

## New urgency to airlift after Kabul blast

*Associated Press*

KABUL, Afghanistan — The United States pressed on with the mammoth evacuation from Afghanistan on Friday amid tighter security measures and fears of more bloodshed, a day after the suicide attack at the Kabul airport that killed scores of Afghans and 13 U.S. service members.

The U.S. warned more attacks could come ahead of President Joe Biden's fast-approaching deadline to withdraw American forces from Afghanistan by Tuesday.

Two officials said the Afghan death toll in Thursday's bombing rose to 169, while the United States said it was the deadliest day for American forces in Afghanistan since August 2011. Biden blamed the attack on Afghanistan's offshoot of Islamic State, an enemy of both the Taliban and the West.

The officials who gave the Afghan death toll were not authorized to talk to the media and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Pentagon also said Friday that there was a bombing only at the airport gate, not at two locations, as U.S. officials initially said.

As the call to prayer echoed Friday through Kabul along with the roar of departing planes, the anxious crowds thronging the airport in hope of escaping Taliban rule appeared as large as ever despite the bombing.

Afghans, American citizens and other foreigners were all acutely aware the window is closing to board a flight before the airlift ends and Western troops withdraw.

The attacks led Jamshad to head there in

the morning with his wife and three small children, clutching an invitation to a Western country he didn't want to name.

"After the explosion I decided I would try because I am afraid now there will be more attacks, and I think now I have to leave," said Jamshad, who like many Afghans uses only one name.

The names of the Afghan victims began emerging and included a news agency founder along with a number of impoverished Afghans who had gone to the airport in hopes of realizing a better life.

By the morning after the attack, the Taliban posted a pickup full of fighters and three captured humvees and set up a makeshift barrier 500 yards from the airport, holding the crowds farther back from the U.S. troops at the airport gates.

Gen. Frank McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, said in the hours after the bombings that the U.S. would adjust its security outside the airport gates as needed, including possibly asking the Taliban to change the location of their checkpoints.

McKenzie said American forces have to stand close to would-be evacuees to make sure they are not carrying any weapons that could cause even greater loss of life aboard a plane.

"Somebody has actually got to watch someone else in the eyes and decide that they're ready to come in" the airport gates, McKenzie said.

In an emotional speech Thursday night, Biden vowed to complete the evacuation and

hunt down the ISIS militants responsible for the carnage.

The group's Afghanistan affiliate is far more radical than the Taliban fighters who seized power less than two weeks ago in a lightning blitz across the country.

The Taliban have wrested back control of Afghanistan two decades after they were ousted in a U.S.-led invasion following the 9/11 attacks.

Their return to power has terrified many Afghans, who fear they will reimpose the kind of repressive rule they did when they were last in control. Thousands have rushed to flee the country ahead of the American withdrawal as a result.

The U.S. said more than 100,000 people have been safely evacuated from Kabul, but thousands more are struggling to leave in one of history's largest airlifts.

The White House said Friday morning that 8,500 evacuees had been flown out aboard U.S. military aircraft in the previous 24 hours, along with about 4,000 people on coalition flights. That was about the same total as the day before the attack.

Outside the airport, Afghans acknowledged that going to the airport was risky — but said they had few choices.

"Believe me, I think that an explosion will happen any second or minute, God is my witness, but we have lots of challenges in our lives, that is why we take the risk to come here and we overcome fear," said Ahmadullah He-rawi.

## Biden vows revenge on terrorists for airport attack

**By NIKKI WENTLING**

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden vowed Thursday to hunt down leaders of the terrorist group that carried out an attack in Kabul which killed 13 U.S. service members and wounded dozens of other troops and Afghan civilians.

Biden expressed outrage and heartbreak at the deaths, and he promised a response. He confirmed the group ISIS-K — an Afghan-based branch of the Islamic State terrorist group — was responsible for the attack. Pentagon officials warned this week of

potential threats from the group.

"To those who carried out this attack, as well as anyone who wishes America harm, know this: We will not forgive, we will not forget," said Biden, who spoke from the East Room of the White House. "We will hunt you down and make you pay. I will defend our interests and our people with every measure at my command."

Biden said he ordered his commanders to develop plans for a return strike against the terrorist group's assets, facilities and leadership. Further, he said his administration "has reason to believe" that they know the

individuals who ordered the attack and would "get them, wherever they are."

"We will respond with force and precision at our time, at the place we choose and the moment of our choosing," the president said. "Here's what you need to know: these ISIS terrorists will not win. We will rescue the Americans. We will get our Afghan allies out. America will not be intimidated."

"We can and we must complete this mission, and we will," Biden said. "And that's what I've ordered them to do. We will not be deterred by terrorists. We will not let them stop our mission."

# Marine blasts US leaders on Afghanistan

By CHAD GARLAND  
*Stars and Stripes*

A Marine officer who filmed a viral video says that he's risking his career of nearly two decades to call out senior military and civilian leaders for failures in Afghanistan.

Lt. Col. Stu Scheller posted the video on social media hours after a blast in Kabul killed 13 U.S. troops. He appears in uniform and responds directly to Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger's letter to troops and veterans asking whether the nearly 20-year-long war in Afghanistan was worth it.

