

## Biden: Support for Pacific allies ‘ironclad’

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden said Thursday that U.S. defense commitment to Pacific allies was “ironclad” as he gathered Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at the White House in the midst of growing concern about provocative Chinese military action in the Indo-Pacific.

The U.S. and the Philippines have had a mutual treaty in place for more than 70 years. Biden’s forceful reinforcement of the American commitment comes in the midst of persistent

skirmishes between the Philippine and Chinese coast guards in the disputed South China Sea.

“The United States defense commitments to Japan and to the Philippines are ironclad. They’re ironclad,” Biden said as he began three-way talks at the White House with Kishida and Marcos. “As I said before, any attack on Philippine aircraft, vessels or armed forces in the South China Sea would invoke our mutual defense treaty.”

Relations between China and the Philippines have been re-

peatedly tested by confrontations involving the two nations’ coast guard vessels in the disputed South China Sea. Chinese coast guard ships also regularly approach disputed Japanese-controlled East China Sea islands near Taiwan.

The so-called “gray-zone” harassment by China has included shining military-grade lasers at the Philippine Coast Guard, firing water cannons at vessels and ramming into Philippine ships near the Second Thomas Shoal, which both Manila and Beijing claim.

In 1999, Manila intentionally

ran a World War II-era ship aground on the shoal, establishing a permanent military presence there.

Biden, in a wide-ranging phone call with Chinese President Xi Jinping last week, raised concerns about China’s operations in the South China Sea, including efforts to impede the Philippines from resupplying its forces on the Second Thomas Shoal.

Chinese officials have bristled at criticism over their actions in the South China Sea and blamed the U.S. for exacerbating tensions.

## US, Japan, S. Korea hold exercises in disputed sea

*Associated Press*

ABOARD THE USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT — A U.S. carrier strike group led by the USS Theodore Roosevelt has held a two-day joint exercise with its allies Japan and South Korea as U.S. President Joe Biden met for talks with leaders from Japan and the Philippines at the White House.

The military and diplomatic maneuvers are meant to strengthen the partners’ solidarity in the face of what they see as China’s aggressive military actions in the region.

A number of U.S. and South Korean guided missile destroyers and a Japanese warship joined the drills in the disputed East China Sea, where worries about China’s territorial claims are rising.

Rear Adm. Christopher Alexander, commander of Carrier Strike Group Nine, said the three nations conducted under-sea warfare exercises, maritime interdiction operations,

search and rescue drills and work focused on communication and data sharing. He told journalists Thursday on the Roosevelt that these drills would help improve communication among the United States and its allies and “better prepare us for a crisis in the region.”

F/A-18E Super Hornet combat jets took off from the carrier’s flight deck, which also had anti-submarine MH-60R Seahawk helicopters.

“It is a busy time; there is a lot going on in the world,” Alexander said. “The significance of this exercise is we have three like-minded countries, three like-minded navies that believe in peace, security and stability in the western Pacific.”

In Beijing, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said its director-general of Asian affairs had met with a top Japanese Embassy official on Friday and expressed “serious concern and strong dissatisfaction” about Japan’s

“negative moves” during Prime Minister Fumio Kishida’s meetings in Washington with Biden and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

That followed earlier Chinese statements that accused the U.S. and Japan of smearing China and urged them to stop undermining regional peace and stability, while saying China will “resolutely defend” its security and development interests.

The participation of Japan and South Korea in the joint exercise was another sign of improving ties between the sometimes wary neighbors. The two U.S. allies’ relationship has often been strained by the memory of Japan’s 35-year colonization of the Korean Peninsula. Washington has been pressing them to cooperate so the three partners can better deal with threats from China and North Korea.

This week’s huge parliamentary election defeat of the go-

vernment party of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, who has sought better relations with Japan, could constrain his Japan-friendly efforts, but experts believe ties will remain stable.

The drills focused on improving the three nations’ joint response capability against North Korea’s increasing nuclear and missile threats, South Korea’s navy said in a statement. It said the navies conducted anti-submarine exercises to enhance their readiness against North Korean submarine threats and maritime interdiction training to practice blocking potential illegal transfers of banned weapons by the North.

Tensions between China and the Philippines have risen over repeated clashes by the two nations’ coast guard vessels in the disputed South China Sea. Chinese coast guard ships also regularly approach disputed Japanese-controlled East China Sea islands near Taiwan.

# Israel's Syria strike frustrates Pentagon

*The Washington Post*

Senior Pentagon officials were frustrated that Israel did not notify the United States before conducting a strike on an Iranian site in Syria this month, an escalation that they assess increases risks to American forces in the Middle East, U.S. officials said.

Iran has vowed retaliation for the April 1 strike on a building adjacent to its embassy in the Syrian capital, Damascus, which killed two senior commanders from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, an organization with a long history of supporting violent attacks against Israel and the United States. U.S. and Israeli officials are closely coordinating how they may respond to an Iranian counterstrike, officials said, with a top American general

visiting Israel on Thursday.

