

UN inspectors near Ukraine nuke plant

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine—A team of U.N. inspectors made its way toward Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant Wednesday on a perilous, long-sought mission to safeguard the site and prevent a catastrophe from the fighting raging around it.

Underscoring the danger, Kyiv and Moscow again accused each other of shelling the area around the complex overnight. Zaporizhzhia is the biggest nuclear plant in Europe.

Fighting in early March caused a brief fire at its training complex, and in recent days, the plant was temporarily put offline because of damage to a transmission line, heightening fears of a radiation leak or a reactor meltdown. Officials have begun distributing anti-radiation iodine tablets to nearby residents.

The complex has been occupied by Russian forces but run by Ukrainian engineers since

the early days of the 6-month-old war. Ukraine has alleged Russia is using the plant as a shield, storing weapons there and launching attacks from around it, while Moscow has accused Ukraine of recklessly firing on the place.

For months, as the fighting has played out, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency has sought access to the plant for an unprecedented wartime mission, and world leaders have demanded that the U.N. watchdog be allowed to inspect it.

With the convoy of vans and U.N.-marked SUVs finally arriving in the afternoon in Zaporizhzhia city, still some 70 miles by road from the plant, IAEA chief and mission leader Rafael Grossi said the "real work" will start Thursday.

He underscored the challenges ahead.

"It's a mission that seeks to prevent a nucle-

ar accident and to preserve this important — the largest, the biggest — nuclear power plant in Europe," he said.

He said an initial tour will take a few days, after which "we will have a pretty good idea of what's going on." Grossi said he had received "explicit guarantees" from Russia that the 14 experts would be able to do their work.

Grossi said he is hoping the IAEA will be able to establish a "continued presence" at the plant in order to safeguard it against an accident.

The world watched the mission's progress with anxiety. European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell renewed a call to Russia to fully demilitarize the area around the plant.

"They are playing games. They are gambling with the nuclear security," Borrell said. "We cannot play war games in the neighborhood of a site like this."

DOJ cites effort to obstruct probe of Trump estate docs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department said classified documents were "likely concealed and removed" from a storage room at former President Donald Trump's Florida estate as part of an effort to obstruct the federal investigation into the discovery of the government records.

The FBI also seized boxes and containers holding more than 100 classified records during its Aug. 8 search of Mar-a-Lago and found classified documents stashed in Trump's office, according to a filing late Tuesday that lays out the most detailed chronology to date of months of strained interactions between Justice Department officials and Trump representatives over the discovery of government secrets.

The filing offers yet another indication of the sheer volume of classified records retrieved from Mar-a-Lago, in Palm Beach, Fla.

It shows how investigators conducting a criminal probe have focused not just on why the records were improperly stored there, but also on the question of whether the Trump team intentionally misled them about the continued, and unlawful, presence of the top secret documents.

The timeline laid out by the Justice Department made clear that the extraordinary search of Mar-a-Lago came only after other efforts to retrieve the records had failed and that it resulted from law enforcement suspicion that additional documents remained inside the property despite assurances by Trump representatives that a "diligent search" had accounted for all of the material.

It also included a picture of some of the seized documents with colored cover sheets indicating their classified status, perhaps as a way to rebut suggestions that whoever packed them or

handled them at Mar-a-Lago could have easily failed to appreciate their sensitive nature.

The photo shows the cover pages of a smattering of paperclip-bound classified documents — some marked as "TOP SECRET//SCI" with bright yellow borders and one marked as "SECRET//SCI" with a rust-colored border — along with whited-out pages, splayed out on a carpet at Mar-a-Lago. Beside them sits a cardboard box filled with gold-framed pictures, including a Time magazine cover.

Though it contains significant new details on the investigation, the Justice Department filing does not resolve two core questions that have driven public fascination with the investigation — why Trump held onto the documents after he left the White House and why he and his team resisted efforts to give them back. In fact, it suggests officials may not have received an answer.

During a June 3 visit to Mar-a-Lago by FBI and Justice Department officials, the document states, "Counsel for the former President offered no explanation as to why boxes of government records, including 38 documents with classification markings, remained at the Premises nearly five months after the production of the Fifteen Boxes and nearly one-and-a-half years after the end of the Administration."

That visit, which came weeks after the Justice Department issued a subpoena for the records, receives substantial attention in the document and appears to be a key investigative focus.

Though Trump insisted again Wednesday that he had declassified the documents at Mar-a-Lago, his lawyers did not suggest that during the visit and instead "handled them in a manner that suggested counsel believed that the documents were classified," the Justice Department said.

Sikh USMC recruits to appeal shave ruling

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

Three Sikh prospective U.S. Marine Corps recruits will appeal a federal ruling that denied their request to enter boot camp without shaving their beards or meeting other grooming requirements that the men say conflict with their religion.

Last week, a U.S. federal judge agreed with a Marine Corps assertion that allowing Milaap Singh Chahal, Jaskirat Singh and Aekash Singh to forgo the boot camp requirements would undermine the service's mission.