"The reason people are so upset on social media right now is not because the Marine on the battlefield let someone down," Scheller says. "People are upset because their senior leaders let them down. And none of them are raising their hands and accepting accountability or saying, 'We messed this up.'"

The video garnered more than 70,000 views and 6,000 shares in its first 10 hours on Facebook and LinkedIn. It's the latest in a spate of calls from

veterans and others demanding that senior officials answer for mistakes over the course of the war, especially in its final months. Some have blamed the precipitous U.S. withdrawal for undermining the Afghan government and allowing the Taliban to seize the country.

Critics have also likened the Afghanistan failure to Islamic State's sweep through Syria and Iraq in 2014, during President Joe Biden's time as vice president and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's leadership of U.S. Central Command.

An officer who commands the Advanced Infantry Training Battalion at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Scheller is a veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, according to a biography posted on his command's website. It states that he started his career in 2005 with the 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, which is one of the units deployed to Kabul's airport to support the U.S. airlift.

At least 10 Marines and a Navy corpsman were among the U.S. troops killed in the attack Thursday that was claimed by ISIS. About 169 Afghans were

killed, two officials told The Associated Press, though a final count is expected to take more time. Scores of others were wounded, at least 18 U.S. troops among them.

Scheller says he knows one of the people killed in the blast, but he declines to name the person until the family had been notified.

"Not making this video because it's potentially an emotional time," he says. "Making it because I have a growing discontent and contempt for ... perceived ineptitude at the foreign policy level."

Scheller cites remarks Austin gave earlier this year suggesting that the Afghan security forces could withstand a Taliban advance.

He also notes that two Marine generals are supposed to be advising the president: Berger, in his position on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and CENTCOM boss Gen. Frank McKenzie, though he does not name McKenzie.

"I'm not saying we've got to be ... in Afghanistan forever," Scheller says. "But I am saying, 'Did any of you throw your rank

on the table and say, hey, it's a bad idea to evacuate Bagram Airfield, a strategic air base, before we evacuate everyone? Did anyone do that?'"

A Marine of his rank and position would be fired immediately over "the simplest live-fire incident" or equal opportunity complaint, he says.

He then suggests that the lives lost over the past 20 years could all be for naught if high-level political and military leaders don't take responsibility for their actions.

"Potentially all those people did die in vain if we don't have senior leaders that own up and raise their hand and say, 'We did not do this well in the end,'" he says. "Without that, we just keep repeating the same mistakes."

Scheller participated in the noncombatant evacuation of American citizens from Beirut in 2006 and deployed to Ramadi, Iraq, the following year. Beginning in 2010, he spent a year in Afghanistan.

He led a team that destroyed explosives caches and sought to prevent improvised explosive device attacks.

## Judge orders trials set up for thousands of 3M earplug cases

By ROSE L. THAYER  
*Stars and Stripes*

A federal judge in Florida has ordered thousands of veterans' lawsuits against an earplug manufacturer to be scheduled for trials to alleviate a backlog of more than 250,000 cases.

The order this week from Judge Casey Rogers in the Northern District of Florida called on veterans' attorneys to move 1,358 cases in the first wave, then between 10,000 and 20,000 in subsequent orders. The cases, which have become the nation's largest multidistrict litigation, claim the Minnesota-

based company 3M sold earplugs to the military that could loosen from the ear canal and led to hearing loss and tinnitus, or a ringing in the ears.

Rogers wrote moving cases to the active docket will help accelerate discovery and ongoing bellwether trials, which are used to present a representative of the cases before a jury to gain useful information for potentially reaching a settlement for all cases.

"We believe the order will ensure the continued efficient management of this litigation and serve the interests of justice

for the 250,000 service members who have suffered hearing damage due to 3M's negligence," according to a statement from Bryan Aylstock of Aylstock Witkin Kreis & Overholtz PLLC, Shelley Hutson of Clark, Love & Hutson GP, and Christopher Seeger of Seeger Weiss LLP, the lead attorneys for plaintiffs in the case.

So far, five veterans have presented their cases in three trials. During the first trial, held in April, a jury awarded \$7.1 million to three Army veterans. 3M won in the second trial in May, which involved one veter-

an. In June, a jury found 3M partially liable and awarded the Army veteran \$1.05 million. A trial scheduled for next month was dismissed, because the veteran's injury was "unrelated to noise-induced hearing loss or 3M," the company said in a statement.

The earplugs at the center of the lawsuits are 3M's Combat Arms Version 2 dual-sided earplug. It was used in the military until 2015. The company never issued a recall on the product and version 4 of the earplug remains in use by the military, according to 3M.

# Virus surge breaks hospital records

*Associated Press*

Kentucky and Texas joined a growing list of states that are seeing record numbers of hospitalized COVID-19 patients in a surge that is overwhelming doctors and nurses and afflicting more children.

Intensive care units around the nation are packed with patients extremely ill with the coronavirus — even in places where hospitalizations have not yet reached earlier peaks.

The ICU units at Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital in Georgia typically have room for 38 patients, and doctors and nurses may have only two or three people who are very sick, said Dr. Jyotir Mehta, medical director of the ICU. On Wednesday, the ICU had 50 COVID-19 patients alone, roughly half of them relying on ventilators to breathe.

“I don’t think we have experienced this much critical illness in folks, so many people sick at the same time,” Mehta said.

He said talking to family members is difficult.

