

## US intel sees Russia planning offensive

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden has pledged to make it “very, very difficult” for Russia’s Vladimir Putin to take military action in Ukraine as U.S. intelligence officials determined that Russian planning is underway for a possible military offensive that could begin as soon as early 2022.

The new intelligence finding estimates that the Russians are planning to deploy an estimated 175,000 troops and almost half of them are already deployed along various points near Ukraine’s border, according to a Biden administration official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the finding.

It comes as Russia has picked up its demands on Biden to guarantee that Ukraine will not be allowed to join the NATO alliance.

The official added that the plans call for the movement of 100 Russian battalion tactical groups along with armor, artillery and equipment.

Intelligence officials also have seen an uptick in Russian propaganda efforts through the use of proxies and media outlets to denigrate Ukraine and NATO ahead of a potential invasion, the official said.

Asked about the intelligence finding as he set out for the presidential retreat at Camp David on Friday evening, Biden reiterated his concerns about Russian provocations.

“We’ve been aware of Russia’s actions for a long time and my expectation is we’re gonna have a long discussion with Putin,” Biden said.

The risks of such a gambit for Putin, if he actually went through with an invasion, would be enormous.

U.S. officials and former U.S. diplomats say while Putin clearly is laying the groundwork for a possible invasion, Ukraine’s military is better armed and prepared today than in past years, and the sanctions threatened by the West would do serious damage to Russia’s economy. It remains unclear if Putin intends to go through with what would be a risky offensive, they say.

Earlier Friday, Biden pledged to make it “very, very difficult” for Putin to take military action in Ukraine and said new initiatives coming from his administration are intended to deter Russian aggression.

“What I am doing is putting together what I believe to be will be the most comprehensive and meaningful set of initiatives to make it very, very difficult for Mr. Putin to

go ahead and do what people are worried he may do,” Biden told reporters.

The Kremlin said Friday that Putin would seek binding guarantees precluding NATO’s expansion to Ukraine during a planned call with Biden. But Biden sought to head off the demand.

“I don’t accept anyone’s red line,” Biden said.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian officials also warned that Russia could invade next month. Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov told lawmakers Friday that the number of Russian troops near Ukraine and in Russia-annexed Crimea is estimated at 94,300, warning that a “large-scale escalation” is possible in January. U.S. intelligence officials estimate closer to 70,000 troops are deployed near the border, according to an unclassified intelligence document obtained Friday by The Associated Press.

The White House and Kremlin have arranged a conversation Tuesday between Biden and Putin. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed plans on Saturday to Russia’s state news agency RIA Novosti and said it will take place in the evening. “The presidents will decide themselves” how long the conversation will last, he said.

## Utility shuts well to end fuel contamination at Navy base

*Associated Press*

HONOLULU — Amid a continuing crisis over fuel contaminating the Navy’s tap water at Pearl Harbor, Honolulu’s water utility said Friday it shut off one of its wells so it doesn’t taint its own supply with petroleum from an underground aquifer it shares with the military.

The Honolulu Board of Water Supply said it acted shortly after the Navy on Thursday disclosed that a water sample from one of its wells had shown the presence of petroleum. The well is near a giant World War II-era underground fuel tank complex that has been the source of multiple fuel leaks over the years.

The tap water problems have afflicted one of the military’s most important bases, home to submarines, ships and the commander of U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific region. They

also threaten to jeopardize one of Honolulu’s most important aquifers and water sources.

Nearly 1,000 military households have complained about their tap water smelling like fuel, or of physical ailments like stomach cramps and vomiting. The Navy water system serves 93,000 people.

The Navy said Thursday it would flush clean water through its distribution system to clear residual petroleum products from the water. The process, followed by testing to make sure the water meets Environmental Protection Agency drinking standards, could take four to 10 days.

The Navy said it will investigate how contaminants got into the well and fix it.

In the meantime, military officials say they will help affected families move into hotels or new homes.

Ernie Lau, the Board of Water Supply’s

chief engineer, said he’s worried the utility could pull contaminated water through the porous lava rock that forms the aquifer, and deliver it to its customers. Because the Navy shut down its well, there’s a chance water would travel to the utility’s Halawa well from the area of the Navy’s well more quickly if the utility continued to pump.