Three U.S. officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss security matters said Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and other senior defense officials believed Israel should have informed them ahead of time because of the strike's implications for U.S. troops and interests in the region. Knowing in advance would have permitted the Pentagon to heighten defenses for U.S. personnel and to position assets, including warships with missile defense systems on board, in a way that could help protect both Israel and U.S. troops from a potential Iranian response.

Austin complained directly to his Israeli counterpart, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, during a call on April 3, one of the U.S.

officials said. A Pentagon readout of the conversation did not disclose that detail, saying only that Austin "reiterated U.S. support for Israel's defense against a range of regional threats."

The Israeli Embassy in Washington did not immediately provide comment on the exchange.

The episode adds to already superheated tensions between Washington and its closest Middle Eastern ally over Israel's campaign against Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip, and highlights a communications gap. U.S. officials have ramped up their criticisms of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's handling of the war, and what they say is Israel's failure to protect civilians and ensure Gazans have access to adequate food, water and medical care.

Aid officials say hunger and disease are mounting in the densely populated Gaza Strip, where Palestinian officials cite a death toll of more than 33,000 people in six months of Israeli military operations. Israel launched its effort to destroy Hamas there in the wake of the group's Oct. 7 attack into Israel, which killed 1,200 people and resulted in the kidnapping of more than 250 others.

President Joe Biden, facing increasing pressure from Democrats and global allies over U.S. support for Israel's Gaza campaign, has threatened to alter his administration's policy toward Israel unless Netanyahu's government demonstrably improves conditions for civilians and ensures a planned offensive in southern Gaza doesn't make things worse.

## Maine shooter's commanding officer admits inaction

*Associated Press*

AUGUSTA, Maine — The commanding officer of an Army reservist responsible for the deadliest shooting in Maine history acknowledged to an independent commission on Thursday that he didn't take action when the reservist skipped counselor sessions, and didn't attempt to verify that the shooter's family took away his guns.

Capt. Jeremy Reamer said he understood that the shooter, Robert Card, was suffering from a psychiatric breakdown during training last summer but said he was limited in the level of oversight he could provide after Card returned home and was no longer actively participating in drills with his Army Reserve unit.

Under questioning, Reamer said he was aware that Card was not going to mandated counseling sessions and acknowledged

that an email problem prevented him from seeing a July message pertaining to Card's health until after the Oct. 25 shootings.

But Reamer defended his decision to rely on a subordinate, an Army reservist who was Card's best friend, to serve as a go-between with Card's family. The reservist, Sean Hodgson, told Reamer that he reached out to Card's family and that family members agreed to take away his guns after he was hospitalized. Reamer said he thought those actions were adequate, and insisted that as an Army Reserve officer, he had no jurisdiction over Card's personal guns.

"My understanding was that an agreement was made and the family agreed to remove the weapons from the home," Reamer told Commissioner Toby Dilworth, who expressed skepticism about leaving such an important task for the family

to handle. "I just know that the family agreed to remove the firearms," Reamer said.

Reamer, who gave up control of the Maine-based unit after what he described as a routine change of command in February, was called back to testify after his previous testimony was cut short because of time constraints.

Commissioners used the break to review medical records, text exchanges, emails and call logs before peppering Reamer with more questions Thursday at the University of Maine, Augusta. At one point, Reamer suggested that more aggressive actions and oversight would have been possible if Card had been a full-time soldier instead of a reservist.

Others testifying Thursday included several survivors who spoke of the horror of the shooting and the difficulties they en-

countered afterward.

Dr. Mark Flomenbaum, the state's retired chief medical examiner, said it was difficult to ascertain the gunman's time of death. But Flomenbaum, who testified via Zoom, stood by his earlier assessment that Card died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound that likely happened 12 to 18 hours before his body was found.

Flomenbaum's conclusions suggested that Card was alive and possibly on the run during much of the two-day search, the biggest in state history. Card's body was found in the back of a tractor-trailer on a former employer's property.

Appointed by Democratic Gov. Janet Mills, the independent commission is determining facts around the shooting that claimed 18 lives at a bowling alley and at a bar and grill, both in Lewiston.

# House Speaker eyes deal on Ukraine aid

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Mike Johnson is negotiating with the White House as he prepares for the treacherous task of advancing wartime funding for Ukraine and Israel through the House, a top House Republican said Thursday.

House Republican Leader Steve Scalise told reporters that Johnson had been talking with White House officials about a package that would deviate from the Senate's \$95 billion foreign security package and include several Republican demands. It comes after Johnson has delayed for months on advancing aid that would provide

desperately needed ammunition and weaponry for Kyiv, trying to find the right time to advance a package that will be a painful political lift.

"There's been no agreement reached," Scalise said. "Obviously there would have to be an agreement reached not just with the White House, but with our own members."

Johnson, R-La., is being stretched between a Republican conference deeply divided in its support for Ukraine, as well as two presidential contenders at odds over the U.S.'s posture towards the rest of the world. President Joe Biden has repeatedly chastised Republi-

cans for not helping Ukraine, saying they are doing the bidding of Russian President Vladimir Putin and hurting U.S. security. Meanwhile, Donald Trump, the presumptive GOP candidate, has said he would negotiate an end to the conflict as he tries to push the U.S. to a more isolationist stance.