“They are grasping for every hope and you’re trying to tell them, ‘Look, it’s bad,’” he said. “You have to tell them that your loved one is not going to make it.”

In New Mexico, top health officials warned Wednesday that the state is about a week away from rationing health care. The number of coronavirus patients needing care at hospitals jumped more than 20% in a day.

“We’re going to have to choose who gets care and who doesn’t get care,” state Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. David Scrase warned. “And we don’t want to get to that point.”

In Idaho, state leaders called on residents to volunteer to help keep medical facilities operating.

Texas and Kentucky on Wednesday reported more COVID-19 patients in their hospitals than at any other time since the pandemic began, 14,255 and 2,074, respectively. The Texas record is based on U.S. Department of Health and Human Services data.

At least six other states — Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Hawaii, Mississippi and Oregon — have already broken their hospitalization records.

In Texas, nearly 47% of the population is fully vaccinated — below the national average of almost 52% — and Republican Gov. Greg Abbott has banned mask and vaccine mandates. Many counties and school districts have defied his mask ban.

In Kentucky, just under 48% of the population is fully vaccinated, and public health officials have blamed the lag in part for the state’s surge. Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear’s COVID-19 restrictions expired in June, and the GOP-controlled legislature has blocked him from issuing new mask requirements or capacity limits.

Nationwide, COVID-19 deaths are run-

ning at more than 1,100 a day, the highest level since mid-March, and new cases per day are averaging over 152,000, turning the clock back to the end of January. As of early this week, the number of people in the hospital with the coronavirus was around 85,000, a level not seen since early February.

The surge is largely fueled by the highly contagious delta variant among people who are unvaccinated. In areas where vaccination rates are particularly low, doctors have pleaded with their communities to get inoculated to spare overburdened hospitals.

They have also sounded the alarm about the growing toll of the variant on children and young adults.

Children now make up 36% of Tennessee’s reported COVID-19 cases, marking yet another sobering milestone in the state’s battle against the virus, Health Commissioner Lisa Piercey said Wednesday. She said the state had 14,000 pediatric cases in the last seven days — a 57% increase over that of the previous week.

In South Carolina, students will again be required to wear masks on school buses starting Monday as COVID-19 cases among children and students rise rapidly.

Nearly 30% of new cases in South Carolina in the past two weeks have been in people 20 and under. During the same time in 2020, about 17% of cases were in children and teens, according to state officials.

# Supreme Court allows evictions to resume

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court’s conservative majority is allowing evictions to resume across the United States, blocking the Biden administration from enforcing a temporary ban that was put in place because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The court’s action ends protections for roughly 3.5 million people in the United States who said they faced eviction in the next two months, according to Census Bureau data from early August.

The court said late Thursday in an unsigned opinion that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which reimposed the moratorium Aug. 3, lacked the authority to do so under federal law without explicit congressional authorization. The justices rejected the administration’s arguments in support of the CDC’s authority.

“If a federally imposed eviction moratorium is to continue, Congress must specifically authorize it,” the court wrote.

The three liberal justices dissented. Justice Stephen Breyer, writing for the three, pointed to the increase in COVID-19 caused by the delta variant as one of the reasons the court should have left the moratorium in place.

“The public interest strongly favors respecting the CDC’s judgment at this moment, when over 90% of counties are experiencing high transmission rates,” Breyer wrote.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the administration was “disappointed” by the decision and said President Joe Biden “is once again calling on all entities that can prevent evictions — from cities and states to local courts, landlords, Cabinet Agencies — to urgently act to prevent evictions.”

Rep. Cori Bush, D-Mo., who had camped

outside the Capitol as the eviction moratorium expired at the end of last month, said Congress must act to reinstate the protections.

“We are in an unprecedented and ongoing crisis that demands compassionate solutions that center the needs of the people and communities most in need of our help. We need to give our communities time to heal from this devastating pandemic,” she said in a statement. “We didn’t sleep on those steps just to give up now. Congress must act immediately to prevent mass evictions.”

It was the second loss for the administration this week at the hands of the high court’s conservative majority. On Tuesday, the court effectively allowed the reinstatement of a Trump-era policy forcing asylum seekers to wait in Mexico for their hearings. The new administration had tried to end the Remain in Mexico program, as it is informally known.



# Lake Tahoe preps as wildfire advances

Associated Press

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, Calif. — Some 14,000 firefighters facing changing weather conditions battled more than a dozen large wildfires across California, including a growing blaze that was slowly pushing toward the Lake Tahoe resort region.

Winds and temperatures were expected to pick up in coming days while humidity drops, adding to the challenges endured by crews working in rugged terrain.

"That's what's closing the window of opportunity we've had to make progress and really get hold of the fire," said Daniel Berlant, assistant deputy director of the state firefighting agency.

Flames churned through mountains just southwest of the Tahoe Basin, a home to thousands and recreational playground for millions of tourists who visit the alpine lake in summer, ski at the many resorts in winter and gamble at its casinos year-round.

Johnny White and Lauren McCauley decided to flee their home in the mountains above Lake Tahoe once they could see flames on the webcam at their local ski re-

sort.

Even as ash rained down under a cloud of heavy smoke, the couple wasn't panicked because they had an early warning Thursday to leave their home near Echo Summit, about 10 miles south of the lake, and wanted to avoid last-minute pandemonium if the wildfire continued its march toward the tourist destination on the California and Nevada border.

