

## IG: Recruiters skipped steps in screenings

**MATTHEW ADAMS**  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Military recruiters sometimes skipped steps to screen out enlistees affiliated with criminal gangs or extremist groups, according to a Pentagon audit published Monday.

The inspector general for the Defense Department investigated the military's recruiting process to see whether service branches were applying policies ordered by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in 2021 to stamp out extremism in the ranks. The required screening includes interviews, questionnaires and forms, tattoo reviews and background checks.

The report comes as the Pentagon continues to wrestle with how to handle extremism within its ranks.

Austin has made the issue a priority within the Defense Department, including efforts to train troops to recognize and report indications of extremism among their fellow service members.

The Pentagon's focus on extremism came largely in the wake of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol by supporters of then-President Donald Trump. The attack included a handful of service members and dozens of veterans among the hundreds in the mob that sought to stop Congress from certifying President Joe Biden's election victory.

Pentagon officials have said they know extremist groups, especially far-right and anti-government organizations, seek out military veterans and push their young followers to enlist so they

can receive military training.

The IG report was conducted by selecting a random statistical sample of applicants from each service from July 1, 2021, through Jan. 31, 2022. The audit found 53 out of 129 applicants, or 41%, weren't interviewed about their ties to extremist groups or gangs. Recruiters did not administer screening forms in 40% of cases and did not complete required tattoo screenings in nine percent of applicants.

"We recommend that the secretaries of the military departments issue a policy memorandum to recruiting personnel reiterating the importance of completing all required steps for screening applicants for extremist or criminal gang associations," the report said.

The audit also found Air Force recruiters incorrectly en-

tered data on 34% of applicants. The recruiters entered information claiming applicants disclosed extremist or gang associations when they did not make such disclosures.

"Air Force recruiters stated that they mistakenly checked boxes in the system indicating applicant extremist or gang associations," the report said. "Additionally, the system did not automatically stop the application process because of a lack of system controls."

The report includes a letter dated Aug. 3 from Richard Vasquez, assistant inspector general for audit readiness and global operations, that states the secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force have 90 days to submit a response to the office concerning specific issues or completed recommendations.

## Ukraine: Rescue workers targeted with 'double tap'

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian officials on Tuesday accused the Kremlin's forces of targeting rescue workers as the death toll from two Russian missile strikes that slammed into residential buildings in the downtown area of a Ukrainian city climbed to seven.

The dead in the Monday evening strikes in the city of Pokrovsk were five civilians, one rescuer and one soldier, Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said. Dozens more were wounded, most of them police officers, emergency workers and soldiers who had rushed to the scene to assist residents.

The Russian missiles slammed into the center of Pokrovsk, which is in the eastern Donetsk region that is partially occupied by Russia. Emergency crews were still removing rubble at the scene on Tuesday. The Iskander missiles, which have an advanced guidance system that increases their accuracy, hit within 40 minutes of each other, ac-

cording to Kyrylenko.

Russia has since the start of the war aimed artillery and missiles at the exact same spot it struck around 30 minutes earlier, often hitting emergency workers who had deployed at the scene.

It's a tactic, called a "double tap" in military jargon, that the Russians also used in Syria's civil war.

"All of (the police) were there because they were needed, putting their efforts into rescuing people after the first strike," Ivan Vyhivskiy, chief of Ukraine's National Police, said Tuesday. "They knew that under the rubble were the injured — they needed to react, to dig, to retrieve, to save. And the enemy deliberately struck the second time."

Russia's Ministry of Defense claimed it hit a Ukrainian army command post in Pokrovsk. Neither side's claims could be independently verified.

Among those injured was Volodymyr Ni-

kulin, a policeman originally from the now Russian-occupied port city of Mariupol.

Arriving at the scene after the first missile strike, Nikulin was wounded in the second strike when missile shrapnel pierced his left lung and left hand.

"Today is not my happy day because Russian criminals committed another awful crime in Pokrovsk," he said in a video he sent to The Associated Press from a hospital ward in the city.

In the video, he is seen lying on a bed shirtless, dried blood on his side and covering his left hand. He moves with pain to show his injuries.

Pointing his camera to show other injured security forces in the ward, he says: "Look, these are Ukrainian heroes who helped (injured) people."

Like others, Nikulin was taken to a hospital in the city. He was later transported to a hospital in Dnipro, where he was to undergo surgery to remove the shrapnel.

# Family of girl, 14, found at Marine base seeks answers

*Los Angeles Times*

More than two months after a missing 14-year-old girl was found in a Camp Pendleton barracks, her family says they've received few details about the investigation or those who brought the girl onto the military base.

Casaundra Perez, the girl's aunt, alleges her niece was raped by a Marine on the base north of San Diego and said military police at the base questioned her niece without a guardian present before notifying her family that she had been found. The aunt continues to be concerned about the investigation and said she worries that investigators have attempted to lay some blame on her niece and get the incident "swept under the rug."

"(Investigators) were accusing (my niece) of communicating with the Marine, and saying that he was her boyfriend, but she doesn't even know the Marine's name," Perez said.

