

## Pentagon: Troops must get vaccines ASAP

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Military troops must immediately begin to get the COVID-19 vaccine, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a memo Wednesday, ordering service leaders to “impose ambitious timelines for implementation.”

More than 800,000 service members have yet to get their shots, according to Pentagon data. And now that the Pfizer vaccine has received full approval from the Food and Drug Administration, the Defense Department is adding it to the list of required shots troops must get as part of their military service.

The memo, which was obtained by The Associated Press, does not dictate a specific timeline for completing the vaccinations. But it says the military services will have to report regularly on their progress. A senior defense official said that Austin has made it

clear to the services that he expects them to move quickly, and that this will be completed in weeks not months.

“To defend this Nation, we need a healthy and ready force,” Austin said in the memo. “After careful consultation with medical experts and military leadership, and with the support of the President, I have determined that mandatory vaccination against coronavirus disease ... is necessary to protect the Force and defend the American people.”

Troops will be able to get their Pfizer shots at their bases and from their commands around the world.

The Pentagon has said it has enough vaccine supply to meet demand.

Individual service members may also go out and get any of the other COVID vaccines on their own.

Fulfilling the vaccine mandate, however, may be a challenge for National Guard

forces who are scattered around the country, and gather just once a month for their required drills.

According to the Pentagon, there are more than 1.3 million troops on active duty and close to 800,000 in the Guard and Reserve. And, as of Aug. 18, more than 1 million active-duty, Guard and Reserve service members were fully vaccinated and nearly 245,000 more had received at least one shot.

Senior military leaders have consistently pressed their forces to get vaccines through a wide range of public pleas, and via social media and other campaigns. But — as is true among the U.S. population — many service members have been reluctant.

Defense officials have said it's critical for troops to get the vaccine because they live and work closely together and outbreaks could hamper the U.S. military's ability to defend America.

## As clock on airlifts ticks down, a risky race to finish

*Associated Press*

WARSAW, Poland — Poland ended its evacuations from Afghanistan, but other European nations vowed Wednesday to press on for as long as possible as the clock ticks down on a dramatic airlift of people fleeing Taliban rule ahead of a full American withdrawal.

President Joe Biden said he is sticking to his Aug. 31 deadline for completing the U.S. pullout as the Taliban insisted he must, ramping up pressure on the already risky operation to fly people out of Kabul.

European allies pressed for more time but lost the argument, and as a practical matter they may be forced to end their evacuations before the last American troops leave. Several countries haven't said yet when they plan to end their operations, perhaps hoping to avoid yet another fatal crush at an airport, one of the last ways out of the country.

The Taliban wrested back control of Afghanistan nearly 20 years after they were ousted in a U.S.-led invasion following the Sept. 11 attacks, which al-Qaida orchestrated while being sheltered by the group. Their return to power has pushed many Afghans to flee, fearing reprisals or a return to the brutal

rule they imposed when they last ran the country.

Thousands of people are still thought to be trying to leave, and it's not clear that all of them will be able to before the end of the month. But any decision by Biden to stay longer could reignite fighting between the Taliban and Western troops running the airlift.

“Due to extreme tension on the ground ... and the scheduled departure of American forces, these evacuations are a true race against time,” French government spokesman Gabriel Attal said Wednesday. He said that his country's evacuation would likely end “a few hours, maybe a few days ahead” of the American departure.

The Taliban said they would allow normal commercial air traffic to resume when they assume control of the airport after Aug. 31, but it's unclear whether airlines would be willing to fly into an airport controlled by the militants.

With the deadline looming, Marcin Przydacz, a Polish deputy foreign minister, said Wednesday that Poland had evacuated its last group after consulting with U.S. and British officials.

“After a long analysis of reports on the security situation, we cannot risk the lives of our diplomats and of our soldiers any longer,” Przydacz said.

A number of troops will remain briefly to wrap up operations, Przydacz said. Poland has used over a dozen planes to bring hundreds of evacuees to Warsaw. Some later traveled on to other countries.

The Czech Republic declared its own evacuation mission complete last week, and Hungary said it plans to end its operations soon.

The White House said Wednesday that around 19,000 people were evacuated from Kabul over the last 24 hours. It said the United States has evacuated or facilitated the evacuation of around 82,300 people since the Taliban takeover in mid-August.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said the military will “continue to evacuate needed populations all the way to the end.” But he added that there will have to be a balance in the final days and hours, as the 5,400 troops in Kabul and critical systems also need to be withdrawn.

Kirby said more than 4,400 American citizens have been evacuated thus far, an increase of about 400 from Tuesday.

# Lawmakers' trip to Kabul draws fury from officials

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Two members of Congress flew unannounced into Kabul airport in the middle of the chaotic evacuation, stunning State Department and U.S. military personnel who had to divert resources to provide security and information to the lawmakers, U.S. officials said.

Rep. Seth Moulton, D-Mass., and Rep. Peter Meijer, R-Mich., flew in and out on charter aircraft and were on the ground at the Kabul airport for several hours Tuesday. That led officials to complain that they could be taking seats that would have otherwise gone to other Americans or Afghans fleeing the country, but the congressmen said in a joint statement that they made sure to leave on a flight with empty seats.

