

## Philippines bests Chinese blockade

By **SETH ROBSON**  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Philippines has resupplied its troops on a grounded warship in disputed South China Sea waters despite an attempted Chinese blockade.

Supply boats reached the BRP Sierra Madre, a grounded navy ship that serves as an outpost at Second Thomas Shoal in the Spratly Islands, on Tuesday, the Philippines' National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea said in a statement.

The mission was successful despite efforts by the "China Coast Guard and Chinese Maritime Militia vessels to block, harass, and interfere," the statement said.

Two supply boats were supported by the Philippine coast guard's BRP Sindangan and BRP Cabra during the mission. Philippine navy warships were on standby, the statement said.

The Philippine coast guard invited a small group of journalists, including two from The Associated Press, to join its ships that secured the supply boats as part of a new strategy aimed at exposing China's increasingly aggressive actions in the South China Sea,

which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety.

As a U.S. Navy plane circled overhead, one Chinese coast guard ship came as close as 50 yards as it crossed the bow of Cabra to block the Philippine coast guard ship, which maneuvered fast to avoid a collision, said a coast guard officer onboard the Cabra who could not be named because of official policy.

The Cabra and the Sindangan were surrounded by four Chinese coast guard ships and four suspected militia vessels and forced to stop as the other two Philippine boats delivered supplies to the Filipino forces at Second Thomas Shoal, more than 4 miles away.

All the Philippine vessels sailed away without further incident after the supplies and a fresh crew of Filipino sailors were delivered to the military outpost on a long-marooned Philippine navy ship at the shoal.

It was not immediately clear why the U.S. Navy deployed the surveillance plane that flew for more than three hours overhead as the Chinese ships blocked and shadowed the Philippine vessels off Second Thomas Shoal. When

asked about the deployment of the Navy plane, U.S. Embassy spokesperson Kanishka Gangopadhyay in Manila said he could not provide specifics. "What I can say is that all of our military activities in the Philippines are conducted in full coordination with our Philippine allies," he said.

Filipino security officials have said they've received intelligence information and surveillance images taken in the disputed waters from their American and other foreign counterparts in the past as part of security cooperation.

The United States lays no claim to the South China Sea but has declared that freedom of navigation and flight, as well as peacefully resolving disputes, are in its national interest.

The dispute over the shoal has reached a tipping point, according to Krista Wiegand, a professor of national security at the University of Tennessee who spoke Tuesday at an online forum organized by Pacific Forum, a think tank in Hawaii.

"China's military is being aggressive," she said of its actions around the shoal, which included

firing a water cannon on Aug. 5 to block a boat attempting to deliver supplies to the Sierra Madre. "I'm not sure what more they could do except live fire."

The Philippines' grand strategy involves challenging China, according to Renato Cruz De Castro, an international studies professor at De La Salle University, Manila, who also spoke during the forum.

"A great power is basically undermining our border," he said.

China has occupied disputed features in the South China Sea and built military facilities on some of them in the past decade. It appears to be building an airstrip in the Paracel Islands in the sea, territory also claimed by Taiwan and Vietnam, according to The Associated Press on Friday.

The Philippines is pouring money into defense modernization and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has repeatedly told troops to turn their attention to external threats, De Castro said.

Expansion of a base-sharing agreement with the U.S. is part of the effort, he said, noting that three shared bases in northern Luzon aren't designed to support humanitarian assistance.

## Worker removed from NICU post after online threats

By **MATTHEW M. BURKE**  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A service member working with infants in intensive care was removed from her post at U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa after making online threats to children she worked with, according to a spokeswoman for the Defense Health Agency.

The service member's post on Snapchat, since deleted, was

shared as a screenshot Tuesday on the Okinawa Rants and Venting Facebook group. Under the screen name "Rae," the service member said she had to hide at work because she was about to throw a baby "like a damn football," according to the post.

Rae also said the babies were "acting like they want to meet Jesus," despite her having given them "so much sugar water that they could be type 2 diabetic

ics."

More than 200 commenters reacted with alarm to the screenshot.

"We sincerely apologize for this inappropriate post," Whitney Trimble, a spokeswoman for Defense Health Agency Region Indo-Pacific, told Stars and Stripes by email Tuesday. "The service member has been removed from patient care pending a full investigation, and our

staff remains dedicated to providing world-class care for every patient."

The service member could not be reached for comment. Marine Corps Installations Pacific did not immediately respond to requests Tuesday and Wednesday seeking comment.

Although the screenshot appeared Tuesday on Facebook, the time and date of the original Snapchat post was not clear.

# Soldiers attacked by coyotes at Fort Johnson

By DOUG G. WARE  
*Stars and Stripes*

A group of soldiers was injured recently when they were attacked by several coyotes as they trained outdoors at Fort Johnson in western Louisiana, officials said Tuesday.

The soldiers were training near the Joint Readiness Training Center at the Army base last month when they encountered as many as four coyotes, base officials said. The Army did not say how many soldiers were attacked.

"Game [officials] assessed two to four coyotes were involved, and likely interacted

with the soldiers due to the coyotes' territorial nature and potential den in the area," according to a statement from Fort Johnson, formerly Fort Polk. "[Enforcement officers] neutralized one coyote, which was sent for rabies testing."