For now, the decision means the men will have to cut their hair, shave their beards, not wear a turban and disavow other tenets of their faith, if they want to enter boot camp. Attorneys for the men say that forces them to choose between their faith and serving their

country in violation of federal protections, such as the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. They plan to quickly appeal the decision as boot camp entrance exams for two of the men expire soon. Aekash Singh and Jaskirat Singh face a deadline of September and October, respectively, to enter boot camp. The deadline for Milaap Singh Chahal is in June 2023, according to court documents.

"We strongly disagree with this decision, and continue to believe the U.S. Marine Corps is doing a disservice to both our clients and itself in denying religious rights that are recognized by other branches of our military and under U.S. law," said Giselle Klapper, a senior attorney for the New York City-based Sikh Coalition, one of the groups representing the men.

In June, the men asked Washington, D.C. District Judge Richard Leon to find that the Marine Corps' denial of their religious accommodation requests for boot camp was discriminatory and violated their constitutional rights.

The action came as part of a lawsuit the men, along with an active-duty Marine Corps captain, filed in April alleging the service is unfairly and unevenly applying grooming standards for service members serving in combat zones or attending boot camp. Proceedings in the April lawsuit continue.

The plaintiffs say the denial of an accommodation violates their religious, speech, due process and equal protection rights. It also forces them to abandon the tenets of their faith if they want to succeed in their military careers or serve their country, the lawsuit

states. The Army and Air Force make accommodations for Sikh service members. The Navy has made changes for Jewish and Muslim sailors pending the final outcome of a lawsuit.

In denying the recruits' request, Leon said the men did not prove their constitutional right to practice their religion took priority over the public's defense interests. Marine Corps training standards that focus, among other goals, on stripping away a recruit's individuality to mold them into a team member are vital to the service's mission, Leon said in an Aug. 24 decision.

The plaintiff's request "would require the military to conduct basic training in a manner that it credibly alleges will 'compromise' the Marine Corps' 'national defense mission,'" Leon wrote in the decision.

Austin: Questions about Afghanistan War remain

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — One year after the last U.S. troops left Afghanistan, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin acknowledged Tuesday the questions some veterans face about the chaotic evacuation and a failed war.

"As our country looks back on two decades of combat in Afghanistan, I understand that many people have hard questions about the costs of the war and what their sacrifices meant," Austin said in a letter to the armed forces. "These are important discussions, and I hope we will keep having them with thoughtfulness and respect."

The evacuation mission from Kabul ended Aug. 30, 2021, after the U.S. and its allies flew about 124,000 Afghans and Americans out of the country but left behind thousands of Afghans and Amer-

ican civilians who wanted to escape the victorious Taliban. Thirteen U.S. service members and at least 170 Afghans were killed in a suicide bombing at Kabul airport believed to be carried out by an offshoot of Islamic State four days before the mission was completed. Over the past year, the Taliban have imposed a stern regime that has suppressed the rights of women and ethnic minorities.

The return of the government that harbored al-Qaida terrorists who plotted the 9/11 attacks was a severe blow to the morale of U.S. veterans, Austin acknowledged.

"Last year, I said that although the Afghanistan war has ended, our gratitude ... never will," he said. "Today, I renew that pledge. To every man and woman who served in Afghanistan: This country will never forget what you did and what you gave."

Taiwan fires warning shots at Chinese drone, tensions rise

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

Taiwanese soldiers fired warning shots at a Chinese drone this week as Taiwan's president announced the military would take "necessary and powerful countermeasures" to protect the island's airspace.

The Taiwanese military on Tuesday spotted three drones operating near Kinmen, a series of Taiwan-governed islets just off China's coast. The drones turned back after soldiers threw warning flares, according to a Tuesday statement from Taiwan's official Military News Agency.

Shortly after, a single drone returned and the soldiers responded by firing warning shots. The drone once again returned to Chinese airspace, according to the report. The statement didn't clarify the type of weapon used.

The event marked the first use

of warning shots during a time of heightened tensions between China and Taiwan, according to a Wednesday report from Reuters.

The warning shots followed remarks from Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, who said the island would not back down in the face of Chinese intimidation, according to a separate Tuesday statement from the Military News Agency.

"The more provocative the enemy is, the calmer we must be," Tsai said in the statement. "We will not let the other side have improper excuses to create conflict, we will not provoke a war, we will restrain ourselves, but it does not mean that we will not fight back."

China in early August held a weeklong series of military exercises that effectively surrounded Taiwan, a response to U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei on Aug. 3.

US clears new COVID boosters for variants

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States on Wednesday authorized its first update to COVID-19 vaccines with booster doses that target the most common current omicron strain. Shots could begin within days.

The move by the Food and Drug Administration tweaks the recipe of shots made by Pfizer and rival Moderna that already have saved millions of lives. The hope is that the modified boosters will blunt yet another winter surge.