The Republican speaker was set to travel to the former president's Mar-a-Lago club in Florida on Friday to meet with Trump and has been consulting him in recent weeks on Ukraine funding to gain his support or at least prevent him from openly opposing the package.

Sen. Markwayne Mullin, an

Oklahoma Republican who often works closely with House lawmakers, said this week he and Trump have spoken with Johnson "in depth" about how to advance Ukraine aid. It is not clear whether Trump would lend any political support, but Mullin said he was hoping to get the former president behind the package, especially now that Johnson's job is at stake.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, a Georgia Republican, has threatened to try to oust Johnson as speaker and warned that advancing funding for Ukraine would help build her case that GOP lawmakers should select a new speaker.

## House advances reauthorization of US spy program

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republicans on Friday advanced a bill that would reauthorize a crucial national security surveillance program, a second attempt just days after a GOP revolt prevented similar legislation from reaching the floor.

Speaker Mike Johnson brought forward a Plan B that, if passed, would reform and extend a section of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act known as Section 702 for a shortened period of two years, in-

stead of the full five-year reauthorization first proposed, in hopes that the shorter timeline will sway GOP critics. But a separate provision, ending warrantless surveillance of Americans, was also to be offered on the floor Friday, potentially jeopardizing final passage of the bill.

It is unclear if Johnson, who has called the program "critical" to national security, will have the Republican support necessary to push the bill through final passage.

Skepticism of the govern-

ment's spy powers has grown dramatically in recent years, particularly on the right. Republicans have clashed for months over what a legislative overhaul of the FISA surveillance program should look like, creating divisions that spilled onto the House floor this week as 19 Republicans broke with their party to prevent the bill from coming up for a vote.

However, some of the original opponents signaled their support for the new plan late Thursday.

"The two-year timeframe is a much better landing spot because it gives us two years to see if any of this works rather than kicking it out five years," Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, said Thursday. "They say these reforms are going to work. Well, I guess we'll find out."

The legislation in question would permit the U.S. government to collect, without a warrant, the communications of non-Americans located outside the country to gather foreign intelligence.

## Biden administration canceling more student loans

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration is canceling student loans for another 206,000 borrowers as part of a new repayment plan that offers a faster route to forgiveness.

The Education Department announced the latest round of cancellations Friday in an update on the progress of its SAVE Plan. More people are becoming eligible for student loan cancellation as they hit 10

years of payments, a new finish line for some loans that's a decade sooner than what borrowers faced in the past.

Casting a shadow over the cancellations, however, are two new lawsuits challenging the plan's legality. Two groups of Republican-led states, fronted by Kansas and Missouri, recently filed federal suits arguing that the Biden administration overstepped its authority in creating the repayment op-

tion.

"From day one of my Administration, I promised to fight to ensure higher education is a ticket to the middle class, not a barrier to opportunity," President Joe Biden said in a statement. "I will never stop working to cancel student debt — no matter how many times Republican elected officials try to stop us."

With the latest action, the Education Department has

now approved cancellation for about 360,000 borrowers through the new repayment plan, totaling \$4.8 billion.

The SAVE Plan is an updated version of a federal repayment plan that has been offered for decades, but with more generous terms.

Congress created the first income-driven repayment option in the 1990s for people struggling to afford payments on standard plans.



# Abu Ghraib detainees get day in court

Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Twenty years ago this month, photos of abused prisoners and smiling U.S. soldiers guarding them at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison were released, shocking the world.

Now, three survivors of Abu Ghraib will finally get their day in U.S. court against the military contractor they hold responsible for their mistreatment.

The trial is scheduled to begin Monday in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, and will be the first time that Abu Ghraib survivors are able to bring their claims of torture to a U.S. jury, said Baher Azmy, a lawyer with the Center for Constitutional Rights repre-

senting the plaintiffs.

The defendant in the civil suit, CACI, supplied the interrogators who worked at the prison. The Virginia-based contractor denies any wrongdoing, and has emphasized throughout 16 years of litigation that its employees are not alleged to have inflicted any abuse on any of the plaintiffs in the case.

The plaintiffs, though, seek to hold CACI responsible for setting the conditions that resulted in the torture they endured, citing evidence in government investigations that CACI contractors instructed military police to "soften up" detainees for their interrogations.

Retired Army Gen. Antonio Taguba, who led an investigation into the Abu Ghraib scandal, is among those expected to testify. His inquiry concluded that at least one CACI interrogator should be held accountable for instructing military police to set conditions that amounted to physical abuse.

There is little dispute that the abuse was horrific. The photos released in 2004 showed naked prisoners stacked into pyramids or dragged by leashes. Some photos had a soldier smiling and giving a thumbs up while posing next to a corpse, or detainees being threatened with dogs, or hooded and attached to electri-

cal wires.

The plaintiffs cannot be clearly identified in any of the infamous images, but their descriptions of mistreatment are unnerving.