"As Members of Congress, we have a duty to provide oversight on the executive branch," the two said in their statement. "We conducted this visit in secret, speaking about it only after our departure to minimize the risk and disruption to the people on the ground, and because we

were there to gather information, not to grandstand."

The two lawmakers are both military veterans, with backgrounds in the region. Moulton, a Marine who has been outspoken critic of the Iraq War, served multiple tours in Iraq. Meijer was deployed as part of the Army Reserves and later worked in Afghanistan at a nongovernmental organization providing aid. Moulton serves on the House Armed Services Committee and Meijer is on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Three officials familiar with the flight said that State Department, Defense Department and White House officials were furious about the incident because it was done without coordination with diplomats or military commanders directing the evacuation.

The U.S. military found out about the visit as the legislators' aircraft was inbound to Kabul, according to the officials. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss ongoing military operations.

# House OKs blueprint for \$3.5T budget

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Striking a deal with moderates, House Democratic leaders have muscled President Joe Biden's multitrillion-dollar budget blueprint over a key hurdle, ending a risky standoff and putting the party's domestic infrastructure agenda back on track.

The 220-212 vote Tuesday was a first move toward drafting Biden's \$3.5 trillion rebuilding plan this fall, and the narrow outcome, in the face of unanimous Republican opposition, signaled the power a few voices have to alter the debate and the challenges ahead still threatening to upend the president's agenda.

From the White House, Biden praised the outcome as "a step closer to truly investing in the American people." He said at a news conference that he had called to congratulate House leaders for the work.

Tensions had flared during a turbulent 24 hours that brought the House to a standstill as a band of moderate lawmakers threatened to withhold their votes for the \$3.5 trillion plan. They were demanding the House first approve a nearly \$1 trillion bipartisan package of other public works projects that's already passed the Senate.

Backed by the White House, Speaker Nancy Pelosi huddled privately with lawmakers and leaders to engineer an off-ramp. In brokering the compromise, Pelosi committed to voting on the bipartisan package no later than Sept. 27, an attempt to assure lawmakers it won't be left on the sidelines. It's also in keeping with Pelosi's insistence that the two bills move together as a more complete collection of Biden's priorities. Pelosi has set a goal of passing both by Oct. 1.

Challenging their party's most powerful leaders, nine moderate Democrats signed onto a letter late last week raising their objections to pushing ahead with Biden's broader infrastructure proposal without first considering the smaller public works plan of road, public transit and broadband spending that has already passed the Senate.

# S. Korea airlifts hundreds out of Kabul

By DAVID CHOI  
and YOO KYONG CHANG  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — Over 380 Afghans who supported South Korea in Afghanistan before the Taliban seized power are expected to arrive at an airport outside Seoul on Thursday, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The evacuees include locals who worked at the South Korean Embassy in Kabul, hospitals, vocational training centers and provincial reconstruction teams.

They are being flown out of Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul aboard three South Korean military airplanes, Second Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Choi Jongmoon said during a Wednesday press conference.

Choi cited the country's "moral responsibility" to house the Afghans given the "serious situations" many of them are under. He added that the evacuees will be entering the country

not as refugees, "but people who have done distinguished service to South Korea."

Some South Korean lawmakers recently said the country ought to act amid the ongoing refugee crisis in Afghanistan.

"Afghanistan needs the help of neighboring countries for getting immediate humanitarian aid; however, unfortunately, Europe and many surrounding nations are against accepting refugees from Afghanistan," Rep. Jang Hye-young of the progressive Justice Party said in a Facebook post Friday.

Over 3,900 South Korean troops served in Afghanistan, according to a Defense Ministry official who spoke to Stars and Stripes on the customary condition of anonymity Wednesday.

Plans to temporarily relocate evacuees to U.S. bases in South Korea and Japan were scrapped due to logistical and geographical factors, according to a Reuters report Tuesday.

# Surge leads Japan to widen state of emergency

By JOSEPH DITZLER  
*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — Facing a nationwide surge in new coronavirus cases linked to the delta variant, the Japanese government on Wednesday added another eight prefectures to the 13 already under a state of emergency.

Eight prefectures were upgraded from quasi-emergency status to a full emergency. They include Hokkaido and Miyagi in the north, Aichi and Gifu in central Japan, and Hiroshima and Okayama in the west.

“In order to protect the people’s lives, the priority is to maintain the health care system,” Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said as he announced the emergency. “In order to overcome this crisis led by the delta strain, I seek further cooperation from everyone.”

The government last week extended the state of emergency until Sept. 12 and expanded the areas covered to 13 prefectures from six including Tokyo. With four new prefectures added to a separate “quasi-emergency” status, 33 of Japan’s 47 prefectures are now under some type of emergency measures.

Meanwhile, U.S. military bases in Japan reported 55 new coronavirus cases on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Twenty-seven of those cases are people associated with the Marine Corps on Okinawa, according to a Facebook post Wednesday by Marine Corps Installations Pacific. The Marines provided no further information but have said its new cases are not limited to service members.

U.S. Army Japan discovered

11 new cases between Aug. 18 and Wednesday, according to a news release. One came up positive in an airport test by Japanese officials. Five had fallen ill with COVID-19 symptoms. Two were already in restricted movement following their recent arrival in Japan and three were isolated as close contacts of another infected individual.

In northeastern Japan, Misawa Air Base identified 13 people with COVID-19 between Aug. 17 and Monday, according to a base news release Tuesday. They include fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people, though the base provided no further details.