An online petition created by Perez is demanding that the name of the Marine be released to the family, that an impartial inves-

tigation be completed and that Camp Pendleton adopt measures to prevent similar incidents. The petition has garnered more than 7,000 signatures.

In a statement, a spokesperson for the Naval Criminal Investigative Service confirmed the investigation is still active and that no charges have been filed. NCIS declined to offer any other details.

NCIS has previously confirmed that it took a Marine with Combat Logistics Battalion 5 in for questioning on the day the girl was found.

Officials with the 1st Marine Logistics Group did not respond to inquiries.

Perez said the family has received calls from detectives who said the investigation is moving along but provided few specific details.

The girl went missing June 10 from her home in Spring Valley, in San Diego County, and Perez said she spent June 27 and 28 at the base before she was discovered. She said her niece does not know the Marine who brought her onto the base.

# Carcinogens found at nuclear missile sites

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The Air Force has detected unsafe levels of a likely carcinogen at underground launch control centers at a Montana nuclear missile base where a striking number of men and women have reported cancer diagnoses.

A new cleanup effort has been ordered.

The discovery "is the first from an extensive sampling of active U.S. intercontinental ballistic missile bases to address specific cancer concerns raised by missile community members," Air Force Global Strike Command said in a release Monday. In those samples, two launch facilities at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana showed PCB levels higher than the thresholds recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency.

PCBs are oily or waxy substances that have been identified as a likely carcinogen by the EPA. Non-Hodgkin lymphoma is a rare blood cancer that uses the body's infection-fighting lymph system to spread.

In response, Gen. Thomas Bussiere, commander of Air Force Global Strike Command, has directed "immediate measures to begin the cleanup process for the affected facilities and mitigate exposure by our airmen and Guardians to potentially hazardous conditions."

After a military briefing was obtained by The Associated Press in January showing that at least nine current or former missileers at Malmstrom were diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma, the Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine launched a study to look at cancers among the entire missile community checking for the possibility of clusters of the disease.

There could be hundreds more cancers of all types, based on new data from a grassroots group of former missile launch officers and their surviving family members.

According to the Torchlight Initiative, at least 268 troops who served at nuclear missile sites, or their surviving family members, have self-reported being diagnosed with cancer, blood diseases or other illnesses over the past several decades.

At least 217 of those reported cases are cancers, at least 33 of them non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

# First US Navy submarine visits Australia since AUKUS deal

By ALEX WILSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

A U.S. nuclear-powered submarine pulled into an Australian naval base last week, the first step in establishing a rotational submarine force meant to prepare the country for its own fleet of nuclear subs, according to the Navy.

The Virginia-class attack submarine USS North Carolina on Friday steamed into HMAS Stirling, a naval base in western Australia, where its crew is expected to help their Australian counterparts learn to "safely operate, maintain and regulate" nuclear submarines and set the "highest standards for nuclear non-proliferation," the U.S. Pacific Fleet said in a news release that day.

The port call is the opening step in a deal between the AUKUS allies — the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom — to outfit Australia with a fleet of eight nu-

clear submarines.

The deal is expected to cost Australia up to 368 billion Australian dollars, or \$240 billion, over 30 years.

Under the deal's "Optimal Pathway," phase one includes frequent visits by U.S. attack subs to familiarize Australian service members with the ships and begin establishment of Submarine Rotational Force West at HMAS Stirling by 2027, according to the news release. The joint effort includes regular visits from four U.S. Virginia-class subs and one U.K. Astute-class sub.

"These port visits are an essential step for Australia to build the necessary operational capabilities and skills to steward and operate its own fleet of nuclear-powered attack submarines," Abe Denmark, senior adviser for AUKUS to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, said in the news release.

# Storm left 1M with no power in eastern US

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — At least two people died, thousands of U.S. flights were canceled or delayed, and more than 1.1 million homes and businesses lost power Monday as severe storms, including hail and lightning, moved through the eastern U.S.

The National Weather Service issued a tornado watch for the greater D.C. area, lasting until 9 p.m. A special Weather Service statement warned, “There is a significant threat for damaging and locally destructive hurricane-force winds, along with the potential for large hail and tornadoes, even strong tornadoes.”

The storms’ spread was massive, with tornado watches and warnings posted across 10 states from Tennessee to New York.

The National Weather Service said more than 29.5 million people were under a tornado watch Monday afternoon.

In Anderson, S.C., a 15-year-old boy who arrived at his grandparents’ house during the storm was struck and killed when a tree fell on him as he got out of a car, according to the Anderson County Office of the Coroner.

In Florence, Ala., police said a 28-year-old man was struck by lightning and died, WAAY-TV reported.

By Monday night, more than 2,600 U.S. flights had been canceled and nearly 7,900 delayed, according to flight tracking service FlightAware. Many cancellations were at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, which was digging out from

disruptions caused by Sunday storms.

The Federal Aviation Administration said it was rerouting planes around storms heading to the East Coast.

