

## N. Korea simulates nuclear attacks on South

*Associated Press*

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea said Thursday its latest missile launches simulated “scorched earth” nuclear strikes on South Korea and that it’s also been rehearsing an occupation of its rival’s territory in the event of conflict.

Pyeongyang has previously tested nuclear-capable missiles and described how it would use them in potential wars with South Korea and the U.S. But the North’s disclosure of detailed war plans reaffirmed its aggressive nuclear doctrine to intimidate its opponents, as it escalates its protest of the ongoing South Korean-U.S. military exercises that it views as a major security threat, observers say.

North Korea’s military said it fired two tactical ballistic missiles from the capital on Wednesday night to practice “scorched earth strikes” at major command centers and oper-

ational airfields in South Korea, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

The North’s military said the missiles carried out their simulated strikes through air bursts, suggesting it confirmed the explosions of dummy warheads at a set altitude.

North Korea said its missile tests were response to the United States’ flyover of long-range B-1B bombers for a joint aerial training with South Korea earlier Wednesday as part of the allies’ field exercises.

“(The aerial drill) is a serious threat to (North Korea) as it was just pursuant to the scenario for a preemptive nuclear strike at” North Korea, the Korean People’s Army general staff said. “The KPA will never overlook the rash acts of the U.S. forces and the (South Korean) military gangsters.”

The missile launches Wednesday were the latest in the North’s barrage of weapons

tests since last year.

According to South Korean and Japanese assessments, the two short-range missiles travelled a distance of 225-250 miles at the maximum altitude of 30 miles before landing in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff called the launches “a grave provocation” that threatens international peace and violates U.N. Security Council resolutions that ban any ballistic launches by North Korea. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said the U.S. commitment to the defense of South Korea and Japan remains “ironclad.”

South Korean and Japanese authorities said their warplanes conducted combined aerial drills with U.S. B-1B bombers respectively on Wednesday. South Korea’s Defense Ministry said that Wednesday’s B-1B deployment is the 10th flyover by U.S. bombers on the Korean

Peninsula this year.

North Korea is extremely sensitive to the deployment of U.S. B-1B bombers, which can carry a huge number of conventional weapons. The North describes the bombers as “nuclear strategic” although the planes were switched to conventional weaponry in the 1990s.

On Aug. 21, the U.S. and South Korean militaries kicked off their summer Ulchi Freedom Shield computer-simulated command post exercise. During this year’s training, slated to end later Thursday, the allies have included more than 30 kinds of field exercises, such as Wednesday’s joint aerial exercise involving the B-1B aircraft.

North Korea calls major U.S.-involved military drills on and near the Korean Peninsula preparation for invasion. Washington and Seoul officials maintain their drills are defensive. The U.S. stations about 28,000 troops in South Korea.

## Tropical Storm heads to ocean after hitting Fla., Ga.

*Associated Press*

PERRY, Fla. — Tropical Storm Idalia headed out to sea Thursday after thrashing parts of Florida and Georgia with punishing rains and destructive winds, leaving residents to begin the arduous process of clearing fallen trees, restoring power and picking through the debris of devastated homes.

Thus far, authorities have only confirmed only one death, that of a man hit by a falling tree in Georgia. But the storm’s ferocious winds shredded homes in Florida’s Big Bend area, where Idalia roared ashore as a major hurricane. As many as a half-million customers were without

power at one point in Florida and Georgia as the storm ripped down power poles.

After pounding Florida, Idalia swung east, flooding many of South Carolina’s beaches and leaving some in the state and North Carolina without power before heading back into the Atlantic Ocean. Forecasters said the weakened storm should continue heading away from the U.S. for several days, although officials in Bermuda warned that Idalia could hit the island early next week as a tropical storm.

Rescue and repair efforts were in full force in Florida’s remote Big Bend area, where Ida-

lia roared ashore Wednesday as a major hurricane. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said he planned to tour the area with federal emergency officials on Thursday. He noted that because the storm came ashore in the remote region where Florida’s Panhandle curves into the peninsula, Idalia was far less destructive than feared, providing only glancing blows to Tampa Bay and other more populated areas. In contrast, Hurricane Ian last year hit the heavily populated Fort Myers area, leaving 149 dead in the state.

“I think this one, there was definitely a lot of destruction but it was so much debris and so

much woods and that’s just going to require a lot to clean all that up,” DeSantis said.

No hurricane-related deaths were officially confirmed in Florida, but the state’s highway patrol reported two people killed in separate weather-related crashes just hours before Idalia made landfall.

The storm was still a menace when it reached Valdosta, Ga., about 80 miles inland.

Nearly all of the 600 tarps that officials had set aside to cover damaged roofs had been claimed by Thursday morning, said Meghan Barwick, spokeswoman for surrounding Lowndes County.

# Time capsule thought empty has coins

By DOUG G. WARE  
*Stars and Stripes*

A nearly 200-year-old time capsule that appeared to include only dirt when opened earlier this week at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., has now yielded several old items found in the sediment, officials said Wednesday.