Misawa’s commander, Col. Jesse Friedel, ordered a limit on gatherings of 20 people or 50% of a room’s capacity, whichever is less, on or off the base.

Three people at Naval Air Facility Atsugi tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday after falling ill, according to a base news release. A fourth turned up positive in an airport test after arriving in Japan.

In Tokyo, another 4,228 people tested positive Wednesday, 1,158 fewer than a week prior and the third consecutive day of new case numbers trending downward, according to NHK and metro government data.

Tokyo and neighboring Kanagawa prefecture — home to headquarters for U.S. Forces Japan, U.S. Army Japan, 5th Air Force and 7th Fleet — are already under the emergency declaration until Sept. 12. So are Okinawa, home to the III Marine Expeditionary Force; Osaka, the second-largest metro area in Japan; and Kyoto.

## Harris urges Vietnam to join US, oppose China ‘bullying’

*Associated Press*

HANOI — Vice President Kamala Harris called on Vietnam to join the United States in challenging China’s “bullying” in the South China Sea, continuing her sharp rhetoric against Beijing as she met with Vietnamese leaders Wednesday.

“We need to find ways to pressure and raise the pressure, frankly, on Beijing to abide by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and to challenge its bullying and excessive maritime claims,” she said in remarks at the opening of a meeting with Vietnamese President Nguyen Xuan Phuc.

Harris also expressed support for sending an additional U.S. Coast Guard cutter to Vietnam to help defend its security interests in the disputed waterway, and pledged that the U.S. would “maintain a strong presence in the South China Sea” to challenge China.

During remarks in Singapore

on Tuesday, Harris said Beijing’s actions to press its territorial claims in the South China Sea amount to “coercion” and “intimidation.”

The vice president’s rebuke of China comes in the middle of her weeklong tour of Southeast Asia, a trip that brought her to Singapore and Vietnam in a bid to strengthen U.S. ties to the Indo-Pacific region to counter China’s growing military and economic influence there.

In addition to her commitment to defend the South China Sea against Beijing advances, Harris unveiled new partnerships and support for Vietnam in areas including climate change, trade and the coronavirus pandemic.

She announced that the U.S. will send 1 million additional doses of the Pfizer vaccine to Vietnam, bringing the total U.S. vaccine donation to Vietnam to 6 million doses. The Defense Department is delivering 77 freezers to store vaccines in the country.

## Marine veteran shines in Paralympics rugby victory

By SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — A former Marine scored three times and forced a turnover in Team USA’s wheelchair rugby win Wednesday over New Zealand in the opening game of the Paralympics.

The game, on an indoor hardwood court at Yoyogi National Stadium in the Japanese capital, began with a “haka” by the New Zealanders, which had the same passion as the challenge laid down by their nation’s formidable All Blacks rugby team.

Moments later, the arena reverberated with the sound of metal striking metal as players launched chairs at opponents like football linemen, creating space for their teammates to zoom toward the goal line.

One of the U.S. players, Raymond Hennagir, 35, of Deptford, N.J., lost both legs and part of his left hand after stepping on an improvised explosive device during his second combat deployment

with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, near Fallujah, Iraq, in 2007. The former corporal didn’t let his injuries slow him down in his Paralympic debut.

At one stage he ripped the ball from an opposing player and passed to a teammate, then zipped downcourt and caught a return pass before crossing into the end zone for one of three goals he scored in quick succession.

“Honestly, it felt good to go out there and play really well and get a turnover for the team and keep the momentum going,” Hennagir said after the game, which the U.S. won 63-35.

A wrestler, hockey and basketball player in high school, Hennagir began playing wheelchair basketball during rehabilitation at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Md. He later switched to wheelchair rugby.

The sport made famous by the 2005 documentary “Murderball” is a four-on-four contest played on a basketball court-sized area.



# Justices order immigration policy restored

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court said the Biden administration likely violated federal law in trying to end a Trump-era program that forces people to wait in Mexico while seeking asylum in the United States.

With three liberal justices in dissent, the high court Tuesday refused to block a lower court ruling ordering the administration to reinstate the program informally known as Remain in Mexico.

It's not clear how many people will be affected and how quickly. Under the lower court ruling, the administration must make a "good faith effort" to restart the program.

There is also nothing prevent-

ing the administration from trying again to end the program, formally called Migrant Protection Protocols.

A federal judge in Texas had previously ordered that the program be reinstated last week. Both he and the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals refused the administration's request to put the ruling on hold.

Justice Samuel Alito ordered a brief delay to allow the full court time to consider the administration's appeal to keep the ruling on hold while the case continues to make its way through the courts.

The 5th Circuit ordered expedited consideration of the administration's appeal.

The court offered little explanation for its action, although it

cited its opinion from last year rejecting the Trump administration's effort to end another immigration program, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. In that case, the court held that the decision to end DACA was "arbitrary and capricious," in violation of federal law.

The administration has "failed to show a likelihood of success on the claim that the memorandum rescinding the Migrant Protection Protocols was not arbitrary and capricious," the court wrote Tuesday in an unsigned order.

The three dissenting justices, Stephen Breyer, Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor, did not write an opinion expressing their views of the case.

In a statement, the Depart-

ment of Homeland Security said it regrets that the high court declined to issue a stay. The department said it would continue to challenge the district court's order.