The utility’s Halawa well produces 10 million gallons a day under normal conditions, supplying 20% of the water serving urban Honolulu. The utility will draw on other wells in the meantime and will only run its Halawa well to test the water for contamination, Lau said.

To protect Oahu’s water, Lau urged the Navy to remove the risk posed by the Red Hill Fuel Storage Facility. It consists of 20 aging tanks, each as tall as a 25-story building, that were built in the early 1940s.

# Troops make 294 allegations of extremism

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The military branches reported nearly 300 allegations of extremism among troops between Jan. 1 and Sept. 30, according to a Defense Department inspector general report released Thursday.

“The military departments reported a total of 294 allegations, 281 investigations and inquiries, 92 instances where action was taken, zero instances where no action was taken and 83 referrals to civilian law enforcement agencies,” according to the report.

There were 137 allegations in the Air Force, 81 in the Army, 44 in the Navy and 32 in the Marine Corps, according to the report. All of them triggered investigations, except 13 in the Navy that did not require further inquiry.

After completing investigations, the Air Force took action in 37 cases, the Army in 18 cases, the Navy referred 27 for punishment — including one for prosecution — and the Marine Corps took action in 10 cases, according to the report.

Extremism reporting is required by the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, which sets the Defense Department’s annual budget. It also required the Pentagon to establish oversight policies, processes and ways to report extremism in the ranks.

The move came after a year of racial turmoil over police killings of unarmed Black people and domestic extremism that came to a head when a large mob of former President Donald Trump’s supporters stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6. Five people died in the chaos and more than 700 people have been arrested for breaching the building that day, according to the federal court of the District of Columbia.

In April, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin established the Defense Department’s Countering Extremism Working Group to oversee the implementation of NDAA extremism requirements and ordered the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness and DOD general counsel to redefine the department’s definition of prohibited extremist activities.

The working group, led by Bishop Garrison, Austin’s senior adviser for human cap-

ital and diversity, equity and inclusion, has yet to release its report, which was originally due in July. The report is expected to list and provide updates on the group’s efforts.

The validity of the data is unclear, according to the report. Nearly a year after the requirement became law, the Pentagon has failed to establish standard policies for the military branches to track and report instances of extremism, which has caused data collection across the services to be inconsistent.

“Until the DOD establishes DOD-wide policy for tracking and reporting allegations of prohibited activities, the DOD will continue to have inconsistent tracking of disciplinary actions for participation in extremist organizations and activities, problems identifying and collecting data from multiple, decentralized systems, and difficulty validating the accuracy of the data,” according to the report.

The authors also said they anticipate further inspector general projects in 2022 that will analyze “additional aspects” of the Pentagon’s policies addressing extremist behavior and prohibited activities.

## Omicron prompts revival of contact tracing in US

*Associated Press*

The arrival of the omicron variant of the coronavirus in the U.S. has health officials in some communities reviving contact tracing operations in an attempt to slow and better understand its spread as scientists study how contagious it is and whether it can thwart vaccines.

In New York City, officials quickly reached out to a man who tested positive for the variant and had attended an anime conference at a Manhattan convention center last month along with more than 50,000 people. Five other attendees have also been infected with the coronavirus, though officials don’t yet know whether it was with the omicron variant.

“As for what we learned about this conference at the Ja-

vits Center and these additional cases, our test and trace team is out there immediately working with each individual who was affected to figure out who else they came in contact with. That contact tracing is absolutely crucial,” New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said.

Once a global epicenter of the pandemic, New York has the country’s biggest contract tracing effort. The city identified four omicron cases Thursday, and a fifth was discovered in nearby Suffolk County on eastern Long Island.

The variant has been detected in a handful of other states so far, including California, Colorado and Hawaii.

Contract tracers have been busy in Nebraska after six cases of omicron were con-

firmed Friday. One of the people had recently returned from a visit to Nigeria, and the other five were close contacts of that person.

In Philadelphia, officials were working to track down contacts of a man in his 30s who is Pennsylvania’s first resident infected with the variant, the city’s Department of Public Health said.