The capsule, a lead box about 1 cubic foot in size, was found a few months ago when workers were renovating the academy's bronze monument of Thaddeus Kosciuszko, a Polish-born engineer who fortified West Point in

the late 18th century. When archaeologists opened the box during an unveiling event on Monday, nothing recognizable was immediately apparent.

"We are not certain if it's soil or mud or dust," Paul Hudson, a West Point archaeologist, said at the time. "It may not be anything."

Not so fast, the academy said in an update Wednesday.

"[The] time capsule from 1828 opened by the U.S. Military Academy's archeologist team during a ceremony on Monday contained six American silver

coins and a commemorative medal," the academy said in a statement. "The historic artifacts were discovered in the sediment."

Among the artifacts scientists uncovered were a liberty dollar coin from 1800, a 50 cent piece from 1828, a quarter from 1818, a dime from 1827, a 5 cent coin from 1795, a penny from 1827 and an Erie Canal commemorative medal from 1826, which was issued to celebrate the completion of the Erie Canal in upstate New York in 1825.

"This is an incredible story

that involves so many of West Point's heroes and many of them are the Army's and our nation's heroes," said Brig. Gen. Shane Reeves, the dean of the academy's academic board. "We should reflect upon and be inspired by our history to pause and realize we have the immense honor and responsibility to continue the legacy that Kosciuszko started."

The academy said the "historical preservation process" is ongoing and there could be more updates on what was found in the box.

## AFRICOM monitoring apparent coup in Gabon

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. Africa Command said it is monitoring an apparent coup in Gabon, a country that has played a key role in the American military's network of crisis response outposts on the continent, officials said.

On Wednesday, Gabon's military leaders announced they had seized power following the reelection of President Ali Bongo Ondimba and that Gen. Brice Oligui Nguema will serve as the country's transitional leader.

Events in Gabon could have implications for U.S. military operations in Africa. The country has played host to a cooperative security location, which functions as a bare-bones launching pad for quick-reaction missions.

Establishing such facilities became a priority for AFRICOM following the deadly 2012 attack on a diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya. Since then, numerous outposts have been set up across Africa.

Former AFRICOM boss Gen.

David Rodriguez said in 2015 that sites such as the one in Gabon "enable us to be within four hours of all the high-risk, high-threat (diplomatic) posts."

The broader region has a recent history of political instability. In 2019, 80 combat-equipped U.S. troops were deployed to the country to monitor potential violence in the nearby Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Soon after their arrival, Gabon's military launched a coup attempt and seized control of state radio. That revolt was short-lived, with the government regaining control the same day.

Since then, AFRICOM has maintained ties. In January, Gen. Michael Langley was in Libreville, the capital of Gabon, to meet with political and military leaders.

"We're grateful for our strong and evolving partnership here and the continued cooperation to help strengthen security in the region for years to come," Langley said at the time.

## US B-2 bomber lands in Norway for the first time

By JENNIFER H. SVAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

An American B-2 Spirit made a historic pit stop in Norway this week, marking the first landing of the stealth bomber in the Scandinavian country, the Air Force said.

On Tuesday, the plane arrived at Orland Air Base for hot pit refueling, a procedure that minimizes the jet's time on the ground and allows it to quickly gas up without shutting down its engines before relaunching.

"This clever technique extends our reach, establishing temporary operational hubs at strategically chosen and even unpredictable locations," Gen. James Hecker, commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa, said in a statement Wednesday.

The B-2 is one of three Spirit bombers from Whiteman Air Base in Missouri that are deployed to Iceland's Keflavik Air Base.

About 150 airmen from the 509th Bomb Wing also deployed Aug. 13 in support of the overseas mission, marking the

jets' first return to Europe since the wing's last deployment to the Continent in 2021.

The aircraft began flying again in May after a five-month grounding of the fleet for safety checks, prompted by a fire in one of the jets in December.

The Air Force has yet to release the findings of its investigation into the cause of the fire.

While in Europe, the B-2 bombers are training with NATO and U.S. Air Force units for an undisclosed duration.

The brief mission to Norway comes as the Air Force continues to practice its agile combat employment concept. One of its goals is to move aircraft and airmen around to different airfields and avoid making them a static target in the event of a large-scale conflict.

In June, two Texas-based B-1B Lancer bombers landed for the first time at Lulea Kallax Air Base in Sweden while deployed to RAF Fairford in England.

All 20 of the U.S. B-2s are based at Whiteman.

## McConnell appears to freeze again

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell appeared to briefly freeze up and was unable to answer a question from a reporter at an event in Kentucky on Wednesday, weeks after he had a similar episode in Washington.

As seen on video from a local news station, the 81-year-old McConnell was asked whether he would run for reelection in 2026. The senator asked the reporter to repeat the question before trailing off and staring straight ahead for about 10 seconds.

An aide standing at the front of the room with McConnell then asked him whether he heard the question and repeated it to him. When McConnell did not answer, the aide announced to the room that “we’re going to need a minute,” and McConnell continued to stare ahead. In all, he was silent for around 30 seconds.