The American Civil Liberties Union called on the administration to present a fuller rationale for ending Remain in Mexico that could withstand court scrutiny.

"The government must take all steps available to fully end this illegal program, including by re-terminating it with a fuller explanation. What it must not do is use this decision as cover for abandoning its commitment to restore a fair asylum system," said Omar Jadwat, director of the ACLU's immigrant rights project.

## Crews struggle to stop fire coming down on Lake Tahoe

Associated Press

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, Calif. — A California fire that gutted hundreds of homes moved toward Lake Tahoe on Wednesday as thousands of firefighters tried to box in the flames, and tourists who hoped to leave found themselves looking at thick yellow haze instead of alpine scenery.

The Caldor Fire was less than 20 miles east of the lake that straddles the California-Nevada state line. The fire was eating its way through rugged timberlands and was "knocking on the door" of the Lake Tahoe basin, California's state fire chief Thom Porter warned this week.

On Tuesday, ash rained down and tourists ducked into cafes, outdoor gear shops and casinos on Lake Tahoe Boulevard for a respite from the unhealthy air.

Inside the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, cocktail waitresses in fishnet stockings and leopard-print corsets served customers playing slots and blackjack.

Sitting at a slot machine near a window looking out at cars driving through the haze, Ramona

Trejo said she and her husband would stay for their 50th wedding anniversary, as planned.

Trejo, who uses supplemental oxygen due to respiratory problems, said her husband wanted to keep gambling.

"I would want to go now," she said.

South of Tahoe, Rick Nelson and his wife, Diane, had planned to host a weekend wedding at Fallen Leaf Lake, where his daughter and her fiancé had met. The smoke, however, caused most of the community to leave. The sun was an eerie blood orange and the floats and boats in the lake were obscured by haze.

In the end, the Nelsons spent two days arranging to have the wedding moved from the glacial lake several hours southwest to the San Francisco Bay Area.

"Everybody's trying to make accommodations for the smoke. And I think it's becoming a reality for us, unfortunately," Diane Nelson said. "I just think that the smoke and the fires have gotten bigger, hotter and faster-moving."

## 1st sentencing in Whitmer kidnapping plot to be given

Associated Press

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Prosecutors preparing for the first prison sentence in an alleged plot to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer are loudly signaling to five other defendants that a key insider has shared extraordinary details about the operation.

Ty Garbin cooperated within weeks of being arrested, willingly putting a "target on his back to begin his own redemption," the government said in a court filing.

Prosecutors wanted U.S. District Judge Robert Jonker to take it into consideration Wednesday when he sentences Garbin for conspiracy. The government is recommending a nine-year prison term, a long stretch but one that would be even longer if he had not assisted investigators after being charged.

The FBI last October said it broke up a scheme to kidnap the Democratic governor by anti-government extremists who

were upset over Whitmer's coronavirus restrictions. Six men were charged in federal court, while others were charged in state court with aiding them.

Garbin, a 25-year-old airplane mechanic, is the only federal defendant to plead guilty; others are awaiting trial.

"He filled in gaps in the government's knowledge by recounting conversations and actions that did not include any government informant or ability to record," Assistant U.S. Attorney Nils Kessler said.

"Second, he confirmed that the plot was real; not just 'big talk between crackpots,' as suggested by co-defendants. Third, he dispelled any suggestion that the conspirators were entrapped by government informants," the prosecutor said.

In his plea agreement, Garbin said the six men trained at his property near Luther, Mich., constructing a "shoot house" to resemble Whitmer's vacation home and "assaulting it with firearms."

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Monsoon floods damage border wall gates

**AZ** DOUGLAS — Several metal flood gates in the newly built section of the U.S.-Mexico border wall in eastern-most Arizona were ripped off their hinges last week by flooding from unusually heavy monsoon rains, authorities say.

A spokesman for the Border Patrol's Tucson sector confirmed Monday the gates were open last week when water from the historic rainfall rushed through the Douglas area near the San Bernardino Wildlife Refuge in Cochise County. He said a Border Patrol team is currently assessing flood damage along the wall.

An official with Customs and Border Protection said authorities planned to repair the damage.

### Tallest man in the US dies at age 38

**MN** ROCHESTER — Igor Vovkovinskiy, the tallest man in the United States, has died in Minnesota. He was 38.

His family said the Ukrainian-born Vovkovinskiy died of heart disease at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester. His mother, Svetlana Vovkovinska, an ICU nurse at Mayo, initially posted about his death on Facebook.

Vovkovinskiy came to the Mayo Clinic in 1989 as a child seeking treatment. A tumor pressing against his pituitary gland caused it to secrete abnormal levels of growth hormone. He grew to become the tallest man in the U.S. at 7 feet, 8.33 inches and ended up staying in Rochester.

### Jack Daniel's age-stated whiskey first in a century

**TN** LYNCHBURG — The producers of Jack Daniel's are offering the brand's first age-stated whiskey in more than a

century with the upcoming release of a 10-year-old Tennessee whiskey.

Limited supplies will be available starting next month. The product will become an annual release from the Jack Daniel Distillery in Lynchburg.

The distillery used an aging process to mature Jack Daniel's Old No. 7 Tennessee Whiskey in oak barrels relocated throughout the barrelhouse over the past decade.