The White House pushed up by 90 minutes President Joe Biden’s departure on a four-day trip that’s taking him to Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The White House also canceled a back-to-school cybersecurity event that was to feature first lady Jill Biden, who is a teacher, Education Secretary Miguel Cardona, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and school administrators, educators and education technology providers from around the country.

The Office of Personnel Man-

agement announced Monday that all non-emergency employees would have to depart before 3 p.m., when all federal offices closed.

The storms postponed a Major League Baseball game between the Phillies and the Washington Nationals in Philadelphia, and in Maryland, the National Weather Service issued a flash flood warning into Tuesday after 4 inches of rain fell in a short amount of time.

By early evening, more than 1.1 million customers were without power across Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, West Virginia and Virginia — all states along the storm system’s path, according to poweroutage.us.

## Trump lawyers seek fewer limits on evidence sharing

Associated Press

Donald Trump’s legal team told a judge overseeing the election conspiracy case against him on Monday that prosecutors’ proposed protective order aimed at preventing the public disclosure of evidence is too broad and would restrict his First Amendment rights.

Lawyers for the early 2024 Republican presidential primary front-runner said in court papers that the judge should impose a more limited order that would bar the public release only of materials deemed “sensitive” — such as grand jury documents — rather than all evidence handed over by the government in the case accusing Trump of conspiring to overturn his 2020 election loss.

Prosecutors with special counsel Jack Smith’s team quickly countered with their own filing accusing Trump of objecting to their proposal because he wants to be able to use the government’s evidence to “try the case in the media rather than in the court-

room.”

U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan said later Monday that she would hold a hearing on the dueling proposals, and that Trump would not have to attend.

Prosecutors asked Friday for the protective order, which would impose rules on what Trump and his defense team can do with evidence shared by the government as they prepare for trial in the case unsealed last week.

Smith’s prosecution team has expressed concern that Trump could improperly share sensitive case information online that could have a “harmful chilling effect on witnesses.”

In their filing Friday seeking the order, prosecutors included a screenshot of a post from Trump’s Truth Social platform that same day in which he wrote, in all capital letters, “If you go after me, I’m coming after you!”

Trump’s lawyers said his post was “generalized political speech” and had nothing to do with the case.

## Judge tosses out Trump countersuit against writer

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A federal judge tossed out former President Donald Trump’s countersuit against the writer who won a sex abuse lawsuit against him, ruling Monday that Trump can’t claim she defamed him by continuing to say she was not only sexually abused but raped.

The ruling shuts down, at least for now, Trump’s effort to turn the legal tables on E. Jean Carroll, who won a \$5 million judgment against him in May and is pursuing her own defamation suit against him. Trump attorney Alina Habba said his lawyers would appeal “the flawed decision” to dismiss his counterclaim.

Carroll’s lawyer, Robbie Kaplan, said she was pleased with the ruling and looking ahead to a trial scheduled in January in her defamation suit, which concerns a series of remarks that Trump has made in denying her sexual assault allegation.

Carroll accused Trump of trapping her in a luxury department

store dressing room in 1996, forcibly kissing her, yanking down her tights and raping her as she tried to fight him off.

He denies any of it happened, even that they ran into each other at the store. He has called her, among other things, a “nut job” who invented “a fraudulent and false story” to sell a memoir.

In this spring’s trial, a civil court jury concluded that Trump sexually abused Carroll but rejected her claim that he raped her. Legally, the difference depended on how, in the jury’s view, he penetrated her against her will.

When a CNN interviewer asked her what was going through her mind when she heard the rape finding, Carroll responded, “Well, I just immediately say in my own head, ‘Oh, yes, he did. Oh, yes, he did.’” She also said she had told one of Trump’s attorneys that “he did it, and you know it.”

Trump then sued Carroll, saying her statements were defamatory. He sought a retraction and money.



# Belarus begins drills near Poland border

*Associated Press*

TALLINN, Estonia — Belarus began military exercises Monday near its border with Poland and Lithuania, a move coming with tensions already heightened with the two NATO members over Russia-linked Wagner mercenaries moving to Belarus after their short-lived mutiny in Russia.

Both Poland and Lithuania have increased border security since thousands of Wagner fighters arrived in Russian-allyed Belarus under a deal that ended their armed rebellion in late June and allowed them and their leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, to avoid criminal charges.

Leaders of the two NATO nations have said they are braced

for provocations from Moscow and Minsk in a sensitive area where both countries border Belarus as well as the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad.

They commented early in August after two Belarusian helicopters flew briefly at low altitude into Polish air space. Belarusian authorities denied their helicopters entered Poland.

The Belarusian Defense Ministry said the drills that began Monday are based on experiences from “the special military operation” — the term Russia uses for its war in Ukraine.

It said that includes the “use of drones as well as the close interaction of tank and motorized rifle units with units of other branches of the armed forces.”

The war games were taking place in the Grodno region of Belarus, near the so-called Suwalki Gap — a sparsely populated stretch of land running 60 miles along the Polish-Lithuanian border.

