

Taiwan: China drills seem to mimic attack

Associated Press

BEIJING — Tension surrounding Taiwan continued Saturday as Taiwan said China's ongoing military drills appear to simulate an attack on the island and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said China should not stymie talks on important global matters such as the climate crisis.

Multiple Chinese warships and aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait following U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei that infuriated Beijing.

Pelosi's trip to the self-governed island outraged China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory to be annexed by force if necessary. China on Thursday launched military exercises off Taiwan's coasts and on Friday cut off contacts with the U.S. on vital issues, including military matters and crucial climate cooperation, as punishments against Pelosi's visit.

On Saturday, Blinken spoke in an online news conference with his Philippine counterpart in Manila after meeting newly elected President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and other top officials.

"We should not hold hostage cooperation on matters of global concern because of dif-

ferences between our two countries," Blinken said.

He cited cooperation on climate change as a key area where China shut down contact that "doesn't punish the United States — it punishes the world."

"The world's largest carbon emitter is now refusing to engage on combating the climate crisis," Blinken said, adding that China's firing of ballistic missiles that landed in waters surrounding Taiwan was a dangerous and destabilizing action.

"What happens to the Taiwan Strait affects the entire region. In many ways it affects the entire world because the Strait, like the South China Sea, is a critical waterway," he said, noting that nearly half the global container fleet and nearly 90% of the world's largest ships transited through the waterway this year.

China shut "military-to-military channels, which are vital for avoiding miscommunication and avoiding crisis, but also cooperation on transnational crimes and counter-narcotics, which help keep people in the United States, China and beyond, safe," he said.

In response to the Chinese military exer-

cises, Taiwan's armed forces issued an alert, dispatched air and naval patrols around the island, and activated land-based missile systems in response to the Chinese exercises, the Ministry of National Defense said. As of 5 p.m., 20 Chinese aircraft and 14 ships continued to carry out sea and air exercises around the Taiwan Strait, it said.

The ministry said that zones declared by China as no-go areas during the exercises for other ships and aircraft had "seriously damaged the peace." It emphasized that Taiwan's military does not seek war, but would prepare and respond for it accordingly.

China's Ministry of Defense said in a statement Saturday that it had carried out military exercises as planned in the sea and airspaces to the north, southwest, and east of Taiwan, with a focus on "testing the capabilities" of its land strike and sea assault systems.

China launched live-fire military drills following Pelosi's trip to Taiwan earlier this week, saying it violated the "one-China" policy. China sees the island as a breakaway province to be annexed by force if necessary, and considers visits to Taiwan by foreign officials as recognizing its sovereignty.

Russian forces begin offenses in eastern Ukraine

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian forces began an assault Saturday on two key cities in the eastern Donetsk region and kept up rocket and shelling attacks on other Ukrainian cities, including one close to Europe's largest nuclear power plant, Ukraine's military and local officials said.

Both cities of Bakhmut and Avdiivka have been considered key targets of Russia's ongoing offensive across Ukraine's east, with analysts saying Moscow needs to take Bakhmut if it is to advance on the regional hubs of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk.

"In the Donetsk direction, the enemy is conducting an offen-

sive operation, concentrating its main efforts on the Bakhmut and Avdiivka directions. It uses ground attack and army aviation," the Ukrainian General Staff said on Facebook.

The last Russian strike on Sloviansk was July 30, but Ukrainian forces are fortifying their positions around the city in expectation of new fighting.

Russian shelling killed five civilians and injured 14 others in the Donetsk region in the last day, Donetsk governor Pavlo Kyrylenko wrote Saturday on Telegram, saying two people were killed in Poprosny, and one each in Avdiivka, Soledar and Pervomaikskiy.

The governor of the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region said three civilians were injured after Russian rockets fell on a residential neighborhood in Nikopol, a city across the Dnieper River from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station. The nuclear plant has been under Russian control since Moscow's troops seized it early in the war.

"After midnight, the Russian army struck the Nikopol area with (Soviet-era) Grad rockets, and the Kryvyi Rih area from barrel artillery," Valentyn Reznichenko wrote on Telegram.

Another Russian missile attack overnight damaged unspecified infrastructure in the

regional capital of Zaporizhzhia. On Thursday, Russia fired 60 rockets at Nikopol, damaging 50 residential buildings in the city of 107,000 and leaving residents without electricity.

Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, warned that the situation was becoming more perilous at the Zaporizhzhia plant.

He expressed concern about the way the plant is being operated and the danger posed by the fighting going on around it. Experts at the U.S.-based Institute for the Study of War said Russia is shelling the area intentionally, "putting Ukraine in a difficult position."

Oversight urged for private military housing

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers dismayed by persistent unsafe conditions in privatized military housing are pushing for the creation of a council to provide oversight, collect public complaints and report its findings to Congress.