The latest incident in Covington on Wednesday only adds to the questions in recent months about McConnell’s health and whether the Republican, who was first elected to the Senate in 1984 and has served as GOP leader since 2007, will remain in Congress and in his leadership post. His reaction was similar to an occurrence in July, when he froze for about 20 seconds at a news conference in the Capitol. That time, he went back to his office with aides and then returned to answer more questions.

McConnell eventually answered two additional questions at the Kentucky event — though not the one about a 2026 campaign — and appeared to have some difficulty speaking. The aide then ended the news conference and McConnell slowly left the room.

In March, McConnell suffered a concussion and a broken rib after falling and hitting his head after a dinner event at a hotel. He did not return to the Senate for almost six weeks.

# Liberals, experts seek to use Constitution to nix Trump bid

Associated Press

As former President Donald Trump dominates the Republican presidential primary, some liberal groups and legal experts contend that a rarely used clause of the Constitution prevents him from being president after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

The 14th Amendment bars from office anyone who once took an oath to uphold the Constitution but then “engaged” in “insurrection or rebellion” against it. A growing number of legal scholars say the post-Civil War clause applies to Trump after his role in trying to overturn the 2020 presidential election and encouraging his backers to storm the U.S. Capitol.

Two liberal nonprofits pledge court challenges should states’ election officers place Trump on the ballot despite those objections.

The effort is likely to trigger a chain of lawsuits and appeals across several states that ultimately would lead to the U.S. Supreme Court, possibly in the midst of the 2024 primary season. The matter adds even more potential legal chaos to a nomination process already roiled by the front-runner facing four criminal trials.

Now Trump’s very ability to run could be litigated as Republicans are scheduled to start choosing their nominee, starting with the Iowa caucuses on Jan. 15.

“There’s a very real prospect these cases will be active during the primaries,” said Gerard Magliocca, a law professor at Indiana University, warning that there could be different outcomes in different states before the Supreme Court makes a final decision. “Imagine you have an opinion that says he’s not eligible and then there’s another primary where he’s on the ballot.”

Though most litigation is unlikely to begin until October, when states begin to set their ballots for the upcoming primary, the issue has gotten a boost from a recently released law review article written by two prominent conservative law professors, William Baude and Michael Paulsen. They concluded that Trump must be barred from the ballot due to the clause in the third section of the 14th Amendment.

That section bars anyone from Congress, the military, and federal and state offices if they previously took an oath to support the Constitution and “have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof.”

In their article, scheduled to be published in the *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, Baude and Paulsen said they believe the meaning is clear.

“Taking Section Three seriously means excluding from present or future office those who sought to subvert lawful government authority under the Constitution in the aftermath of the 2020 election,” they write.

The issue came up during last week’s Republican presidential debate in Milwaukee, when former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson warned that “this is something that could disqualify him under our rules and under the Constitution.”

In 2021, the nonprofit Free Speech For People sent letters to the top election official in all 50 states requesting Trump’s removal if he were to run again for the presidency. The group’s legal director, Ron Fein, noted that after years of silence, officials are beginning to discuss the matter.

Trump argues that any effort to prevent him from appearing on a state’s ballot amounts to “election interference” — the same way he is characterizing the criminal charges filed against him in New York and Atlanta and by federal prosecutors in Washington, D.C., and Florida.

## Data hints at leaving interest rates unchanged

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — An inflation gauge closely tracked by the Federal Reserve remained low in July, adding to signs of cooling price increases and raising the likelihood that the Fed will leave interest rates unchanged when it next meets in late September.

Thursday’s report from the Commerce Department showed that prices rose 0.2% from June to July, the third straight modest increase. Compared with a year

earlier, prices rose 3.3% in July, up from a 3% annual increase in June. The year-over-year figure, though, is down sharply from the 7% peak it reached a year ago, though still above the Fed’s 2% inflation target.

The latest data follows other recent reports that suggest the economy and the job market may be slowing enough to cool inflation pressures. The number of advertised job openings, for example, tumbled in July, and

fewer Americans are quitting their jobs to seek better opportunities. Both trends ease the pressure on companies to raise pay to find and keep workers — a move that tends to perpetuate inflation as employers raise prices to offset their higher labor costs.

The inflation gauge that was issued Thursday, called the personal consumption expenditures price index, is separate from the better-known consumer price index.



# US agency aims to ease pot restrictions

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has delivered a recommendation to the Drug Enforcement Administration on marijuana policy, and Senate leaders hailed it Wednesday as a first step toward easing federal restrictions on the drug.

HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra said Wednesday on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, that the agency has responded to President Joe Bi-

den's request "to provide a scheduling recommendation for marijuana to the DEA."

"We've worked to ensure that a scientific evaluation be completed and shared expeditiously," he added.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said in a statement that HHS had recommended that marijuana be moved from a Schedule I to a Schedule III controlled substance.

"HHS has done the right thing," Schumer, D-N.Y., said.

"DEA should now follow through on this important step to greatly reduce the harm caused by draconian marijuana laws."

Rescheduling the drug would reduce or potentially eliminate criminal penalties for possession. Marijuana is currently classified as a Schedule I drug, alongside heroin and LSD.