"You don't want everyone in the basin panicking and scrambling to try and leave at the same time," McCauley said.

Echo Summit, a mountain pass where cliff-hanging U.S. Route 50 begins its descent toward Lake Tahoe, is where firefighters plan to make their stand if the Caldor Fire keeps burning through dense forest in the Sierra Nevada.

"Everything's holding real good along Highway 50," said Cal Fire Operations Section Chief Cody Bogan. "The fire has been backing down real slowly ... we've just been allowing it to do it on its own speed. It's working in our favor."

The fire is one of nearly 90 large blazes in

the U.S. There were more than a dozen big fires in California, including one that destroyed 18 homes in Southern California, which has so far escaped the scale of wildfires plaguing the north all summer.

A new fire broke out Thursday in the Sierra foothills forcing evacuations near the historic Gold Rush town of Sonora, just dozens of miles from Yosemite National Park.

Fires in California have destroyed around 2,000 structures and forced thousands to evacuate while also blanketing large swaths of the West in unhealthy smoke.

Climate change has made the West warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make the weather more extreme and wildfires more destructive, according to scientists.

The Caldor Fire has been the nation's top firefighting priority because of its proximity to Lake Tahoe, where its tourist economy should be in full swing this time of year.

"This is the week before Labor Day weekend — a busy weekend, normally," South Lake Tahoe City Manager Joe Irvin said. "That is not going to be the case this year."

## Pilot, fiancée save 17 in Tenn. flood

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Nashville-based helicopter pilot Joel Boyers had just finished helping his fiancée earn her pilot's license on Saturday morning, and they were heading home to celebrate, when he received a frantic call from a woman in Pennsylvania. Her brother's home in Waverly, Tenn., was underwater and he was trapped on a roof with his daughters. Could Boyers help?

"I thought, 'How would I feel if I told her I'm not even going to try?'" he said in a Thursday interview. "She just so happened to call the right person, because I'm the only person crazy enough to even try to do that."

The weather was terrible and Boyers had to contend with hills and high-voltage power lines on the way to Waverly, a small city about 60 miles west of Nashville. Just before reaching the town, he set down in a field to get his bearings and realized the internet was down, making it impossible to pinpoint the house he was looking for. He flew on anyway.

"As soon as I popped over the ridge, it was nothing but tan raging water below me," he said. "There were two houses that were on fire. There were cars in trees. There was

tons of debris. Any way debris could get caught, it was. I knew no one was going to be able to swim in that."

A few people were out in boats, rescuing the stranded, and one person was helping with a jet ski, but Boyers was alone in the sky. He started flying up and down the flooded creek, grabbing anyone he could.

Boyers, who co-owns Helistar Aviation, said he ended up rescuing 17 people that day. He's proud of that, but said he's the one who should be thanking them. "I literally prayed just days before this that God would give me some meaning in my life, and then I end up getting this call," he said.

Saturday's flooding killed 20 people, taking out houses, roads, cellphone towers and telephone lines, with rainfall that more than tripled forecasts and shattered the state record for one-day rainfall. More than 270 homes were destroyed and 160 took major damage, according to the Humphreys County Emergency Management Agency.

It was also a powerful experience to go through with his fiancée, Melody Among, who acted as his co-pilot, spotting power lines, giving him sips of water and even taking the controls at times. "Her and I will be bonded to those people for life," he said.

## Tropical Storm Ida may turn into huge hurricane

NEW ORLEANS — Tropical Storm Ida swirled toward a strike on Cuba on Friday as a rapidly intensifying storm that could speed across warm Gulf waters and slam into Louisiana as a Category 3 hurricane on Sunday, the National Hurricane Center warned.

"The forecast track has it headed straight towards New Orleans. Not good," said Jim Kossin, a senior scientist with The Climate Service.

Ida was expected to become a hurricane Friday before hitting tobacco-rich western Cuba, where the government issued a hurricane warning Friday for its westernmost provinces and the Isle of Youth. As much as 20 inches of rain could fall in places, making deadly flash floods and mudslides possible, forecasters said.

An even greater danger will then begin over the Gulf, where forecasts were aligned in predicting Ida will strengthen very quickly into a major hurricane, reaching 120 mph before landfall in the Mississippi River delta late Sunday, the hurricane center said.

-From The Associated Press

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

**Boardwalk landmark to get brand new skin**

**NJ** MARGATE — The boardwalk fixture Lucy the Elephant is having all of its metal skin replaced because more than 50% of its exterior has degraded beyond repair.

The six-story high elephant statue in Margate will close Sept. 20 after architects determined it would be more cost effective to replace the metal siding than to try to restore it, according to Richard Helfant, executive director of the Save Lucy Committee.

Built in 1881, Lucy was saved from demolition and moved a short distance from its original location in 1970. The National Historic Landmark is one of the oldest roadside attractions in the country.

The new overhaul will cost \$1.4 million and is funded in part by a grant from the Preserve New Jersey Preservation Fund administered by the New Jersey Historic Trust, Helfant said Tuesday.

**Ex-officer pleads guilty to stealing narcotics**

**OR** KLAMATH FALLS — A former Klamath Falls police officer who stole narcotics from an evidence room and caused a DUI crash has pleaded guilty to multiple federal charges.