Bills introduced in the Senate and House this week call for a new Military Housing Readiness Council to serve as a focal point for accountability after years of sluggish efforts by the Defense Department to improve poor housing. The group would be comprised of Defense Department officials, service members, military families and military housing experts.

They would be tasked with implementing a tenant bill of rights that gives military families more power to negotiate with companies that manage on-base housing and completing a database to field complaints from the public. Service members and their families have long raised alarm over dangerous conditions such as mold, asbestos, roof leaks and rodent infestations in the privatized housing system.

"I've heard horror stories from constituents about military housing overrun with

black mold that's harmed their health and the health of their families, including their small kids," said Rep. Sara Jacobs, D-Calif., a bill co-sponsor. "This is a problem in San Diego and all across the country that lowers military readiness and morale and makes us all less safe."

Rep. Stephanie Bice, R-Okla., said housing conditions at Tinker Air Force Base near Oklahoma City have improved in recent years but problems continue to abound nationally.

"There are still a range of nationwide issues that require greater oversight, including the timeliness of repairs, abatement of mold and the timely accommodation of individuals with disabilities," she said in a statement. "We must ensure our service members and their families have reliable and safe housing conditions."

Lawmakers have passed several measures to increase oversight, including the tenant bill of rights, but it has not been enough to crack down on negligent landlords, said Rep. Katie Porter, D-Calif.

In April, a Senate investigation found that one of the largest private providers of military housing, Balfour Beatty Communities, ignored residents' reports of poor living conditions even after pleading guilty to defraud-

ing the Army, Navy and Air Force. The company operates more than 43,000 residences in 26 states that house some 150,000 military family members.

"It's clear we need to do more to hold private companies accountable to the law," Porter said in a statement.

The proposed council would review and make recommendations for inspection practices, resident surveys, maintenance work order systems and landlord payment of medical bills for residents sickened by their living conditions. The group would be expected to meet at least four times a year and provide annual reports analyzing complaints, housing inspections and maintenance requests and response times.

A March report by the Government Accountability Office stated the Defense Department has made progress in increasing the frequency of home inspections, using a standardized inspection checklist and adjusting incentive fees for companies based on quality of work rather than its speed. But the Pentagon remains hamstrung by the power of the housing companies and cannot implement some legislative provisions without a consensus from private landlords, the department said.

Chemical is discovered in Hawaii monitoring well

Associated Press

HONOLULU — The Honolulu Board of Water Supply said Thursday it has detected a small amount of a chemical naturally occurring in coal, crude oil and gasoline in a monitoring well near a Navy fuel storage facility that spilled jet fuel last year.

The utility said in a news release it found "very low levels" of the chemical, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. It said

it shared its data with the state Department of Health and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and both agencies agree these low levels are not expected to cause any health effects. Still, they agreed the situation needs attention and continued monitoring, the utility said.

The Board of Water Supply said the discovery heightens its concern that fuel spilled from the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility is migrating through the

aquifer located under the tank farm.

The utility has three wells that tap the aquifer to supply drinking water to more than 400,000 Oahu residents.

It shut down those wells in December when it learned fuel had flowed from the tank farm into a Navy drinking water well supplying water to 93,000 people on and near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. That leak sickened some 6,000 of the Navy's water users.

Judge rules against Navy in Growler jet fleet lawsuit

Associated Press

SEATTLE — A federal judge has ruled that the Navy violated the National Environmental Policy Act during its environmental review process for the expansion of the Growler jet fleet at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island.

The ruling said the Navy failed to disclose the basis for greenhouse gas emissions calcu-

lations, failed to quantify the impact on classroom learning, failed to take a hard look at species-specific impacts on birds, and failed to give detailed consideration to the Navy base in El Centro, Calif., as an alternative for Growler expansion, the Skagit Valley Herald reported.

The two-page ruling adopted the recom-

mendation of a U.S. federal magistrate, who issued a report and recommendation in December in favor of state Attorney General Bob Ferguson's lawsuit.

The state and the other parties have 30 days to either agree on a remedy or on a briefing schedule to come up with a remedy, Ferguson said in a press release.

Ind. 1st state to pass ban on abortions

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana on Friday became the first state in the nation to approve abortion restrictions since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, as the Republican governor quickly signed a near-total ban on the procedure shortly after lawmakers approved it.

The ban, which takes effect Sept. 15, includes some exceptions. Abortions would be permitted in cases of rape and incest, before 10-weeks post-fertilization; to protect the life and physical health of the mother; and if a fetus is diagnosed with a lethal anomaly. Victims

of rape and incest would not be required to sign a notarized affidavit attesting to an attack, as had once been proposed.

Under the bill, abortions can be performed only in hospitals or outpatient centers owned by hospitals, meaning all abortion clinics would lose their licenses. A doctor who performs an illegal abortion or fails to file required reports must also lose their medical license — wording that tightens current Indiana law that says a doctor “may” lose their license.