Suhail Al Shimari has described sexual assaults and beatings during his two months at the prison. He was also electrically shocked and dragged around the prison by a rope tied around his neck. Former Al-Jazeera reporter Salah Al-Ejaili said he was subjected to stress positions that caused him to vomit black liquid. He was also deprived of sleep, forced to wear women's underwear and threatened with dogs.

## Jury selection to start in Trump hush-money case

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Of the 1.4 million adults who live in Manhattan, a dozen are soon to become the first Americans to sit in judgment of a former president charged with a crime.

Jury selection is set to start Monday in ex-President Donald Trump's hush-money case — the first trial among four criminal prosecutions of the presumptive Republican presidential nominee. The proceedings present a historic challenge for the court, the lawyers and the citizens in the jury pool.

"There is no question that picking a jury in a case involving someone as familiar to everyone as former President Trump poses unique problems," one of the trial prosecutors, Joshua Steinglass, said during a hearing.

Those problems include finding people who can be impartial about one of the most polarizing figures in American life and detecting any bias among prospective jurors without invading the privacy of the ballot box.

There's also the risk that peo-

ple may try to game their way onto the jury to serve a personal agenda. Or they may be reluctant to decide a case against a politician who has used his social media megaphone to tear into court decisions that go against him and has tens of millions of fervent supporters.

Still, if jury selection will be tricky, it's not impossible, says John Jay College of Criminal Justice psychology professor Margaret Bull Kovera.

"There are people who will look at the law, look at the evidence that's shown and make a decision," says Kovera, whose research includes the psychology of juries. "And the job of the judge and the attorneys right now is to figure out who those people are."

Trump has pleaded not guilty to fudging his company's books as part of an effort to conceal payments made to hide claims of extramarital sex during his 2016 campaign. He denies the encounters and contends the case is a legally bogus, political-engineered effort to sabotage his current run.

## Electric Ford SUV driver was using automated system before fatal crash

Associated Press

DETROIT — The driver of a Ford electric SUV involved in a February fatal crash in Texas was using the company's partially automated driving system before the wreck, federal investigators said Thursday.

Data from the 2022 Mustang Mach E SUV showed that Ford's "Blue Cruise" driver-assist system was in use ahead of the Feb. 24 crash, according to a preliminary report released Thursday by the National Transportation Safety Board.

The crash is one of two recent fatal wrecks involving Ford Mustang Mach Es that are under investigation by the NTSB and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which often send teams to probe incidents involving automated technology.

The NTSB can only make recommendations, but the NHTSA has the authority to take action including seeking recalls for safety issues.

In both cases, the Mach Es hit

vehicles stopped on freeways at night, and neither the driver nor the system were able to prevent the collisions. Ford says on its website that its driving systems do not replace human drivers, who have to be ready to take control at any time.

A company spokeswoman wouldn't comment on the NTSB report Thursday, deferring to a previous statement saying that Ford is cooperating in the investigations.

The Texas crash occurred on Interstate 10 in San Antonio. The NTSB report says the Mach E struck the rear of a 1999 Honda CR-V that was stopped in the middle of three lanes around 9:50 p.m. The 56-year-old driver of the CR-V was killed.

Another driver who was able to avoid the CR-V told investigators that neither its tail nor hazard lights were working at the time.

The agency said it intends to issue safety recommendations to prevent similar crashes.

# Massive attack destroys one of Ukraine's energy facilities

Associated Press

A massive missile and drone attack destroyed one of Ukraine's largest power plants and damaged others, officials said Thursday, part of a renewed Russian campaign targeting energy infrastructure.

The Trypilska plant, which was the biggest energy supplier for the Kyiv, Cherkasy and Zhytomyr regions, was struck numerous times, destroying the transformer, turbines and generators and leaving the plant ablaze. As the first drone approached, workers hid in a shelter, saving their lives, said Andrii Gota, chairman of the supervisory board of the state company that runs the plant, Centrenergo.

They watched the plant burn, surrounded by dense smoke and engulfed in flames. "It's terrifying," said Gota. Hours later, rescuers were still dismantling

the rubble.

Speaking in Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin cast the attacks on Ukrainian energy facilities as a response to Ukrainian strikes that targeted Russian oil refineries.

The Trypilska plant supplied electricity to 3 million customers — but none lost power because the grid was able to compensate since demands are low at this time of year. Still, the consequences of the strikes could be felt in the coming months, as air conditioning use ramps up with summer.

At least 10 other strikes overnight damaged energy infrastructure in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city. Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said more than 200,000 people in the region, which has been struck repeatedly, lacked power.

Ukraine's largest private energy operator, DTEK, de-

scribed the strikes as one of the most powerful attacks this year, while Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko told reporters it was a "large scale, enormous, missile attack that affected our energy sector very badly."

Russia has recently renewed strikes on Ukrainian energy facilities, and attacks last month blacked out large parts of the country — a level of darkness not seen since the first days of the full-scale invasion in 2022.