“You’ll see me at the front of the line,” FDA vaccine chief Dr. Peter Marks told The Associated Press shortly before his agency cleared the new doses.

Until now, COVID-19 vaccines have targeted the original coronavirus strain, even as wildly different mutants emerged. The new U.S. boosters are combination, or “bivalent,” shots. They contain half that original vaccine recipe and half protection against the newest omicron versions, called BA.4 and BA.5, that are consi-

dered the most contagious yet.

The combination aims to increase cross-protection against multiple variants.

“It really provides the broadest opportunity for protection,” Pfizer vaccine chief Annaliesa Anderson told the AP.

The updated boosters are only for people who have already had their primary vaccinations, using the original vaccines. Doses made by Pfizer and its partner BioNTech are for anyone 12 and older while Moderna’s updated shots are for

adults — if it has been at least two months since their last primary vaccination or their latest booster. They’re not to be used for initial vaccinations.

There’s one more step before a fall booster campaign begins: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention must recommend who should get the additional shot. An influential CDC advisory panel will debate the evidence Thursday — including whether people at high risk from COVID-19 should go first.

US life expectancy plunged again in 2021

Associated Press

NEW YORK — U.S. life expectancy dropped for the second consecutive year in 2021, falling by nearly a year from 2020, according to a government report being released Wednesday.

In the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the estimated American lifespan has shortened by nearly three years. The last comparable decrease happened in the early 1940s, during the height of World War II.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention officials blamed COVID-19 for about half the decline in 2021, a year when vaccinations became widely available but new coronavirus variants caused waves of hospitalizations and deaths. Other contributors to the decline are longstanding problems: drug overdoses, heart disease, suicide and chronic liver disease.

“It’s a dismal situation. It was bad before and it’s gotten worse,” said Samuel Preston,

a University of Pennsylvania demographer.

Life expectancy is an estimate of the average number of years a baby born in a given year might expect to live, given death rates at that time. It is “the most fundamental indicator of population health in this country,” said Robert Hummer, a University of North Carolina researcher focused on population health patterns.

U.S. life expectancy rose for decades, but progress stalled before the pandemic.

It was 78 years, 10 months in 2019. In 2020, it dropped to 77 years. Last year, it fell to about 76 years, 1 month.

The last time it was that low was in 1996.

Declines during the pandemic were worse for some racial groups, and some gaps widened. For example, life expectancy for American Indian and Alaskan Native people saw a decline of more than 6½ years since the pandemic began, and is at 65 years. In the same span, life expectancy for Asian

Americans dropped by about two years, and stands at 83½.

Experts have said there are many possible reasons for such differences, including lack of access to quality health care, lower vaccination rates, and a greater share of the population in lower-paying jobs that required them to keep working when the pandemic was at its worst.

The new report is based on provisional data. Life expectancy estimates can change with the addition of more data and further analysis. For example, the CDC initially said life expectancy in 2020 declined by about 1 year, 6 months. But after more death reports and analysis came in, it ended up being about 1 year, 10 months.

But it’s likely the declines in 2020 and 2021 will stand as the first two consecutive years of declining life expectancy in the United States since the early 1960s, CDC officials said.

Indiana man arrested in shooting that killed Dutch soldier

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Indianapolis police arrested a man Tuesday in connection with a shooting over the weekend that left one Dutch soldier dead and two wounded.

Shamar Duncan, 22, of Indianapolis, was arrested on a preliminary charge of murder, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department said.

Duncan was being held in jail and will not be eligible for release from jail while the Marion County Prosecutor’s Office reviews the case, police said.

A 26-year-old member of the Dutch Commando Corps, identified by U.S. authorities as Simmie Poetsema, died of his injuries “surrounded by family and colleagues,” the Dutch Defense Ministry said in a statement

Monday.

The shooting occurred Saturday in downtown Indianapolis.

“IMPD detectives want to thank members of the community for their cooperation during this investigation,” IMPD spokesman Shane Foley said. “During the investigation, multiple individuals spoke with detectives and provided detectives with video connected to

the investigation.”

Poetsema and the two other soldiers were shot after what Indianapolis police believe was a disturbance outside the hotel where they were staying about 3:30 a.m. Saturday near several downtown bars and nightclubs, authorities said. The soldiers were in the United States for training exercises at a southern Indiana military base.

Indiana clinics sue to block abortion ban

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana abortion clinic operators filed a lawsuit Tuesday seeking to block the state's ban on abortions before it takes effect in about two weeks.

The lawsuit filed in a Monroe County court claims the ban, which includes limited exceptions, “strips away the fundamental rights of people seeking abortion care” in violation of the Indiana Constitution.

It asks for a judge to block the law from going into effect on Sept. 15, arguing the ban “will infringe on Hoosiers’ right to privacy, violate Indiana’s guarantee of equal privileges and immunities, and includes unconstitutionally vague language.”

