

Doctors stay in Ukraine's war-hit towns

Associated Press

ZOLOCHIV, Ukraine — Dr. Ilona Butova almost looks out of place in her neatly pressed lavender scrubs as she walks through a door frame that hangs from a crumbled wall into what used to be an administrative office of her hospital in Zolochiv.

Not one building in the facility in the northeastern Ukrainian town near the Russian border has escaped getting hit by artillery shells.

Since Russia's invasion on Feb. 24, space to treat patients at the hospital has shrunk constantly because of damage. Her staff has dwindled to 47 from 120. And the number of people seeking treatment in the small town 11 miles from the border is often higher now than before the fighting began.

Ukraine's health care system struggled for years because of corruption, mismanagement and the COVID-19 pandemic. But the war has only made things worse, with facilities damaged or destroyed, medical staff relocating to safer places and many drugs unavailable or in short supply. Care is being provided in the hardest-hit areas by doctors who have refused to evacuate or have rushed in as volunteers, putting themselves at great risk.

"It's very hard, but people need us. We

have to stay and help," said Butova, a neurologist who also is the administrator of the hospital in the town near Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city. She added that she has had to do more with fewer resources.

The World Health Organization declared its highest level of emergency in Ukraine the day after the invasion, coordinating a major relief effort there and in neighboring countries whose medical systems also are under strain.

About 6.4 million people have fled to other European countries, and a slightly higher number are internally displaced, according to U.N. estimates. That presents a major challenge to a health care system built on family doctor referrals and regionally separate administrations.

Across Ukraine, 900 hospitals have been damaged and another 123 have been destroyed, said Health Minister Viktor Liashko, noting: "Those 123 are gone, and we're having to find new sites to build replacements."

In addition, scores of pharmacies and ambulances have been destroyed or are seriously damaged, and at least 18 civilian medical staff have been killed and 59 others seriously wounded, he said.

"In occupied areas, the referral system

has totally broken down," Liashko told The Associated Press. "People's health and their lives are in danger."

Kyiv's economy was drained by the conflict with Moscow-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine that began in 2014. When he came to power five years later, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy inherited a health care system that was undermined by reforms launched under his predecessor that had slashed government subsidies and closed many small-town hospitals. During the pandemic, people in those communities had to seek care in large cities — sometimes waiting as long as eight hours for an ambulance in severe cases of COVID-19.

As Russia has expanded the territory it controls in eastern and southern Ukraine, the supply of drugs in those areas has dwindled, along with medical staff to administer them. In the southern front-line town of Mykolaiv, "things have been very difficult," volunteer Andrii Skorokhod said.

"Pharmacies have not been working, and shortages have become increasingly acute: Hospital staff were among those evacuated, including specialists. We just need more staff," said Skorokhod, who heads a Red Cross initiative to provide residents with free medications.

Officials: US to send Ukraine drones, more Howitzers

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States is poised to announce it will provide Ukraine with nearly \$800 million in new military aid Friday, including at least a dozen Scan Eagle surveillance drones, according to several U.S. officials.

Officials said the bulk of the aid package will be additional Howitzers and ammunition, including Javelin missiles that the Ukrainian military has been using effectively to try and hold off Russian forces and take back territory Moscow has gained. Two officials confirmed the new inclusion of the portable, long-endurance drones which are launched by a catapult and can be retrieved.

The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the aid ahead of its public

release.

For much of the last four months of the war, Russia has concentrated on capturing the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, where pro-Moscow separatists have controlled some territory as self-proclaimed republics for eight years.

Russian forces have made some incremental gains in the east, but they have also been put on the defensive in other regions, as Ukraine ratchets up its attacks in the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea. The Russian-occupied territory was seized by Moscow in 2014. Nine Russian warplanes were reported destroyed last week at an airbase on Crimea in strikes that highlighted the Ukrainians' capacity to strike deep behind enemy lines.

Russian leaders have warned that striking

facilities in Crimea marks an escalation in the conflict fueled by the U.S. and NATO allies and threatens to pull America deeper into the war.

This latest aid comes as Russia's war on Ukraine is about to reach the six-month mark. Already, the U.S. has sent Ukraine more than \$9 billion in weapons systems, ammunition and other equipment. It would be the 19th time the Pentagon has provided equipment from Defense Department stocks to Ukraine since August 2021.

Efforts to tamp down the fighting have also continued. On Thursday, Turkey's leader and the U.N. chief met in western Ukraine with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. They discussed a range of issues including prisoner exchanges.

Marine Ospreys still flying despite USAF groundings

BY JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps continues to fly its MV-22 Ospreys despite the Air Force grounding its fleet of CV-22s over a mechanical issue with the tiltrotor aircraft.

The Marine Corps flies more than 240 Ospreys, a medium-lift aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter but flies like an airplane, according to an undated fact sheet from III Marine Expeditionary Force.

The Marines have been aware of the “hard clutch issue” since 2010 and train their pilots “to react with the appropriate emergency control measures should the issue arise during flight,” according to a statement from Marine spokesman Maj. Jim Stenger that was emailed Friday to Stars and Stripes.