According to the DEA, Schedule I drugs "have no currently accepted medical use in the United States, a lack of accepted safety for use under

medical supervision, and a high potential for abuse."

Schedule III drugs "have a potential for abuse less than substances in Schedules I or II and abuse may lead to moderate or low physical dependence or high psychological dependence." They currently include ketamine and some anabolic steroids.

Biden requested the review in October 2022 as he pardoned thousands of Americans convicted of "simple possession" of marijuana under federal law.

## Forecasters warn of fire risk conditions in Hawaii

Associated Press

HONOLULU — The National Weather Service on Wednesday warned gusty winds and low humidity have increased the risk that fires could spread rapidly in the western parts of each Hawaiian island, three weeks after a deadly blaze tore through a coastal Maui town during a similar alert.

But the agency said winds would not be as powerful compared to Aug. 8 when flames burned down much of Lahaina, killing at least 115 people and destroying more than 2,000 structures. The fire was the deadliest in the U.S. in more

than a century.

Lahaina's flames were fanned by wind gusts topping 60 mph. This time, winds are forecast to be 15 to 30 mph with gusts up to 50 mph, said Maureen Ballard, meteorologist at the agency's Honolulu office.

"There is a magnitude of difference between the wind speeds in this event versus August 8th," Ballard said.

The agency issued a Red Flag Warning for the leeward sides of the Hawaiian Islands through Thursday afternoon. It said gusts, low humidity and dry grasses and trees could contribute to "extreme fire be-

havior." It urged people to delay activities that could throw off sparks.

"It's definitely still something to be concerned about," Ballard said.

The Lahaina fire was fueled by powerful winds whipped up by a combination of Hurricane Dora, which passed some 500 miles to the south, and a very strong high pressure system to the north of the islands.

The cause of the blaze hasn't been determined, but it's possible it was ignited by bare electrical wire and leaning power poles toppled by the strong winds.

Maui's electric utility, Hawaiian Electric, acknowledged its power lines started a wildfire on Maui but faulted county firefighters for declaring the blaze contained and leaving the scene, only to have a second wildfire break out nearby.

Maui County has sued the utility.

As high winds re-entered the weather forecast on Tuesday, the county, Hawaiian Electric and Maj. Gen. Kenneth Hara, head of the Hawaii National Guard, issued a joint statement saying they were working together to minimize the risk of wildfire and ensure safety.

## Critical fire weather arrives in Northern California

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Gusty winds and low humidity brought a high risk of wildfires to the interior of Northern California on Wednesday, and a utility proactively cut electricity to about 8,400 customers to prevent potential ignitions in the blustery conditions.

Red flag warnings for critical fire danger were in effect until 8 p.m. in much of the Sacramento Valley and adjacent areas to the west, the National Weather Ser-

vice said.

Pacific Gas & Electric said shortly before 2 a.m., it began public safety power shutoffs in "targeted high-fire-threat areas" of eight counties. Winds calmed throughout the afternoon, and by 5 p.m. the utility issued a weather "all-clear," saying it would begin the process of restoring electricity.

The gusty northerly winds were generated in the wake of a trough of low pressure that moved through Northern Califor-

nia on Tuesday, the weather service said.

Public safety power shutoffs are intended to prevent fires from starting when power lines are downed by winds or struck by falling trees or windblown debris. Such fires have caused destruction and deaths in California.

The issue of power shutoffs surfaced in Hawaii after the deadly fire on Aug. 8 that destroyed the Maui community of Lahaina.

Wednesday's proactive power

cuts were PG&E's first since 2021. PG&E first implemented the shutoffs in 2019, leaving nearly 2 million people in the San Francisco Bay Area and elsewhere in Northern California without power and drawing fierce criticism.

The utility has since been able to reduce the impact by adding more circuit switches to its grid, allowing it to more precisely determine which customers will lose power, said Paul Moreno, a PG&E spokesperson.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

**Man arrested months after finding bag with \$5K in it**

**CT** TRUMBULL — A Connecticut man says it felt like he won the lottery when he discovered a bag with nearly \$5,000 in cash lying in a parking lot. So, he decided to keep it.

Three months later, he has been charged with larceny.

It turns out the bag, which Trumbull Police said was clearly marked with a bank's insignia and found outside the same bank, contained cash from the town's tax department. There were also "numerous documents" inside identifying the rightful owner of the cash as the town of Trumbull, police said.

The man, Robert Withington, 56, of Trumbull, contends he didn't steal the money and didn't notice anything inside the bag indicating who the owner was.

The money went missing on May 30. Police said an employee in the Trumbull Tax Collector's office couldn't find the bag after arriving at the bank to make a deposit during regular business hours, according to a police news release. Over the next several months, detectives learned that the bag had been "inadvertently dropped on the ground outside of the bank" and Withington had picked it up.

**Prisoner who used jet ski to escape in 2022 is captured**

**WV** LEWISBURG — A convicted rapist who authorities say used a jet ski during an escape from an Arkansas prison last year was arrested Tuesday in West Virginia, the U.S. Marshals Service said.