And in Maryland, officials were rushing to trace, quarantine and test close contacts of three people from the Baltimore area who are the first known cases in the state. Two are from the same household, including a vaccinated person who recently traveled to South Africa, and the third has no recent travel history and is unrelated to the other two.

Dr. Marcus Plescia, chief medical officer of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, said “more and more” contact tracing efforts are expected in the coming days, in part because of the uncertainty about how effective vaccines and treatments like monoclonal antibodies will be against omicron.

“Contact tracing can give us information about how it’s spreading and hopefully break chains of transmission to stop clusters and outbreaks, or at least delay them until we know more and understand what our next steps need to be,” said Crystal Watson, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security at the Bloomberg School of Public Health.

# President signs stopgap funding bill

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Friday signed into law the stopgap spending bill that will keep the federal government running through Feb. 18, after congressional leaders defused a partisan standoff over federal vaccine mandates.

The White House released a statement noting the bill signing and thanking congressional leaders for their work. Earlier in the day, Biden said it was worth praising bipartisanship, but “funding the government isn’t a great achievement, it’s the bare minimum of what needs to get done.”

Both chambers of Congress passed the legislation Thursday avoiding a short-term

shutdown of the government into the weekend. The bill keeps the federal government running for 11 more weeks, generally at current spending levels, while adding \$7 billion to aid Afghanistan evacuees.

“I am glad that in the end, cooler heads prevailed. The government will stay open and I thank the members of this chamber for walking us back from the brink of an avoidable, needless and costly shutdown,” said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

Lawmakers bemoaned the short-term fix and blamed the opposing party for the lack of progress on this year’s spending bills. Rep. Rosa DeLauro, chair of the House Ap-

ropriations Committee, said the measure would, however, allow for negotiations on a package covering the full budget year through September.

Before the votes, Biden said he had spoken with Senate leaders and he played down fears of a shutdown: “There is a plan in place unless somebody decides to be totally erratic, and I don’t think that will happen.”

Some Republicans opposed to Biden’s vaccine rules wanted Congress to take a hard stand against the mandated shots for workers at larger businesses, even if that meant shutting down federal offices over the weekend by refusing to expedite a final vote on the spending bill.

## Colo. grocery store shooter unable to stand trial

*Associated Press*

DENVER — A judge ruled Friday that a man charged with killing 10 people at a Colorado supermarket earlier this year is mentally incompetent to stand trial and ordered him to be treated at the state mental hospital to see if he can be made well enough to face prosecution.

Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa, 22, is accused of opening fire at a busy King Soopers in the college town of Boulder in March, kill-

ing a police officer, shoppers and several store employees.

Four doctors have now determined that Alissa is not mentally competent to participate in court proceedings, and he has “deteriorated” over the past couple of months while in jail, District Attorney Michael Dougherty said. Given the consensus, Dougherty requested that Judge Ingrid Bakke send Alissa to the state mental hospital in hopes that medication and treatment will enable him

to become competent under the law — able to understand legal proceedings and work with his lawyers to defend himself.

Dougherty did not disclose why the experts determined Alissa is not competent, and the report explaining the evaluation’s finding is not available to the public, only to the lawyers and judge. Alissa’s attorney, Kathryn Herold, said Friday her client has a “serious” mental illness but did not pro-

vide details.

The ruling halts virtually all proceedings in the case indefinitely. Alissa is not scheduled to be back in court again until March 15, nearly a year after the shooting, to discuss whether any progress has been made. There is a possibility he could return before then if doctors believe he has become competent, Dougherty said. Prosecutors will get monthly updates from the hospital on his condition.

## Parents of teen in Mich. school shooting caught

*Associated Press*

PONTIAC, Mich. — The parents of a teen accused of killing four students in a shooting at a Michigan high school were caught early Saturday, several hours after a prosecutor filed involuntary manslaughter charges against them, officials said.

James and Jennifer Crumbley were captured in a commercial building in Detroit that housed artwork, Detroit Police Chief James E. White told a news conference. White said the couple “were aided in getting into the building,” and that a person who helped them may also face charges.