It links the three Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia with the rest of the NATO alliance and separates Belarus from Kaliningrad, a heavily militarized Russian exclave on the Baltic Sea that has no land connection to Russia.

Military analysts in the West have long viewed the Suwalki Gap as a potential flashpoint area in any confrontation between Russia and NATO.

They worry that Russia might try to seize the gap and cut off

the three Baltic states from Poland and other NATO nations.

Belarus’ military has said it is actively using Russian mercenaries to train its troops, and the exercises began as more Wagner fighters reportedly arrived in the country.

According to Belaruskij Ha-jun, an activist group that tracks troop movements in Belarus, mercenaries arrive in small groups daily.

Grey Zone, a Wagner-linked blog on the messaging app Telegram, reported Monday that some 7,000 Wagner fighters are at a camp close to Asipovichy, a town 140 miles north of the Ukrainian border.

The claim could not be independently verified.

# High July temps make month the hottest on record

*Associated Press*

Now that July’s sizzling numbers are all in, the European climate monitoring organization made it official: July 2023 was Earth’s hottest month on record by a wide margin. July’s global average temperature of 62.51 degrees Fahrenheit was six tenths of a degree Fahrenheit higher than the previous record set in 2019, Copernicus Climate Change Service, a division of the European Union’s space program, announced Tuesday. Normally global temperature records are broken by hundredths or a tenth of a degree, so this margin is unusual.

“These records have dire consequences

for both people and the planet exposed to ever more frequent and intense extreme events,” said Copernicus deputy director Samantha Burgess. There have been deadly heat waves in the Southwestern United States and Mexico, Europe and Asia. Scientific quick studies put the blame on human-caused climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas.

Days in July have been hotter than previously recorded from July 2 on. It’s been so extra warm that Copernicus and the World Meteorological Organization made the unusual early announcement that it was likely the hottest month days before it ended.

Tuesday’s calculations made it official.

The month was 2.7 degrees warmer than pre-industrial times. In 2015, the nations of the world agreed to try to prevent long-term warming — not individual months or even years, but decades — that is 1.5 degrees warmer than pre-industrial times.

Last month was so hot, it was 1.3 degrees hotter than the average July from 1991 to 2020, Copernicus said. The world’s oceans were 0.9 degrees warmer than the previous 30 years and the North Atlantic was 1.9 degrees hotter than average. Antarctica set record lows for sea ice, 15% below average for this time of year.

# Scout jamboree packs up ahead of tropical storm

**By DAVID CHOI**

*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — Thousands of Boy Scouts at the World Scout Jamboree campsite in Saemangeum, South Korea, were evacuated Tuesday from the coastal city in advance of a tropical storm that is expected to make landfall this week.

The World Scout Jamboree is relocating to safer areas in Seoul and Chungcheong Province, about 50 miles south of the capital city, due to the approaching Tropical Storm Khanun, the organization said in a statement Tuesday.

South Korea’s Ministry of the Interior and Safety is overseeing the evacuation and dis-

patched 1,014 buses to transport the roughly 37,000 attendees from 156 countries, Minister Lee Sang-min told reporters at a news conference Tuesday.

Four police helicopters and 273 police cars and motorcycles were also dispatched to escort the Scouts to their respective destinations.

The U.S. contingent left the

Saemangeum site Sunday aboard buses bound 85 miles north to Camp Humphreys, the largest U.S. military base overseas, in Pyeongtaek city.

The Scouts were settled in Humphreys Middle School where they slept on cots inside the gym and ate food provided by Eighth Army at the school’s cafeteria.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

**K9 jumps in baptismal pool while on the job**

**FL** PANAMA CITY — The baptismal pool at one Florida church appears to be having an unusual impact on visitors, with an accused burglar and a search dog both ending up in the water, according to the Bay County Sheriff's Office.

Investigators believe the law enforcement K9 was attempting "to beat the heat."

However, the burglary suspect said a force held his head in the pool, resulting in him being baptized while in the church, the sheriff's office said in news release.

It happened at Emerald Beach Church of Christ near Panama City Beach, about 120 miles east of Pensacola on the Panhandle.

Deputies did not report finding anyone else in the church. It was during their search that a sheriff's office dog jumped in the baptismal pool (without permission) and began splashing around, video showed. The dog's human partner was clearly taken off guard and the deputy can be heard laughing in the video.

**Estate sells for almost \$139M, record amount**

**CT** GREENWICH — Copper Beech Farm, with 50 acres of waterfront property in the tony New York suburb of Greenwich, has sold for just under \$139 million, believed to be a record home sale in Connecticut, Sotheby's International Realty said.

The estate, once owned by a family that helped start what is now U.S. Steel, dates back to the late 19th century. The main

house is a 13,500-square-foot mansion with eight bedrooms and eight bathrooms. There also is a three-bedroom gatehouse and a two-bedroom carriage house with a clock tower.

The estate includes a swimming pool, a grass tennis court, an apple orchard and two private beaches along Long Island Sound.

