rangers for the top spot in the Eastern Conference.

Stars 3, Sabres 2: Joe Pavelski scored the go-ahead goal on a deflection with his back to the net and playoff-bound Dallas got its 50th win of the season over visiting Buffalo.

Jason Robertson and Wyatt Johnston also had goals while Thomas Harley had two assists for the Stars, who won for the 10th time in 11 games and have a Western Conference-high 109 points with three games to play.

Jets 4, Predators 3 (OT): Kyle Connor scored at 1:52 of overtime to give visiting Winnipeg a victory over Nashville.

With the overtime loss, the Predators clinched a playoff spot.

Avalanche 5, Wild 2: Nathan MacKinnon notched his seventh career hat trick as part of a four-point performance, and host Colorado broke out of a two-game funk with a win over the Minnesota.

The win kept Colorado in second place in the Central Division with 104 points. The team trails Dallas by five points with three games left.

Ducks 3, Kings 1: Alex Kilorn and Trevor Zegras scored in the third period, and host Anaheim prevented Los Angeles from securing a playoff spot.

Los Angeles will have to wait to confirm a third straight playoff appearance. Vegas is one point behind the Kings for third place in the Pacific Division with a game in hand.

Kraken 5, Coyotes 0: Shane Wright scored 68 seconds into the first period for his fourth goal in four games since being called up from the AHL, Philipp Grubauer made 39 saves in his second shutout of the season, and host Seattle beat Arizona.

Flames 3, Sharks 2 (OT): Andrei Kuzmenko scored a power-play goal 2:58 into overtime and visiting Calgary rallied to beat San Jose.

Naeher, US edge Canada for SheBelieves Cup title

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Alyssa Naeher made three saves in a penalty shootout and converted her own attempt to lead the United States past Canada Tuesday night in the final of the SheBelieves Cup, the Americans' fifth straight title in the event.

The U.S. won the shootout 5-4 after the rivals played to a 2-2 draw in regulation. Emily Fox scored the decisive goal in the seventh round of the shootout after Naeher stopped Evelyne Viens.

Sophia Smith scored both U.S. goals. Her first tied the game at 1-1 in the 50th minute. Her second put the Americans ahead 2-1 in the 68th off a cross from Trinitie Rodman.

Adriana Leon scored twice for Canada.

The United States leads the all-time series with Canada 54-4-8. The previous meeting was last month in the CONCACAF Gold Cup, with the Americans advancing to the final on penalties after a rain-soaked 2-2 draw. Naeher also made three saves

and converted a penalty in that match.

"It's just incredible to watch and be here live, and know how prepared she is," interim U.S. coach Twila Kilgore said. "I mean, she is prepared for every PK she could possibly face."

The SheBelieves Cup matches were the last for the team under Kilgore. Emma Hayes is set to take over for the next two games on the schedule, exhibitions against South Korea in June.

Kilgore led the team to a 10-1-3

record after taking over for Vlatko Andonovski, who departed after the U.S. was eliminated in the round of 16 at the Women's World Cup last summer.

"I just think this team needed to regroup a little bit and focus on the things we felt would get us ready (for the Olympics) and get back to who we really are, get back to our DNA and also make sure that we're evolving," Kilgore said. "This team really wanted to evolve. Everything you see on the pitch is all credit to the players."