A Detroit business owner spotted a car tied to the Crumbleys in his parking lot late Friday, Oakland County Undersheriff Michael McCabe said in a statement. A woman seen

near the vehicle ran away when the business owner called 911, McCabe said. The couple was later located and arrested by Detroit police.

A prosecutor filed involuntary manslaughter charges against the Crumbleys on Friday, accusing them of failing to intervene on the day of the tragedy despite being confronted with a drawing and chilling message — “blood everywhere” — that was found at the boy’s desk.

The Crumbleys committed “egregious” acts, from buying a gun on Black Friday and making it available to Ethan Crumbley to resisting his removal from school when they were summoned a few hours before the shooting, Oakland County prosecutor Karen McDonald said.

Authorities had been looking for the couple since Friday afternoon. Late Friday, U.S. Marshals announced a reward of up to \$10,000 each for information leading to their arrests.

The Crumbley’s attorney, Shannon Smith, said the pair had left town earlier in the week “for their own safety.” Smith told The Associated Press they would be returning to Oxford to be arraigned.

However, White said the Crumbleys “appeared to be hiding” in the building where they were found. He added that the parents appeared to be “distressed” when they were captured.

“Head down... just very upset,” he said of one of the parents.

The couple was expected to be booked into the Oakland County Jail, McCabe said.



# Famously soggy Seattle has wettest fall on record

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Seattle, a city known for soggy weather, has seen its wettest fall on record.

The National Weather Service says 19.04 inches of rain fell between Sept. 1 and Nov. 30, breaking a record set in 2006.

A series of wet storms caused by so-called “atmospheric rivers” pounded the Pacific Northwest, causing widespread flooding and damage. Atmospheric rivers are huge plumes of moisture over the Pacific that carry water from oceans onto land.

“It’s really been incredible for Seattle. I think what’s really been interesting is that we have just had atmospheric river after atmospheric river after atmospheric river, which is something that you usually don’t see even in a very wet place like Seattle,” said Justin Shaw, who runs the Seattle

Weather Blog.

Areas north of Seattle were hit especially hard. The city of Bellingham recorded 23.55 inches of rain from Sept. 1 to Nov. 30, 6.5 inches more than the previous high. Officials have said damages from November flooding in Whatcom County, which includes Bellingham, could reach as high as \$50 million.

The record rain comes after the region saw record breaking heat earlier this year. Scientists say these extreme weather events will be more frequent with climate change worsening.

“We know that climate change makes those kinds of extreme events both more likely to happen and more severe,” said Meade Krosby a climate adaption scientist at the Climate Impact Group of the University of Washington.

# China’s communists bash US democracy before Biden summit

Associated Press

BEIJING — China’s Communist Party took American democracy to task on Saturday, sharply criticizing an upcoming global democracy summit that will be hosted by President Joe Biden and extolling the virtues of its governing system.

Party officials questioned how a polarized country that botched its response to COVID-19 could lecture others, and said that efforts to force others to copy the Western democratic model are “doomed to fail.”

The harsh rhetoric reflects a growing clash of values that has been thrust into the spotlight as China rises as a global power. The question is whether the United States and other leading democracies can peacefully co-exist with a powerful authoritarian state whose actions are at odds with the Western model that emerged victorious at the end of the Cold War.

The pandemic exposed defects in the American system, said Tian Peiyan, the deputy director of the Communist Party’s Policy Research Office. He blamed the high COVID-19 death toll in the U.S. on political disputes and a divided government from the highest to the lowest levels.

“Such democracy brings not happiness

but disaster to voters,” he said at a news conference to release a government report on what the Communist Party calls its form of democracy, which is firmly under party control.

Neither China nor Russia are among about 110 governments that have been invited to Biden’s two-day virtual “Summit for Democracy,” which starts Thursday and will address strengthening democracy, defending against authoritarianism, corruption and human rights.

The participation of Taiwan, a self-governing democracy that China says should be under its rule, has further angered Beijing.

U.S.-China relations remain strained despite a virtual summit between Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping last month.

The recent difficulties faced by some Western democracies have given Communist Party leaders more confidence in their system as they try to build China into a global power. State media often cite the chaos of the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol after the last presidential election. The report issued Saturday said “today’s world is facing challenges of excessive democracy.”