“The Marine Corps continually processes hazards and safety concerns, and implements risk mitigation for all known and existing hazards,” Stenger wrote.

Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, commander of Air Force Special Operations, on Tuesday indefinitely grounded the Air Force fleet of CV-22 Ospreys, the same basic aircraft customized for special operations, “due to an

increased number of safety incidents” involving the clutch inside a gearbox that connects one of the Osprey’s two Rolls Royce engines to the propeller rotor.

The Osprey is designed to compensate in the event the problem arises in flight, but pilots must land the aircraft, according to a report in Defense News.

Since 2017 four incidents involving hard clutch engagement have occurred during Osprey flights, two incidents in the past six weeks, an Air Force spokesman Lt. Col. Rebecca Heyse said Wednesday by email.

The Marines have lost Ospreys in two fatal crashes this year alone, one in Norway and another in California, but after more than 533,000 MV-22 flight hours, the clutch problem has not caused a “single catastrophic event,” Stenger wrote.

At least 13 troops have died in Osprey crashes since 2015, according to published accounts.

Four Marines died in March when a Marine Osprey crashed in Norway due to pilot error, according to the Marines. Another five were killed when an Osprey crashed in June in a Southern California accident still under investigation.

Life sentence for ISIS ‘Beate’ who tortured hostages

Associated Press

An Islamic State militant who was one of the ringleaders torturing international hostages, demanding ransom payments from their families and broadcasting videotaped executions to the world was sentenced Friday to life in prison.

U.S. prosecutors said El Shafee Elsheikh was one of the three “ISIS Beatles,” a group of masked terrorists known for their British accents and brutal executions of journalists and humanitarian-relief workers during ISIS’ rise in Syria. The Justice Department described Elsheikh as “the most notorious ISIS member to face a jury trial in the United States.”

A jury convicted Elsheikh, now 34, in April of conspiracy charges in the kidnapping and murder of American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff and humanitarian workers Peter Kassig and Kayla Mueller, as well as terrorism charges in the deaths of British and Japanese hostages.

Alexandra Kotey, another member of the group who was captured with Elsheikh in 2018, pleaded guilty in 2021 and was sentenced this year to life in prison. The third member of the “Beatles,” Mohammed Emwazi, who was the masked executioner, was killed in a U.S. airstrike in 2015.

At trial, Elsheikh’s defense team had denied that he was a member of the “Beatles” or that he had any role in the torture and execution of hostages, calling him a “simple ISIS fighter.” But Elsheikh had given a series of interviews to journalists detailing his role in seeking ransoms from the families of Western hostages captured during the Syrian civil war, beating the prisoners and demanding personal information.

U.S. District Judge T.S. Ellis called Elsheikh’s and Kotey’s conduct “horrific, barbaric, brutal, callous — and of course, criminal.” He sentenced Elsheikh to eight concurrent life sentences.

Foley’s mother, Diane Foley, told Elsheikh at the hearing, “James would want you to know that you did not win.”

Noting that it was the eighth anniversary of her son’s beheading, Diane Foley said through tears that her son’s example of service and compassion lived on.

“James Wright Foley lives on,” she told Elsheikh.

EU to boost monkeypox vaccines

Associated Press

LONDON — A smaller dose of the monkeypox vaccine appears to still be effective and can be used to stretch the current supply by five times, the European Medicines Agency said Friday, echoing a recommendation made earlier this month by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The EU drug regulator said in a statement that injecting people with just one fifth the regular dose of the smallpox vaccine made by Bavarian Nordic appeared to produce similar levels of antibodies against monkeypox as a full dose.

The approach calls for administering Bavarian Nordic’s vaccine with an injection just under the skin rather than into deeper tissue, a practice that may stimulate a better immune response. People still need to get

two doses, about four weeks apart.

The EMA said national authorities could decide, “as a temporary measure” to use smaller doses of the vaccine to protect vulnerable people during the ongoing monkeypox outbreak.

EU health commissioner Stella Kyriakides said the decision would allow the vaccination of five times as many people with the continent’s current supply.

“This ensures greater access to vaccination for citizens at risk and healthcare workers,” she said in a statement.

Earlier this month, the U.S. FDA authorized a similar plan to extend the country’s monkeypox vaccine stocks. The technique has previously been used to stretch supplies of vaccines during other outbreaks, including yellow fever and polio.

Russian villages evacuated after blaze

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — A fire at a munitions depot near the Russian village of Timonovo has led to the evacuation of two villages in Russia's Belgorod region on Ukraine's northeastern border, an official said Friday. The blaze was the latest in a series of destructive incidents on Rus-

sian-occupied territory in Ukraine or inside Russia itself.

Roughly 1,100 people reside in the villages of Timonovo and Soloti, around 15 miles from the Ukrainian border. There were no casualties in the blaze late Thursday, Belgorod regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

The fire came days after another ammunition depot exploded on the Crimean Peninsula, a Russian-occupied territory on the Black Sea that was annexed by Moscow in 2014.