Samuel Paul Hartman, 39,

was arrested along with his wife, his mother and his mother's boyfriend at a hotel in Lewisburg, the Marshals Service said in a news release.

The women are accused of helping Hartman escape in August 2022 from the East Arkansas Regional Unit in Briceys.

Hartman was on a work detail in a field near the detention facility when a pickup truck with the women inside approached. Several gunshots were fired at a corrections officer from the waiting vehicle as Hartman ran to it. The vehicle fled to two jet skis staged near the Mississippi River not far from the prison, the statement said.

Hartman was sentenced to life in prison in 2013 for a rape conviction out of Franklin County, Ark.

**In video, ranger draws weapon on activists**

**NV** NIXON — A tribal ranger's conduct is under review after he pointed a weapon Sunday at environmental activists and plowed his patrol vehicle through their blockade on the road leading to the annual Burning Man counterculture festival in the Nevada desert.

The incident unfolded on a rural stretch of highway on the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe reservation in northwestern Nevada.

A news release from the tribe's chairman, James J. Phoenix, described the incident as a ranger using his patrol vehicle to clear "debris" out of the roadway after climate activists refused to leave.

Videos on social media, however, showed the ranger had slammed his vehicle into the

blockade — a metal travel trailer frame that some of the protesters had chained themselves to — then drove back toward the activists while announcing on a bullhorn, "I'm going to take you all out!"

The ranger, whose name has not been released, then exited his vehicle, drew the weapon and yelled for the protesters to get down on the ground, according to videos taken from multiple angles.

**Village again delaying plan for tallest flagpole**

**ME** COLUMBIA FALLS — Plans to build the world's tallest flagpole are being delayed — again.

The tiny town of Columbia Falls in Maine is extending its moratorium on big developments for another six months following a proposal for a flagpole taller than the Empire State Building, with an observation deck and a flag larger than a football field. The planned tourist attraction would also have an auditorium, living history museums and a monument.

Town officials said they lacked rules and regulations for such a large project.

The town of 485 residents began grappling with zoning regulations after Morrill Worcester proposed a structure stretching skyward some 1,461 feet. Worcester's family operates a wreath-making company and founded the Wreaths Across America organization, which provides holiday wreaths for military cemeteries.

Columbia Falls residents voted to adopt a six-month moratorium in March to give local officials time to draft regulations. The three-member Select

Board voted unanimously Monday evening to continue the moratorium.

**11 taken to hospital as jetliner hits turbulence**

**GA** ATLANTA — Eleven people on a Delta Air Lines flight were taken to the hospital on Tuesday after the plane hit turbulence while heading to Atlanta, officials said.

Flight 175 had left Milan and was about 40 miles northeast of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport when the crew reported severe turbulence, according to the Federal Aviation Administration, which said it will investigate.

The Airbus A350 landed safely at the airport shortly before 7 p.m.

Eleven passengers and crew members were taken to the hospital, Delta said. It didn't provide details on their injuries or conditions.

The airline said Delta agents were providing food, lodging and re-booking for the uninjured customers.

**Lawmaker arrested on voter fraud charge**

**AL** HUNTSVILLE — An Alabama legislator was arrested Tuesday on felony voter fraud charges accusing him of voting in a district where he did not live.

Republican Rep. David Cole, of Huntsville, was arrested on charges of voting in an unauthorized location, according to Madison County Jail records.

Cole, a physician and Army veteran, was elected to the state House of Representatives last year.

— From wire reports

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# Army: More options, not triple option

*Stars and Stripes*

After failing to secure bowl eligibility for the second time since 2015 last season, the Army Black Knights are gearing up for the 2023 campaign with their priorities clearly laid out.

Among them, as 10th-year head coach Jeff Monken and players made clear after opening fall camp, are a new offensive scheme, a greater emphasis on run defense and sustained special teams success.

Gone are the days of the triple option, a physical and grueling method of moving the ball downfield. NCAA rules that took effect before the beginning of the 2022 season prohibit blocking below the waist on the perimeter and more than 1 yard beyond the line of scrimmage, forcing Monken and company to reevaluate the practicality of the decades-old scheme.

The triple option offense was great and helped the Black Knights win a lot of football games, Monken said, but it was also complex. Shifting to a

spread will simplify the learning process for newcomers, and the returning players have had little trouble adapting.

"We still want to be a tough, hard-nosed football team that runs the football and stops the run," Monken said. "We want to be an offense that can control the clock and limit the possessions of the other team. Those philosophies are all still there. We're just going to be structured a little differently, presented a little differently."

The chief architect of the new-look Army offense is Drew Thatcher, who spent the past four seasons as the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at Division II Nebraska-Kearney. The Lopers averaged at least 33 points and 400 yards per game the past two seasons.

One of the biggest areas of improvement Thatcher said he wants to see is the ability to adapt on the fly.

"We've still got to run the ball, but you've got to be able to have a little better balance," Thatcher

said. "When really good teams can take away one part of your game, you've got to be able to have an answer, whether it's by a really good player that does that or by a scheme and loading the box."