# State employees’ phones hacked by NSO spyware

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The phones of 11 U.S. State Department employees were hacked with spyware from Israel’s NSO Group, the world’s most infamous hacker-for-hire company, a person familiar with the matter said Friday.

The employees were all located in Uganda and included some foreign service officers, said the person, who was not authorized to speak publicly about an ongoing investigation. Some local Ugandan employees of the department appear to have been among the 11 hacked, the person said.

The hacking is the first known instance of NSO Group’s trademark Pegasus spyware being used against U.S. government personnel. It was not known what individual or entity used the NSO technology to hack into the accounts, or what information was sought.

“We have been acutely concerned that commercial spyware like NSO Group software poses a serious counterintelligence and security risk to U.S. personnel,” White House press secretary Jen Psaki said at briefing Friday.

Senior researcher John Scott-Railton of Citizen Lab, the public-interest sleuths at the University of Toronto who have been tracking Pegasus infections for years, called the discovery a giant wake-up call for the U.S. government about diplomatic security.

“For years we have seen that diplomats around the world are among targets,” he said, “and it looks like the message had to be brought home to the U.S. government in this very direct and unfortunate way. There is no exceptionalism when it comes to American phones in diplomats’ pockets.”

News of the hacks, which were first reported by Reuters, comes a month after the U.S. Commerce Department blacklisted NSO Group, barring U.S. technology from being used by the company. And Apple sued NSO Group last month, seeking to effectively shut down its hacking of all iPhones and other Apple products, calling the Israeli company “amoral 21st century mercenaries.” The State Department employees were hacked on their iPhones, the person familiar with the matter said.

NSO Group said in a statement that after being asked Thursday about the Ugandan phones “we immediately shut down all the customers potentially relevant to this case.”

**AMERICAN ROUNDUP**

**‘Snake burglar’ steals thousands from salon**

**CA** RIVERSIDE — Police were looking for a man dubbed the “snake burglar” who wriggled his way through a Southern California business and fled with several thousand dollars.

Surveillance video showed the man slithering on his belly at the Rustic Roots salon in Riverside at around 5 a.m. after apparently entering through a rooftop fire escape.

Owner Lori Hajj told KNBC-TV the thief she calls the “snake burglar” stole hundreds of dollars worth of products, cash from the register and a safe with more than \$8,000 inside.

The same man may have tried to burglarize other businesses previously, including a local pizza parlor where security video showed a man crawling on his belly, the station said.

**Rosa Parks memorial to be near spot of arrest**

**AL** MONTGOMERY — A new memorial to Rosa Parks will depict the one-time Alabama seamstress near the spot where she was arrested for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man in 1955.

Created by Montgomery artist Ian Mangum, the memorial is composed of a series of pieces of black steel that were formed to create an image of Parks. The installation is identical to one that Mangum created for Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, the Montgomery Advertiser reported.

Parks, an activist with the NAACP, gained fame after refusing to give up her bus seat to

a white man on Dec. 1, 1955. Her arrest led to the yearlong Montgomery Bus Boycott, which propelled Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. into the national limelight. A subsequent lawsuit led to a ruling that outlawed racial segregation on Montgomery’s buses.

The memorial is located outside the Rosa Parks Museum.

**Girl credited with saving family from fire**

**NC** TABOR CITY — A fire marshal is crediting a 9-year-old girl with saving her family after their home was engulfed in flames sparked by a space heater.

Columbus County Fire Marshal Shannon Blackman said the girl was sleeping in her home in Tabor City and awakened to discover a space heater on fire in her bedroom, news outlets reported. She then woke up her younger sister, and alerted the rest of the family to get out of the house.

Three of the four adults inside the home suffered second- and third-degree burns, officials said.

The girls’ father, David Vela, is a firefighter with the Lake Waccamaw Fire Department who was injured after reentering the burning home to rescue two dogs.

Blackman said the family lost everything in the fire.

**Cops: Man slapped teen in face at LSU game**

**LA** BATON ROUGE — A man was arrested for slapping a teenager in the face during a football game at Louisiana State University, police say.