“I am personally most proud of each Hoosier who came forward to coura-

geously share their views in a debate that is unlikely to cease any time soon,” Gov. Eric Holcomb said in the statement announcing that he had signed the measure. “For my part as your governor, I will continue to keep an open ear.”

Indiana was among the earliest Republican-run state legislatures to debate tighter abortion laws after the Supreme Court ruling in June that removed constitutional protections for the procedure.

But it is the first state to pass a ban through both chambers, after West Virginia lawmakers on July 29 passed up the chance to be that state.

Pentagon won't let DC use Guard for migrants

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration on Friday denied Washington, D.C., Mayor Muriel Bowser's request for assistance from the National Guard to help the city process the busloads of migrants that Republican governors in Texas and Arizona have been sending to the nation's capital, leaving the district scrambling to accommodate them.

Bowser, a Democrat, expressed frustration at the Defense Department decision, saying she would try again with a more narrowly tailored request for National Guard help with certain tasks related to the migrants' arrival.

State governors can call up their National Guard troops without federal consent for a wide variety of tasks. But since the district

is not a state, Bowser cannot activate the Guard without approval from the Pentagon. She had sent a letter asking for the help last month.

“When the mayor of the district says she needs or he needs ... the D.C. National Guard to support the safe operation of our city, we expect a fair consideration,” Bowser said on Friday shortly after learning the Defense Department had rejected the request she made July 19. The decision was first reported by NBC News.

The Department of Defense issued a statement Friday on the decision.

Bowser faulted both Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, and the Biden administration for treating the busing of thousands of migrants who have crossed the Mexican border as a political issue, rather than fo-

cusing on the pressing needs of the people getting off buses with no plans for where they will sleep.

“I have done — regardless of Republicans in Texas or Democrats on Pennsylvania Avenue — what I need to do to run the city. And when we have a growing humanitarian crisis that we expect, that the federal government expects, is going to only worsen, I have got to deploy the resources that I need to handle it. And we need our National Guard,” Bowser said. “If we were a state, I would have already done it. I would have deployed the National Guard.”

Abbott started sending migrants to the district by bus in April, as a way of highlighting his disagreements with Biden over immigration. Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, a Republican, then followed suit.

Dems change some tax provisions in economic bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democrats pared part of their proposed minimum tax on huge corporations and made other changes in their giant economic bill, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said Friday, as they drove toward delivering a campaign-season victory to President Joe Biden on his domestic agenda.

In an unusual peek at closed-door bargaining, Schumer, D-N.Y., said Democrats dropped a proposed tax boost on hedge fund executives after pivotal centrist

Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., said she would otherwise vote “no.” Schumer said that in its place, the measure now has a new tax — which others said will be 1% — on the shares companies buy back of their own stock, netting the government far more revenue.

“Sen. Sinema said she would not vote for the bill” or even vote to let debate begin unless private equity tax was removed from the legislation, Schumer told reporters. “So we had no choice.”

He spoke a day after he and Si-

nema announced compromise revisions to the environment, health care and tax package. With final numbers still to be calculated, the overall measure raises over \$700 billion in revenue — including more robust IRS tax collections — using most of it for energy, climate and health initiatives and reducing federal deficits by \$300 billion.

In another change, Schumer said a proposed 15% minimum tax on mammoth corporations had been trimmed and would now raise \$258 billion over the

coming decade, down from \$313 billion. That provision, which has been the legislation's biggest revenue raiser, will now let those companies depreciate their equipment costs more quickly, lowering the government's tax take and helping manufacturers who buy expensive machinery. The new tax is expected to apply to around 150 companies with income exceeding \$1 billion.

Democrats planned for the Senate to begin considering the bill Saturday, and the House will return next Friday for votes.

Floods strand about 1K in Death Valley

Associated Press

DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK, Calif. — Record rainfall Friday triggered flash floods at Death Valley National Park that swept away cars, closed all roads and stranded hundreds of visitors and workers.

There were no immediate reports of injuries but roughly 60 vehicles were buried in mud and debris and about 500 visitors and 500 park workers were stuck inside the park, officials said.

The park near the California-Nevada state line received 1.46 inches of rain at the

Furnace Creek area. That's about 75% of what the area typically gets in a year and more than has ever been recorded for the entire month of August.

Since 1936, the only single day with more rain was April 15, 1988, when 1.47 inches fell, park officials said.

"Entire trees and boulders were washing down," said John Sirlin, a photographer for an Arizona-based adventure company who witnessed the flooding as he perched on a hillside boulder where he was trying to take pictures of lightning as the storm ap-

proached.

"The noise from some of the rocks coming down the mountain was just incredible," he said in a phone interview Friday afternoon.

Park officials didn't immediately respond to requests for an update Friday night.