Jakobi Buchanan, who has scored 18 times in the past two seasons; Tyson Riley, whose 443 rushing yards in 2022 lead all returners; and Tyrell Robinson, who has averaged 8 yards per carry during his three-year career, all promise to keep the rushing attack alive and well.

A strong running game and the ability to make in-game adjustments both start with the offensive line. Senior Connor Finucane said the offensive line is moving better than it ever has, even with 10 returning offensive linemen checking in at or above 300 pounds for the first time.

"It's like a more forgiving golf club," Finucane said. "You can make a little more error, and you can still get away with some stuff."

Finucane, one of four team

captains, also touted the experience of his unit, which includes six players who racked up a total of 44 starts in 2022.

"I think experience is going to be helpful, regardless of what offense we've played in," Finucane said.

Experience is not as plentiful under center. Monken said junior Bryson Daily took first-team reps in the first practice, but sophomore Dewayne Coleman is also in the mix for the job.

On defense, the other three Army captains emphasized stopping the run, something the Black Knights struggled with last season. They allowed 199 rushing yards per game, a huge increase from marks under 118 during the first two years under coordinator Nate Woody.

"Statistically, we probably didn't perform the way we wanted to last year," senior LB Leo Lowin said. "There's going to be a couple new faces, but for the most part, we know this defense. We've just got to execute better."

## 'Significant rebuilding' needed this year at Air Force

*Stars and Stripes*

The last three full football seasons arguably have been the best in the history of the U.S. Air Force Academy. The Falcons won at least 10 games, finished no worse than second in the Mountain Division of the Mountain West Conference and claimed bowl victories in all three.

While that run of sustained success has been pretty common with Troy Calhoun as coach, Air Force is facing some unprecedented turnover heading into 2023. Keeping it alive will require the services of many new faces.

Using the triple option, the Falcons rushed for 326.7 yards per game last season, the only mark in the Football Bowl Sub-

division above 290.

However, five of their top six rushers — who accounted for more than two-thirds of their 4,247 yards — are gone, including quarterback Haaziq Daniels and Brad Roberts, the nation's leading individual rusher. Beyond that, just two starting offensive linemen are back, and the Falcons will be without their two most productive receivers from 2022.

"This is one of the more significant rebuilding years that we've had since we've been here," said Calhoun, who is entering his 17th season.

Two seniors on offense gathered preseason all-conference nods from the media — running back John Lee Eldridge, whose 7.7 yards per carry led all qual-

ified runners in 2022, and center Thor Paglialong, who started all 13 games last year.

On defense, junior nose guard Payton Zdroik and senior safety Trey Taylor also received all-conference recognition. Zdroik recorded 30 tackles, 5½ sacks and a fumble recovery last season, and he is the only returning starter on the defensive line. Taylor led Air Force with 69 tackles, adding a sack and a pair of interceptions.

That duo leads a group of six regular starters returning including safeties Jayden Goodwin and Camby Goff, cornerback Eian Castonguay and inside linebacker Alec Mock, all of whom are seniors. In 2022, they led the Falcons to post Mountain West lows in yards (254.4) and

points allowed per game (13.4) under first-year defensive coordinator Brian Knorr.

"This is a squad that's going to take us a good number of weeks, maybe months just as far as growth and development," Calhoun said.

Despite the uncertainty, a media panel predicted them to finish second in the Mountain West, behind Boise State. Two of the 36 voters even picked them to win the conference.

Ten wins will be tough to replicate for the Falcons, as will holding onto the Commander in Chief's Trophy, which they won in 2022 after prevailing in low-scoring affairs against Navy and Army. The top priority, Calhoun said, is to see his team play well against every opponent.



# Tiafoe advances to third round of US Open

Associated Press

NEW YORK — There was not much drama involved in Frances Tiafoe's second-round victory at the U.S. Open on Wednesday night. He quickly grabbed a lead and never let go. He only faced one break point — and saved it. He volleyed terrifically. His outmatched opponent needed some help from a trainer for a bothersome neck.

And there was no escaping the feeling that the 10th-seeded Tiafoe was having the time of his life. This is where he wants to be, no matter the details of the match. Under the lights at a Grand Slam tournament, absorbing the attention of thousands of folks in the Arthur Ashe Stadium stands and reciprocating the love while getting past Sebastian Ofner of Austria 6-3, 6-1, 6-4 in a tad more than 1½ hours.

"I love it. I love it. I love all of it. I love the 1-on-1 battle. You're putting your heart on the line. Everyone's there to watch you and one other guy. You're competing like crazy. Everyone's anticipating the match. And it's like, 'Who wants it more?'" Tiafoe, a 25-year-old from Mary-

land, said during an interview before the U.S. Open. "If you don't love that, it's the wrong sport for you. I just absolutely love being in those positions and those atmospheres."

He knew this was Ofner's U.S. Open debut and said after Wednesday's encounter that he wanted to use "the environment to my advantage."

Tiafoe took a step forward on a day two highly seeded men exited on his half of the draw: No. 5 Casper Ruud, last year's runner-up, and No. 7 Stefanos Tsitsipas. With No. 4 Holger Rune out in the first round, three of the tournament's top seven men already are gone.