Witnesses said the man, 40, struck the young fan, 14, in a Tiger Stadium suite during a recent game against Texas A&M, news outlets reported.

Arrest records state that officers who went to speak with the man from Houston said there was a “very strong smell of alcohol on his breath” and that he was slurring his speech.

The man was charged with simple battery and disturbing the peace, both misdemeanors.

**Schools superintendent to be knighted by Spain**

**FL** MIAMI — The superintendent for Miami-Dade County schools is being knighted by Spain for his work in expanding Spanish-language programs.

Superintendent Alberto Carvalho will be admitted into the Order of Isabella the Catholic, an honor given to people whose work contributes to Spain and its culture. The knighthood will be awarded on behalf of King Felipe VI of Spain by Miami’s Spanish Consul General Jaime Lacadena on Dec. 13 at his home.

Born and raised in Portugal, Carvalho leads Florida’s largest school district in a county where seven out of 10 people are Hispanic.

Carvalho has also received honors from Portugal and Mexico.

**Ex-baggage handler jailed for stealing guns**

**MO** ST. LOUIS — A former Southwest Airlines baggage handler was sentenced to six months in prison after pleading guilty to know-

ingly possessing or receiving stolen guns.

Federal prosecutors said Mark Hunter of St. Louis was charged after a passenger traveling through St. Louis Lambert International Airport reported that a pistol had been stolen from his luggage.

Federal agents investigated and found seven reported thefts of guns from luggage checked on Southwest over a five-month period in 2020.

After comparing Southwest scheduling records of baggage employees and the dates of the thefts, investigators focused on Hunter, who admitted to stealing five guns from checked bags, according to prosecutors.

Hunter faces three years of supervised release after his prison time, prosecutors said.

**Pizza delivery man dies in porch collapse**

**IN** CONNERSVILLE — A pizza delivery driver died after a porch collapsed while he was making a delivery in eastern Indiana, police said.

Connorsville Police Department officers found that William Fields, 45, of Connorsville, had fallen through what appeared to be a collapsed porch. Fields had been pinned by heavy debris and was motionless when officers found him, police said.

He was pronounced dead at a local hospital a short time later.

Fields was working as a delivery driver for Pizza King and was delivering to the address at the time of the collapse, police said.

The death was ruled an accident, police said.

— From Associated Press



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# No. 14 Utah earns first Rose Bowl bid

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — As the Utah players celebrated the Pac-12 championship surrounded by roses and confetti, the memories of two teammates who couldn't share in the moment were paramount.

The past year marked by tragedy following the deaths of Ty Jordan and Aaron Lowe will end with the long-coveted Rose Bowl bid.

Devin Lloyd returned an interception for a touchdown, Cam Rising threw for another score and No. 14 Utah clinched the first Rose Bowl berth in school history with a 38-10 victory over No. 10 Oregon on Friday night.

"Our mantra after the tragedy was we're not going to get over it, but we'll get through it," coach Kyle Whittingham said. "I believe our guys really did that and I couldn't be more proud of them."

Jordan died last Christmas from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Lowe, who also played with Jordan in high school, was then shot and killed at a house

party in September.

Their teammates used the memories as fuel for a season that ended with a title.

"We've got a lot of toughness in us and resiliency," said Lloyd, who was named MVP of the game. "But at the same time, I also believe that they were there guiding us throughout the whole season. They were able to help us create things that I don't think we ever would have done without them."

This game was a near carbon copy of the one in Salt Lake City last month when the Utes (10-3, No. 17 CFP) jumped out early and won 38-7.

While that game all but ended the playoff hopes for Oregon (10-3, No. 10), the rematch delivered the Utes the Rose Bowl prize they had been seeking since joining the Pac-12 in 2011.

Utah had lost its first two trips to the conference title game, including two years ago to Oregon, but left little doubt this time.

"We've just been working

away on it ever since we joined the league," Whittingham said. "This is the culmination of a lot of years of hard work and effort, not only by us, but everyone involved. It takes a lot of people to make this thing go."

Rising engineered a TD drive on the opening possession after converting a sneak on fourth down near midfield. Tavon Thomas capped it with a 2-yard run.