Indiana’s Republican-dominated Legislature approved the tighter abortion restrictions during a two-week special legislative session that ended Aug. 5, making it the first state to do so since the U.S. Supreme Court eliminated federal abortion

protections for abortions by overturning *Roe v. Wade* in June.

The Indiana law includes exceptions, allowing abortions 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.

The legal question of whether the Indiana Constitution protects abortion rights is unclear, said Ken Falk, legal director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana, which filed the lawsuit.

Falk pointed to a 2004 state appeals court decision that said privacy was a core value under the state constitution that extended to all residents, including women seeking an abortion.

But the Indiana Supreme Court later upheld a law mandating an 18-hour waiting period before a woman could undergo an abortion while not deciding whether the state constitution included a right to abortion.

The leader of Indiana’s most prominent anti-abortion group argued the state constitution protects life as among the “inalienable rights.”

“We are confident the state will prevail and pray the new law is not blocked from going into effect on September 15, knowing that any delay will mean the indiscriminate killing of unborn children will continue at abortion clinics across Indiana,” Indiana Right to Life CEO Mike Fichter said in a statement.

Jennifer Drobac, an Indiana University law professor, said she believed the argument that the state constitution prohibits lawmakers from stripping legal privileges from some residents that are available to others is a strong argument against the abortion ban.

“When you look at people who become pregnant, their medical care is being regulated in a way that the medical care of people who do not become pregnant is not being regulated,” she said.

Gorbachev mourned as rare world leader

Associated Press

BERLIN — Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union and for many the man who restored democracy to then-communist-ruled European nations, was saluted Wednesday as a rare leader who changed the world and for a time brought hope for peace among the superpowers.

But the man who died Tuesday at 91 was also reviled by many countrymen who blamed him for the 1991 implosion of the Soviet Union and its diminution as a superpower. The Russian nation that emerged from its Soviet past shrank in size as 15 new nations were created.

The loss of pride and power also eventually led to the rise of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has tried for the past quarter-century to restore Russia to its former glory.

President Joe Biden praised Gorbachev for being open to

democratic changes. Gorbachev won the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize for his role in ending the Cold War.

“After decades of brutal political repression, he embraced democratic reforms. He believed in glasnost and perestroika — openness and restructuring — not as mere slogans, but as the path forward for the people of the Soviet Union after so many years of isolation and deprivation,” Biden said.

Biden added, “these were the acts of a rare leader — one with the imagination to see that a different future was possible and the courage to risk his entire career to achieve it. The result was a safer world and greater freedom for millions of people.”

Although Gorbachev was widely feted abroad, he was a pariah at home. Putin acknowledged that Gorbachev had “a deep impact on the course of world history.”

NASA aims for Saturday launch of new moon rocket

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — NASA will try again Saturday to launch its new moon rocket on a test flight, after engine trouble halted the first countdown this week.

Managers said Tuesday they are changing fueling procedures to deal with the issue. A bad sensor also could be to blame for Monday’s scrapped launch, they noted.

The 322-foot rocket — the most powerful ever built by NASA — remains on its pad at Kennedy Space Center with an empty crew capsule on top.

The Space Launch System rocket will attempt to send the capsule around the moon and back. No one will be aboard, just three test dummies.

If successful, it will be the first capsule to fly to the moon since NASA’s Apollo program 50 years ago.

Proceeding toward a Saturday launch will provide addi-

tional insight, even if the problem reappears and the countdown is halted again, said NASA’s rocket program manager, John Honeycutt. That’s better “than us sitting around scratching our heads, was it good enough or not.”

“Based on what I’ve heard from the technical team today, what we need to do is continue to pore over the data and polish up our plan on putting the flight rationale together,” he said.

During Monday’s launch attempt, readings showed that one of the four main engines in the rocket’s core stage could not be chilled sufficiently prior to the planned ignition at liftoff. It appeared to be as much as 40 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than the desired minus-420 degrees Fahrenheit, the temperature of the hydrogen fuel, according to Honeycutt. The three other engines came up just a little short.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Female gator over 10 feet sets state record

MS JACKSON — Mississippi hunters set a new state record after killing a female alligator that measures more than 10 feet long, state wildlife officials said.

A pair of hunters killed the gator on the Pearl River near the Ross Barnett Reservoir northeast of Jackson, the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks said in a news release. It measured 10 feet, 2 inches long from head to tail, making it the longest female alligator harvested on record in the state.

The catch would have tied a 1984 world record, but that record fell last year after a female alligator taken in Florida measured 10 feet, 6.75 inches, said Ricky Flynt, the department's alligator program coordinator.

Sheriff: Woman killed by nearby target practice

SC GAFFNEY — A sheriff in rural South Carolina said a 42-year-old woman is dead after being hit by a stray bullet as her neighbor practiced firing a gun in his yard.

The neighbor was charged with involuntary manslaughter and shooting under the influence, Cherokee County Sheriff Steve Muller said in a news release.