The results of the rabies testing weren't available Tuesday.

The soldiers who encountered the animals were from the 29th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, an Army National Guard unit stationed in Hawaii, officials at Fort Johnson said. The attack by the coyotes occurred July 21 and none of the soldiers were seriously hurt.

"The soldiers received a medical evaluation and treatment for their injuries," base officials said without specifying the wounds that the soldiers suffered.

Since the soldiers were attacked, the base has been monitoring wildlife in the area to guard against any future encounters, according to a Fort Johnson spokesperson. The base is near the Kisatchie National Forest.

"No further coyote interaction has occurred, indicating this was an isolated event," the spokesperson said.

A video posted to social media

two days after the encounter claims 14 soldiers were attacked by the coyotes, and includes several photographs of what appear to be wounds to some of the soldiers. The video, however, has not been authenticated by the Army.

Coyotes are common across the United States and rarely attack humans. When coyotes do attack people, they almost never inflict serious injuries and there are very few known fatal coyote attacks on record, according to wildlife experts. Fort Johnson did not say whether the animals attacked without provocation.

## Heatstroke kills 2 dogs on military flight to Seattle

By KELLY AGEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — A Defense Intelligence Agency contractor and his wife lost their two dogs to heatstroke on a government-chartered flight recently, despite changes last year to ensure pets survived those journeys.

When Tim and Anne Surette arrived in Seattle on Aug. 17 after a long flight from Japan on the Patriot Express, they learned that Winter, their 11-year-old Old English bulldog, and Soju, a 5-year-old French bulldog, had died en route, Tim Surette told Stars and Stripes by phone Monday.

The Patriot Express is a government-chartered air service that moves service members, civilian employees and their families between overseas bases and the United States.

It's overseen by Air Mobility Command, headquartered at Scott Air Force Base, Ill.

The couple was moving from Yongsan Garrison in South Korea to Reston, Va., Surette said.

They last saw their dogs alive during a three-hour layover at Misawa Air Base, Japan, where they left the plane, walked the dogs and refilled their water bottles, he said.

When the couple returned to their seats, they noticed the air inside was incredibly hot. "I would say it was between 75 and 80 degrees the entire way," Surette said.

"The flight attendants announced that as soon as we lifted off the temperature would drop, but it never did or it didn't significantly," he said. "Flight attendants passed water around three separate times to us while we were flying, but I did sweat the entire way. Because the cabin was not cool, I can't imagine that the cargo compartment was any cooler."

The command cautioned owners of short-nosed dogs like bulldogs that their pets are at higher risk of heatstroke. Their facial structure is less effective at cooling them down through panting, according to PetEducate.com.

## US Navy ships stop to help Australian, Filipino sailors

By ALEX WILSON  
AND JEREMY STILLWAGNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

The U.S. Navy provided food and fuel to mariners in distress on the high seas this month in separate incidents on two seas, according to the service.

The guided-missile destroyer USS Ralph Johnson on Aug. 14 fed a group of Philippine fishermen in the South China Sea who needed food and water as they made their way home.

The Ralph Johnson spotted fishermen aboard a small vessel signaling for help, according to a Monday press release from Task Force 71/Destroyer Squadron 15.

The fishermen were "waving their arms back and forth," 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. Luka Bakic said Wednesday.

Petty Officer 1st Class Aileen Adriano, of Ilocos Norte, Philippines, translated for her shipmates and the fishermen in Tagalog and English.

"I've been in the Navy for 9

years, and this is the first time I've been able to use my language to help out," Adriano said in the release. "It felt really good to be a part of this."

The group was on its way home to the Philippines but didn't have enough food or water to make the journey safely, the Navy said. The ship provided a loaf of bread, several gallons of water and four "hot plates" — fully prepared meals with meatloaf, vegetables and rice.

In an unrelated incident Aug. 8, the USNS Millinocket, an expeditionary fast-transport vessel, provided fuel to a leisure craft stranded on the Timor Sea off northern Australia, according to Indo-Pacific Command.

The Millinocket, underway in support of the Talisman Sabre exercise, detoured to a distress signal coming from a boat 35 miles northeast of Darwin, said the Millinocket's master, civilian mariner Capt. Erwin Lao, in an Aug. 21 news release.

# Kyiv says it took out defense system

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia and Ukraine traded drone attacks early Wednesday, officials said, with Kyiv apparently targeting Moscow again and the Kremlin's forces launching another bombardment of Ukrainian grain storage depots in what have recently become signature tactics in the almost 18-month war.

Later Wednesday, the Ukrainian intelligence agency claimed it had destroyed a key Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile defense system in occupied Crimea. If confirmed, it would be another embarrassing blow for Moscow, as Ukraine increasingly targets Russia's assets far behind the front line in southern and eastern Ukraine.

The agency, known by its acronym GUR, claimed on its official Telegram channel that Russia has a "limited number" of the sophisticated systems and that the loss "is a painful blow." Moscow officials made no immediate comment.

The long-range S-400 missiles are capable of striking enemy aircraft and are re-

garded as one of the best such systems available. They have a range of 250 miles and can simultaneously engage multiple targets.