Thomas Reif, 28, pleaded guilty Tuesday to possession of a controlled substance by misrepresentation, fraud, forgery, deception or subterfuge in a federal court in Medford, The Herald and News reported.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon said Reif entered the Klamath Falls Police Department's evidence room with an unauthorized key, and removed methamphetamine and fentanyl on Nov. 27, 2020.

Reif then overdosed while driv-

ing his police car and caused a multi-car crash, prosecutors said. A toxicology report showed Reif was under the influence of methamphetamine and fentanyl.

**Wolves could get federal oversight in 2 states**

**ID** BOISE — Two conservation groups asked the Biden administration to reinstate a federal monitoring program to oversee the management of gray wolves in Idaho and Montana following changes in wolf hunting laws in the two states intended to drastically reduce wolf numbers.

The Idaho Conservation League and the Endangered Species Coalition also on Wednesday urged federal officials to do a status review that could lead to re-listing wolves under the Endangered Species Act.

Both states' management of wolves was under federal oversight for five years after wolves were delisted about a decade ago. The groups said that oversight needs to be reinstated "because the previous five-year monitoring period has been demonstrated to be inadequate for ensuring long-term state commitments to a recovered gray wolf population."

**Ski resort expansion blocked by appeals court**

**NV** RENO — A California appeals court has blocked the expansion of Lake Tahoe's famed Squaw Valley ski resort because the development plan fails to adequately address potential harm to air and water quality, as well as increased noise levels and traffic in the area.

A three-judge panel of California's Third District Court of Appeals granted parts of two appeals brought by Sierra Watch. It reversed a state judge's 2018 ruling and ordered the lower court in Placer County to issue a new rul-

ing specifying additional actions the resort must take to ensure the new development complies with the California Environmental Quality Act.

In addition to other concerns, the panel said Tuesday existing plans fail to adequately address climate change or impacts on regional wildfire evacuation plans surrounding the site of the 1960 Winter Olympics.

**Judge rejects bid to allow guns at state fair**

**MN** MINNEAPOLIS — A judge has rejected a request by a gun owners group for a temporary injunction to require the Minnesota State Fair to allow permit holders to carry their pistols on the fairgrounds, ruling Wednesday that they're unlikely to prevail as the broader case goes forward.

Ramsey County District Judge Laura Nelson ruled less than 24 hours before the State Fair opened Thursday that the Minnesota Gun Owners Caucus failed to meet its burden of proof that the fair's longstanding ban on guns violates state law or that they have sufficient legal grounds to seek relief. The group contends the ban violates the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms, and state laws governing the rights of permit holders to carry their guns in public.

**Man convicted in killing after governor's pardon**

**KY** LONDON — A man pardoned by Kentucky's former governor for a 2014 drug robbery killing has been convicted for the same slaying in federal court after a two-week trial.

Federal prosecutors brought charges against Patrick Baker after he was released from prison when former Gov. Matt Bevin

pardoned him on his way out of office in 2019. Baker's family had political connections to Bevin, including hosting a fundraiser for the one-term governor.

A federal jury in eastern Kentucky convicted Baker on Wednesday on a charge of murder committed during a drug trafficking crime after about six hours of deliberation over two days.

U.S. District Judge Claria Horn Boom will sentence Baker, 43, on Dec. 21. Prosecutors declined to seek the death penalty, but Baker could serve life in prison on the conviction.

**Investigation prompts bus access changes**

**HI** KAILUA-KONA — Prompted by a U.S. investigation, Big Island officials have agreed to make changes to the county's bus system to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The investigation stemmed from a complaint from a rider that wheelchair lifts weren't working on Hele-On buses, and other ADA compliance issues.

The county "frequently deployed buses with chronically inoperable lifts," said an agreement signed this week by the county and Justice Department.

The agreement to change county policy and procedures foresees a civil lawsuit, West Hawaii Today reported Wednesday.

The county agreed to immediately report inoperable lifts and take the vehicles out of service until the lifts are repaired.

Other changes include having the bus driver announce any stop on request of a rider with a disability, putting bus stops at locations that are more accessible and maintaining a complaint log.

— From wire reports

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# Digital tickets divisive issue for fans

Associated Press

John Fey was at home in Lincoln, Neb., this summer, rummaging through a box of old scrapbooks when he came upon a couple of lost treasures.

At the bottom of the box, detached from the page they were once glued to, were ticket stubs from Nebraska's 1971 "Game of the Century" win against Oklahoma and the Cornhuskers' 1984 Orange Bowl loss to Miami.

Those games are still regarded among the greatest in college football history and those stubs were proof Fey was at both.

"I had flashbacks. Big-time flashbacks," the 68-year-old from Plattsmouth, Neb., said.

For people who keep them, ticket stubs can spark memories of being at a big game in person, cheering on a favorite team or, for a guy like Fey, nearly total recall of time spent with friends and family at a stadium. They are treasured mementos — and they are not going away even as schools transition to cashless transactions for everything from game tickets to food and drink.

Nearly every Football Bowl Subdivision school has gone to mobile ticketing this season, but in a spot check of 30 schools, only Notre Dame said it would refuse to print tickets for fans requesting them.