The storm followed another major flooding event earlier this week at the park 120 miles northeast of Las Vegas. Some roads were closed Monday after they were inundated with mud and debris from flash floods that also hit western Nevada and northern Arizona hard.

Hard-hit Ky. threatened by more flooding

Associated Press

Thunderstorms on Friday brought a renewed threat of flooding to parts of Kentucky ravaged by high water a week ago.

The National Weather Service issued a flood watch through Saturday morning for nearly the entire state.

As residents continued cleaning up from the late July floods that killed at least 37 people, rain started falling on already saturated ground in eastern Kentucky late Friday morning. Some places could have received up to 3 inches of rain by Friday night, and the storm system wasn't expected to let up until at least Saturday evening, the weather service said.

"There's a lot of debris that's out there that could cause clogging in waterways

that could lead to flooding," Gov. Andy Beshear said at a news conference.

Due to unsafe travel conditions, Beshear canceled visits to two flood-ravaged counties Friday.

The White House announced Friday that President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden will travel to eastern Kentucky on Monday to survey the damage from last week's devastating floods and meet with those affected. The Bidens would join Beshear and his wife, Britanny, at an unspecified Federal Emergency Management Agency disaster recovery center.

Last week's storm in eastern Kentucky sent floodwaters as high as rooftops. In the days afterward, more than 1,300 people were rescued as teams searched in boats and combed debris-clogged creek-

banks. Beshear said Friday that two people in Breathitt County remained missing.

Many residents are still waiting for their utilities to be restored. About 2,000 Kentucky customers remained without electricity on Friday. Some entire water systems were severed or heavily damaged, prompting a significant response from the National Guard and others to distribute bottled water.

Beshear said authorities were checking on people in homes that were still habitable but who might be stranded in areas where private bridges were washed out. Emergency shelters and area state parks housed nearly 530 people who fled homes that were destroyed or badly damaged. Many more residents were staying with relatives and friends.

Progress made on Calif. fire; Wash. fire spares town

Associated Press

LIND, Wash. — A small town in Washington state that was evacuated due to a fast-moving fire was largely spared Friday, while in California crews made progress against the state's deadliest and largest wildfire of the year.

Adams County Sheriff Dale Wagner said the fire that had been threatening the eastern Washington town of Lind was contained after burning six homes and eight other structures. He said firefighters were watching over hot spots.

The sheriff's office had told Lind's residents to evacuate on Thursday afternoon because of the encroaching flames. With the help of state and local resources, the fire started to calm down and by 8 p.m.

Thursday all evacuation orders were lifted for the community of about 500 people approximately 75 miles southwest of Spokane.

Meanwhile, in California, fire crews on Friday had a massive wildfire 30% contained and had managed to carve firebreaks around much of the week-old blaze.

The McKinney Fire destroyed much of the small hamlet of Klamath River near the Oregon border and killed four people, whose identities haven't been confirmed by authorities.

The blaze forced thousands from their homes and destroyed more than 100 buildings, including at least 87 residences, authorities said at a Friday night community meeting.

The fire hasn't advanced much in days as thunderstorms dumped brief but heavy rain on the fire's eastern flanks and more firefighting resources were sent to battle the blaze, which has burned about 93 square miles.

However, some of the storms didn't produce much rain but released gusty winds that drove flames — especially when the blaze first erupted on July 29 — and lightning that sparked dozens of smaller blazes, which firefighters managed to prevent from spreading.

Forecasts were calling for triple-digit temperatures and plunging humidity levels this weekend, along with possible winds that could create conditions for further wildfire growth.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Cops: Drunk woman drove golf cart on I-95

FL TITUSVILLE — A woman with an open bottle of Jack Daniel's whiskey in a bag was arrested for driving a golf cart on Florida's busiest interstate while drunk, according to an arrest report.

The 58-year-old woman is now facing misdemeanor charges of disorderly intoxication in a public place and resisting an officer without violence.

According to a Florida Highway Patrol report, a semitruck driver spotted the woman driving the golf cart in the center lane of Interstate 95 in Brevard County. The truck driver "advised she observed the driver of the golf cart passing out while driving," the report said.

The truck driver used her semi to steer the golf cart to the shoulder of the interstate, troopers said. Once troopers arrived at the scene, the woman started arguing with them. Inside her bag, troopers found an open bottle of Jack Daniel's Tennessee Fire Whiskey, authorities said.

Airbnb removes 'slave cabin' from listings

MS GREENVILLE — An Airbnb listing in Mississippi advertised as a "slave cabin" has been removed from the site following backlash on social media.

Airbnb apologized after a TikTok video went viral criticizing the description of a cottage in Greenville. The bed and breakfast was marketed as an "1830s slave cabin." The "meticulously restored" property, complete with a new television and premium streaming channels, was

described as a "tenant sharecropper's cabin and a medical office for local farmers and their families to visit the plantation doctor."