Earlier, a three-hour nighttime Russian drone attack in Ukraine's southern Odesa region Tuesday caused a blaze at grain facilities, Odesa Regional Military Administration Head Oleh Kiper said.

The attack destroyed 14,300 U.S. tons of grain, bringing the month's total grain losses to around 300,000 U.S. tons, Ukrainian Infrastructure Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said in a Facebook post.

Russia zeroed in on Odesa last month, crippling significant parts of the port city's grain facilities, days after President Vladimir Putin broke off Russia's participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative. That wartime deal enabled Ukraine's exports to reach many countries facing the threat of hunger.

Under a year of that deal, Ukraine shipped 36.2 million U.S. tons of grain, most of it from the Odesa region.

Russian officials, meanwhile, claimed to have downed Ukrainian drones in Moscow and the surrounding region early Wednesday, the defense ministry and the mayor said. No casualties were reported in the drone attack, which has become almost a daily occurrence in the Russian capital.

Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyanin said one drone smashed into a building under construction in Moscow City, a prestigious business complex hit by drones twice before. Several windows were broken in two buildings nearby and emergency services responded to the scene.

Russia's Ministry of Defense said the drone had been electronically jammed.

It blamed the attack on Ukraine and said two other drones were shot down by air defense systems in the Mozhaishk and Khimki areas of the Moscow region. Kyiv officials, as usual, neither confirmed nor denied Ukraine was behind the drone attacks.

Moscow airports briefly closed but have now reopened, according to Russian state media.

## Wagner boss on passenger list of crashed aircraft

*Associated Press*

MOSCOW — A private jet crashed in Russia on Wednesday, killing all 10 people aboard, emergency officials said. Mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin was on the passenger list, but it wasn't immediately clear if he was on board.

A plane carrying three pilots and seven passengers that was en route from Moscow to St. Petersburg went down more than 60 miles north of the capital, according to officials cited by Russia's state news agency

Tass. It was not clear if Prigozhin was among those on board, though Russia's civilian aviation regulator, Rosaviatsia, said he was on the manifest.

Russia's state news agency RIA Novosti reported that eight bodies were found at the site of the crash.

In an image posted by a pro-Wagner social media account showing burning wreckage, a partial tail number matching a private jet belonging to the company could be seen. The color and placement of the num-

ber on the engine of the crashed plane matches prior photos of the Wagner jet.

Prigozhin's fate has been the subject of intense speculation ever since he mounted a short-lived mutiny against Russia's military leadership in late June.

This week, Prigozhin posted his first recruitment video since the mutiny, saying that Wagner is conducting reconnaissance and search activities, and "making Russia even greater on all continents, and Africa even more free."

## Heat wave hits nearly 100M across US; child dies in van

*Associated Press*

OMAHA, Neb. — Scorching weather hitting nearly 100 million people across a huge swath of the U.S. forced schools and outdoor workers to scramble to adjust Tuesday — and claimed the life of a 1-year-old girl left in a Nebraska day care center's van on one of the hottest days of the year.

Officers and medics were called Monday afternoon to Kidz of the Future Childcare in Omaha for an unresponsive baby inside the van, police said. Temperatures at the time

reached into the upper 90s, part of a days-long heat wave.

The child, Ra'Miyah Worthington, was pronounced dead at a hospital, police said. Court documents say her body temperature was 109 F. Her parents questioned why her absence at the day care wasn't noticed.

"She loved, loved, loved her family," her mother, Sina Johnson, told the television station WOWT. "She loved her daddy. She was daddy's little girl."

Prosecutors charged the driver, Ryan

Williams, 62, of Omaha, on Tuesday with a felony count of child negligence resulting in death, which carries a sentence of up to four years in prison.

He told investigators that he was distracted by a young boy who didn't want to get out of the van when he was unloading the vehicle and mistakenly forgot the girl inside, according to court documents. A second staff member came out to help get the boy, and Williams closed up the van without conducting his normal sweep of the vehicle.



# Witness in Trump docs case retracts false testimony

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — A witness in the criminal case against Donald Trump over the hoarding of classified documents retracted “prior false testimony” after switching lawyers last month and provided new information that implicated the former president, the Justice Department said Tuesday.

The statements from the witness, a Trump staffer identified in court papers as the director of information technology at Mar-a-Lago, was presented to prosecutors weeks before special counsel Jack Smith secured an updated indictment accusing Trump and two others in a plot to delete surveillance video at the Florida property.

Prosecutors said in a court filing Tuesday that the witness told a grand jury in Washington in March that he could not recall any conversations about the security footage.

But in July, after being warned by prosecutors that he was a target of the investigation and after being advised that his lawyer might have a conflict of interest because of his representation of others in the probe, the witness received a new attorney from the federal defender’s office and provided the Justice Department with information that helped form the basis of the revised indictment against Trump, his valet Walt Nauta and a third defendant, Carlos De Oliveira, the court filing says.

Prosecutors described the witness interaction in a filing that seeks a hearing in Florida about potential conflicts of interest involving the defense lawyer, Stanley Woodward, who also represents Nauta. Woodward

declined to comment.