The other 29? They are willing to print, though most do not publicly offer that option. Illinois was among schools that did give fans a choice, and 74% picked paper. That figure was 64% at Nebraska and 50% at Texas A&M.

Traditional tickets on cardstock began fading away in the last decade with the advent of print-at-home tickets and digital, or mobile, ticketing systems where fans have a barcode on their smartphones scanned at the gate.

Nebraska fan Tom Reischlein of Omaha said he has used mobile ticketing at venues with no problem but chose paper football tickets at his wife's suggestion they might want them as a souvenir if they see a memorable game.

"I think it's a good idea that they're kind of easing into it and giving people the choice," said Reischlein, 58. "I've seen a lot of the older folks, either they don't have a cell phone or they have trouble navigating through it when there's a bunch of people lined up behind them."

Mark Townsend of Columbia, Md., a collector who runs the website TicketsFromThePast.com, said paper tickets bring about a sense of nostalgia.

Stubs from historic NFL, NBA and Major League Baseball games have the most monetary value, while college football ticket stubs tend to hold greater sentimental value, Townsend said, because of the strong emotional connection of alumni and fans.

Without paper tickets, he said, "You lose that piece of history and memory of where you've been, where grandpa's been, or 'Me and my dad went to the ballgame and we've got our ticket stub still,'" he said. "It's more your moment in time and the pleasure that the game gave you. It ignites things in your

head that makes you remember things."

In Fey's case, his '71 Game of the Century stub leads him to reminisce about Johnny Rodgers' 72-yard punt return for a touchdown that was the signature play of the Cornhuskers' 35-31 win.

"He was 10 yards in front of me when he crossed the 5-yard line," Fey said. "I swear to God if I would have had a cell phone I would have taken a picture."

Fey said he had stuffed the ticket stub in his pocket after he went through the turnstile, put it in his scrapbook when he got home and forgot he had it until he was going through some boxes last month.

Same with the stub from the '84 Orange Bowl. The husband of a woman Fey worked with had an extra ticket and asked if Fey wanted to join him and three others on a guys' trip to Miami.

There Fey witnessed one of the defining plays of Nebraska coach Tom Osborne's career — the late failed two-point conversion pass that left the Huskers with a 31-30 loss when an extra-point kick probably would have secured his first national championship.

In the moment, Fey said, he was inclined to throw away that ticket stub.

"But I must have thought, 'Well, someday I might want to look back on this,'" he said. "Now if they get blown out 48-0, that's one thing. They were behind and it was a hell of a comeback and had that pass not been tipped, maybe he would have got it."

"I'm glad I didn't throw it away."

## Pac-12 standing pat, won't add new members

Associated Press

The Pac-12 said Thursday it will stand pat with its membership and not look to expand the 12-team conference, making it highly unlikely that the Big 12 schools being left behind by Texas and Oklahoma will find new Power Five homes.

The announcement came two days after the Pac-12, Atlantic Coast Conference and Big Ten pledged to work together on governance issues and scheduling agreements in football and basketball.

The formation of a three-conference alliance came a little less than a month after the Southeastern Conference invited Texas and Oklahoma to join

the league in 2025. The move would coincide with the end of the Big 12's current television contract.

With Pac-12 expansion off the board, and both the ACC and Big Ten stating publicly that they are content with their current membership, the eight remaining Big 12 schools appear to have limited options beyond sticking together.

"The decision by Texas and Oklahoma led to significant instability in college athletics and I don't think instability is good for college athletics, particularly given all the other issues that are facing us right now," Pac-12 Commissioner George Kliavkoff told The As-

sociated Press. "I think you heard my colleagues in the ACC and Big Ten agree with that position that we need to bring a stability back to college athletics."

The past few months have brought a wave of significant events in college sports, from a stinging Supreme Court ruling in an antitrust case to the advent of college athletes as paid sponsors.

Meanwhile, the NCAA is in the process of sweeping reform as it tries to redefine its mission and there is a proposal in the pipeline to expand the College Football Playoff from four to 12 teams.

The SEC's move to add OU

and Texas led to widespread speculation that it could trigger a wave of conference realignment across the rest of the Power Five.

Just days after the planned move of Texas and Oklahoma became official, Kliavkoff and Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby discussed whether the the Pac-12 and Big 12 could possibly work together to benefit each conference. Nothing ever came of that, and the Big 12 was left out of the alliance.

Between the alliance and the Pac-12's standing pat, the threat of widespread school poaching seems to have subsided — at least until the Big 12 decides its next move.



# Judge, Yanks top A's, win 12th straight

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — The red-hot New York Yankees keep coming up with timely hits, defensive gems or key pitches to pull off close wins — and now they have their best unbeaten run in nearly 60 years because of all those little things.

Aaron Judge hit a tiebreaking single with two outs in the ninth inning, Giancarlo Stanton homered for the third straight game and the Yankees beat the Oakland Athletics 7-6 on Thursday for their 12th consecutive victory.

“We’re playing well, we’re playing for a lot, and it’s a lot of fun to be part of this team,” said manager Aaron Boone, who watched from inside for most of this one after his second-inning ejection.

Aroldis Chapman closed it out for his 300th career save, becoming the 31st pitcher to reach the milestone. Jonathan Loaisiga (9-4) struck out two over two innings for the win.