Old No. 7 Jack Daniel's ages, on average, four to five years.

Jack Daniel's is the flagship brand of Louisville, Ky.-based Brown-Forman Corp.

### Passenger's cellphone catches fire after landing

**WA** SEATAC — A passenger's cellphone caught fire after an Alaska Airlines flight landed at the Sea-Tac International Airport, forcing the crew to deploy evacuation slides to get everyone on board to safety.

A spokesperson for Alaska Airlines said a passenger's cellphone on flight 751 from New Orleans to Seattle caught on fire, KOMO-TV reported. The aircraft crew used a battery containment bag to extinguish the fire, the spokesperson said.

Hazy conditions in the aircraft cabin forced the crew to deploy evacuation slides to get the guests off the plane.

There were 128 passengers and six crew members on board the flight, according to the spokesperson.

### Police: Fire that burned sculpture was arson

**NM** SANTA FE — Authorities in Santa Fe were searching for a suspect who set fire to a sculpture over the weekend.

Fire officials said someone de-

liberately committed arson against a 21-foot tall sculpture outside of the Form & Concept gallery downtown.

Police Chief Andrew Padilla told the Santa Fe New Mexican investigators are reviewing surveillance footage in hopes of identifying a suspect.

### Man arrested after truck hits houses

**SD** SIOUX FALLS — A Pierre man was arrested after he allegedly drove a truck into two houses in Sioux Falls, sending a homeowner to the hospital.

The Argus Leader reported the 24-year-old man failed to navigate a curb. He hit one house, then crashed into a second. His truck ended up in a bedroom. The 41-year-old homeowner was sleeping in the room and suffered a concussion when he was hit by debris.

Jesse Peterson, the owner of the first home that was struck, said the impact sounded like an explosion. He said he found the driver unconscious. Nobody in his house was hurt.

A police spokesman says the driver could face charges of driving under the influence and vehicular battery.

### Man who tried to swallow memory cards sentenced

**NC** RALEIGH — A federal judge handed down a 12-year prison sentence to a man convicted on child pornography charges after authorities say he tried to swallow memory cards containing pornographic images.

David Sierra Orozco, 31, a Mexican national, was sentenced this week, The News & Observer of Raleigh reported. Orozco was convicted in March of possessing child pornography. Orozco is a resident of Georgia and an unlawful immigrant who will be deport-

ed at the end of his sentence, the newspaper said.

Court records say sheriff's deputies in Harnett County stopped Orozco in July 2017 after they say he was driving erratically. While being searched, officers found a folded \$100 bill.

When they unfolded it, memory cards fell to the floor.

Testimony at a preliminary hearing indicated Orozco grabbed the memory cards and tried to eat them.

He swallowed one and chewed another that deputies were able to retrieve, an agent said.

Three other cards were unscathed, and they contained multiple images and videos of child pornography.

### Man steals iCloud files looking for nude images

**CA** LOS ANGELES — A Southern California man broke into thousands of Apple iCloud accounts and collected more than 620,000 private photos and videos in an effort to steal images of nude young women, federal authorities said.

Hao Kuo Chi, 40, of La Puente, agreed to plead guilty to four felonies, including conspiracy to gain unauthorized access to a computer, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Chi admitted that he impersonated Apple customer support staff in emails that tricked unsuspecting victims into providing him with their Apple IDs and passwords, according to court records cited by the Times.

He gained unauthorized access to photos and videos of at least 306 victims across the U.S., most of them young women, he acknowledged in his plea agreement with federal prosecutors in Tampa, Fla.

He faces up to five years in prison for each of the four crimes.

— From wire reports

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# FCS teams return after short offseason

Associated Press

K.C. Keeler didn't ask his Sam Houston players to stick around long after they won the school's first national championship last May, capping a long and draining season — physically and emotionally — because of the pandemic.

He's also not asking them to stick around as long at practice this year.

Throughout the Championship Subdivision, coaches are making concessions this fall to acknowledge that the quick turnaround from last spring is hard.

Practices that typically had 24 sessions in the Huntsville, Texas, heat?

"We're down to 19 periods," Keeler said.

"I give them a halftime after like the 11th or 12th period every day where they literally just go over and hydrate."

Keeler sent his team home after the championship win and didn't have them return until June 28, when the community finally honored them with a parade for their championship.

When the Bearkats resumed practice Aug. 4, just 80 days had passed since they beat South Dakota State 23-21 for the title on a pass with 16 seconds to play.

With the season opener set for Sept. 2, that is 108 days between games for the Bearkats. Between the 2018 and 2019 seasons, the last time things were normal, Sam

Houston had 286 days between games.

By the time this regular season ends, assuming it goes on as scheduled, Sam Houston will have played 20 games in 2021 — with the potential for postseason games a very real possibility.

Sam Houston is one of many programs that have banned, or severely limited, tackling in practice, but not every highly regarded program follows suit.

"Football is a collision sport," James Madison coach Curt Cignetti said, "... and you still have to develop the toughness, the mindset of your team in camp. So, we've had a physical camp. Everybody wanted a physical camp."

## Ex-Vols among transfers on teams eyeing playoffs

Associated Press

Tennessee hasn't finished a season ranked higher than 22nd since 2007, yet there still figures to be a heavy Volunteer flavor to the playoff picture this year.

Or to put it more accurately, an ex-Volunteer flavor.