The volume and accuracy of the attacks have alarmed the country's defenders and left officials scrambling for better ways to protect energy assets. The strikes have also tested Ukraine's ability to make quick repairs.

Ukraine's leaders have pleaded for more air defense systems to ward off such attacks, but those supplies have been slow in coming.

## 2 Russians in Niger to train forces

Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal — State television in Niger has broadcast footage of Russian military trainers arriving in the country aboard a plane equipped with military supplies to boost its air defenses amid deteriorating relations between Niger and the U.S.

Two Russian trainers were filmed in front of the plane wearing military uniforms, caps and face coverings. The plane arrived Wednesday night, the report said, and carried military supplies to help Niger improve its air defenses.

"We are here to train the Nigerian army to use the military equipment that is here," one of the Russian trainers said in French in Thursday's broadcast. "We are here to develop military cooperation between Russia and Niger."

Until recently, Washington considered Niger a key partner and ally in a region swept by attempted coups in recent years.

A U.S. airbase was established as the heart of Niger's counter insurgency operations in the sub-Saharan region known as the Sahel. Since 2012, the region has been gripped by a worsening insurgency fought by groups linked to Al Qaeda and Islamic State.

The U.S. invested heavily in training Niger's forces to beat back the insurgency that has ravaged the country and its neighbors. But last summer, some of those elite U.S.-trained forces took part in a coup that ousted the elected president.

## US consumer sentiment drops slightly

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Consumer sentiment about the U.S. economy has ticked down but remains near a recent high, with Americans' outlook largely unchanged this year.

The University of Michigan's consumer sentiment index, released Friday in a preliminary version, slipped to 77.9 this month, down from March's figure of 79.4. Sentiment is about halfway between its all-time low, reached in June 2022 when

inflation peaked, and its pre-pandemic averages.

"Consumers are reserving judgment about the economy in light of the upcoming election, which, in the view of many consumers, could have a substantial impact on the trajectory of the economy," said Joanne Hsu, director of the consumer survey.

An increase in gas prices likely contributed to the decline in consumers' outlook, according to Ian Shepherdson, chief econ-

omist at Pantheon Macroeconomics. The average national price of a gallon of gas has jumped about 7% from a month ago, according to AAA, to \$3.63 a gallon.

Americans' perceptions of future inflation also edged up, probably reflecting still-elevated prices. Consumers expect inflation to be 3.1% a year from now, which would exceed the Federal Reserve's 2% target. Still, that would be below the current level of 3.5%.

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# Royals sweep Astros with 13-3 victory

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Bobby Witt Jr. had four hits, including two home runs, and five RBIs and the Kansas City Royals used a nine-run first inning to defeat the Houston Astros 13-3 Thursday to complete a three-game sweep and extend their winning streak to seven games.

Vinnie Pasquantino, who came into Wednesday's game hitting .108 with no RBIs, was 3-for-5 with three RBIs and now is hitting .222 with eight RBIs.

The Royals completed a perfect seven-game homestand against the White Sox and Astros. It's just the third time in franchise history they've played at least seven games on a homestand without a loss. The other two: seven games in 1988 and eight games in 1985, the year they won their first World Series.

Brady Singer (2-0) allowed one run and five hits in five innings.

Hunter Brown (0-2) got only two outs, but allowed nine runs and 11 hits.

The Royals sent 15 men to the plate in the first inning, tying a club record with 11 hits in the inning (also set in 1986 and 2006). It was the second straight game they've batted around in an inning, sending 11 men to the plate in a seven-run inning Wednesday night.

**Mets 16, Braves 4:** DJ Stewart hit a two-run homer in New York's four-run third inning and pinch-hitter Tyrone Taylor

hit a ninth-inning grand slam to cap the rout as the visiting Mets beat Atlanta.

Jose Quintana (1-1) gave up three runs in 5½ innings. Jeff McNeil drove in three runs with two hits in the best game of the season for the Mets' bats. New York set season highs for runs and with 16 hits.

Stewart's homer, which gave the Mets a 7-0 lead, was his second of the series. The designated hitter had no hits this season before hitting a two-run homer in the Mets' 8-7 win in the series opener on Monday night.

Infielder Luis Guillorme gave up the grand slam to Taylor in his first appearance with the Braves. Guillorme was used as a pitcher for the first time since appearances on the mound for the Mets in the 2020 and 2021 seasons.

New York won two of three games in the rain-shortened series and four of six games on the road trip.

**Athletics 1, Rangers 0:** JP Sears carried a no-hitter into the seventh inning and combined with three relievers on a one-hitter, Seth Brown homered to supply the game's only run and visiting Oakland beat Texas.

Sears (1-1) allowed leadoff walks in the first, second and fifth innings before Adolis García ended the no-hit bid by lining a one-out single to left field in the seventh on an 0-2 sweeper. The 28-year-old left-hander was then pulled after throwing 88 pitches. He struck out five,

including 2023 World Series MVP Corey Seager three times.