In response to the video, Airbnb said properties that formerly housed enslaved people have no place on the site.

Residents can apply online for IDs with 'X'

NY ALBANY — New Yorkers who want a driver's license with an "X" gender identity marker can now apply online and skip the in-person line at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

New York began offering the "X" option for licenses, learner's permits and non-driver identification cards in May, following the passage of a 2021 state law.

Guard shot in armored vehicle ambush

CA LOS ANGELES — Robbers ambushed an armored vehicle in broad daylight and opened fire on the armed guards, injuring one critically in a Southern California casino's parking lot before fleeing with cash, police said.

At least two suspects, armed with handguns and a rifle, remained at large hours after the shooting in Gardena, near Los Angeles.

The guard was shot in the leg and is expected to survive, according to Gardena Police Lt. Chris Cuff. The other guard was not shot but was taken to the hospital for cuts sustained during the violence outside the Hustler Casino. The armored vehicle is operated by Loomis

US, a cash-handling company.

The guards returned fire but it was not immediately clear whether any of the suspects were struck.

FAA employees: Co-pilot 'jumped' from plane

NC RALEIGH — A 911 call from air traffic controllers suggests that a co-pilot may have jumped from a damaged plane before the other pilot made an emergency landing in North Carolina, according to a recording of the call.

It's been unclear exactly how or why Charles Hew Crooks, 23, exited the small cargo plane about 30 miles south of Raleigh-Durham International Airport. He did not have a parachute, and his body was found in a backyard in Fuquay-Varina.

Two Federal Aviation Administration employees can be heard telling a 911 dispatcher that the plane was heading to the airport. The pilot onboard had apparently told them that his co-pilot had "jumped out of the aircraft," news outlets reported.

The airplane sustained substantial damage to its landing gear and fuselage, according to the National Transportation Safety Board.

Officials investigating swine flu at county fair

WV CHARLESTON — Health officials said they are investigating after several people developed a flu-like illness after working closely with pigs that exhibited respiratory symptoms and fever at a county fair.

The state Department of

Health and Human Resources said the H3N2v strain of influenza A was confirmed on at least one human test.

The illnesses occurred at the Jackson County Fair. Dr. Ayne Amjad, the state's health officer, said swine influenza viruses may circulate in pig populations throughout the year and do not usually infect humans. The same antiviral drugs used to treat seasonal influenza can also be used for swine flu infection.

Man doused 2 with gas in possible hate crime

CO AURORA — Police in suburban Denver say they're looking for a man who doused two customers with gasoline at a fueling station after confronting them because they were speaking Spanish and "don't belong here."

The man looked for something to ignite the gasoline before smashing the rear window of the victims' vehicle, taking the keys to their car and leaving, Aurora police said.

Police are investigating the incident as a hate crime. No arrests had been made, said police Sgt. Faith Goodrich.

The incident happened July 23 at the Rocket Gas Station on Havana Street. Inside the station store, the man confronted the victims after hearing them speak Spanish and "told them they don't belong here," department officials said. He allegedly followed them to their car and used a station pump to douse them with gasoline, according to statements from the victims and witnesses, evidence collected at the scene and surveillance video, Goodrich said.

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Prescott hits reset button with Cowboys

Associated Press

OXNARD, Calif. — Dak Prescott had fair warning before his first meeting with reporters at training camp that Dallas Cowboys coach Mike McCarthy had just delivered his best line so far in California.

Something about quarterbacks being the key to winning Super Bowls.

Dallas is the most overdue among the NFL's storied franchises for a trip even close to that far in the playoffs. That's part of why the star QB got a heads-up from the public relations staff before stepping to the podium.

Prescott knew what his coach was saying.

"I feel like we talked about that in a lot of conversations," Prescott said. "Obviously the old saying, defense wins championships, it's true. And when he says quarterbacks win the Super Bowl, it means they have

to make big plays in big moments in games like that."

For all the talk about the Cowboys not getting off the snap in time for a final play in a 23-17 home wild-card loss to San Francisco last January, most of it hasn't been whether Prescott ran too far trying to set up one last throw to the end zone.

Maybe it was a moment of imprecision in a big game for Prescott. Maybe not. But it came after plenty of other misfires for an offense that deteriorated from one of the best in the NFL early in the season to one of the most inconsistent late.

McCarthy was asked two days into camp where he thinks the 2016 NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year can improve as Prescott, the starter since Week 1 of his first year, turns 29 and carries a 1-3 postseason record into his seventh season.

The sound bite that had Twitter buzzing came about halfway

through the answer.

"This is Dak Prescott's offense and I think you see him taking ownership of that," McCarthy said. "Because at the end of the day, defense wins championships, but the Super Bowl is won by the quarterback."

McCarthy also left little doubt he believes Prescott is capable of joining Roger Staubach and Troy Aikman as Super Bowl-winning QBs in Dallas.