"We always have significant demand for Greenwich waterfront," listing agent Leslie McElwreath of Sotheby's International Realty said.

McElwreath said the property, which last sold in 2014 for about \$120 million, was listed in February at \$150 million and ultimately sold for \$138,830,000. She would not disclose the buyer or seller.

**State to ban gun ads allegedly for children**

**IL** SPRINGFIELD — Illinois will soon outlaw advertising for firearms that officials determine produces a public safety threat or appeals to children, militants or others who might later use the weapons illegally, as the state continues its quest to curb mass shootings.

Gun-rights advocates said the plan, which Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker has pledged to sign into law, is an unreasonably vague decree that violates not only the constitutionally protected right to own guns but also free speech.

The prime exhibit in Democratic Attorney General Kwame Raoul's effort is the JR-15, a smaller, lighter version of the AR-15 semi-automatic rifle advertised with the tag line, "Get 'em One Like Yours." The maker said it is deliberately

made smaller, with added safety features, to fit younger shooters as they learn from adults how to safely maneuver such a weapon. Raoul said it's marketed to children and potentially entices them to skip the adult supervision and start firing.

**Teen charged after gas on bonfire triggers blast**

**WI** SHAWANO — A Wisconsin teenager has been charged with triggering a bonfire explosion that injured more than a dozen people.

Prosecutors in northeastern Wisconsin's Shawano County charged Sam Armstrong, 18, with 13 counts of injury by negligent handling of explosives or fire in connection with the explosion outside the community of Pulaski, WLUK-TV reported.

Armstrong was attending the bonfire with other teenagers when he threw a barrel containing a gasoline-diesel mix into the fire, sparking an explosion that burned at least 17 people, according to the criminal complaint.

Armstrong, who was 17 at the time, later told police he didn't know his actions would cause an explosion and injure anyone, according to the complaint. He told investigators he had been drinking beer.

**Judge arrested, tied to slaying of his wife**

**CA** ANAHEIM — A Southern California judge has been arrested in connection with the slaying of his wife, authorities said.

Orange County Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Ferguson was arrested after police received reports of a shooting in an Anaheim home and found

the judge's wife, Sheryl Ferguson, shot inside, Anaheim police said.

She was pronounced dead at the scene, and the 72-year-old judge was arrested and taken to jail, police said in a statement. No additional details were released.

Ferguson serves as a judge in a courthouse in the Orange County city of Fullerton. He previously worked in the Orange County District Attorney's office, and prosecuted drug cases, according to the North Orange County Bar Association.

The court declined to provide additional information.

**Ruling reinstates officers who refused COVID shot**

**MA** BOSTON — Massachusetts State Police must reinstate seven troopers who refused to be vaccinated for COVID-19, an independent arbitrator has ruled. The troopers have been on unpaid leave, but the arbitrator's decision means they can return to work with retroactive pay if they choose.

The union representing state troopers filed a grievance in 2021 after the law enforcement officers were suspended following former Republican Gov. Charlie Baker's order requiring executive department employees to be vaccinated. Current Democratic Gov. Maura Healey lifted the vaccine mandate in May.

Massachusetts State Police are determining the "scope as well as the administrative and legal steps" needed to implement the arbitrator's ruling, David Procopio, an agency spokesperson, said.

— From wire reports

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# Pens, Caps trying to keep window open

Associated Press

The Stanley Cup banners hanging in Pittsburgh and Washington aren't collecting dust yet. The Penguins won their third, fourth and fifth championships in 2009, 2016 and 2017, while the Capitals hoisted the Cup for the first time in franchise history in 2018.

Still, the core players from those title-winning teams aren't getting any younger: Sidney Crosby celebrated his 36th birthday Monday and Alex Ovechkin turns 38 next month. The Penguins' 16-year playoff streak and the Capitals' eight-year playoff streak ended last season.

The moves made this summer show both teams are willing to sacrifice some future success to keep winning now. Pittsburgh over the weekend traded several players and two high draft picks to land Norris Trophy-winning defenseman Erik Karlsson, a deal that came on the heels of Washington signing power forward Tom Wilson to a seven-year contract extension.

New Penguins general manager Kyle Dubas and longtime Capitals GM Brian MacLellan are trying to jam open their teams' contending window as long as possible — a difficult task in the NHL in the salary cap era.

"It is challenging," MacLellan said. "We got some young guys that are still coming, but our goal is to remain competitive. I think it's a tricky balance, but we'll see if we can pull it off. I think it's important for Ovi, for all our veteran guys that we remain competitive, give them a chance to compete."

In replacing Ron Hextall and Brian Burke — they were fired after Pittsburgh missed the playoffs for the first time since

2006 — Dubas took a big swing at upgrading immediately by getting Karlsson from San Jose. Perhaps more significant than what he gave up is the \$10 million annually the Penguins have committed to the 33-year-old Swede over the next four seasons.

Dubas isn't worried about sending a message to veteran leaders like Crosby, Evgeni Malkin and Kris Letang or coach Mike Sullivan. But it speaks volumes about the direction the team is going in, with no sign of a rebuild in sight.