Kesha Luwan Lucille Tate, 42, was fatally shot after hearing gunfire outside her home in rural northern South Carolina, news outlets reported. Family members told authorities Tate was looking out her kitchen window when a bullet struck

her in the chest, county Coronor Dennis Fowler said in a statement.

The sheriff's office said Tate's neighbor was "target practicing" in a neighborhood of about 40 homes.

Skydiver dies after crashing into pond

WI STURTEVANT — A skydiver practicing for national competition died after crashing into a pond in Racine County, sheriff's officials said.

The 36-year-old man from Tennessee experienced a hard landing in the water next to the Skydive Midwest skydiving center, according to officials.

The sheriff's office said the man was not conscious when he was pulled from the pond by other skydivers. Deputies and members of the Union Grove-Yorkville Fire & Rescue attempted life-saving measures, but the man never regained consciousness.

Officials said the man was a professional practicing for the U.S. Parachute Association National Championships set to begin Sept. 3 at the skydiving center.

Man charged with hiding camera in restroom

FL SANIBEL — A New Hampshire man faces charges in southwest Florida after disguising a camera as a fire alarm and hiding it in a public restroom near the beach, police said.

The 58-year-old man was arrested in Chicago on Aug. 19 and is awaiting extradition back to Lee County, Fla., to face video

voyeurism and other charges, according to a Sanibel police news release.

Sanibel public works employees were at a family restroom at Bowman's Beach Park on July 28 when they noticed a new fire alarm device on the wall, police said. After verifying the device had not been installed by city staff, the workers called Sanibel police.

Officers verified the device was not a fire alarm and discovered it contained a video camera.

1 dead after seniors given dishwashing liquid

CA SAN MATEO — A resident of a San Francisco Bay Area senior citizens home died after being mistakenly served dishwashing liquid as drinking juice, the home said.

Three residents of Atria Park Senior Living Facility in San Mateo, about 20 miles south of San Francisco, were taken to the hospital after they were served the drink, KRON-TV reported.

The facility has suspended employees involved while it investigates, and the facility is also cooperating with authorities, the statement said.

Airport tests drone detection technology

CA LOS ANGELES — Drone detection technology is being tested at Los Angeles International Airport, federal and local officials said.

The technology detects, tracks and identifies drones entering restricted airspace around LAX, which is the sec-

ond U.S. airport to test the system, said Keith Jeffries, the Transportation Security Administration security director at the airport. Miami International Airport was selected in 2021 as the first test site.

Last year there were 50 reports of drone sightings, and so far this year there have been 38 sightings within a 10-mile radius of LAX, said Justin Erbacci, chief executive officer of Los Angeles World Airports, the city's airports department.

Drones pose a clear and present danger to airport security, Erbacci said.

Island lighthouse marks turning 150 years old

GA ST. SIMONS ISLAND — A beloved lighthouse on the Georgia coast will be illuminated like a giant birthday candle to celebrate turning 150 years old.

The lighthouse on St. Simons Island opened in 1872 to replace an earlier version destroyed during the Civil War. Standing 104 feet tall and capable of projecting its light beam 23 miles out to sea, the coastal landmark is still used to help ships navigate St. Simons Sound.

The Coastal Georgia Historical Society plans to mark the lighthouse's big 150th anniversary over Labor Day weekend by having an animated light show projected on the outside of the 104-foot tower.

The show will tell the history of the lighthouse and its keepers while also highlighting the coastal region's heritage and culture, said Sandy White, education director for the historical society.

— From wire reports



STARS AND STRIPES

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.

**Reporting
World, National
and Military News**

Will Sanders leave SWAC for big-time?

Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. — Sitting on a metal folding chair just beyond the end zone of Mississippi State's practice field, Deion Sanders is alone watching the Bulldogs scrimmage on a muggy spring day.

Coach Prime snagged his new offensive coordinator for Jackson State from Bulldogs coach Mike Leach's staff this offseason. On this day, Sanders had made the 90-minute drive to Starkville with a few other members of his staff to study how Mississippi State operates.

"I want to be great," Sanders said the next day, back on campus at JSU. "So when I go to places like I went yesterday, that's for me, too. That's just not for my coaches. I want to see how this is run. I want to see how can I improve practice. I want to see what can I do different or where am I falling short, and I challenged myself to go to another level."

Last season, Sanders' second as Jackson State head coach, the Tigers went 11-2 and won the Southwestern Athletic Conference. Then Sanders signed two Power Five-level recruits to the HBCU, an unprecedented recruiting feat.

Heading into the 2022 season, Sanders has emerged as maybe the most fascinating potential head-coaching candidate in college football.

Adding to the intrigue is the state of Sanders' old school. Once-mighty Florida State began Year 3 under coach Mike Norvell trying to snap a string of four straight losing seasons.

"I don't look down the street that far. I dominate the moment, man," Sanders told AP.

Recent hiring trends in major college football are working against Sanders jumping straight from Jackson State to a Power Five conference school.