Lloyd then returned an interception 34 yards for a score later in the first quarter and Utah put the game away by scoring twice in the final 27 seconds of the first half.

Rising hit Dalton Kincaid on an 11-yard pass with 27 seconds left. Then Malone Matae intercepted an ill-advised pass from Anthony Brown to set up Jadon Redding's 50-yard field goal on the final play of the half to make it 23-0.

The Utes led the game last month 28-0 at the half.

"Honestly, it seemed kind of similar," Ducks safety Verone McKinley III said. "It's tough because we felt prepared. We

felt we had a good game plan and then to let what happened happen again was a tough pill to swallow."

Thomas and T.J. Pledger added TD runs in the second half for the Utes to the delight of the huge contingent of Utah fans among the 56,511 in attendance for the first title game in Las Vegas.

## Contract talk

The lead-up to the game was filled with talk about the future of Oregon coach Mario Cristobal. There were reports that Miami was making a run at Cristobal, who won two national titles there as a player, and that the Ducks are doing what it takes to keep him.

Cristobal said he has not talked to any other school and if he had any news he would announce it.

"Let's not create narratives as we sit here in this press conference," Cristobal said. "Oregon is working on some stuff for me, that's what I have right now, and that's the extent of that conversation."

# Arians says vaccination probe should be expanded

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach Bruce Arians would like to see the NFL expand an investigation of the COVID-19 vaccination status of two players on his team to include other rosters around the league.

Responding publicly for the first time to the league suspending wide receiver Antonio Brown and safety Mike Edwards for three games for misrepresenting their status with fake vaccination cards, Arians said Friday those may not be the only cases of their kind in the league.

"The league did their due diligence and we move on," Arians

said after practice. "I will not address these guys for the next three weeks. They'll just be working out, and we'll address their future at that time. Other than that, there's really nothing to say."

A third player, former Bucs receiver John Franklin III, also was suspended for three games. He was cut during training camp and currently is a free agent.

Arians said the reigning Super Bowl champions have done as good a job as any team managing the coronavirus pandemic the past two seasons.

He added the club fully cooperated with the league probe launched last month after a per-

sonal chef who once worked for Brown told the Tampa Bay Times that the receiver had obtained a fake vaccination card before reporting to training camp.

"This is a setback because of what happened, but we have done an amazing job. We haven't had an outbreak in a position room, so I'm very happy with that part," Arians said.

Asked if he thinks there may be issues with the vaccination status of other players around the league, the coach replied, "maybe."

"It is what it is," Arians said. "We've done everything. I mean, everything. There's a lot more to that story. I just hope

they don't stop looking."

Brown, who has missed the past five games with an ankle injury and likely was going to remain sidelined for the next two as well, loses a little over \$181,000 during the suspension. The Bucs are 5-0 with him in the lineup this season, 3-3 without.

The discipline will cost Edwards, a backup who leads the team with three interceptions, about \$141,000.

In addition to sitting out Sunday's game at Atlanta, the pair will miss home games the following two weeks against Buffalo and New Orleans. Brown and Edwards will be eligible to return Dec. 26 against the Carolina Panthers.



# Warriors end Suns' 18-game streak

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Warriors coach Steve Kerr spent a good chunk of his post-game press conference reiterating his belief that the Suns are the best team in the West.

Funny, because Phoenix coach Monty Williams said pretty much the same thing about Golden State.

With the two top teams in the NBA splitting a pair of games this week, the debate isn't likely to be settled soon.

Stephen Curry bounced back from one of the worst shooting nights of his career and scored 23 points, and the Warriors convincingly ended the Suns' 18-game winning streak with a 118-96 victory on Friday night.

"We know that we're trying to catch them, not vice-versa," Kerr said of the defending Western Conference champs. "We haven't been in the playoffs for two years. We're trying to catch them and we know they're the best team in the West until somebody knocks them off."

That's something no team had been able to do for more than five weeks as Phoenix erased a 1-3 start and rose to the top of the West standings.

Golden State was among those who tried and failed, losing 104-96 on Tuesday.

Kerr's team flipped the script in the rematch.