Last week, nine Russian warplanes were reported destroyed at an airbase on Crimea, demonstrating both the Russians' vul-

nerability and the Ukrainians' capacity to strike deep behind enemy lines. Ukrainian authorities have stopped short of publicly claiming responsibility.

But President Volodymyr Zelenskyy alluded to Ukrainian attacks behind enemy lines after the blasts in Crimea, which Russia has blamed on "sabotage."

Death threats further complicate Iran deal

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Last week's attack on author Salman Rushdie and the indictment of an Iranian national in a plot to kill former national security adviser John Bolton have given the Biden administration new headaches as it attempts to negotiate a return to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran.

A resolution may be tantalizingly close. But as the U.S. and Europe weigh Iran's latest response to an EU proposal described as the West's final offer, the administration faces new and potentially insurmountable domestic political hurdles to forging a lasting agreement.

Deal critics in Congress who have long vowed to blow up any pact have ratcheted up their opposition to negotiations with a country whose leadership has refused to rescind the death threats against Rushdie or Bolton. Iran also vows to avenge the Trump administration's 2020 assassination of a top Iranian general by killing former Secretary

of State Mike Pompeo and Iran envoy Brian Hook, both of whom remain under 24/7 taxpayer-paid security protection.

Although such threats are not covered by the deal, which relates solely to Iran's nuclear program, they underscore deal opponents' arguments that Iran cannot be trusted with the billions of dollars in sanctions relief it will receive if and when it and the U.S. return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, a signature foreign policy accomplishment of the Obama administration that President Donald Trump withdrew from in 2018.

"This is a tougher deal to sell than the 2015 deal in that this time around there are no illusions that it will serve to moderate Iranian behavior or lead to greater U.S.-Iran cooperation," said Karim Sadjadpour, an Iran expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"The Iranian government stands to get tens of billions in sanctions relief, and the

organizing principle of the regime will continue to be opposition to the United States and violence against its critics, both at home and abroad," he said.

While acknowledging the seriousness of the plots, administration officials contend that they are unrelated to the nuclear issue and do nothing to change their long-held belief that an Iran with a nuclear weapon would be more dangerous and less constrained than an Iran without one.

"The JCPOA is about the single, central challenge we face with Iran, the core challenge, what would be the most threatening challenge we could possibly face from Iran, and that is a nuclear weapon," State Department spokesman Ned Price said this week. "There is no doubt that a nuclear-armed Iran would feel an even greater degree of impunity, and would pose an even greater threat, a far greater threat, to countries in the region and potentially well beyond."

Judge: Some of Mar-a-Lago affidavit could be unsealed

The Washington Post

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — A federal judge said Thursday that he is "inclined" to unseal some of the affidavit central to last week's FBI search of former president Donald Trump's Florida home, instructing the Justice Department to redact the document in a way so it would not undermine the ongoing investigation if it were made public.

Federal Magistrate Judge Bruce Reinhart, appearing to reject the government's argument for keeping the entire document sealed, said he would make a determination after next Thursday, when Justice Department officials are expected to submit their proposed redactions.

The affidavit has become the latest flashpoint in a criminal probe scrutinizing materials taken from the White House when Trump's term ended last year. On Aug. 8, FBI agents executed a search warrant at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, carting away dozens of boxes containing what authorities say are highly classified national secrets.

Reinhart, noting that he had reviewed the affidavit multiple times, said he believed parts of it could be made public without impeding the probe.

The government had argued that its investigation was in the "early stages" and that release of the affidavit could chill po-

tential witnesses, risk the safety of those already interviewed, reveal future investigative steps and disclose significant amounts of grand jury material.

"I'm not prepared to find the affidavit should be fully sealed," Reinhart said. "I believe based on my initial careful review of the affidavit many times that there are portions that could preemptively be unsealed."

Reinhart said he would not make a decision until reviewing the government's proposed redactions and would stay any ruling pending potential appeals — meaning the affidavit may not be made public for some time, if ever.

ND board revives Pledge of Allegiance

Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. — The school board in North Dakota's most populous city reversed course Thursday on its decision to stop reciting the Pledge of Allegiance at its monthly meetings, following complaints from conservative lawmakers and an angry backlash from citizens around the country.

Seven of the nine members of the Fargo Board of Education, including four newcomers who took office in June, voted last week to cancel a previous board edict that was approved a couple of months before the election. The new board agreed with member Seth Holden, who said the pledge did not align with the district's diversity and inclusion code in part because the phrase "under God" does not include all faiths.

North Dakota Republican Gov. Doug Burgum earlier this week promoted new legislation

that would require public schools and governing bodies to administer the pledge without mandating that people recite it. Republican state Rep. Pat Heinert, a retired county sheriff, is suggesting that sanctions be put in place for public boards and commissions that don't require the patriotic oath.

Angry emails and voicemails dominated Thursday's special meeting to reconsider the vote. Nyamal Dei, a refugee who fled war-torn Sudan, played a profanity-laced voicemail from a man who called her a slave, racist and Nazi. Several board members apologized to Dei, the lone Black member on the board, for taking the worst of the abuse.