Prescott understands that's how quarterbacking legacies are defined in the city. He replaced perhaps the best Cowboys quarterback not to win a Super Bowl in Tony Romo, whose preseason injury created Prescott's opportunity six years ago.

"The ones that we hold at the highest standard are the ones that have Super Bowl rings," Prescott said. "So, it starts there for me is trying to fill the shoes

of those guys that have come before me and do something for this organization that hadn't been done in a long time."

Dallas hasn't even reached an NFC championship game since the last of the franchise's five Super Bowls during the 1995 season. It has three NFC East titles with Prescott — but two losses in playoff openers at home, including as the NFC's top seed his rookie year.

Prescott said Chad Bohling, the Cowboys' mental health consultant, showed him clips of the quarterback's postgame news conference after the loss to the 49ers, along with some of star running back Ezekiel Elliott.

It might have been the equivalent of hitting a reset button for Prescott.

"That feeling is a nasty feeling and that's one that when you think about it, you want to go work," Prescott said.

Union files brief replying to league's Watson appeal

Associated Press

CANTON, Ohio — The NFL Players Association has filed a brief replying to the league's appeal in Deshaun Watson's discipline case.

Former New Jersey Attorney General Peter C. Harvey now has the necessary paperwork to issue a ruling.

The players' union announced the reply brief shortly before Friday's deadline but didn't release its contents because it's confidential.

Harvey was selected by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell on Thursday to hear the league's appeal of the six-game suspension given to Watson for violating the personal conduct policy.

The NFL said Friday there's no timeline for Harvey to issue a ruling. The policy says the appeal will be "processed on an expedited basis."

Watson was suspended by independent disciplinary officer Sue L. Robinson after being accused of sexual assault and harassment by two dozen women in Texas. The allegations go back to when Watson was playing for the Houston Texans.

Watson, who was traded to the Cleveland Browns in March, recently settled 23 of 24 lawsuits filed by the women. Watson has denied any wrongdoing.

The NFL is seeking an indefinite suspension of at least one year and a fine around \$8 million, a person familiar with the filing told The Associated Press on Wednesday. The person, speaking on condition of anonymity because the matter isn't public knowledge, also said Watson would be required to undergo evaluation and treatment as determined

by medical experts before he could be reinstated.

Under the collective bargaining agreement, the appeal gave Goodell authority to enact a punishment, which he previously did under the old CBA. But Goodell instead chose Harvey, currently a partner at a law firm in New York, to hear the appeal.

Harvey has served as Goodell's designee in other arbitrations, and he's a member of the league's Diversity Advisory Committee, created to improve racial and gender diversity across the NFL.

In 2017, Harvey was one of four members of an expert panel who reviewed the league's domestic violence investigation into Dallas Cowboys running back Ezekiel Elliott, who was suspended six games for violating the conduct policy.

Goodell chose a designee to handle Watson's case because he wanted an expert in the field who can focus solely on this matter, a person familiar with Harvey's appointment told the AP on Thursday. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because it's an internal matter.

Watson continues to practice with Cleveland, which would hand the starting job to Jacoby Brissett in his absence.

"I think with our plan, we will just kind of await clarity on the situation but just continue to move ahead with what we are doing," Browns coach Kevin Stefanski said about distribution of reps in practice.

Stefanski said he hasn't finalized plans for playing time for his QBs in the first preseason game against Jacksonville next Friday.

Newgarden seeks IndyCar lead at home

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Josef Newgarden wasn't at peak physical condition when he raced last week at Indianapolis, that much he admits.

But sitting out would have crippled his championship chances, so earning the medical clearance to compete following his post-race collapse at Iowa was Newgarden's only choice. He finished fifth to maintain his hold on third place in the IndyCar standings.

"I wasn't 100% but I felt good, I felt normal in a lot of respects, but I'm trying to get myself even better," Newgarden said. "We needed to be in the race, and I was happy to be there."

Next up is his home race, the second Music City Grand Prix through the downtown streets of Nashville. Newgarden was an ambassador for last year's inaugural race and the commitments admittedly stretched him thin ahead of his deflating 10th-place finish.

That won't be good enough Sunday for Newgarden's quest for a third IndyCar title. So he slimmed down his obligations ahead of this year's race and used several days this week to reset following his Iowa

disruption.

Newgarden won the first race of the Iowa doubleheader last month to take the IndyCar points lead, but crashed hard the next day while leading in pursuit of the weekend sweep. The incident dropped him to third in the standings and then came a medical scare: Newgarden was cleared in the care center but then lost consciousness in the motorhome lot and hit his head.

It's believed he suffered a concussion when his head hit the pavement. That required deliberate care to ensure Newgarden would be cleared to race the road course at Indianapolis last Saturday. When that race ended, he felt "just tired."