A year ago at Flushing Meadows, Tiafoe's career changed and his life did, too. He beat Rafael Nadal in the fourth round along the way to reaching the semifinals of a major for the first time, then pushing eventual champion Carlos Alcaraz to the limit before bowing out.

All the way, the fans—including some well-known ones, such as former first lady Michelle Obama and NBA All-Star Bradley Beal — showered Tiafoe with affection. And he certainly

enjoyed basking in that adulation and the extra attention that came with his higher profile, including a role in the Netflix docuseries about tennis, "Break Point."

"I'm totally cool with putting myself fully out there and seeing what happens. Let the chips fall where they may. I love feeling the crowd with me. Everyone paid their hard-earned money to come watch. So I want them to enjoy," said Tiafoe, who went over to the stands to greet rapper Pusha T, a guest of his, after the triumph over Ofner. "And also, I want to win."

Next up for Tiafoe is No. 22 Adrian Mannarino of France, who produced one wild on-the-run 'tweener during his win Wednesday.

"He's very tricky. He's got an unorthodox game style," Tiafoe said. "I'm ready. I'm ready for him."

Three other U.S. men joining Tiafoe in the third round with victories were No. 9 Taylor Fritz; No. 14 Tommy Paul, an Australian Open semifinalist in January who collected his first career comeback from two sets down to beat Roman Safiullin

3-6, 2-6, 6-2, 6-4, 6-3; and Ben Shelton, who advanced when 2020 champion Dominic Thiem stopped playing in the second set after being visited by a physiotherapist.

His win was followed in Ashe by 2018 Australian Open champion Caroline Wozniacki's 7-5, 7-6 (5) victory over two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova. Wozniacki recently came out of retirement after 3½ years away from the game.

In earlier action Wednesday, defending champion Iga Swiatek and Coco Gauff remained on course for a quarterfinal showdown with straight-set victories, while 23-time major champ Novak Djokovic also had little trouble moving into the third round.

But Ruud, who lost to Alcaraz in last year's final in New York and also was the runner-up at the French Open in 2022 and 2023, was beaten by Zhang Zhizhen of China 6-4, 5-7, 7-2, 0-6, 6-2. And Tsitsipas, a two-time Slam finalist who has never passed the third round in New York, was eliminated by 128th-ranked Swiss qualifier Dominic Stricker 7-5, 6-7 (2), 6-7 (5) 7-6 (6), 6-3.

## Colts still uncertain about timetable for Taylor's return

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indianapolis Colts already know running back Jonathan Taylor will miss four games.

It's unclear how much longer he could be out. Or whether he'll stay with the Colts.

One day after the 2021 NFL rushing champ landed on the physically unable to perform list following off-season ankle surgery, general manager Chris Ballard did not provide a timetable for Taylor's return and would not talk about any trade offers he received for the 24-year-old All-Pro.

Instead, he'd rather get Taylor back on the field.

"We've got to work through it and we're going to do everything we can to work through it. Look, relationships are repairable," Ballard said Wednesday. "We have work to do, we do. We've got work to do on the relationship."

Ballard's comments come after ESPN.com reported the Miami Dolphins and Green Bay Packers both expressed interest in acquiring the 2021 All-Pro.

During earlier news conferences Wednesday, Dolphins general manager Chris Greier called the discussions "exploratory" "and that no offers were exchanged."

Packers general manager Brian Gutekunst wasn't as direct, but inferred he took a similar position.

"First of all, I can't talk about players on other teams," Gutekunst said. "We try to be in every conversation. Anytime we have good players available to us, we'd like to make the Green Bay Packers better, and we'll look at those opportunities."

Taylor's health is one reason teams might be hesitant to meet Indy's trade demands.

The former Wisconsin star initially went

on PUP when Indy reported to training camp July 25. He hasn't practiced since last season. By starting the regular season on PUP, Taylor will not be eligible to play until at least Week 5 when Tennessee visits Lucas Oil Stadium.

The Colts also want to see Taylor playing healthy in new coach Shane Steichen's offense.

Perhaps the bigger question is whether Taylor still wants to play in Indy.

He's been one of the most vocal running backs to complain about how teams value the position. The franchise tag of \$10.1 million is the lowest for any position other than punters and kickers.

The result has been an ugly contract dispute as Taylor enters the final year of his rookie deal. Taylor is due to make \$4.3 million this season.

# Mariners win record 21st game in August

Associated Press

SEATTLE — After the most successful month in franchise history, the Seattle Mariners might prefer if August just never ended and rolled right into October.

“There’s like 60 days in August isn’t there? I wish there was,” manager Scott Servais quipped. “What a month.”

What a month, indeed. The Mariners closed out the winningest month in team history by beating the Oakland Athletics 5-4 on Wednesday and moving back into sole possession of the AL West lead.

J.P. Crawford dropped a two-run single into left field in the seventh inning to put Seattle ahead, and the Mariners rallied from a pair of deficits.