“The target letter to Trump Employee 4 crystallized a conflict of interest arising from Mr. Woodward’s concurrent representation of Trump Employee 4 and Nauta,” prosecutors wrote.

They added: “Advising Trump Employee 4 to correct his sworn testimony would result in testimony incriminating Mr. Woodward’s other client, Nauta; but permitting Trump Employee 4’s false testimony to stand uncorrected would leave Trump Employee 4 exposed to criminal charges for perjury.”

In the filing, the Justice Department also sought to explain its use of grand juries in both Washington and Florida, where charges were ultimately filed. U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon, a Florida judge presiding over the case, had earlier asked about the legal propriety of using grand juries in both districts.

Prosecutors said they continued using the Washington grand jury even after charges were filed in Florida for the express purpose of investigating potential false statements by witnesses in Washington. The Washington grand jury completed its term last week, they said.

A trial has been set for May 20, 2024, in the classified documents case. Trump has pleaded not guilty and denied any wrongdoing.

Trump is facing another prosecution by Smith, over efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election, as well as a criminal case in Georgia over attempts to subvert that state’s vote and another in New York in connection with hush money payments to a porn actor.

# Mexico raises fears over Texas’ floating barrier

*Associated Press*

AUSTIN, Texas — Mexico’s government has repeatedly raised concerns with the U.S. about large buoys Texas put on the Rio Grande to deter migrants and agreements between the two countries could suffer if the floating barrier remains in place, a State Department official said in court Tuesday.

The testimony sought to reinforce what the Biden administration argues are the diplomatic stakes over wrecking-ball-sized buoys that Texas Gov. Greg Abbott authorized this summer as part of the Republican’s increasingly hardline measures in the name of curbing the flow of migrants crossing the border.

U.S. District Judge David Ezra did not immediately rule at the conclusion of the hearing Tuesday in Austin. At one point, Ezra said the issue centered on whether Abbott has the power to unilaterally try stopping what the governor has described as an “invasion” on America’s southern border.

“Mexico has sensitivities

about sovereignty and doesn’t want to be seen as a lesser partner to the United States,” said Hillary Quam, the State Department’s coordinator for border affairs between U.S. and Mexico.

In Austin, Quam said Mexico has raised concerns “at the highest diplomatic levels” with the U.S. in the short time that the buoys — which stretch roughly the length of a handful of soccer fields on a portion of the river near the Texas city of Eagle Pass — have been on the water. Quam said infrastructure projects between the countries and Mexico’s commitments to delivering water to the U.S. could stall over the barrier.

The hearing was held days after Texas repositioned the barrier closer to U.S. soil. During a trip Monday to Eagle Pass, Abbott said the barrier was moved “out of an abundance of caution” after what he described as allegations that they had drifted to Mexico’s side of the river. He added that he did not know whether the allegations were true.

# Hundreds evacuated after LA hospital loses power

*Associated Press*

LOS ANGELES — A succession of power outages at a Los Angeles hospital prompted the evacuation of 28 patients in critical condition to other hospitals early Tuesday, while 213 other patients were moved to another building in the medical center, and a baby was delivered by flashlight, authorities said.

The power failure blacked out Adventist Health White Memorial’s main six-story building, disabling elevators, said Fire Chief Kristin M. Crowley. More than 100 firefighters and numerous ambulances were sent to the facility.

The building includes OB-GYN and neonatal intensive care, Crowley said.

Power was finally restored at about 2:30 p.m. Tuesday and most patients were returned to their rooms, the hospital said.

The hospital originally lost power at 3 a.m. Monday after Tropical Storm Hilary dumped record rainfall on the city, and backup generators kicked in, John Raffoul, the hospital president, said. But then another blackout was reported at 11:45 p.m. Monday, authorities said.

A baby boy was born at the hospital after the emergency power failed.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Woman who slammed car into wall sentenced

**OH** CLEVELAND — An Ohio woman convicted of murder in the death of her boyfriend and a friend after authorities said she deliberately slammed her car into a brick wall at 100 mph has been sentenced to 15 years to life in prison.

Mackenzie Shirilla, 19, who was 17 at the time of the July 2022 crash in the Cleveland suburb of Strongsville, was convicted last week of four counts each of murder and felonious assault as well as aggravated vehicular homicide and other crimes.

Killed in the crash were Shirilla's boyfriend Dominic Russo, 20, and Davion Flanagan, 19. Tim Troup of the Cuyahoga County prosecutor's office argued that the defendant had a tumultuous relationship with Russo that she meant to end "and she took everybody that was in the car with her."

Common Pleas Court Judge Nancy Margaret Russo last week called her actions "controlled, methodical, deliberate, intentional and purposeful."

"This was not reckless driving. This was murder," Russo said.

## Man pleads guilty to planning airport attack

**MD** SILVER SPRING — A Maryland man charged in 2019 with planning an Islamic State-inspired attack at a Washington, D.C., area shopping and entertainment complex pleaded guilty on Monday to engaging in a separate plot to drive a stolen van into a crowd of people at a nearby air-

port.