Just going from the second-tier of Division I football, where Jackson State competes, to the Bowl Subdivision is an increasingly rare move. Making the jump from an HBCU to FBS is even rarer and going from the SWAC to a Power Five school is unheard of.

Then again, Sanders, 55, has always been one of one.

Prime Time made cornerback a glamour position during his time at Florida State in the late 1980s. He played 10 years of Major

League Baseball while simultaneously being one of the best players in the NFL throughout the 1990s.

"You don't get to become considered the best, running with the rest," Sanders said.

Sanders has discussed job openings with officials from at least three Power Five schools, including Florida State when it hired Norvell in 2019.

"Killed it. Nailed all the interviews," Sanders said.

He impressed at least one athletic director enough that a preliminary conversation, done as a favor to Sanders' then-agent, led to a second, more formal interview.

Arkansas AD Hunter Yurachek said he went into his initial meeting with Sanders back in 2019 with no expectations.

"I was blown away," Yurachek told AP. "He was very well prepared. He had done research on our program. He had done research on recruits. He could talk about the SEC."

At that time, Sanders was still coaching at a Dallas-area high school that he helped launch. His lack of experience was too much to overcome.

Past champs stumble in first round of US Open

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The welcome and support for Venus Williams in Arthur Ashe Stadium on Tuesday afternoon were not the same as they were for her sister, Serena, a night earlier. Nor was the result.

Venus, who turned 42 in June, has not made any pronouncements about her future in tennis, unlike her younger sibling, and while she has been successful and influential, too — a seven-time Grand Slam champion; a Black woman in a predominantly white sport — the fanfare and attention are not the same.

Playing in front of thousands of empty blue seats in an arena quite silent at the start, although growing louder later, Venus bowed out in the first round of the U.S. Open for the second consecutive appearance, losing 6-1, 7-6 (5) to Alison Van Uytvanck.

"She means so much to female tennis. Tennis, in general," Van Uytvanck said. "She's a legend."

This was the 23rd trip to Flushing Meadows for Venus, who made it to the final in 1997 as a teen then won the trophy in 2000 and 2001, and her record 91st time partici-

pating in a major tournament.

Venus had never lost in the opening round at the U.S. Open until 2020, then was absent last year.

Asked what keeps her motivated these days, she answered: "Three letters: W-I-N. That's it. Very simple."

At night, Emma Raducanu became only the third defending U.S. Open champion to lose in the first round, eliminated by Alizé Cornet 6-3, 6-3. And yet another past champ bowed out in straight sets when Naomi Osaka, who won two of her four Grand Slam titles in New York, was eliminated by Australian Open runner-up Danielle Collins 7-6 (5), 6-3 in a match that ended after midnight.

Osaka, a former No. 1, also lost in the first round of the French Open this year and has slid to 44th in the rankings. She had been 3-0 head-to-head against Collins, but this fun-to-watch, hard-hitting matchup went the other way.

"When you lose to somebody three times," said the 19th-seeded Collins, who has struggled with injuries this season, "you have nothing to lose, so I tried to go for it and

hope for the best."

Raducanu, who was 18 and ranked 150th when she won the title as a qualifier a year ago, was bothered by hand blisters — she took a medical timeout for treatment after the first set — and was outplayed by Cornet, a 32-year-old from France who also upset No. 1 Iga Swiatek at Wimbledon.

"Obviously really disappointing. Really sad to leave here. It's probably my favorite tournament. But also, I mean, in a way, (I'm) happy, because it's a clean slate," Raducanu said. "I'm going to drop down the rankings. (Will) climb my way back up."

Also playing under the lights was 22-time major champion Rafael Nadal, who returned to the U.S. Open for the first time since 2019 and beat 21-year-old Rinky Hijikata 4-6, 6-2, 6-3, 6-3. Nadal did not show any serious lingering issues with the torn abdominal muscle that forced him out of Wimbledon in July.

Venus was off the tour in singles entirely from August 2021 until less than a month ago and is now 0-4 since her return. Her ranking — which 20 years ago was No. 1 — is 1,504th this week.

Amid turmoil, Irish independence safe

Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Notre Dame is as confident as ever that the treasured football independence of the Fighting Irish is safe despite the maelstrom that is college sports.

Notre Dame athletic director Jack Swarbrick told The Associated Press on Tuesday that the program's position is even stronger now than when he stepped into the job in 2008, bolstered by success on the field and investments in the program.

"I think it's probably less threatened than it was back then," Swarbrick said. "Part of that may be the natural growth and my understanding of the value of independence. But part of it is, I think we've done a number of things to position us to be better and to compete effectively."

The fifth-ranked Fighting Irish begin their first full season under new coach Marcus Freeman on Saturday night at No. 2 Ohio State. Notre Dame

is coming off its fifth straight double-digit victory season, a school record, and has had just one losing season since 2010, Brian Kelly's first as coach.

When Swarbrick arrived losing seasons had become fairly routine in South Bend. From 1997-2009, the Fighting Irish had more seasons under .500 (four) than seasons with at least 10 victories (two).