After García's single, Austin Adams hit Jonah Heim with a pitch. Pinch-hitter Jared Walsh then hit a bloop between the mound and second base. Second baseman Zack Galof slid while attempting to make the catch, but dropped the ball. Adams picked up the ball and threw to third base to force García for the second out. Third baseman Abraham Toro then threw to second, forcing Heim and completing a bizarre inning-ending double play.

Adams and Luca Erceg didn't allow hits in their relief stints and Mason Miller pitched a perfect ninth for his second save.

**Phillies 5, Pirates 1:** Ranger Suárez struck out eight over six shutout innings, Brandon Marsh and Bryson Stott hit two-run homers and Alec Bohm also went deep to lead host Philadelphia past Pittsburgh.

The Phillies won the opener of a season-high, 10-game homestand that included four with the Pirates, and three games each against the Colorado Rockies and Chicago White Sox.

Bohm — who had no homers this season after hitting 20 last season — socked his first off Pirates starter Jared Jones over the outstretched glove of centerfielder Michael A. Taylor for the 1-0 lead.

Marsh hit a two-run homer — after a brief review overturned a double call — in the inning that chased Jones. Stott also hit his

first homer of the season, a two-run shot later in the inning off reliever Colin Holderman for a 5-0 lead.

**Orioles 9, Red Sox 4 (10):** Colton Cowser hit the first two homers of his career, including a three-run shot in the 10th inning, and visiting Baltimore rallied past Boston to complete a three-game sweep of their AL East rivals.

Gunnar Henderson opened the Orioles' six-run 10th with a two-run homer against Isaiah Campbell (0-1), scoring automatic runner Jackson Holliday.

The 20-year-old Holliday, baseball's top-rated prospect who made his big league debut a night earlier, scored two runs but went 0-for-4 for the second straight game.

Cowser, another Orioles prospect who struggled during a brief stint in the majors last season, drove in 10 runs in the series.

A night after the Orioles rallied from a 5-0 deficit to win 7-5, they fell behind 2-0 before coming back, thanks in part to some shaky defense by the Red Sox.

Boston led 2-1 when Holliday reached on an error by third baseman Pablo Reyes leading off the eighth. With one out, Adley Rutschman hit what appeared to be an inning-ending double-play grounder, but the Orioles challenged the call, and after a review, Holliday was ruled safe at second because shortstop David Hamilton missed the bag while making the turn.

## Ohtani's ex-interpreter charged with stealing \$16M

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Federal authorities charged the former longtime interpreter for Los Angeles Dodgers star Shohei Ohtani on Thursday with federal bank fraud, alleging that he stole more than \$16 million from the Japanese sensation to cover gambling bets and debts.

Interpreter Ippei Mizuhara, a constant presence beside Ohtani in baseball stadiums across the country since 2018, abused the two-way player's trust in him and exploited the language barrier to plunder a bank account that only he could access, prosecutors said.

U.S. Attorney Martin Estrada

said Mizuhara was so intertwined in Ohtani's life and career that he became the star's "de facto manager."

The role enabled him to withdraw money from the account — at times lying and impersonating Ohtani to bank employees — to finance his "insatiable appetite for illegal

sports betting."

Thursday's announcement, at a packed news conference in downtown Los Angeles, ended weeks of speculation about Mizuhara's self-admitted gambling problems, the wide-ranging federal investigation and Ohtani's role in the scandal.



# DeChambeau shoots 65 to lead by 1 shot at Masters

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Bryson DeChambeau was the mad scientist who calculated barometric pressure and the decay of spin rate in altitude when trying to figure out how to best play the game.

Then he became the incredible bulk, adding 40 pounds of muscle and mass with a diet of some 3,500 calories a day in an effort to swing the club faster and hit the ball farther than anyone.

The third iteration he showed at the Masters on Thursday might be the most daunting.

"The golf phase," DeChambeau said Thursday after opening with a 7-under 65, his best start in a major and lowest score at the Masters. "Trying to be the best golfer I can be."

DeChambeau was plenty good in a relentless wind, taking a one-shot lead over Scottie Scheffler in the rain-delayed opening round. Scheffler hasn't changed at all. The world's No. 1 player was practically flawless from tee to green.

The first round could not be completed because of a 2½-hour delay from overnight rain that drenched Augusta National, leaving the greens softer than they have been all week.

The test came from a steady 20 mph wind, with gusts twice that strong.

Among those still on the course was Tiger Woods, who was 1-under par through 13 holes when it was too dark to continue. He next faces 23 holes Friday, an endurance test for his battered legs, as he tries to set the Masters record by making his 24th consecutive cut.

Nicolai Hojgaard of Denmark, one of 17 newcomers to the Masters, was at 5 under with three holes to play. Max Homa was at 4 under through 13 holes.

DeChambeau put on a clinic of power and putting, always a good recipe at Augusta National.

"I'm just in a place where I'm repeating a motion, trying to do the same thing over and over again," he said.

He ran off five birdies in a six-hole stretch on the back nine, including a two-putt birdie on the par-5 15th when his risky shot under a pine tree cleared the water fronting the green and left him 40 feet away.