While the transfer portal was particularly active during the most recent offseason, no team lost more star power than Tennessee, which fired coach Jeremy Pruitt in January when school officials said an internal investigation found serious NCAA violations.

Three teams ranked in the top 10 of The Associated Press Top 25 landed notable former Volunteers.

No. 1 Alabama landed ex-Tennessee linebacker Henry To'o To'o. Running back Ty Chandler transferred from Tennessee to No. 10 North Carolina.

But the Volunteers' presence is most notable at No. 2 Oklahoma. The Sooners have three former Vols in running back Eric Gray, defensive back Key Lawrence and offensive tackle Wanya Morris.

"Definitely for me as a running back, the history of the 'RBU,' so many great running backs came through here, the history of the offense at Oklahoma, just the OU program in gen-

eral, I was definitely attracted to it from day one," Gray said. "Once I got to the transfer portal, I kind of knew Oklahoma was the school I wanted to go to."

There are a number of transfers who should make an impact this season and it's no surprise this list features a couple of former Tennessee players:

**Notre Dame QB Jack Coan (Wisconsin):** Coan already has been named the starting quarterback for No. 9 Notre Dame's Sept. 5 season opener at Florida State. Coan made 18 starts for Wisconsin from 2018-19, but he injured his right foot before the 2020 season and never played for the Badgers again with Graham Mertz taking over the job. Coan completed 69.6% of his passes for 2,727 yards with 18 touchdowns and five interceptions in 2019 while helping Wisconsin reach the Big Ten championship game and Rose Bowl. Coan will get a chance to face his former team Sept. 25, when the Fighting Irish face No. 12 Wisconsin at Chicago's Soldier Field.

**Oklahoma RB Eric Gray (Tennessee):** Gray rushed for 772 yards and also caught 30 passes for 254 yards in nine games last season. He rushed for 539 yards as a freshman in

2019. He closed the 2019 season by rushing for 246 yards against Vanderbilt and gaining 120 all-purpose yards and scoring the winning touchdown against Indiana in the Gator Bowl. He was named the most valuable player of the Gator Bowl. Gray should form a quality running back tandem with Oklahoma's Kennedy Brooks, who rushed for more than 1,000 yards in back-to-back years in 2018 and 2019 before opting out of the 2020 season.

**Kentucky QB Will Levis (Penn State):** Levis will be the starting quarterback for Kentucky's Sept. 4 season opener with Louisiana-Monroe. Levis appeared in 15 games for Penn State and went 61-for-102 for 644 yards with three touchdowns and two interceptions. Kentucky might not be the only SEC East team handing its starting quarterback job to someone who arrived by transfer this offseason. Tennessee's quarterback competition includes Michigan transfer Joe Milton and Virginia Tech transfer Hendon Hooker, as well as Harrison Bailey.

**Florida State QB McKenzie Milton (UCF):** Milton is a two-time American Athletic Conference offensive player of the year who finished eighth in the

Heisman Trophy balloting in 2017 and sixth in 2018, but he suffered ligament, nerve and artery damage to his knee in November 2018 and hasn't played in a game since. Milton, who won his last 24 starts at UCF, now is attempting a comeback with Florida State and competing with Jordan Travis for the right to open the season as the Seminoles' starting quarterback.

**Georgia DB Tykee Smith (West Virginia):** Smith was a third-team Associated Press All-America selection for West Virginia last season. He had 61 tackles — eight for loss — and two interceptions in 10 games. Smith also had 53 tackles and two interceptions as a freshman in 2019. Smith will be part of a Georgia secondary that also includes Clemson transfer Derion Kendrick.

**Alabama LB Henry To'o To'o (Tennessee):** To'o To'o was a two-year starter at Tennessee who recorded a team-high 76 tackles last season. He also had 10 tackles for loss. He had 72 tackles as a freshman in 2019. Alabama coach Nick Saban says To'o To'o has benefited from his familiarity with the system after playing at Tennessee for Pruitt, a former Alabama defensive coordinator.



# Serena pulls out of U.S. Open with injury

Associated Press

Serena Williams added herself to the list of big-name withdrawals from the U.S. Open on Wednesday, pulling out of the year's last Grand Slam tournament because of a torn hamstring.

Williams hasn't competed since injuring her right leg in the first set of her first-round match at Wimbledon in late June.

The American, who turns 40 next month, announced her decision to sit out the U.S. Open via a social media post. She joins Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal in sitting out the competition in Flushing Meadows, where play begins Monday, raising questions about what the future of tennis might look like without them. The draw for the tournament is Thursday.

This will be the first major tournament since 1997 without Williams, Federer or Nadal in the singles brackets. Williams made her Grand Slam debut at the 1998 Australian Open; Federer made his the following

year; Nadal in 2003.

Williams has won 23 Grand Slam singles titles, a record in the professional era. Only one player in tennis history owns more, Margaret Court with 24.

Federer, Nadal and Novak Djokovic share the men's record of 20.

"After careful consideration and following the advice of my doctors and medical team, I have decided to withdraw from the US Open to allow my body to heal completely from a torn hamstring," Williams wrote in Wednesday's post.

Her note ended with: "I'll see you soon."

Williams' coach, Patrick Mouratoglou, also put up a post on social media, saying, "we've done everything we could" and adding: "It is heartbreaking, but this is the only possible decision."