"I think it's just the affirmation that we believe that they have a chance to contend and compete for a championship, and there's a lot of work that has to be done," Dubas said. "Obviously, the team missed the playoffs last year and there's no dancing around it and we've tried to supplement as best we can."

MacLellan, unlike Hextall, sold at the trade deadline when it was clear Washington was likely to miss the playoffs. He, too, has tried to supplement the core that remains from the Cup run, signing winger Max Pacioretty and trading for defenseman Joel Edmundson.

Pacioretty turns 35 in November and Edmundson is 30 — the same age Wilson will be when his new \$45.5 million contract kicks in for the 2024-25 season. Nicklas Backstrom is nearing 36, T.J. Oshie turns 37 in December and John Carlson 34 in December.

The Capitals think that experience can be a benefit in trying to get back into the playoffs.

"There's a lot of winners in that room, and when you don't make the playoffs, it's a fail-

ure," Wilson said. "We're hungry, we're excited to get back at it and get this thing moving back in the right direction."

The timeline is clear. Ovechkin is signed for three more years and is in hot pursuit of Wayne Gretzky's career goals record, currently 75 behind a mark that long seemed impossible to approach.

Wilson's deal carries him four years beyond Ovechkin with the expectation he'll become the face of the franchise and succeed his longtime Russian teammate as captain.

But it also locks him in at a \$6.5 million cap hit through 2026 to contribute to the Gretzky chase and perhaps another playoff run or two.

"We're going to keep pushing," Wilson said. "A good team and a team that's winning games means he's scoring goals, and we're checking both those boxes at the same time."

The Penguins, with Malkin 37 and Letang 36 like Crosby, are determined to win enough games to remain a perennial playoff team. That's no easy task in the Metropolitan Division trying to keep up with Carolina, New Jersey and the New York Rangers and in the Eastern Conference with young Buffalo and Detroit among the teams on the rise.

Getting Karlsson should be a boost, at least in the short term, as Dubas tries to silence the doubters who don't think Pittsburgh can remain in the Stanley Cup mix.

"We have to go out and prove it," he said. "I think the doubts are fair. I think the criticisms are fair. Now we have our belief, and then it's about us to go and execute it."

## France routs Morocco, moves to World Cup quarterfinals

Associated Press

ADELAIDE, Australia — France coach Herve Renard high-fived his staff on the sideline as it became clear his team was on its way to the quarterfinals of the Women's World Cup.

Only 23 minutes had been played at Adelaide's Hindmarsh Stadium on Tuesday, but France was already 3-0 up against Morocco and on course for a show-down with co-host Australia.

The French scored once more in the second half to win 4-0 and end Morocco's historic debut

run at the World Cup.

"The result speaks for itself," Renard said. "We were able to score four times and now we've got a foot in the door for the quarterfinals. Things are getting a little bit heated. Only eight teams left in the running. The objective now is to pull off the best performance that the French team has ever done."

France took fourth place in 2011 and this is the fourth straight time it has advanced to the quarterfinals of the World Cup.

A three-goal burst in nine minutes took the game away from Morocco, with Kadidiatou Diani, Kenza Dali and Eugenie Le Sommer all scoring early in the match.

Le Sommer, who is France's all-time leading scorer, headed in a fourth in the 70th minute to complete the win.

**Colombia 1, Jamaica 0:** At Melbourne, Australia, Colombia's players danced and sang on the field long after the team secured its historic first-ever trip to the quarterfinals.

Catalina Usme's second-half goal gave Colombia a 1-0 win over Jamaica. Both teams were aiming for a first victory in the knockout stage, with the winner moving on to the last eight at soccer's biggest tournament.

Colombia, a team that didn't even qualify for the 2019 tournament, played a physical, scrappy match. Linda Caicedo, the team's 18-year-old sensation who plays for Real Madrid, created opportunities and tested a Jamaica defense that didn't concede a goal in the group stage.



# Buescher wins 2nd Cup race in a row

*Associated Press*

BROOKLYN, Mich. — Chris Buescher has earned half of his four career NASCAR Cup Series victories in a stunning, nine-day stretch of success.

Buescher won his second straight NASCAR Cup Series race by holding off points leader Martin Truex late in the FireKeepers 400 on Monday and is surging with his top performances toward the end of the regular season.

"It's certainly very good timing as we head into the playoffs in a few short weeks," said the 30-year-old Buescher, who was in the No. 17 Ford for RFK Racing.

Buescher, who won last week at Richmond, led 52 of the 200 laps. With 12 laps left, Truex challenged him with door-to-door driving before sparks were seen under his No. 19 Toyota and he faded.

"I felt like we were a little better, but it is just really hard to pass the leader on equal tires," Truex said.

Truex made a savvy move in the No. 19 Toyota for Joe Gibbs Racing to win Stage 2. Shortly after pitting, he went high before dropping low to surge past Daniel Suarez and finished second to earn a 57-point lead over Denny Hamlin in the standings.