Dei said reversing the decision would be giving in to hate. She paused for several seconds before casting the lone no vote to reinstate the pledge.

"We won't be rewarding our children or students in our dis-

trict for acting in this way," Dei said. "But know that this moment will pass. Let's get back to the work that we are elected to do and that is to find a solution to our teacher shortages, mental health issues and academic achievement for our students."

City of Fargo spokesman Gregg Schildberger said police "are currently investigating a handful of reports related to perceived threats" to at least three members of the board.

Board member Greg Clark said he broke down his angry messages and found that less than 20% came from Fargo. He acknowledged his vote to bring back the pledge was influenced by people he does not represent.

"But I hope you'll forgive me because I truly believe it is in the best interest of our schools to do so," Clark said. "The disruptions and the threats must end so that we can have a successful start to our school year."

Holden, who made the motion to cancel the pledge, said he struggled with his decision but was heartbroken over the abusive comments and worried about the image of the board.

"I'm also concerned about what might happen to this board in the future because we're going to have to probably be prepared to take more heat than we normally do for decisions that we make," he said, "because that there may be a perception of success."

Public comment was not allowed at the special meeting, attended by about two dozen citizens. A handful of them clapped after the vote. One of them, Vietnam veteran David Halcrow, apologized to Dei after the meeting.

"What was done to her ... those people need to be in the clink," said Halcrow. "If it were up me, they would be in jail. There's no excuse for that kind of thing."

Chinese basin drought disrupts shipping industry

Associated Press

CHONGQING, China — Ships crept down the middle of the Yangtze on Friday after China's driest summer in six decades left one of the mightiest rivers barely half its normal width and set off a scramble to contain the damage to a weak economy in a politically sensitive year. Factories in Sichuan province and the adjacent metropolis of Chongqing in the southwest were ordered to shut down after reservoirs that supply hydropower fell to half their normal levels and demand for air conditioning surged in scorching temperatures.

Normally bustling streets were empty after temperatures hit 113 degrees Fahrenheit in Chongqing on Thursday. State media said that was the hottest

in China outside the desert region of Xinjiang in the northwest since official records began in 1961.

"We cannot live through this summer without air conditioning," said Chen Haofeng, 22, who was taking pictures of the exposed riverbed. "Nothing can cool us down."

The disruption adds to challenges for the ruling Communist Party, which is trying to shore up sagging economic growth before a meeting in October or November when President Xi Jinping is expected to try to award himself a third five-year term as leader.

The world's second-largest economy grew by just 2.5% over a year earlier in the first half of 2022 — and that was less than half the official target of 5.5%.

Zimbabwe looks to gold coins amid rising inflation

Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe — After working as an overnight security guard at a church in Harare's impoverished Mabvuku township, Jeffrey Carlos rushes home to help his wife fetch water to sell. Water shortages mean most residents of the capital city of more than 2.4 million must source their own water. Carlos is lucky because the property he rents has a well and his family can haul up buckets of water to sell to neighbors.

"This is our gold," he says of the well water.

"If we are lucky, we can sell up to 12 buckets of water (per day) for \$2," said the 50-year-old father of three. That's about enough money to buy the family's food for the day, he said.

Rising prices have pushed

many Zimbabweans to the brink, reminding people of when the southern African country faced world-record inflation of 5 billion% in 2008. With inflation jumping from 191% in June to 257% in July, many Zimbabweans fear the country is heading back to such hyperinflation.

To prevent a return of such economic disaster, President Emmerson Mnangagwa's government last month took the unprecedented step of introducing gold coins as legal tender. The country's central bank, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, said that because the value of the one-ounce, 22-carat coins would be determined by the international price of gold, they will help tame the inflation and stabilize the nation's currency.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man who broke into home wanted a bath

WI CHIPPEWA FALLS — A Minnesota man who allegedly broke into an occupied Wisconsin home and locked himself in a bathroom never had a chance to come clean.

He was getting ready to take a bath when authorities arrived.

Authorities said the 29-year-old St. Paul, Minn., man was filling up the tub when Chippewa Falls police who answered the call of a stranger in the home ordered him to come out of the bathroom. He did, wearing only a T-shirt and underwear that was inside-out. His pants were on the bathroom floor, the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram reported.

The unbathed suspect had an odor of alcohol, police said.

The man is facing charges of burglary to a dwelling and criminal trespass. He was ordered not to possess or consume alcohol.

State approves alcohol sales at college stadium

AL MONTGOMERY — Beer and wine sales are coming to Bryant-Denny Stadium at the University of Alabama.

Dean Argo, a spokesman for the Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, said the agency gave approval to an alcohol license for the vendor at Bryant-Denny Stadium. The state approval was the final regulatory step in authorizing sales.

A spokeswoman for the university's athletic department did not immediately return an

email seeking comment about when sales might begin.

The Tuscaloosa City Council approved the alcohol sales license for Levy Premium Foodservice, the university's concession vendor at the stadium, news outlets reported. Levy representative Herbert Tesh told councilmembers that beer and wine would be sold to fans on the concourse but not in the stands, news outlets reported.