"We had some lean years back then and ... we've only had one in the past 10 years," Swarbrick said.

The national championship remains elusive, but Fighting Irish football is healthier than it's been since Lou Holtz led Notre Dame to its last title in 1988. Since the 2012 season, Notre Dame has made the College Football Playoff twice and played in a BCS championship game.

"That's at the core of whether you're threatened or not. If we can't compete at that level, you got a choice to make," Swarbrick said.

As conference realignment brings consolidation of the biggest brands and bluest bloods in college football — USC and UCLA to the Big Ten, Texas and Oklahoma to the Southeastern Conference — Notre Dame remains the most valuable free agent on the market.

Swarbrick said representatives of several conferences reached out to Notre Dame over the last six months to gauge the school's interest in a membership that would include football. He said Notre Dame has not had discussions with anyone about joining a conference.

Swarbrick has said that as long as Notre Dame has a strong television partner to broadcast home football games, reasonable access to the CFP and a conference home for its Olympic sports, there is no pressure to change.

Most of Notre Dame's teams compete in the Atlantic Coast Conference. That membership includes a football scheduling arrangement requiring Notre

Dame to play five ACC teams per season, plus a commitment by the Irish to join the ACC if they were to give up independence. That contract runs concurrent with the ACC's media rights deal with ESPN and expires in 2036.

Before joining the ACC, most Notre Dame teams competed in the Big East.

"My experience with Notre Dame is they value independence. It's who they are. And I think they will protect that at virtually any cost," former Big East Commissioner Mike Tranghese said.

Tranghese, who was part of the commissioner group that ran the BCS, said there was never any desire among the conferences to create a post-season structure that would force Notre Dame into a conference. And he doubts there would be now.

"What's the incentive? Why would you force Notre Dame to go join somebody else and make them stronger?" Tranghese said.

Backyard Brawl gets a revival for Pitt, West Virginia

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Pat Bostick's official title at the University of Pittsburgh is "Senior Associate Athletic Director of Development, Major Gifts."

There's an unofficial title that pops up fairly regularly for the quarterback who helped the Panthers pull off one of college football's greatest upsets of the 21st century.

"I joke sometimes people think when they see my face they think of a score before they think of my name," Bostick said with a laugh.

That's because across a significant stretch of the Appalachians and western Pennsylvania foothills, "13-9" lives on forever.

Pitt's stunner over then-No. 2 West Virginia in 2007 deflated a stadium, derailed a season, and redefined a rivalry, one that will be renewed for the first time in more than 10 years on Thursday night when the 17th-ranked Panthers host the Mountaineers in the return of "The Backyard Brawl."

Well over a decade removed from that cold December night in Morgantown, W.Va., the details remain fresh in Bostick's mind.

The renewal of the series after both teams left the Big East for more lucrative pastures — Pitt to the Atlantic Coast Conference, the Mountaineers to the Big 12 — has already produced a rare home sellout for the Panthers. It also required Bostick and others on both sides to spend the run-up serving as history professors of sorts. After all, the players who will participate in the 105th edition of the Brawl were in elementary school the last time Pitt and West Virginia shared the same field, a 21-20 victory by the Mountaineers in 2011.

"I absolutely do feel a responsibility to share," Bostick said. "It's the same responsibility that the seniors had when I was a freshman. I'm also going to encourage them to enjoy it."

Maybe it's because, as former Panthers running back LeSean McCoy put it, "nothing else matches up" to the Brawl.

"The rivalry is something special," said McCoy, who ran for 148 yards during the 2007 win and later embarked on a 12-year NFL career.

Former WVU linebacker Gary Stills tried to impart the significance of the Brawl to his son Dante, who admittedly didn't particularly grasp it while growing up.

He does now. Maybe because the Mountaineers' defensive lineman will find himself thrust into it for the first time on Thursday night.

"I wasn't, like, locked in, because I'm a kid. I'm just playing around," Dante Stills said. "I remember just people talking about it growing up as a kid: 'We don't like Pitt, we don't like Pitt.' But I'm a kid, so I'm like, 'Why don't you like Pitt?' But now, I obviously know."

Snell helps Padres squeak past Giants

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Blake Snell allowed four hits over six shutout innings and Trent Grisham hit a two-run homer to lead the San Diego Padres to a 4-3 victory over the San Francisco Giants on Tuesday night.

Snell (6-7) struck out eight and rebounded from a shaky start against Cleveland his last time out, when he permitted a season-high six runs. In three starts against San Francisco this season, the left-hander has held the Giants to two runs and struck out 27 over 17⅓ innings.

San Diego extended its lead for the National League's third wild card to three games over Milwaukee, and it pulled within a half-game of Philadelphia for the second spot.

"I think it's just continuing that run we're on right now," said designated hitter Josh Bell, who drove in the Padres' first run with a single in the

sixth. "Knowing our starters are going to go six, seven innings like they normally do, we're going to be in a good place at the end of the day."