Rondell Henry's plea agreement with Justice Department prosecutors could lead to his release from federal custody as soon as October, when a judge is scheduled to sentence him in the airport plot, which Henry abandoned.

Henry, who has remained in custody for over four years, didn't harm anybody before police arrested him.

Henry, 32, of Germantown, Md., pleaded guilty to attempting to perform an act of violence at an international airport, court records show.

Henry admits that he stole a U-Haul van from a parking garage in Alexandria, Va., drove it to Dulles International Airport in Virginia and entered a terminal building on March 27, 2019.

## Woman arrested after threatening Trump

**IL** CHICAGO — Federal agents arrested a Chicago-area woman Monday on a complaint accusing her of sending emails threatening to shoot former President Donald Trump and his son Barron, according to federal prosecutors and a criminal complaint.

Tracy Marie Fiorenza, 41, was arrested Monday morning on a charge of transmitting threats to kill or injure, according to the U.S. attorney's office in Chicago. The case was filed earlier this month in U.S. District Court in southern Florida.

"I will state that I will shoot Donald Trump Sr. AND Barron Trump straight in the face at any opportunity I get!" Fiorenza said in a May 21 email to the head of an educational institution in the Palm Beach, Fla., ar-

ea, according to an affidavit accompanying the complaint.

Donald Trump's primary residence is in Palm Beach.

Fiorenza allegedly wrote a similar email on June 5, saying she would "slam a bullet" into Barron Trump "with his father IN SELF DEFENSE!," according to the affidavit submitted by a U.S. Secret Service agent.

Neither the headmaster nor the school where the emails were allegedly sent was named in the charging documents.

## Officer accused of hitting suspect with car

**WI** GREEN BAY — A Green Bay police officer pleaded not guilty Monday to felony misconduct after he struck a man with his squad car following a 2021 traffic stop.

Matthew Knutson, a 13-year member of the Green Bay police force, also pleaded not guilty to misdemeanor negligent operation of a vehicle. He was placed on paid administrative leave in October, and charges were filed in April.

Knutson made a traffic stop after a vehicle appeared to not yield a right of way, according to a complaint. Video has shown the driver of the car running away as Knutson pursues in his squad car and another officer chases on foot.

Knutson's squad car later strikes the man, knocking him to the ground, where he is then apprehended by officers.

## Delivery driver loses FedEx job after attack

**MS** JACKSON — A Black FedEx delivery driver who says two white

men shot at and chased him in Mississippi in 2022 has now been fired from his job, he and his attorney said Monday.

Last Thursday, a Mississippi judge cited police errors in declaring a mistrial for the father and son charged in the attack.

A detective testified about failing to give prosecutors and defense attorneys a copy of a videotaped police interview with former driver D'Monterrio Gibson.

Carlos Moore, an attorney who has represented Gibson in a civil lawsuit, provided AP with a copy of an email Gibson received from FedEx on Monday.

FedEx fired Gibson because he did not accept a part-time, non-courier job that the company offered in mid-July, Moore said, adding that he did not know whether the company gave Gibson a deadline to accept.

## 3 people suffer burns after food truck fire

**WI** SHEBOYGAN — A fire following a possible gas explosion in a food truck Monday left three people with severe burns and needing life support, authorities said.

When fire crews arrived the fire already had been extinguished but three people needed life support at the scene before being transported to a hospital, the Sheboygan Fire Department said.

The fire occurred shortly before 6 p.m. at Vollrath Park, which hosts food trucks on Mondays, news outlets reported. Sheboygan sits along Lake Michigan about 60 miles north of Milwaukee.

— From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit [www.stripes.com](http://www.stripes.com).

Reporting  
World, National  
and Military News

# Conference realignment set to cause headaches

Associated Press

Throughout Terry Keenan's seven decades of following West Virginia football, little has gotten in the way when he wants to see his beloved Mountaineers.

Conference realignment promises to be a headache.

College sports and the traveling fan are on course for a big reset in 2024. TV money has lured Southern Cal, UCLA, Oregon and Washington to the Big Ten. Arizona, Arizona State, Colorado and Utah will join the growing Big 12. And Oklahoma and Texas will head to the Southeastern Conference.

Although a few regional rivalries have been created or preserved, longer trips will be the norm.

How long? A trip between Oregon and Rutgers is more than 2,400 air miles, would require a stopover and take at least 7½ hours if things go perfectly. It's less for schools like Southern Cal, UCLA or Washington that would have nonstop flights available.

Time will tell whether football fans will embrace this new concept, or whether realignment will put a dagger into the heart of the road warrior for games that

aren't marquee matchups. For every chance for a new Big Ten school to play at Ohio State, there will be trips such as Utah playing UCF in Orlando, Fla., or Arizona State traveling to Morgantown, W.Va.

Keenan isn't thrilled, although he still has a year to figure it out, especially after the conference schedules are announced.

"Just speaking for myself, I don't know. It's a bad deal, really," said Keenan, 74. "We're on the East Coast and everybody else is in the Midwest or on the West Coast. Probably the majority of the fans won't be able to do that. It puts a burden on them if they want to see the games in person."