"He was a rocket most of the day and for Chris to hold him off is really impressive,"

said Brad Keselowski, who was proud of his fourth-place finish as a driver and win as a part-owner of RFK Racing.

Hamlin was third followed by Keselowski and Kyle Larson.

Buescher gave Ford its ninth straight victory at Michigan to extend the longest winning streak by a manufacturer at a track that has hosted Cup races since 1969.

"To be here in Ford's backyard and get this done and have so many Ford folks with us here, it is a special weekend," he said. "You always have a little more on your shoulders here."

The race was suspended Sunday due to rain, which delayed the start and later led to a red-flag stoppage that lasted 19-plus hours before the race resumed under cloudy skies the next day.

Two of the top drivers didn't make it to Monday. Many of the fans that filled the stands and the infield on Sunday, giving the track one of its biggest crowds in years, did not return to see the end of the race.

William Byron and Kyle Busch, who have a combined seven wins this year, were knocked out of the competition on the first day of the two-day race. Busch spun out and hit a wall after making side-by-side contact with Ryan Blaney early in the race and Byron ran into a wall without anyone around him shortly after Truex won the

first stage.

"I put myself in a bad spot," Busch said. "I really hate that I did that."

## Who's hot

Buescher became the first Cup driver to win consecutive races since Byron had victories at Las Vegas and Phoenix in March. He's the first RFK driver to have consecutive victories since 2010, and the first to win multiple times in a year for the organization since 2017.

"I kind of like being an underdog and under the radar," said Scott Graves, Buescher crew chief. "But I also know with a couple wins, it's hard to hide."

## Who's not

Chase Elliott lost control after just 34 laps Sunday due to a tire failure.

"It was really early in the day to have a tire blow like that," the Hendrick Motorsports star said. "It was really weird. It's a bummer, but not surprised. Add it to the list."

Elliott missed six Cup races with a broken left tibia that he suffered in a March 3 snowboarding accident.

The 2020 Cup champion, winless this year, is No. 22 in points and likely needs to win one of the last three races in the regular season to earn a spot in the playoffs.

# Source: Pac-12's Stanford, Cal now on ACC's radar

*Associated Press*

The four remaining Pac-12 schools still aboard for next season — California, Stanford, Oregon State and Washington State — have options if they are looking for another conference.

The Atlantic Coast Conference is exploring the possibility of adding the West Coast schools, with an emphasis on California and Stanford in the San Francisco Bay Area, a person with knowledge of the discussions told The Associated Press on Monday. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the ACC was not making its internal discussion public and the conversations were still in early stages.

The person said the ACC's

presidents are expected to dig into the merits of expansion again Tuesday and that the conference does not plan to draw out making a decision.

The American Athletic Conference also has interest in expanding West and adding all four Pac-12 teams, a person with direct knowledge of that league's internal discussion told the AP on condition of anonymity. The AAC has schools as far West as the Dallas area.

The UC Board of Regents scheduled a special closed-session meeting for Tuesday morning to discuss Cal's conference affiliation.

The Pac-12 lost five members last week after a potential media rights contract with Apple left

the schools seeking a better deal. Arizona, Arizona State and Utah announced they would join Colorado in the Big 12 next year while Oregon and Washington decided to follow Southern California and UCLA to the Big Ten, also next summer.

The abrupt departures have raised the possibility that the Pac-12, which dates to 1916, will completely dissolve sooner rather than later.

Washington State President Kirk Schulz released a letter Monday, saying the Cougars believed the Pac-12 membership was ready to move forward with the Apple deal, only to be "shocked" by the decisions by Washington and Oregon to leave for the Big Ten.

"I genuinely felt that on Friday morning we would sign the needed paperwork, finalize the deal with Apple, and move the Pac-12 toward a new and brighter future," Schulz wrote.

A person familiar with the Apple deal, speaking on condition of anonymity because all of its details had not been made public, said it would have guaranteed \$23-25 million per year per school with escalator clauses based on subscribers. The deal also provided no guarantees of games being sold to linear TV networks, but it would have left that possibility open for consideration.

The Mountain West is the most logical spot for the Pac-12 schools to land geographically.

# Biggio's homer in 8th lifts Blue Jays

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Cavan Biggio hit a two-run homer to break a scoreless tie in the eighth inning, and the Toronto Blue Jays beat the Cleveland Guardians 3-1 on Monday night after losing starting pitcher Hyun Jin Ryu to a knee injury.

Biggio's 415-foot drive to center field came off reliever Enyel De Los Santos (4-2) and scored Daulton Varsho. Toronto had been held to one hit over the first seven innings by Guardians rookie Gavin Williams, who struck out a season-high 12.

"Cavan made the clutch plays offensively and defensively for us," Blue Jays manager John Schneider said. "It was just an awesome night for him. He's a true baseball player."

Ryu was struck on the right kneecap by Oscar Gonzalez's line drive in the fourth, but fielded the ball and turned it into the final out of the inning. He was forced to exit with a bruised knee in his second start since undergoing Tommy John surgery in June 2022.