Williams has won six singles championships at the U.S. Open, most recently in 2014. In her five appearances at the hard-court tournament in New York since then,

she has made it to the final twice — losing to Naomi Osaka in 2018 and Bianca Andreescu in 2019 — and the semifinals three other times, including last year.

Her best-in-the-game serve and powerful groundstrokes have allowed Williams to remain among the title contenders at the biggest tournaments, especially on hard courts and grass.

This season, she was a semifinalist at the Australian Open in February, before losing to eventual champion Osaka there. At the French Open, played on red clay, Williams lost in the fourth round to Elena Rybakina.

At Wimbledon, Williams was serving while leading 3-1 in her opening match when her left shoe seemed to lose its traction while she was hitting a forehand and her right leg flexed awkwardly.

She tried to continue but eventually needed to stop playing, only the second mid-match retirement of her Grand Slam career and first since 1998.

## Rams bolster backfield, deal draft picks to Patriots for Michel

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — The Los Angeles Rams are getting some much-needed help in the backfield.

The Rams announced Wednesday that they acquired running back Sony Michel from the Patriots for undisclosed 2022 draft picks.

Michel, who was drafted in the first round in 2018, brings some relief to a Rams offense that was running low on healthy running back options with the regular season fast approaching.

Darrell Henderson left practice Monday with a sprained thumb. The Rams won't have two of last season's top three running backs this fall after Cam Akers' season-ending Achilles tendon injury and Malcolm Brown's departure for Miami. They also won't have emerging talent Raymond Calais, who was waived with an injury designation Monday after breaking his foot in their preseason game against Las Vegas.

That left only undrafted second-year pro Xavier Jones, rookie seventh-round pick Jake Funk and rookie Otis Anderson as the remaining options to support quarterback Matt Stafford.

Michel entered the preseason at a pivotal point of his injury-plagued career.

The Patriots declined to pick up his fifth-

year option in May, clearing the way from him to become a free agent at the conclusion of the season.

During his rookie campaign, he fought through the lingering effects of the left knee injury he suffered as a senior at Georgia. He appeared in eight games and rushed for 931 yards and six touchdowns, averaging 4.7 yards per carry.

He appeared in 14 games in 2019 but saw his production tail off. He ran for 912 yards and seven TDs while his yards per carry average fell to 3.7.

That average rose to 5.7 last season before a quadriceps injury sidelined him for six games. The 26-year-old also spent a week on the COVID-19 list.

His contract status left him entering training camp fighting for a roster spot this season in New England.

Damien Harris was productive in 2020, his second season, and got most of the snaps. The Patriots drafted former Oklahoma running back Rhamondre Stevenson in the fourth round in April, and he joined a depth chart that also includes veteran James White, Brandon Bolden and J.J. Taylor. Stevenson had two impressive performances during the first two exhibition games, running for four touchdowns, including a 91-yard score.

## Jags RB Etienne out for season

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Travis Etienne was supposed to be a game-changer for the Jacksonville Jaguars this season.

He might not have had the same impact as rookie quarterback Trevor Lawrence, but Clemson's other offensive star and the Atlantic Coast Conference's all-time leading rusher looked like he would be a prominent figure — maybe even the go-to guy — in coach Urban Meyer's offense.

Matchup nightmare? Versatile weapon? Big-play threat? Etienne was expected to provide all those and more after Jacksonville chose him with the 25th overall pick in April's NFL draft.

Now, though, Meyer and the Jaguars will have to wait a year to see what Etienne can do in the NFL. The team placed the running back on injured reserve Tuesday, one day after he suffered a Lisfranc injury to his left foot.

Tests revealed the extent of the injury Tuesday. He is expected to have surgery as soon as possible. He may have been able to return late in the year, but the Jaguars opted to take a cautious approach and give him plenty of time to recover before the 2022 season.

Since Etienne landed on IR before 53-man rosters get set next Tuesday, he cannot return this season.

# Yanks top Braves, run win streak to 11

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Wandy Peralta retired Freddie Freeman with the bases loaded for the final out, and the New York Yankees held off the Atlanta Braves 5-4 Tuesday night to extend their longest winning streak in 36 years to 11 games.

DJ LeMahieu's two-run homer in the fifth inning gave New York the lead. Giancarlo Stanton and Rougned Odor also went deep for the Yankees.

New York closer Aroldis Chapman, trying to preserve the lead, gave up two hits and two walks in the ninth. Chapman's bases-loaded walk to Jorge Soler cut the margin to one, and manager Aaron Boone pulled Chapman for Peralta.

The Yankees remained four games behind first-place Tampa Bay in the AL East.

The 11-game winning streak is New York's longest since Aug. 31 to Sept. 10, 1985.

Charlie Morton (12-5) allowed four runs and six hits in five innings. He had nine strikeouts.

Clay Holmes (2-0), the third of six Yankees relievers, earned the win.

**Dodgers 5, Padres 2:** AJ Pollock hit a two-run single and robbed Manny Machado of a two-run homer to lead visiting Los Angeles past sinking San Diego in a series opener between NL West rivals headed in opposite directions.

Will Smith homered for the Dodgers and Julio Urias (14-3) allowed one hit over five scoreless innings in his return from the injured list to match Chicago Cubs right-hander Kyle Hendricks for most wins in the majors.