Roy Nwaissier has attended every Southern California game, home or away, since 1992, except in 2020 when fans were prohibited at some games because of the pandemic. One year, his best friend moved his fall wedding to a Friday to accommodate Nwaissier.

Realignment isn't going to do him any favors.

"I'm just a little concerned that moving to the Big Ten is going to exponentially increase the number of things that could go wrong

and result in me missing a game and breaking my streak," Nwaissier said.

While distance and cost are the greatest factors, there are other things to consider — weather-related flight delays, cold weather destinations late in the season, the quality of an opponent and whether there's anything else worth doing in a far-away destination.

"It's going to be terrible," said Tom Aiello, a Valdosta State history professor and author of several sports books, including one on the Bayou Classic between Grambling State and Southern. "College football was built on rivalry games, and regional rivalries at that. And those regional rivalries were largely built on some kind of personal issue. And all that goes away in these kind of manufactured conferences that they're creating."

Paying for all the long flights to new places might seem daunting, but domestic leisure traffic is expected to remain strong in 2023 and 2024, the nonprofit U.S. Travel Association said. Government figures show that while average fares skyrocketed last year as travel began recovering from COVID-19 restrictions,

prices have eased. But hotel rates have kept rising: the average room costs \$156.47 per night, up 19% from August 2019, according to commercial real estate data firm CoStar.

How far fans will go to see their favorite team depends on the situation, said David Tyler, an associate professor at UMass and an expert in sports rivalries.

"There is a limit in terms of the distance that people can travel for these," Tyler said. "But when they're traveling for games, it's typically about the experience when they're traveling those big distances. It's about the experience and the camaraderie and the other people more than the game itself."

While a core group of fans will be willing to travel a certain distance, games requiring that much more time on a plane will hurt attendance, Tyler said. "That's when you'll really see those die-hards not willing to travel to those games."

The first few years of realignment shouldn't make a difference, according to two experts in sports rivalries. Joe Cobbs, a professor at Northern Kentucky, said there will initially be a "novelty effect" for traveling fans.

## New first-down rule may be lost on college football fans

Associated Press

The NCAA rule change that drew the most notice in the offseason might go mostly unnoticed by fans once the college football season is underway.

For the first season since 1967, the clock will continue to run, as it does in the NFL, when a team makes a first down on a play that ends inbounds rather than stopping until the chains are set and the referee signals ready for play. The exception is during the last two minutes of the second and fourth quarters.

The primary rationale for the change was to cut the number of plays to reduce players' potential injury exposures, national supervisor of officials Steve Shaw said — not to necessarily shorten the nearly 3½ hours it takes to play the average game.

The importance of limiting exposures will grow as more teams play in the College Football Playoff. The playoff goes from four to 12 teams in the 2024-25 season, and further expansion is possible after that.

The NCAA Football Rules Committee projects the new rule will trim seven or eight plays from the average of about 180 per game in 2022. An eight-play reduction over a 12-game season would save 96 potential injury exposures per team, and there would be over 100 fewer exposures for teams that advance to the playoff.

Shaw said he expects consternation about the rule to wear off much like changes to blocking-below-the-waist rules did last year. The blocking rule drew initial outcry from coaches, Shaw said, but the

transition went smoothly and the net result has been fewer lower-body injuries.

"No one is going to look up in the middle of the first quarter or middle of the second and say, 'They didn't stop the clock on a first down and that just ruined this drive. That's just awful,'" Shaw said. "It's just one of those things that will disappear, and when you get your final numbers at the end, you may see seven plays less in a game that no one would have known at all."

A couple of other changes address pace of play. One bars a team from calling consecutive timeouts during the same dead-ball period. The second eliminates playing an untimed down when a penalty occurs as time expires in the first and third quarters. The play following the penalty will carry over to the following quarter.



# US sprinter Thomas knows role of sleep

Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary — Rest assured, Gabby Thomas is a big believer in the power of a good night's sleep.

Because to dream big, the American sprinter must first dream well.

Thomas wrote a paper on the subject of rest as part of her recently completed master's degree from the University of Texas. It's a look at racial disparities in sleep disorders and evaluates sleep epidemiology among Black Americans.

Her takeaway is simple: Catching valuable shut-eye matters. A lot.

She's going to need her rest given what lies ahead for her at the world championships. Thomas began Wednesday by winning her first-round heat of the 200 meters. The semifinals and final follow the next two days before the 4x100 relay (final on Saturday) and possibly the 4x400 relay (Sunday).

Good night, indeed.

"The biggest takeaway for me is that sleep is a public health crisis and as a society, we don't recognize that," said Thomas, who earned her undergraduate degree in neurobiology and global

health from Harvard. "Lifestyle stressors have a significant impact on sleep and is actually linked to many chronic health problems later in life. So while I do prioritize my own sleep so that I can be one of the best runners in the world, it's also because I'm very aware of the consequences of not getting good sleep now later in life."

Thomas said sleep holds as much importance to her as a track workout. Or a gym workout. Or a physio session. Or proper nutrition.

"It is most definitely the most important part of my training, and I can't stress that enough," she said.

She's hardly alone in her belief about the benefits of sound sleep. Shot putter Ryan Crouser defended his world title last weekend. As much as working on his technique, he credits sleep for playing a role in making him a champion.