Man indicted on murder charges after boat crash

GA SAVANNAH — A Georgia man has been indicted on homicide by vessel charges after a Memorial Day weekend boat crash that killed five people.

Mark Stegall was indicted on 10 counts of first-degree homicide by vessel, six counts of serious injury by vessel, boating under the influence, and reckless operation, local news outlets reported.

The collision between one boat with six people and one with three people happened on the Wilmington River near Savannah, with some bodies not recovered until the next day.

Four members of the Leffler family — Chris, 51, his wife Lori, 50, and their sons Zach, 23, and Nate, 17 — died in the May 28 accident. Robert “Stephen” Chauncey, a passenger in Stegall's boat, also died. Others were injured.

Fire hits hotel that inspired ‘Dirty Dancing’

NY LIBERTY — A fire consumed a building at the site of the long-closed Grossinger's resort, once

among the most storied and glamorous hotels in New York's Catskills.

In its heyday after World War II, Grossinger's drew hundreds of thousands of vacationers a year, many of them Jewish. The resort had a 27-hole golf course, indoor and outdoor pools, a nightclub, two kosher kitchens and a 1,500-seat dining room. It drew crooners like Eddie Fisher and has been cited as an inspiration for the 1987 movie “Dirty Dancing.”

The fire broke out in a three-and-half story building on the old hotel property. Firefighters who responded to the scene had to cut through a gate and were hampered by overgrowth and concrete barriers. An excavator knocked down the structure after the fire was out, according to a Facebook post by the Liberty Fire Department.

The cause of the fire was under investigation.

New Airbnb screening made to stop parties

CA SAN FRANCISCO — Airbnb said it will use new methods to spot and block people who try to use the short-term rental service to throw a party.

The company said it has introduced technology that examines the would-be renter's history on Airbnb, how far they live from the home they want to rent, whether they're renting for a weekday or weekend, and other factors.

Airbnb said the screening system that it is rolling out for listings in the United States and Canada has been tested since last October in parts of Australia, where it produced a 35%

drop in unauthorized parties.

Sea turtle nests are 1st in 75 years in state

LA NEW ORLEANS — The world's smallest and most endangered sea turtles have hatched in Louisiana's wilds for the first known time in more than 75 years, officials said.

“Louisiana was largely written off as a nesting spot for sea turtles decades ago, but this determination demonstrates why barrier island restoration is so important,” Chip Kline, chairman of the Louisiana Coastal Restoration and Protection Authority, said in a news release.

Crews monitoring the Chandeleur Islands — a chain 50 miles east of New Orleans — to help design a restoration project found tracks of females going to and from nests and of hatchlings leaving a nest.

Zoo names new baby hippo Fritz after vote

OH CINCINNATI — The Cincinnati Zoo has named their newest baby hippo Fritz, after an online vote by tens of thousands of his adoring fans.

After over 90,000 name suggestions came in from every state in the U.S. and over 60 countries, zoo employees narrowed it down to Fritz or Ferguson — Fritz won with 56% of the vote.

Fritz, a male, is a little brother to the zoo's already famous hippo, Fiona. Fiona was born six weeks premature and wasn't able to stand on her own, though now she is healthy and happy.

—From Associated Press

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Karlaftis found way from Greece to Chiefs

Associated Press

The quickest way to the quarterback for a defensive end is usually the most direct route, and that may be why Chiefs rookie George Karlaftis is so adept at bulldozing his way through an unsuspecting offensive tackle and into the backfield.

Then again, perhaps it's because the route Karlaftis took to reaching the NFL was anything but direct.

The first-round pick out of Purdue grew up in Athens — not the one in Georgia, home to the Bulldogs, but the one in Greece, home to the Parthenon. His father, Matt, was an accomplished track and field athlete who had ventured to the U.S. to attend college, and while doing doctoral work at Purdue met his eventual wife, Amy.

The two settled back in Athens, where Matt Karlaftis embarked on a career in academia, and where the family eventually grew to include four children. But the lives of all of them changed in June 2014, when their patriarch died of a sudden heart attack while on a work trip at the age of 44. Within a matter of days, Amy decided to move with her kids back to Indiana,

where she settled in West Lafayette to be closer to family and her support network.

It was there that George Karlaftis, who had excelled at water polo and a myriad other sports in Greece, fell in love with the American version of football. He was in the eighth grade and, for a young man learning a new language, adapting to a new culture and trying to make new friends, the game gave him an opportunity to discover himself.

Now, a mere eight years later, the 21-year-old Karlaftis has reached the pinnacle of the sport.

"Looking back on it," he said, "it's pretty crazy to think about. I feel like, more generally speaking, I've always excelled in sports to a certain extent. Football sort of came natural to me after I had a full year under my belt. I surely fell in love with it. Just looking back on it, I had a crazy, crazy ride. And just like the French say, 'C'est la vie,' right? That's life."

It has certainly been an interesting one. And in many ways, it's only beginning.