Seattle went 21-6 in the month, bettering the previous franchise record of 20 victories in a month. The Mariners have

won 13 of their last 15 games and will head into September in the middle of an AL West title race with Houston and Texas. The Mariners are one percentage point ahead of the Astros, with the Rangers one game back.

The last time Seattle went into September with at least a share of first place was 2001, also the last time the Mariners won the AL West.

“Twenty-one wins in a month and there was a really special team here that won 116 games one year and they didn’t even do that,” Servais said, referencing Seattle’s 2001 team that had four months of 20 victories during that record-setting season.

Teoscar Hernández capped his hot month with a three-run homer in the third inning — his 23rd of the season — to erase a 3-0 deficit. But it was Crawford who came through after Seattle fell behind 4-3.

The Mariners’ rally in the seventh inning came off reliever Kirby Sneed (1-2), who had not allowed an earned run in his previous 10 appearances. Dominic Canzone doubled, Mike Ford singled and Dylan Moore walked to load the bases.

Following a strikeout, Crawford hit a soft liner the opposite way to score a pair and give Seattle the lead. Crawford is 7-for-11 this season when hitting with the bases loaded.

“J.P. is going to put the ball in play and he’s not going to try to do too much in those spots,” Servais said. “He’s learned that through the years and I think it’s a great example for our younger players to look at.”

Justin Topa (4-4) got the victory despite giving up the lead in the seventh. Aledmys Díaz lined a ground-rule double down the left-field line and Esteury Ruiz followed with his own double

that barely eluded the dive of Eugenio Suárez at third base. Pinch-runner Nick Allen scored easily and Oakland had a 4-3 lead.

Oakland tried to add on but Ruiz was thrown out at home plate by Hernández attempting to score on Ryan Noda’s flyout to right field. It was Hernández’s 12th assist this season, most among AL outfielders.

Ruiz was initially ruled safe but the call was overturned on replay.

“I was surprised when he was called safe but I know I made a really, really good throw. I’m glad they overturned it,” Hernández said.

Matt Brash worked through the eighth, striking out pinch-hitter Tony Kemp to end the inning with Brent Rooker standing at third as the tying run. Andrés Muñoz pitched the ninth for his 11th save in 14 chances.

## US in good spot for next round of Basketball World Cup

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The opponent names will become more recognizable for USA Basketball now. Nikola Vucevic awaits on Friday, Jonas Valanciunas on Sunday, and if the Americans keep progressing through this FIBA World Cup the challenges will only get tougher.

To that, they say this: Good.

Second-round play at the World Cup starts Friday, with a 32-team field to start the tournament now down to 16 contenders for the Naismith Trophy. The United States is one of eight teams with 3-0 records, and those are the teams that have the easiest path to the quarterfinals.

“There’s an immediate respect level from guys going against them in the NBA,” U.S. coach Steve Kerr said. “The familiarity really helps as well. The hard part is when you go into a game and there’s a great player who these guys don’t know, and

he’s got a last name with lots of letters, and you have to refer to him as No. 5 or whatever and our guys aren’t ready for how good this player is. That’s a huge challenge in this tournament.”

Not anymore. Nobody will need to Google most of the best players on the teams that made Round 2. Luka Dončić is headed there, along with Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, Karl-Anthony Towns, Dennis Schröder, Patty Mills, Bogdan Bogdanović, Vucevic and Valanciunas — among others.

In Round 2, the U.S. plays Montenegro on Friday and Lithuania on Sunday.

“For us as a country, to get to play against the U.S. will be a huge thing,” said Vucevic, Montenegro’s best player. “We have to go out there and show our best ... and enjoy that game.”

Joining the U.S. in Round 2 with 3-0 records out of group play are Slovenia, defending

World Cup champion Spain, Canada, Germany, Serbia, the Dominican Republic and Lithuania. For those eight teams, the task is this simple: Win two games this weekend, and the quarterfinals are certain. Each could also lose one of their next two games and still advance.

Also in the second-round field are eight teams that advanced with 2-1 records: Montenegro, Greece, Italy, Puerto Rico, Australia, Georgia, Brazil and Latvia.

The Americans are the only team in the tournament that has won every game so far by at least 27 points. Canada’s closest win margin so far is 26; Lithuania’s is 20.

“Nothing changes,” U.S. captain Jalen Brunson said. “The approach has to be the same. It’s almost the knockout stage, and we approach the game like it’s our last game every game. We’ve got to keep that same

mentality. There’s just a lot more at stake now.”

There’s more than just the World Cup at stake, even.

Australia has already qualified for next year’s Paris Olympics. All 15 remaining second-round teams are still in the mix to clinch an automatic berth in those games based on their finish here; two of the five Americas teams will get Olympic spots, two of the 10 European teams left will get them as well.

For those teams that keep winning, the Olympic spots will take care of themselves.

“Our goal, our first goal, was to win the group stage,” said Gilgeous-Alexander, Canada’s top player and one of two current All-NBA players in the tournament — Dončić, the Dallas star who leads Slovenia, being the other. “But we’re not done. We’re not satisfied. And we have five more games to try to go win.”