"A rule of thumb of athletes at the elite level, they're all very good sleepers," Crouser said. "The No. 1 thing you can do to increase your recovery is optimizing your sleep."

Thomas sees a direct correlation between good-quality sleep

time and her fast times on the track. The 26-year-old has the top 200 time (21.60 seconds) in the world this season, making her one of the favorites over a crowded field that includes newly minted 100-meter champion Sha'Carri Richardson, who was the fastest Wednesday in qualifying.

"Sleep is so easy to neglect," said Thomas, who was hampered by a hamstring injury last season and missed the worlds in the 200. "We live in a society where sleep is really such an afterthought. Not getting enough sleep is an epidemic in our country and it's something that is not talked about or taken seriously."

Thomas would like to see the sleep and rest folded into the ever-growing conversation about mental health.

"Not getting eight hours of sleep, that has really, really bad health outcomes," Thomas said. "It's scary."

Catching good-quality sleep is far from easy for athletes who travel the world, skipping through time zones, sometimes from week to week. Circadian rhythms get interrupted. Routines get altered. Budapest, for instance, is seven hours ahead of

Thomas' home in Texas. Often in track, athletes will spend part of their season competing across Europe. For major events, athletes try to come over days or weeks in advance so they can adjust.

Simple things Crouser does to keep his sleep schedule on track include limiting the blue-light exposure from the phone two or three hours before drifting off. He stops eating at least two hours before going to sleep. He uses blackout curtains in the room, and even tapes his mouth to ensure he's breathing out of his nose.

Women's 20-kilometer race-walk winner Maria Perez of Spain took action after tossing and turning the night before her race because of nerves.

"Was forced to call to our doctor for help and medicines to help me take ... rest," Perez explained. "It helped and I felt more or less fresh in the morning."

A well-rested Thomas has been able to incorporate even more into her training. She's been running everything from the 100 to the 400 this season. By dabbling in the 400, Thomas feels even stronger in the 200.

# Trout returns to lineup, but faltering Angels lose again

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Three-time AL MVP Mike Trout returned to the Los Angeles Angels' lineup Tuesday night after missing 38 games with a broken bone in his left hand.

The Angels activated Trout before they hosted the Reds, and he took his usual No. 2 spot in the order while playing center field.

Cincinnati scored three unearned runs in the fifth inning of a 4-3 victory.

Trout went 1-for-4 with an infield single.

Trout hadn't played since July 3, when he broke the hamate

bone by fouling off a pitch in San Diego. The 32-year-old superstar had surgery to repair the break, but he is back in the lineup seven weeks after the injury.

With the Angels' playoff hopes hanging by a thread, Trout decided he couldn't wait any longer, even while his healing hand still gets unusually painful when he hits in the batting cage.

"It's definitely sore, but I've talked to some doctors and they've told me it can't get injured more," Trout said. "There's definitely going to be soreness up there, but I'm just

happy to be out there with the guys."

The Halos (61-65) went 16-22 in Trout's absence, including 11 losses in their past 18 games to fall to the fringe of the AL playoff race despite another stellar season from AL MVP frontrunner Shohei Ohtani and the acquisition of several veterans at the trade deadline.

"We're not out of it," Trout said. "I've seen some crazy stuff. We've got a group of guys in there that just won't stop fighting. ... Obviously, this isn't where we wanted to be right now, but we're not coming in and just giving up."

Trout has never won a playoff game, and he has appeared in only three postseason contests, all back in 2014. His Angels currently have the majors' longest active streaks of losing seasons (seven) and non-playoff seasons (eight, tied with Detroit).

That's more than enough motivation for Trout to hit through some pain for the final 37 games of the regular season, he said.

"We're running out of time here, so I'm expecting to try to be in there every day," Trout said.

Trout is batting .263 with 18 homers, 44 RBIs and a .862 OPS this season.

# Nationals extend Yankees' skid to nine

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The New York Yankees' losing streak hit nine games for the first time in 41 years as Tommy Kahnle allowed a go-ahead homer to CJ Abrams with two outs in the eighth inning and the Washington Nationals claimed a 2-1 win on Tuesday night.

Winless since beating the Marlins on Aug. 11 in Miami, the Yankees are on their first nine-game skid since Sept. 13-21, 1982 — the final month of a 79-win season when they employed three managers (Bob Lemon, Gene Michael and Clyde King).

"Pretty down but we've got to fight through it," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said.

Abrams snapped a 1-1 tie by hitting a first-pitch changeup from Kahnle (1-2) off the right-field foul pole for his 13th homer of the season.

Mason Thompson (4-4) earned the win and Kyle Finnegan picked up his 22nd save in 29 chances.

Carter Kieboom homered in the third for Washington.

**Guardians 8, Dodgers 3:** Kole Calhoun's three-run homer capped a five-run seventh inning as host Cleveland sent Los Angeles to just its third loss in the month of August.

The Dodgers are 17-3 in August and 25-10 since the All-Star break.

Oscar Gonzalez also homered for the Guardians.