In a sense, Karlaftis is following in the footsteps of his more well-known counterpart in the

NBA, Milwaukee Bucks center Giannis Antetokounmpo. Known affectionately as "the Greek Freak," Antetokounmpo was named the league's Most Valuable player twice (2019, 2020) and helped lead the Bucks to the 2021 NBA title, and was voted MVP of the NBA Finals.

The Chiefs were better than just three teams in the NFL last season when it came to bringing down the quarterback, and they were unable to make a noteworthy splash in free agency until they signed veteran Carlos Dunlap midway into training camp. So instead, they spent one of their two first-round draft picks in an attempt to upgrade at defensive end.

Karlaftis was the fifth one off the board after a standout career at Purdue, but he fit perfectly with Kansas City.

"With a late start to football, he picked it up quick," Chiefs general manager Brett Veach said, "and one thing in common in everyone that you talk to about George is approach to the game and how important it is to him."

That's been evident through the first month of training

camp. Karlaftis is often one of the first players on the field and one of the last to leave it, and not just because he's probably signed more autographs for fans than just about anyone.

Along the way, Karlaftis began spending time with veteran Frank Clark, who regularly puts in extra work after practice.

"George is dope. He's a dope rookie," Clark said with a smile. "He listens, you know? And honestly, I love him. He's a favorite for me early, one of my favorite rookies ever. He wants to be good. He understands it's a different game. There's a different twist in the NFL. You have to be understanding that."

"The other day," Clark recalled, "he asked about getting off the ball — I fly off the ball — and he's asking, 'What are you looking at?' And I explained to him different keys. Then at the end of practice, I'm zoned out, looking at the sky, just had five plays in a row, and he came running over to me and he's like, 'Bro!' Scared me. He's like, 'Bro! I did it! I did what you told me to do!' I was like, 'Oh, cool. Good stuff.' But just the fact that he came over so excited was cool."

Watson suspension delays payoff on Browns' gamble

Associated Press

BEREA, Ohio — The franchise quarterback who brought baggage and Super Bowl dreams to Cleveland won't play for two months.

It's always something with the Browns, who have a well-chronicled history of missteps.

Deshaun Watson's acceptance of an 11-game suspension and \$5 million fine in a settlement with the NFL over alleged sexual misconduct has left the Browns wondering what will become of a season they believed could be special.

Watson won't be back until

December, at the earliest, and only then if the three-time Pro Bowler satisfies the league's requirements that he undergo an evaluation by behavioral experts and follows their treatment program.

The Browns knew there was a strong possibility they'd be without Watson for an extended period. They signed him for five years despite the lawsuits brought by two dozen women in Texas.

And now that they know exactly the time frame for his absence, the question becomes can they survive until Watson is eligible to return on Dec. 4

— against, of all teams, the Texans?

"We still have 17 games to play," Browns general manager Andrew Berry said Thursday, shortly after Watson's punishment became public. "We think we have a number of talented players and coaches who are in that locker room. Our expectation is still to have a competitive team and go and try to win every game."

Jacoby Brissett is Cleveland's new starting quarterback, and the 29-year-old has a track record of being a capable replacement. He's done it with New England, Indianapo-

lis and Miami while posting a 14-23 record as a starter.

Not nearly as flashy or dynamic as Watson, he's more of a game manager. His experience is a huge plus — on and off the field. Brissett is a leader, and by all accounts well-liked and respected by his teammates and coaches.

"A pro's pro, somebody who is going to lead from out in front, works very hard at his craft and just is an outstanding teammate," coach Kevin Stefanski said, essentially repeating comments he's made about Brissett throughout training camp.

Bradley starts fast in FedEx Cup event

Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. — Kegan Bradley hasn't been to the FedEx Cup finale in four years, and he started the BMW Championship on Thursday like he was in a hurry to get back.

Bradley matched a career low with a 29 on the front nine at Wilmington Country Club and finished with a 7-under 64 to take a one-shot lead over Adam Scott.

Bradley is No. 44 in the FedEx Cup and likely needs a top-10 finish — he hasn't had one since the U.S. Open — to be among the 30 players who advance to the Tour Championship in Atlanta to chase the \$18 million prize.

He isn't willing to consider the scenarios until it matters,

which is Sunday. Until then, it's all about trying to win a tournament, just like any week.

"My plan is I'm going to go home and see my kids no matter what on Sunday night," Bradley said. "I'd love to go to Atlanta. That's everyone's goal to start the year."

Scott started the postseason at No. 77 and tied for fifth in the playoff opener last week to make it to the second stage. Now he's at No. 45, giving him a chance. It also meant being paired with Bradley, and they put on quite a show. They combined for 15 birdies.

"He played beautifully today, and I was really just trying to follow his lead," Scott said. "He

kind of had everything going the way he wanted, and most of the time he was teeing off first and I was just trying to follow."

PGA champion Justin Thomas put a different putter in the bag and responded with a 66 to leave him in the group with former British Open champion Shane Lowry and Harold Varner III.

Xander Schauffele and Collin Morikawa led the group at 67.