"It clipped the tree. I hit four pine needles rather than five, and it worked out perfectly," said DeChambeau, not entirely rid of his precise calculations.

Scheffler teed off about two

hours later when the wind was at full force, and part of him was surprised to see so many red numbers under par on the large, white boards.

"I've played this tournament once before in some pretty high winds, and it's an extremely challenging golf course," Scheffler said, giving credit to caddie Ted Scott for "guessing the wind correctly" on a number of shots.

He had the only bogey-free round of the 89 players in the field. Three of his six birdies came on the par 3s, one of those when he holed a bunker shot from behind the 12th green.

DeChambeau feels he got fortunate with his shot that grazed the tree. There was no doubting the break Scheffler got with his second shot on the par-5 13th, when he flinched upon hearing a shot hit from another fairway. Scheffler's ball came up short, and he assumed it would roll back into the tributary of Rae's Creek in front of the green.

The turf was soft enough that it stayed up, and he chipped it close to make birdie.

"I've never seen a ball stay up there," Scheffler said. "I don't know if that will happen again this week. I'm hoping I don't find out."

## Chiefs' Rice surrenders to police

Associated Press

GLENN HEIGHTS, Texas — Kansas City Chiefs wide receiver Rashee Rice surrendered to police Thursday on charges including aggravated assault after he and another driver of a speeding sports car allegedly caused a crash involving a half-dozen vehicles on a Dallas highway last month.

A spokeswoman for Rice's attorney confirmed to The Associated Press that Rice turned himself in at the Glenn Heights Police Department. Rice is being represented by Texas state Sen. Royce West.

Rice was booked into the Regional Jail in DeSoto, and West said he was released on bond Thursday night.

In an emailed statement, West emphasized what he called Rice's "continued cooperation with law enforcement."

"Mr. Rice acknowledges his actions and feels deeply for those injured as a result of this accident," the lawyer said.

Rice said on Instagram that he was taking "full responsibility" for his part in the wreck.

On Wednesday, Dallas police said arrest warrants had been issued for Rice, 23, for one count of aggravated assault, one count of collision involving serious bodily injury and six counts of collision involving injury.

## BYU hoops coach Mark Pope in talks with Kentucky

Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — BYU coach Mark Pope was negotiating with Kentucky to succeed John Calipari, multiple outlets reported Thursday night.

Pope, who played for Kentucky's 1996 national championship team and was co-captain for two seasons, was close to finalizing a deal, CBS Sports reported, citing anonymous

sources. ESPN, also citing anonymous sources, also reported that an agreement with Pope was expected.

Earlier Thursday, Scott Drew announced on social media that he was staying with Baylor, eliminating one potential candidate for the Wildcats job. UConn's Dan Hurley, who led the Huskies to their second consecutive national title on Mon-

day night, also turned down Kentucky.

Calipari stepped down on Tuesday after 15 years. The Hall of Famer, who led the Wildcats to the 2012 national championship, said the program needed to "hear another voice." He was hired as Arkansas' coach on Wednesday.

The 51-year-old Pope is 110-52 in five seasons with the Cou-

gars and has led them to two NCAA Tournament appearances, including this season, when BYU finished 23-11 while playing in the Big 12 Conference for the first time. He went 77-52 in four seasons at Utah Valley after working as an assistant at Wake Forest and Georgia.

Pope led Kentucky with 6.3 rebounds per game during the 1994-95 season.

# Penguins boost playoff odds with win

*Associated Press*

PITTSBURGH — Erik Karlsson scored 1:40 into overtime and the Pittsburgh Penguins bolstered their playoff odds with a 6-5 win over Detroit on Thursday night.

Sidney Crosby set up Karlsson's winner to become the 14th player in NHL history to reach 1,000 career assists. Crosby finished with a goal and two assists to move past Hall of Famer Phil Esposito and into 10th on the NHL's all-time scoring list.

The longtime Penguins captain assisted on Drew O'Connor's first-period goal to reach 999 career assists. Crosby then redirected a beautiful pass from Bryan Rust in the second period to move into a tie with Esposito with 1,590 points. Crosby moved past Esposito in the extra period by feeding Karlsson.

Rust added a goal for Pittsburgh. Kris Letang and Jeff Carter both scored their 10th goals and Alex Nedeljkovic stopped 25 shots as the Penguins leapfrogged Washington to move into the Eastern Conference's second wild-card spot with three games remaining.

**Flyers 4, Rangers 1:** Bobby Brink scored the go-ahead goal early in the second period, Samuel Ersson made 24 saves and visiting Philadelphia snapped an eight-game losing streak with a win over New York.

Cam York, Travis Konecny and Noah Cates also scored for the Flyers. Ryan Poehling added two assists as Philadelphia stayed alive in the tight Eastern Conference playoff race.

Ersson improved to 22-18-7 while allowing only a goal to Artemi Panarin.

**Sabres 4, Capitals 2:** Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen stopped 22 shots and Buffalo played the role of playoff spoilers with a 4-2 win over visiting Washington.