**Diamondbacks 6, Rangers 3:** Zac Gallen (14-5) struck out 11 over six stellar innings, Alek Thomas had a spectacular diving catch on the warning track for the first out of the ninth and host Arizona held off skidding Texas.

Tommy Pham extended his hitting streak to 13 games for the D-backs, who swept the two-game series and have won five straight games, helping their cause in a crowded National League wild-card race. They're currently a half-game ahead of the Giants and Reds for the final spot.

The Rangers have lost six straight and are just a half-game ahead of the Astros for first place in the AL West.

**Braves 3, Mets 2:** Eddie Rosario hit a two-run homer in the second inning, Marcell Ozuna had a solo shot in the fifth and major league-leading Atlanta held on to beat visiting New York.

The Braves took a 2-0 lead on Rosario's 20th homer. Ozuna made it 3-0 with his 27th homer and third in the last two games.

New York (59-68) had won seven of nine but dropped 23 games back and are in

fourth place in the NL East.

**Mariners 6, White Sox 3:** Josh Rojas hit a two-run homer and six relievers combined for five effective innings, helping visiting Seattle beat Chicago for its season-high eighth straight win.

After Bryan Woo tossed four innings of one-run ball in his return from the injured list, Seattle's bullpen took over. Justin Topa (3-3) got four outs for the win, and Andrés Muñoz earned his eighth save by striking out Luis Robert Jr. with a runner on first.

The Mariners (71-55) moved a season-best 16 games over .500. They stayed in third in the AL West, a half-game back of Houston.

**Blue Jays 6, Orioles 3 (10):** Brandon Belt homered on Mike Baumann's first pitch in the 10th inning, Daulton Varsho hit a two-run home run in the second and visiting Toronto defeated Baltimore.

The loss ended the Orioles' three-game winning streak and cut their lead in the AL East over Tampa Bay to two games.

Toronto added a run in the 10th on a wild pitch by Baumann (9-1), the first reliever in Orioles history to win his first nine decisions.

**Phillies 4, Giants 3:** Trea Turner had a two-run single in the ninth inning that bounced off Camilo Doval's glove and into center field, giving host Philadelphia a victory over San Francisco.

Philadelphia increased its lead to four games over San Francisco in the National League wild-card race. The Giants have lost 12 of their last 16 games.

Bryce Harper hit his 11th homer of the season and went 2-for-3 with a walk.

**Tigers 8, Cubs 6:** Andy Ibañez had his first two-homer game, leading host Detroit past Chicago.

Tyler Holton (3-2) got the victory with 1½ innings of relief. Alex Lange pitched the ninth for his 19th save.

Dansby Swanson hit a two-run homer for Chicago.

**Rays 12, Rockies 4:** Osleivis Basabe hit a grand slam for his first major league homer and capped a nine-run eighth inning for AL wild card-leading Tampa Bay over visiting Colorado.

Basabe is filling at shortstop for Wander Franco, who is on MLB's administrative list while authorities in the Dominican Republic investigate him for an alleged relationship with a minor.

Yandy Díaz went 3-for-5 in his fifth straight multi-hit game, raising his AL-leading average to .328.

**Brewers 7, Twins 3:** Tyrone Taylor hit a go-ahead RBI single and highlighted a five-run sixth inning as host Milwaukee beat Minnesota in an interleague matchup of division leaders.

Willy Adames of NL Central-leading Milwaukee and Christian Vázquez of AL Central-best Minnesota hit two-run homers.

The Brewers rallied against reliever Dylan Floro (4-6) after getting held in check by starter Bailey Ober, who left after 78 pitches.

**Astros 7, Red Sox 3:** Kyle Tucker hit a two-run homer and Justin Verlander (9-6) threw six scoreless innings to help host Houston beat Boston.

Boston manager Alex Cora and right fielder Alex Verdugo were ejected for arguing balls and strikes as the Red Sox lost a second straight game at Houston.

Verlander allowed five hits and struck out a season-high nine in his fourth start since returning to the Astros in a trade with the Mets.

**Pirates 6, Cardinals 3:** Andrew McCutchen's two-run homer was the 299th of his career and capped a five-run fifth inning against struggling Adam Wainwright, and host Pittsburgh sent St. Louis to its sixth loss in seven games.

Wainwright remained stuck on 198 victories in his career. He retired the side in order in the first three innings but was charged with six runs in 4⅓ innings, giving up seven hits, striking out three and walking one.

**Marlins 3, Padres 0:** Jesús Luzardo (9-8) threw a two-hit shutout over six innings and Jorge Soler hit his 33rd homer of the season to lead visiting Miami past San Diego in a matchup of National League wild-card hopefuls.

The Marlins (62-52) entered the game having lost five of their last six games and moved five games ahead of the Padres (60-67) in the race for a wild-card spot.

**Athletics 5, Royals 4:** Shea Langeliers homered for the second consecutive game, and host Oakland spoiled the return of former Cy Young Award winner Zack Greinke by beating Kansas City.

Greinke had been out for two weeks with a right elbow injury before being activated off the injured list just before Tuesday's game. The 39-year-old looked sharp while throwing 53 pitches and allowing two hits in four scoreless innings. He had five strikeouts and allowed one runner past first base.