Rory McIlroy was the only player from the afternoon who looked to challenge Bradley, and he was doing just that at 6 under with four holes to play. Then he was between clubs on the par-3 15th, tried to hit a soft cut with a 5-iron and put his tee

shot into the water. He took three putts from just short of the green, missing a 3-footer, and made triple bogey.

McIlroy was in the group at 68 that included Jordan Spieth and Patrick Cantlay, who won the BMW Championship last year at Caves Valley on his way to capturing the FedEx Cup.

McIlroy was able to accept one bad swing that cost him three shots, especially having missed the cut last week in the FedEx St. Jude Championship.

"Overall the rest of it was pretty good," he said. "I knew once I got here last weekend, I knew it was a golf course that was going to suit me better than last week."

Kadri leaves Avs, signs 7-year, \$49M deal with Flames

Associated Press

CALGARY, Alberta — Nazem Kadri is going to the Calgary Flames, leaving the Colorado Avalanche after helping them win the Stanley Cup for the first time since 2001.

Calgary announced a \$49 million, seven-year contract Thursday, meaning Kadri will count \$7 million against the salary cap through 2029. The move came shortly after the Flames traded forward Sean Monahan to the Montreal Canadiens to free up space under the salary cap.

Landing Kadri is the second big deal Calgary has made this offseason, coming about a month after the team acquired Jonathan Huberdeau, MacKenzie Weegar and a conditional first-round pick in a trade that sent Matthew Tkachuk to Florida.

The Pacific Division-winning Flames have had to restock their lineup after also losing Johnny Gaudreau in free agency this offseason.

Kadri, who turns 32 before opening night, had arguably his best NHL season in his third

year with Colorado. He set career highs with 59 assists and 87 points in 71 games, and that success continued into the playoffs.

The gritty center from London, Ontario, had seven goals and eight assists during the Avalanche's Cup run, sandwiched around a broken thumb he played through in the Final against Tampa Bay.

Kadri was considered the second-best NHL free agent available after Gaudreau, who signed for \$68.25 million with the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Judge delays Utah ban on transgender kids

SALT LAKE CITY — Transgender kids in Utah will be not be subjected to sports participation limits at the start of the upcoming school year after a judge delayed the implementation of a statewide ban passed earlier this year.

Judge Keith Kelly's decision Friday to put the law on hold until a legal challenge is resolved came after he recently rejected a request by Utah state attorneys to dismiss the case. Most

Utah schools' students head back to classes this month.

Attorneys representing the families of three transgender student-athletes filed the lawsuit challenging the ban last May, contending it violates the Utah Constitution's guarantees of equal rights and due process.

Similar cases are underway in states such as Idaho, West Virginia and Indiana.

The issue of whether transgender girls should be allowed to participate in female sports has become flashpoint across the U.S. with Republican lawmakers passing legislation to block them based on the premise it gives them an unfair competitive advantage. Transgender rights advocates counter that the rules aren't just about sports, but another way to demean and attack transgender youth.

Braves outfielder Ozuna facing more legal woes

ATLANTA — Atlanta Braves outfielder Marcell Ozuna was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol early Fri-

day near Atlanta.

It was the second arrest in as many years for Ozuna. He was arrested on May 29, 2021, on charges of aggravated assault by strangulation and battery after police officers said they witnessed him attacking his wife. Those charges were dropped after he completed a pretrial diversion program.

Ozuna also was charged with failure to maintain lane. He was released on \$1,830 bond.

Ozuna, 31, is in his third season in Atlanta. He is in the second year of a \$65 million, four-year contract.

In other baseball news:

■ Former major leaguer Mark DeRosa has been named Team USA manager for the 2023 World Baseball Classic, USA Baseball announced Friday.

DeRosa, 47, is currently a co-host of MLB Network's daily morning program, MLB Central.

The U.S. won the title in 2017, beating Puerto Rico 8-0 in the title game at Dodger Stadium.

Pujols leads Cardinals' rout of Rockies

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Albert Pujols launched a pinch-hit grand slam and drove in five runs, Adam Wainwright (10-9) pitched seven sharp innings and the St. Louis Cardinals routed the Colorado Rockies 13-0 Thursday for a three-game sweep.

The Elias Sports Bureau said the Cardinals were the first team in big league history to have a player at least 40 years old hit a grand slam and another at least 40 to pitch seven shutout innings in the same game. Pujols is 42, two years older than Wainwright.

The Rockies lost starting pitcher Antonio Senzatela (3-7) and right fielder Charlie Blackmon in the second inning to leg injuries.

The NL Central-leading Cardinals won their fourth in a row and sent Colorado to its fifth straight loss.

Pujols hit his 690th career home run, connecting off Austin Gomber and capping a five-run third that made it 10-0.

Wainwright (10-9) gave up three hits, two of them infield singles.

Braves 3, Mets 2: Max Fried (11-4) out-pitched Jacob deGrom, ever so slightly, in a matchup of aces and rookie Michael Harris II hit a go-ahead double in the seventh inning that sent Atlanta past visiting New York.