“To be honest, I never thought about it,” Chapman said via translator. “At the beginning, I wasn’t even a closer, but as you go on with your career there are certain goals that come and you get to reach. I’m very happy.”

Joey Gallo crushed a three-run drive in the third for a 6-0 lead before Oakland came

back, tying it on Josh Harrison’s homer in the fifth.

Judge doubled leading off the eighth as New York loaded the bases against Sergio Romo, who escaped unscathed. Lou Trivino (5-7) began the ninth hours after manager Bob Melvin said he would remain the closer despite consecutive blown saves.

“After what we’ve been going through, to be down 6-0 and come storming back like that with that kind of fight, at this point in time we’re looking for some small victories,” Melvin said.

Anthony Rizzo drew a two-out walk from Trivino, and Tyler Wade entered as a pinch-runner. He stole second and reached third on catcher Sean Murphy’s throwing error before coming home on Judge’s line drive.

The Yankees have their longest winning streak since a run of 13 straight victories from Sept. 1-12, 1961, and the team moved a season-best 23 games above .500 at 75-52.

Stanton connected for his 23rd homer and fifth in eight games moments after a fuming Boone got tossed by plate umpire Todd Tichenor for arguing balls and strikes. Boone repeatedly gestured and yelled before finally making his way to the tunnel and clubhouse.

Brett Gardner homered one out later to back right-hander Jameson Taillon, who didn’t reach five innings for a decision but has still won seven straight decisions since a May 31 loss to Tampa Bay in the Bronx. Rizzo added an RBI double in the third.

“All that matters right now is winning,” Taillon said. “It doesn’t matter how you get it done.”

Matt Chapman and Murphy hit back-to-back homers in the third, the fifth time the A’s have done so this season. Chapman drew a bases-loaded walk and Elvis Andrus a two-run single that chased Taillon in the A’s three-run fourth.

Oakland right-hander James Kaprielian struck out eight but was clobbered from the start after he had been 2-0 with a 3.31 ERA in three starts since coming off the injured list.

The stumbling A’s, who reached the playoffs each of the past three seasons, lost their fifth straight — four by two or fewer runs — on a night attendance was a dismal 8,147, which Chapman called a “little disappointing.”

“We’ve had some really tough finishes,” Chapman said. “It seems like we’re right there.”

## Scherzer, surging Dodgers shut out reeling Padres

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Max Scherzer pitched 7  $\frac{2}{3}$  dominant innings to win his eighth straight decision, Austin Barnes hit a two-run home run off Yu Darvish and surging Los Angeles beat plunging San Diego 4-0 for a three-game sweep.

Scherzer (12-4) allowed only two hits, struck out 10 and walked one for the Dodgers, who handled the listless Padres less than 24 hours after winning 5-3 in a 16-inning game that took 5 hours, 49 minutes, and ended at 12:59 a.m. It was the longest big league game since pandemic rules were implemented last year.

Los Angeles won for the 12th time in 13 games and for the 16th time in 18.

**Giants 3, Mets 2:** Kris Bryant launched an early two-run homer, pinch-hitter Darin Ruf broke an eighth-inning tie with

an RBI single and visiting San Francisco beat plummeting New York on Thursday for a three-game sweep.

Bryant connected in the first inning off Carlos Carrasco for his 24th home run of the season and sixth with the major league-leading Giants since they acquired him from the Chicago Cubs at the July 30 trade deadline.

**White Sox 10, Blue Jays 7:** Luis Robert hit a two-run home run, Carlos Rodón won in his return from the injured list and Chicago beat host Toronto.

José Abreu, César Hernández and Eloy Jiménez each hit solo shots as the White Sox earned a split in the four-game series.

**Orioles 13, Angels 1:** A day after ending a 19-game losing streak, major league-worst Baltimore got a grand slam and six RBIs from Pedro Severino to rout visiting Los Angeles.

Shohei Ohtani led off the game with a homer, his MLB-leading 41st, but that was the only highlight for the Angels, who have lost five of six.

**Red Sox 12, Twins 2:** Chris Sale joined Hall of Famer Sandy Koufax as the only pitchers on record with three immaculate innings, Bobby Dalbec homered twice and host Boston beat Minnesota.

Dalbec drove in seven runs and Rafael Devers hit his 30th homer, a two-run shot during a five-run sixth that helped seal Sale’s third win in as many starts since his return from Tommy John surgery.

**Reds 5, Brewers 1:** Jonathan India hit a three-run homer, Nick Castellanos also went deep and visiting Cincinnati avoided a three-game sweep by NL Central-leading Milwaukee.

**Pirates 11, Cardinals 7:** Gregory Polanco turned boos into

cheers with the decisive two-run double during an eight-run seventh inning, and host Pittsburgh rallied past St. Louis.

**Indians 10, Rangers 6:** Bradley Zimmer hit a two-run homer into the second deck in right field to highlight a four-run first inning, and Cleveland beat visiting Texas.

**Marlins 7, Nationals 5:** Jorge Alfaro homered, rookie Bryan De La Cruz had three hits, and host Miami beat Washington.

**Diamondbacks 8, Phillies 7:** Carson Kelly hit a two-run homer and drove in three runs, Nick Ahmed added a two-run blast and Zac Gallen pitched five strong innings as visiting Arizona beat Philadelphia for the fourth straight game this season.