The 36-year-old left-hander tossed four hitless innings. He was helped off the field and was undergoing X-rays after the game.

"The ball just got me on the knee and left a bruise," Ryu said through a translator. "I didn't hurt it running or making the

play."

Cleveland cut its deficit to 2-1 in the bottom of the eighth when Bo Naylor singled in Brayan Rocio against Tim Mayza. Biggio ended the inning one batter later by fielding Steven Kwan's grounder to second and turning it into a double play.

"I just trusted my instincts," Biggio said. "My first reaction was to get the ball, tag (Naylor) and then I went to first."

**Pirates 7, Braves 6:** Rookie infielder Liover Peguero had two hits in a six-run third inning and host Pittsburgh chased Spencer Strider early before holding off Atlanta for a rain-delayed victory.

Connor Joe homered in the fourth to help the fourth-place Pirates hand the major league-leading Braves their third consecutive defeat.

**Dodgers 13, Padres 7:** Mookie Betts hit a grand slam to cap an eight-run fourth inning and visiting Los Angeles won for the sixth time in seven games.

It was the Dodgers' 11th slam this season to tie their single-season high.

James Outman had four hits for the Dodgers, who took three of four in the series to improve to 8-2 this season against San Diego.

**Rangers 5, Athletics 3:** Travis Jankowski had a go-ahead RBI groundout in the eighth, Leody

Taveras followed with a sacrifice fly, and visiting Texas won its season-best seventh straight game.

The Rangers won this one without clearing the fences. They had hit multiple home runs in six straight games to begin August to match the longest such streak in franchise history.

**Reds 5, Marlins 2:** Christian Encarnacion-Strand and Joey Votto homered on consecutive pitches by Miami's Eury Pérez in the fourth inning, and host Cincinnati stopped a six-game slide.

TJ Friedl had two hits and two RBIs as the Reds improved to 10-14 since the All-Star break. The six-game slide matched the season high for Cincinnati, which remains in the thick of the playoff race.

**White Sox 5, Yankees 1:** Andrew Vaughn hit a two-run homer and made a terrific run-saving play at first base, helping host Chicago get its third straight win.

Luis Robert Jr. added a two-run double in a three-run eighth, helping the White Sox break it open.

**Red Sox 6, Royals 2:** Pablo Reyes hit a walkoff grand slam to break a ninth-inning tie — his third hit of the night — and host Boston recovered after blowing a two-run lead.

**Giants 8, Angels 3:** Patrick Bailey put the Giants ahead with

a two-run double when Randal Grichuk misplayed his drive to left, keying visiting San Francisco's six-run rally in the ninth inning that sent Los Angeles to its season-worst seventh consecutive loss.

Shohei Ohtani doubled, singled, scored a run and stole his 15th base of the season for the Angels, who still haven't won since the MLB trade deadline.

**Twins 9, Tigers 3:** Carlos Correa homered and drove in four runs as visiting Minnesota won its season-best fifth straight.

The Twins (60-54) also got a homer and three RBIs from Ryan Jeffers, improving to 15-8 since the All-Star break.

**Mets 11, Cubs 2:** Pete Alonso homered in consecutive at-bats and tied a career high with six RBIs as host New York withstood a long rain delay and snapped a six-game losing streak.

In their first home game since trading Justin Verlander, Mark Canha and Tommy Pham at last week's deadline, the Mets (51-61) avoided matching their longest skid this season.

**Brewers 12, Rockies 1:** Freddy Peralta (8-8) struck out 13 to match his career high and allowed just one hit in seven innings to lead host Milwaukee.

Sal Frelick had a three-run homer, scored three times and had four RBIs for the Brewers.

## Anderson suspended 6 games, Ramírez 3 for fighting

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Tim Anderson's decision to pick a fight with José Ramírez cost him more than a sore jaw.

Chicago's shortstop was suspended six games and Ramírez for three games by Major League Baseball for throwing punches and touching off a lengthy, wild brawl between the White Sox and Guardians on Saturday night.

MLB announced the disci-

pline for Anderson and Ramírez on Monday, along with other suspensions and fines following one of baseball's ugliest fights in several years.

Anderson and Ramírez also were fined an undisclosed amount. Both players are appealing, and were in their respective lineups Monday night.

Anderson was given the harsher penalty for instigating the fight as he and Ramírez faced off in the middle of the in-

field like boxers inside the ropes. Anderson connected with a couple of punches before Ramírez dropped him with a blow to the face.

The White Sox said Anderson passed a concussion test.

Also, Cleveland manager Terry Francona, Guardians closer Emmanuel Clase and third base coach Mike Sarbaugh have been suspended one game each. Chicago manager Pedro Grifol was also suspended for one game.

In addition, White Sox pitcher Michael Kopech and Guardians rookie Gabriel Arias have been fined an undisclosed amount for their actions.

Francona and Clase served their suspensions Monday as the Guardians opened a four-game series with Toronto. Grifol also served his suspension Monday when the White Sox hosted the New York Yankees. Sarbaugh intends to sit on Tuesday.