The Braves won three of four in the se-

ries and moved within 3½ games of the NL East-leading Mets. Atlanta has won nine of 10.

Astros 21, White Sox 5: Alex Bregman hit two homers and two doubles, driving in a career-high six runs and powering visiting Houston past Chicago.

Houston's run total tied for the second most in team history — the Astros scored 23 against Baltimore in 2019.

Brewers 5, Dodgers 3: Andrew McCutchen homered twice, Hunter Renfroe also went deep and host Milwaukee split a four-game series with Los Angeles.

McCutchen had three RBIs in his 19th career multi-homer game.

Blue Jays 9, Yankees 2: George Springer went 5-for-5, Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hit a three-run homer to cap a five-run second inning off Frankie Montas, and visiting Toronto beat slumping New York.

Coming off Josh Donaldson's walk-off grand slam to beat Tampa Bay on Wednesday night, New York lost for the 13th time in 17 games.

Diamondbacks 5, Giants 0: Zac Gallen struck out a career-high 12 in 7½ innings, extending his shutout streak to 21½ innings as Arizona won at San Francisco.

Gallen (9-2) limited the Giants to four hits and has won five straight decisions.

Rays 7, Royals 1: Luis Patiño pitched strongly into the sixth inning, Yandy Díaz

drove in three runs and host Tampa Bay beat Kansas City.

Patiño (1-1), recalled from Triple-A Durham to make his first big league appearance since July 23, gave up four hits in 5⅓ scoreless innings.

Cubs 3, Orioles 2: Willson Contreras hit two homers, Adrian Sampson pitched scoreless ball into the sixth inning and visiting Chicago beat Baltimore.

Sampson (1-3) allowed four hits with six strikeouts and two walks over 5⅓ innings, earning his first win since last Sept. 14 at Philadelphia.

Nationals 3, Padres 1: Nelson Cruz drew a bases-loaded walk from Josh Hader to bring in the go-ahead run in the ninth inning as Washington beat host San Diego.

Carl Edwards (5-3) pitched a perfect eighth and Kyle Finnegan worked the ninth for his sixth save.

Rangers 10, Athletics 3: Nathaniel Lowe hit a three-run homer, and Jonah Heim drove in two runs against his former team as Texas beat visiting Oakland.

Dane Dunning (3-6) allowed two runs in six innings for his second consecutive win.

Pirates 8, Red Sox 2: Bryan Reynolds hit two home runs, JT Brubaker pitched seven shutout innings and host Pittsburgh snapped a six-game skid.

Brubaker (3-10) allowed two hits, walked none and struck out seven.

Storm outlast Mystics take lead in best-of-three series

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Breanna Stewart had 23 points and 12 rebounds, Jewell Loyd scored 12 of her 16 points in the final five minutes and the fourth-seeded Seattle Storm beat the fifth-seeded Washington Mystics 86-83 on Thursday night.

Loyd didn't make her first field goal until the 4:52 mark of the fourth quarter, but she came up huge in the closing minutes.

Loyd missed a long three-pointer with 51 seconds left, but Tina Charles grabbed the offensive rebound, leading to Loyd's runner in the lane that gave Seattle an 82-81 lead. Washington turned it over and Loyd was fouled with 24.2 seconds left before making two free throws.

Elena Delle Donne was long on a three-point attempt for Washington, and Stewart sealed it with two free throws with 14.6 seconds left.

"The fact that Jewell just stuck with it, that

just shows that she's a vet," Stewart said. "We're not rookies anymore, we've been here for a while. We know what to do, and we just stick with the game play."

Gabby Williams added 12 points for Seattle, which will host Game 2 on Sunday. Sue Bird scored 10 points and became the fourth player in WNBA history with 100 career three-pointers in the playoffs.

Delle Donne made 11 of 17 shots and scored 26 points for Washington in her first playoff game since the 2019 WNBA Finals. Natasha Cloud and Ariel Atkins each added 16 points.

Sun 93, Wings 68: Jonquel Jones had 19 points and eight rebounds, Alyssa Thomas added 15 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists, and host Connecticut beat Dallas in Game 1 of their first-round series.

The third-seeded Sun pulled away in the third quarter, scoring 13 straight points to build a 64-45 lead. The sixth-seeded Wings went five-plus minutes without a field goal in

the third quarter, and the Sun closed the frame on a 17-5 run for an 18-point lead.

Game 2 of the best-of-three series is Sunday in Uncasville.

"We've been working the entire season to be here, so we don't want to squander this opportunity," Jones said of the home-court advantage. "We got to come up with that right intensity."

Dijonai Carrington added 13 points and DeWanna Bonner scored 10 of her 12 points in the first half for Connecticut.

Dallas scoring leader Arike Ogunbowale sat out because of an abdominal injury. The Wings got a boost when Satou Sabally played in her first game since July 12. Sabally scored 10 points in the first half, including a half-court heave to beat the first-quarter buzzer, but she went scoreless after halftime.

Allisha Gray led Dallas with 17 points. Tyasha Harris each added 13 points and Marina Mabrey had 11.