"I was fatigued from the intense week," he said. "It wasn't so much that I was dealing with symptoms, I just wasn't 100% energy. I feel like this week, I've had more time to rest, and I'll be more myself this weekend."

Newgarden is in a tight title fight with six drivers separated by 52 points with four races remaining. His Team Penske teammate Will Power cycled into the lead for the third time this season after Indianapolis; Newgarden, with an IndyCar-

high four wins this season, is 32 points behind his teammate.

Newgarden is passionate about IndyCar in Nashville and last year packed his schedule with pre-race appearances to promote the event debut. This year he cut back to only his fourth annual ping-pong tournament for charity. About a dozen of his fellow competitors played in the Thursday afternoon tournament. Newgarden's team advanced to the final but lost.

He said the charity tournament was a priority. Newgarden, via an IndyCar bonus program, already earned a \$1 million prize this season and \$500,000 was split between two charities of his choice. The tournament also benefitted the two charities, Wags and Walks of Nashville and the SeriousFun Children's Network.

Newgarden's support has helped Wags and Walks — where Newgarden and his wife adopted one of their dogs — break ground on its first facility that will double the amount of pets it helps save each year. Both founder Kathryn Dhall and Clea Newman, who runs the SeriousFun Children's Network that was started by her father, the late actor Paul Newman, attended the tournament.

Ford, Keselowski, look for a better idea to succeed

Associated Press

It all seemed so promising at the start of the NASCAR season for Ford and its teams, particularly Jack Roush's rebranded organization with new driver/owner Brad Keselowski.

Joey Logano of Team Penske won the exhibition Busch Clash at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in January ahead of NASCAR's shift to Daytona International Speedway and the start of the season.

It was there that Keselowski, who left Penske for an ownership stake with Roush, took the longtime NASCAR team owner back to victory lane for the first time since 2017. Keselowski drove the rebranded Ford for RFK Racing to a victory in a Daytona 500 qualifying race. About 90 minutes later, Chris Buescher took Roush back to victory lane with an RFK sweep

of the two qualifying races.

Three days later, Penske rookie Austin Cindric won the Daytona 500 to give Ford wins in the first four Cup events of the year.

And now? With just a month remaining before NASCAR's playoffs begin, Ford is bringing up the rear in the manufacturer battle. Three drivers have combined for four Ford victories through 22 points races, and Logano has two of the wins. His victory in June in St. Louis was the last Ford win, and at fourth in the Cup standings, Logano is the highest-ranked Ford driver.

Cindric and Chase Briscoe for Stewart-Haas Racing have the only other two wins for the blue oval bunch as NASCAR shifts into their backyard at Michigan International Speedway.

"Four wins is not enough. It's not acceptable," said Mark

Rushbrook, global director of Ford Performance Motorsports. "We need to get more wins. We need to have drivers further up the standings and hopefully at least four if not more drivers into the playoffs."

"It's certainly going to be hard with where we are with only four regular-season races left. It's been a struggle with the new car, the new package with getting our head around it, and how to set it up properly going to the track and optimizing it."

Chevrolet has been the dominant brand this season with 13 wins — Chase Elliott has a series-high four victories — and Toyota has five victories.

RFK optimism

Keselowski returns to his home track feeling confident about RFK's recent progress. The native of Rochester Hills

believes the team is on "a little bit of an upswing" and thought he and teammate Buescher were fast on the road course at Indianapolis last week.

"We seem to be getting better every week, and the team's starting to click and we're starting to figure out some of the missing pieces," Keselowski said.

Keselowski has been in a deep hole since March when the No. 6 team was slapped with a 100-point penalty for modifying a single-source part on the Next Gen. It was the harshest penalty on NASCAR's new car until late last month, when NASCAR disqualified Denny Hamlin and Kyle Busch following their 1-2 finish at Pocono Raceway, then docked 100 points from Michael McDowell for another infraction on the Next Gen.

Gonsolin, Los Angeles four-hit Padres

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Tony Gonsolin pitched five scoreless innings and the Los Angeles Dodgers threw a four-hitter against the San Diego Padres' supercharged lineup, winning 8-1 Friday night after honoring Vin Scully.

Los Angeles manager Dave Roberts led the stadium in a unison call of Scully's signature "It's time for Dodgers baseball" during a memorial before the game. Scully died Tuesday at age 94.

"It speaks to how much love the Dodger family has for Vin," Roberts said. "It was a special moment."

The NL West rivals met for the first time since San Diego acquired superstar Juan Soto, Josh Bell and Brandon Drury ahead of Tuesday's trade deadline. Los Angeles extended its division lead to a season-best 13½ games over the Padres and showed no signs of slowing down.

Gonsolin (13-1) struck out six and allowed three hits. He overcame a 30-pitch first in-

ning and left two runners on. After that, he settled in.