Alex Tuch, Zach Benson, Jack Quinn and Dylan Cozens, with an empty-netter, scored for the Sabres playing their last

home game of the season, and two days after they extended their NHL-record playoff drought to a 13th season following a 3-2 loss at Dallas.

It marked Washington's second loss at Buffalo in nine days following a 6-2 decision on April 2.

The Capitals dropped to 1-5-2 in their past seven and squandered an opportunity to keep pace in a tightly contested race for the Eastern Conference's eighth and final playoff spot.

Connor McMichael and Tom Wilson had goals for the Capitals.

**Panthers 4, Blue Jackets 0:** Sergei Bobrovsky made 25 saves to tie for the NHL lead with six shutouts, Sam Reinhart scored his 54th goal and host Florida defeated Columbus.

Bobrovsky, who has 44 career shutouts, is tied with Arizona's Connor Ingram and Pittsburgh's Tristan Jarry for the most this season.

Matthew Tkachuk, Evan Rodrigues and Vladimir Tarasenko also scored for the Panthers, who moved a point behind the idle Boston Bruins for first place in the Atlantic Division. Defenseman Oliver Ekman-Larsson had two assists after missing Tuesday's game against Ottawa to rest.

Jet Greaves stopped 42 shots for the Blue Jackets, who are mathematically locked into the fourth-best odds in the upcoming NHL draft lottery.

**Devils 6, Maple Leafs 5:** Jesper Bratt broke a tie with 1:14 left with his second goal of the game and New Jersey beat Toronto, overcoming Maple Leafs star Auston Matthews' NHL-leading 67th and 68th goals of the season.

Matthews has the most goals in the NHL since Mario Lemieux had 69 in 1995-96.

Bratt also had an assist, Timo Meier had two goals and an assist, and Erik Haula and Nolan Foote also scored for New Jer-

sey. Jake Allen stopped 27 shots. Luke Hughes had two assists.

John Tavares also scored twice for Toronto. David Kampf added a goal, and Ilya Samsonov made 14 saves.

**Ottawa 3, Tampa Bay 2 (SO):** Brady Tkachuk had a goal and an assist in regulation and scored the only goal of the shootout for visiting Ottawa.

NHL points leader Nikita Kucherov had two assists for the Lightning to give him 98 this season as he looks to join Wayne Gretzky (11 times), Mario Lemieux (once) and Bobby Orr (once) as the only players with 100 or more assists in a season. The right wing has an eight-game point streak and 141 points this season.

Drake Batherson also scored for the Senators, who have missed the postseason seven consecutive seasons. Anton Forsberg stopped 24 shots.

The Lightning have the first Eastern Conference wild card secured.

**Islanders 3, Canadiens 2 (OT):** Kyle Palmieri scored at 1:17 of overtime and host New York extended their winning streak to six games with a victory over Montreal.

Pierre Engvall and Casey Cizikas also scored, Semyon Varlamov made 13 saves and the Islanders inched closer to securing a playoff spot. Adam Pelech added two assists for New York.

Cole Caufield scored and had an assist and Sam Montembault made 30 saves, but the Canadiens lost for the fourth time in five games.

**Jets 3, Stars 0:** Laurent Brossoit stopped 24 shots for his third shutout, David Gustafsson scored on his 24th birthday and Winnipeg beat host Dallas.

The Jets won their fifth consecutive game coming off a six-game winless streak and prevented the Stars from clinching the Central Division title.

Instead, Winnipeg avoided a

season sweep by Dallas and matched Colorado in second place with 104 points, five behind the Stars.

Nikolaj Ehlers opened the scoring with an unassisted goal, his 24th, late in the first period. Gustafsson scored midway through the second. Mark Scheifele added an empty-netter for his 25th.

**Sharks 3, Kraken 1:** Devin Cooley withstood a barrage of shots to make 49 saves in his fourth career start, Kyle Burroughs and Fabian Zetterlund scored less than a minute apart in the second period, and San Jose beat host Seattle.

The Sharks spoiled Seattle's final home game of the season, taking advantage of two defensive breakdowns by the Kraken just 51 seconds apart and a terrific performance by Cooley.

Burroughs snapped a 1-1 tie with his second goal of the season, finishing William Eklund's pass on an odd-man rush at 14:46 of the second period. Less than a minute later, Seattle's defense lost track of Zetterlund as he flashed in front of the net. His redirection of Mikael Granlund's pass slipped under the arm of Kraken goalie Joey Daccord, who finished with 20 saves. It was Zetterlund's 22nd goal.

**Kings 4, Flames 1:** Viktor Arvidsson scored two goals and host Los Angeles clinched a playoff berth with a victory over Calgary. Kevin Fiala and Akil Thomas also scored in a workmanlike win for the Kings.

Cam Talbot made 23 saves and captain Anze Kopitar had two assists as the Kings opened a four-game homestand to end the regular season under interim coach Jim Hiller.

Jonathan Huberdeau scored in the third period for the Flames, who have lost nine of 11 as they wrap up a non-playoff season.

Jacob Markstrom stopped 26 shots for the Flames.