Los Angeles has won 10 of 11, while the Padres have lost 10 of 12.

Urias, who missed his previous turn with a bruised left calf, held San Diego hitless until Eric Hosmer doubled with one out in the fifth.

**Giants 8, Mets 0:** Brandon Belt hit two of visiting San Francisco's four home runs to push his career-best total to 19, and rookie Sammy Long pitched into the sixth inning in a win over slumping New York.

LaMonte Wade Jr. and Mike Yastrzemski also connected in the first four innings as the Giants jumped to a 7-0 advantage against rookie Tylor Megill (1-3).

San Francisco catcher Buster Posey was removed with left knee discomfort in the fifth.

Belt ended a 2-for-30 skid with two homers and a single in his first three plate appearances, and added an RBI infield single

in the eighth for his season-high fourth hit. Long (2-1) tossed three-hit ball over 5½ innings, striking out four and walking one.

**Red Sox 11, Twins 9:** Hunter Renfroe homered twice, the second during a five-run fifth inning that gave host Boston a six-run advantage as it defeated last-place Minnesota.

Alex Verdugo had three hits, and Renfroe drove in five runs with his 14th career multi-homer game. Kiké Hernández added a two-run homer.

Jorge Polanco hit a two-run homer for the Twins and Josh Donaldson added a solo shot in the ninth.

**Brewers 7, Reds 3:** Omar Narváez hit a tiebreaking double in a four-run seventh inning, Kolten Wong added a two-run homer in the eighth and host Milwaukee rallied past Cincinnati.

Brewers shortstop Willy Adames exited early with a leg injury, but first-place Milwaukee hit a trio of sacrifice flies to win the opener of a three-game series between the top two teams in the NL Central.

Hunter Strickland (3-1) pitched a scoreless inning in relief of starter Corbin Burnes to help the Brewers win for the 11th time in 14 games. Josh Hader earned his 27th save in 28 chances.

**Astros 4, Royals 0:** Luis Garcia pitched into the seventh inning and two relievers completed a four-hitter as host Houston blanked Kansas City.

Garcia (10-6) struck out seven and scattered four hits across 6½ sharp innings. Ryne Stanek got the next four outs before Kendall Graveman worked a perfect ninth.

Carlos Correa had two hits and two RBIs to help the Astros snap a two-game skid.

**Rays 3, Phillies 1:** Nelson Cruz returned from the COVID-19 list, played first base for the first time in his career and hit a tiebreaking two-run double in the eighth inning as visiting Tampa Bay beat Philadelphia.

The 41-year-old Cruz, the Rays' designated hitter who had never played first, handled all his chances cleanly in his first action anywhere on defense since he played right field for Seattle in 2018. He singled in the first and sixth innings before his big hit in the eighth, a line drive off Archie Bradley (7-2) that scored Brett Phillips and Randy Arozarena.

JT Chargois (2-0) struck out the only batter he faced to end the seventh, and Andrew Kittredge worked the last two innings for his third save.

**Rangers 7, Indians 3:** Nathaniel Lowe

was 5-for-5 with a three-run homer in the first inning, and visiting Texas beat Cleveland after adding another player to the COVID-19 list.

Lowe singled in the third, seventh and ninth, doubled in the fifth and homered in the first. DJ Peters also hit a three-run homer in the ninth and drove in four runs.

The win came at an opportune time for the Rangers, who placed catcher Jonah Heim on the COVID-19 list before the game, bringing their total to five players on the list.

**Nationals 5, Marlins 1:** Tres Barrera had three hits, including a homer, and visiting Washington sent Miami to its eighth straight loss.

Yadiel Hernández singled and tripled, while Ryan Zimmerman also went deep for the Nationals.

**Angels 14, Orioles 8:** Baltimore staggered to its 19th consecutive loss, allowing 19 hits and falling behind visiting Los Angeles by 11 runs early.

The Orioles' streak is the major leagues' longest skid since Kansas City dropped 19 straight in 2005.

**White Sox 5, Blue Jays 2:** Dylan Cease pitched seven effective innings, José Abreu hit a three-run homer and Chicago won at Toronto to stop a three-game slide.

Cease (10-6) retired his first 11 batters, fanning six, before Vladimir Guerrero Jr. lined a single to right in the fourth. Cease allowed one run and four hits. Liam Hendriks earned his 29th save in 35 chances.

**Tigers 4, Cardinals 3:** Miguel Cabrera and Robbie Grossman hit back-to-back home runs to lead Detroit to an interleague victory at St. Louis.

Two days after hitting his 500th homer, Cabrera connected on No. 501. At 423 feet, it was his second-longest home run this season.

**Pirates 4, Diamondbacks 2:** JT Brubaker pitched five scoreless innings for his first win in nearly three months, and host Pittsburgh beat Arizona.

Brubaker (5-13) allowed four hits with six strikeouts, stranding five runners in scoring position. Since last winning May 29, Brubaker went 0-9 with a 7.08 ERA in 12 starts. Chris Stratton picked up his second save.

**Mariners 5, Athletics 1:** Luis Torrens hit a tiebreaking two-run single, Chris Flexen pitched into the seventh inning and Seattle swept a two-game series at Oakland.

The A's managed three straight singles in the first against Flexen (11-5), who struck out five over 6½ innings. He allowed six hits and walked one.