The floundering Giants committed four errors and lost their sixth in a row. They entered this series hoping to make up ground on San Diego, but instead have fallen 9½ games back for the NL's final postseason spot.

Dodgers 4, Mets 3: Gavin Lux and visiting Los Angeles quieted New York in a matchup of NL division leaders.

Yankees 7, Angels 4: Aaron Judge hit a three-run shot for his 51st homer of the season, and New York snapped its three-game losing streak with a victory at Los Angeles.

Guardians 5, Orioles 1: Cal Quantrill combined with three relievers for a one-hitter, rookie center fielder Will Benson made a pair of terrific leaping catches at the wall and AL Central-leading Cleveland beat

visiting Baltimore.

Reds 5, Cardinals 1: Austin Romine hit a two-run homer as host Cincinnati roughed up Dakota Hudson and ended St. Louis' three-game winning streak.

Rockies 3, Braves 2: C.J. Cron drove in two runs, José Ureña outpitched Max Fried, and visiting Colorado handed Atlanta its third straight loss.

Twins 10, Red Sox 5: Nick Gordon hit his first-ever grand slam and drove in a career-high six runs as host Minnesota beat Boston.

Blue Jays 5, Cubs 3: Teoscar Hernández hit a three-run homer and Vladimir Guerrero Jr. also went deep as host Toronto beat Chicago.

Mariners 9, Tigers 3: Cal Raleigh sparked a six-run third with a solo homer and capped it with a sacrifice fly as Seattle won at Detroit.

Astros 4, Rangers 2: Jose Altuve homered to back Framber Valdez, who won his sixth

straight decision as Houston won at Texas.

Diamondbacks 12, Phillies 3: Zac Gallen stretched his scoreless streak to 34⅓ innings, and Jake McCarthy homered and had five RBIs as host Arizona routed Philadelphia.

Rays 7, Marlins 2: José Siri homered, doubled and drove in two runs as Tampa Bay won at Miami after All-Star pitcher Shane Bieber was scratched due to injury.

Pirates 4, Brewers 2: Oneil Cruz went 2-for-4 with two RBIs and scored the go-ahead run in the eighth inning as Pittsburgh won at Milwaukee.

Royals 9, White Sox 7: Rookie Nick Pratto hit two home runs to highlight a career-high four-hit performance and Kansas City sent host Chicago to its fifth straight loss.

Athletics 10, Nationals 6: Sean Murphy hit a grand slam in the fifth inning and Oakland won at Washington.

Former 1st-rounders Rosen, Leatherwood among cuts

Associated Press

The Las Vegas Raiders waived offensive lineman Alex Leatherwood on Tuesday, the third of the club's three first-round draft picks in 2020-21 to get dumped before the end of his second season.

NFL teams had to cut their rosters to 53 players for the regular season by the Tuesday deadline, although some moves were procedural steps before bringing those players back.

Most of the openings will be when players on the current roster are moved to injured reserve with the possibility of returning this season. Those players have to be on the 53-man roster first.

Leatherwood was the 17th overall pick by the Raiders last year, and started all 17 games.

Receiver Henry Ruggs III and cornerback Damon Arnette were drafted 12th and 19th overall, respectively, in 2020 before getting cut after off-field incidents last year.

Mike Mayock was general manager and Jon Gruden was the coach for those picks. They have since been replaced by GM Dave Ziegler and coach Josh McDaniels.

Leatherwood struggled to find consistency, as he was moved from tackle to guard during his rookie season under the previous coaching staff. McDaniels gave Leatherwood another chance at right tackle this offseason, but the former Alabama lineman seemingly regressed behind Brandon Parker and rookie Thayer Munford during training camp.

The Cleveland Browns released quarterback Josh Rosen, a 2018 first-rounder by Arizona who was brought in as an extra arm in training camp while the team navigated Deshaun Watson's situation.

Rosen was a possible option as the backup while Jacoby Brissett starts during Watson's 11-game NFL suspension. However, Joshua Dobbs had an excellent training camp and preseason, making Rosen expendable.

The 25-year-old Rosen hasn't lived up to expectations since being taken 10th overall by the Cardinals four years ago. He's 3-13 as a starter in his NFL career, which also includes stops with Arizona, Miami, Tampa Bay, San Francisco and Atlanta.

The Falcons protected re-

ceiver Jared Bernhardt on their initial roster. The undrafted former college lacrosse player at Maryland gave his current position a try after helping Ferris State win the Division II championship last season as an option quarterback.

Carolina placed Zane Gonzalez (groin) on season-ending injured reserve, leaving the team temporarily without a kicker on their 53-man roster. The Panthers have already worked out Brian Johnson and Eddy Pineiro, and have more tryouts coming.

There were also a handful of trades on cutdown day, including Philadelphia acquiring defensive back C.J. Gardner-Johnson from New Orleans in a deal that otherwise involved draft picks.