**Royals 6, Mariners 4:** Salvador Perez hit his fourth career grand slam and Kansas City beat host Seattle.

# More NFL players adopting Guardian Caps

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — For Carolina Panthers rookie offensive lineman Brady Christensen any chance to protect his brain is a no-brainer — even if he thinks he may look a little goofy doing so.

That's why Christensen is among a growing number of NFL players taking advantage of the new "Guardian Caps," a soft-shell cover that retrofits to the top of the helmet to reduce impact and limit head injuries.

Sure, it's a little strange at first, like wearing a small pillow on top of your head.

But NFL players seem to be taking to it at practice.

"Anything to protect my brain a little bit more, I'm all in," Christensen said. "I want to remember my kids' names when I'm 50."

The Jacksonville Jaguars first experimented with the Guardian Caps in practice last year after the product received temporary approval from the NFL and the NFL Players Association. This year, 23 teams purchased the caps before the season for

players to try out and five are actively using them: the Panthers, Bills, Dolphins, Bears and Rams. More than 100 players, mostly linemen, are using the caps, according to Jeff Miller, the NFL's executive vice president of communications for public affairs and policy.

"We are always on the lookout for ways to make the game safer for our players," Miller said. "And will explore anything that will improve the health and safety of our athletes ... This will dampen the force of some of those hits that they take to the helmet."

It's not hard to notice them.

Buffalo Bills center Mitch Morse joked that when he first tried on the cap he felt like a character in a Halo video game.

"You got people giving you hell, your family being like 'what the hell is this?'" Morse said with a laugh.

Morse said at first his neck was a little sore from wearing the caps, but he's grown to like the added protection.

"It's something that I'm very comfortable with and then we tried it on and, of course,

we gave each other hell for how it looks," Morse said. "But then after one practice, I looked at (Bills defensive lineman) Justin Zimmer, I'm like 'man, I know we were getting after it, and I didn't feel anything.'"

Through extensive testing at the Biocore laboratories of Charlottesville, Va., the NFL believes the caps reduce the severity of impact blows to the head by about 10%.

Currently, more than 200 colleges are using them, including all top five ranked teams in the country. More than 1,500 high schools and 500 youth programs also use the caps to protect their players and there are currently more than 100,000 Guardian Caps in the market today.

The caps used by NFL players weigh about 11 ounces, about 4 ounces heavier than those used by college and high school players simply because professional athletes are generally bigger.

The caps are only allowed in practice and cannot be worn in games. But Miller wouldn't rule out players wearing them on game day in the future.

## Return of Bosa, Ford gives Niners' pass rush a boost

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — San Francisco 49ers defensive coordinator DeMeco Ryans was in a good mood after practice on Thursday for good reason.

The first-year play-caller has his two most dangerous edge rushers back on the field, with Nick Bosa taking part in team drills this week for the first time this summer and Dee Ford ramping up his practice time.

Their return only adds more depth to the strength of the Niners and has Ryans scheming up all sorts of possibilities with a line that also includes Samson Ebukam and Arden Key on the edge, the versatile Arik Armstead and inside players like D.J. Jones, Javon Kinlaw and Kentavious Street.

"Having all those guys available, we can do a lot of things," Ryans said after practice Thursday. "All those guys are very talented and you have unlimited options with what you can do with all those guys. All of them are really great talents. All of them are awesome at rushing the passer. And we just want to utilize guys to their best ability. We want to be able to utilize them, utilize their

strengths, to help us win games."

San Francisco rode its defensive line to a Super Bowl appearance in the 2019 season with Bosa winning the Defensive Rookie of the Year honors, alongside big seasons from Armstead and Ford.

That was missing last season when Ford played only one game because of a back injury and Bosa went down in Week 2 with a season-ending knee injury.

But the 49ers are counting to a return to that 2019 formula to get back to the postseason this year after an injury-plagued 6-10 season in 2020.

"We've seen just the penetration, the get-off, the disruption up front," All-Pro linebacker Fred Warner said. "Our defense, it all starts with them. When they're getting off and they're disrupting it makes it easy for guys like me, everybody in the back end to do their jobs."

The key to the defense is Bosa, who immediately emerged as one of the league's top pass rushers as a rookie in 2019. Bosa had nine sacks and ranked in the top 10 in the league in pressures, according to Pro Football Focus.

## NFL: Vaccination rate at 93%, will increase testing

Associated Press

The NFL says 93% of players are vaccinated for COVID-19 and the league wanted mandatory vaccination but the NFLPA wouldn't agree to it.

The league also has asked the players' union to adjust protocols so vaccinated players would be tested weekly instead of every 14 days. Unvaccinated players are tested daily.

NFLPA president JC Tretter, a center for the Cleveland Browns, said earlier this week the decision not to make vaccination mandatory was done by the league. But league officials disputed that assertion.

"We've been discussing mandatory vaccination from the start," NFL deputy general counsel Larry Ferazani said Thursday. "In fact, we took the lead and required staff and coaches to be vaccinated in order to have access to a player. Beginning at that point, we began banging the drum for what (the NFLPA's) experts also concede is the single greatest way that we can protect the players and the staff, which is to get to a 100% vaccination level. That was our request from that, and we would still love to see that mandate go into effect tomorrow."