"I was grinding at-bats. (Jurickson) Profar starting with 10-11 (pitches) was too many," Gonsolin said. "Fouling off some good pitches. I was throwing a lot of balls early but executed when I needed to."

Astros 9, Guardians 3: Trey Mancini hit two home runs, including his first career grand slam, to lead Houston to a win at Cleveland.

Braves 9, Mets 6: Ronald Acuña Jr. got four hits and robbed Pete Alonso of a two-run homer as visiting Atlanta rebounded quickly in its NL East showdown with New York.

Angels 4, Mariners 3 (10): Taylor Ward's sacrifice fly scored Magneuris Sierra in the 10th inning, and Los Angeles blew a three-run lead late before pulling out a win at Seattle.

Cardinals 4, Yankees 3: Paul DeJong hit a two-run double with two outs in the eighth inning, lifting host St. Louis past New York.

Twins 6, Blue Jays 5 (10): Nick Gordon hit a three-run homer and scored the game-ending run in the 10th inning for host Minnesota after a pair of miscues by Toronto catcher Danny Jansen.

Gordon, who had three hits in the game, was the automatic runner to start the bottom of the 10th. Jordan Romano (3-3) struck out Jake Cave on a low slider that got past Jansen, who threw wildly to first, allowing Cave to reach and moving Gordon to third. Tim Beckham hit a grounder to third baseman Matt Chapman, who threw home to try to get Gordon.

Orioles 1, Pirates 0: Dean Kremer (4-3) pitched impressively into the seventh inning and Félix Bautista held on through a dicey ninth to lift host Baltimore over Pittsburgh.

Phillies 7, Nationals 2: Kyle Gibson (7-4) retired his first 18 batters and pitched one-run ball over eight innings, Kyle Schwarber hit his NL-leading 34th homer and host Philadelphia beat Washington.

Rays 5, Tigers 3: Brandon Lowe hit a go-ahead, two-run double in the eighth inning and Tampa Bay walked a franchise-record 13 times while rallying to win at Detroit.

White Sox 2, Rangers 1: Dylan Cease pitched six strong innings, Eloy Jimenez hit a tie-breaking homer and Chicago won at Texas.

Brewers 5, Reds 1: Eric Lauer (8-3) pitched seven strong innings, Rowdy Tellez and Tyrone Taylor homered, and host Milwaukee beat Cincinnati.

Diamondbacks 6, Rockies 5: Geraldo Perdomo hit a two-out, two-run single in the eighth inning, then made a terrific diving snag on a grounder in the ninth to preserve Arizona's win over visiting Colorado.

Cubs 2, Marlins 1: Willson Contreras hit a two-run homer in the eighth inning to lift host Chicago past Miami.

Red Sox 7, Royals 4: Xander Bogaerts had four hits, Alex Verdugo doubled twice and Boston won at Kansas City.

Dodgers put Kershaw on IL with lower back pain

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles Dodgers placed left-hander Clayton Kershaw on the 15-day injured list Friday, one day after he left a start with lower back pain.

This marks the 34-year-old Kershaw's second trip to the injured list this season. He was previously sidelined with inflammation in a pelvic joint.

Kershaw had an X-ray and an MRI on Friday, and nothing new was revealed in the MRI. Manager Dave Roberts said Kershaw was sore on Friday, and that prompted to the IL move.

Kershaw's previous back injury was on the right side, and

this one is more on the left side, according to Roberts.

The three-time NL Cy Young Award winner was warming up before the fifth inning of a 5-3 victory over San Francisco on Thursday when he winced and pointed to the Dodgers' dugout. He later walked off the field with a trainer.

Kershaw, a nine-time All-Star, is 7-3 with a 2.64 ERA and 88 strikeouts in 85⅓ innings.

In other baseball news:

■ Houston Astros manager Dusty Baker tested positive for COVID-19 prior to Friday night's game against the Guardians in Cleveland.

Baker held his usual pregame availability with the media

about two hours before the 7:10 p.m. game. The announcement of the positive test came after the game started.

Kim among leaders in Greensboro

GREENSBORO, N.C. — Joo-hyung "Tom" Kim began the Wyndham Championship with a quadruple bogey on his first hole and wasn't the least bit bothered. The kid seems to be going places in a hurry.

Already assured a PGA Tour card for next season, Kim overcame his rough start with a 6-under 64 on Friday that gave him a share of the early lead with Brandon Wu and Ryan

Moore in the final PGA Tour event of the regular season.

Kim, a 20-year-old South Korean, has to win at Sedgefield Country Club to qualify for the FedEx Cup playoffs because he will not be considered a PGA Tour member until September when the new season starts. Only a victory gives him instant membership.

He took eight shots for his first hole on Thursday. Since then, Kim has made 14 birdies and reached 9-under 131 along with Wu (67) and Moore (67).

John Huh, who opened with a 61, had a 71 and was one shot behind along with Russell Henley (65) and Sungjae Im (67).