The Warriors (19-3) limited the Suns

(19-4) to a season low for scoring and slipped past Phoenix for the best record in the NBA.

"They did a good job of speeding us up," Williams said. "We did that to them the other day. That's part of the chess match. When we got to the paint and found guys, it was phenomenal in the second quarter but that's the only quarter we did it consistently."

The Suns were within 83-74 following a dunk by JaVale McGee early in the fourth quarter but never got closer. Gary Payton II scored on consecutive possessions, added a breakaway two-handed dunk, then followed with a short jumper to put Golden State ahead by 20.

Three days after going 4-for-21 while missing 11 of 14 three-point tries in Phoenix, Curry shot 8-for-20 with six threes, five rebounds and five assists.

Andrew Wiggins added 19 points as Golden State extended its home winning streak to 11. Draymond Green had nine points, nine assists and nine rebounds to go with six steals and three blocks.

"They got us at their home so we had to come here and protect our house," Wiggins said. "They made it hard for us. Facing them is going to be a battle all the time."

Deandre Ayton had 23 points and six rebounds for Phoenix. Chris Paul added 12 points and eight assists.

Williams had tried his best to keep talk

about the streak to a minimum while at the same time encouraging his players to relish the ride. He won't have to worry about that anymore following Phoenix's first loss since Oct. 27.

Now the talk is which team is the one to beat in the West, with their next meeting set for Christmas in Phoenix.

"Not quite sure who it is but it's good to be in that category," Williams said.

Playing the second half of a back-to-back and again without injured leading scorer Devin Booker, the Suns fell behind by double digits early and spent the rest of the night trying to catch up.

Curry made it an impossible climb.

The two-time MVP hit his first two threes, completed a three-point play amid chants of "MVP! MVP!" and made another shot beyond the arc to put the Warriors up 49-37.

"We were, especially in the second half, much more patient," Kerr said. "Once we settled down after that sort of disastrous final four minutes of the second quarter, we were really poised, competed and earned a really good win."

The Suns trailed by 11, then closed the second quarter on an 8-0 run to pull within 51-48 before the Warriors pulled away in the second half.

"The winning streak was a lot of fun," Paul said. "Been a long time since we felt a loss but hell, let's start a new one."

# Kennard clutch as Clippers edge Lakers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — LeBron James returned from a frustrating stint in the NBA's health and safety protocols just in time for yet another frustrating loss for the Los Angeles Lakers.

Luke Kennard scored 17 of his 19 points in the second half and hit two clutch three-pointers in the final minutes, sending the Los Angeles Clippers to a 119-115 victory over the Lakers on Friday night.

James had 23 points and 11 rebounds in his first game back since a positive COVID-19 test kept him out of the Lakers' blowout win over Sacramento on Tuesday. He received a series of negative subsequent tests that allowed him to play

against the Clippers for only the 12th time in the Lakers' 24 games this season, but he couldn't stop the Lakers' fourth straight loss to their city rivals.

Paul George scored 19 points for the Clippers, who never trailed and never pulled away in the teams' first meeting of the season. They played a choppy, chippy game appropriate for two clubs hovering around .500 while dealing with major injury problems that have slowed the development of two rosters harboring NBA title ambitions.

**76ers 98, Hawks 96:** Joel Embiid scored 28 points, including a jumper with 42 seconds remaining that gave his team its first lead of the second half, and visiting Philadelphia

took a comeback win over Trae Young and Atlanta.

Embiid added 12 rebounds for Philadelphia, which has won each of its first two games against the Hawks. Friday night was Philadelphia's first visit to Atlanta since losing to the Hawks in last season's Eastern Conference semifinals.

**Cavaliers 116, Wizards 101:** Darius Garland had 32 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds, and Cleveland went on a 19-0 run spanning part of each half in a rout of host Washington.

**Nets 110, Timberwolves 105:** Kevin Durant scored 30 points, including the clinching jumper with 11 seconds left, and Brooklyn held off visiting Minnesota.

**Jazz 137, Celtics 130:** Donovan Mitchell had 34 points and six assists to lead host Utah over Boston.

**Heat 113, Pacers 104:** Kyle Lowry scored a season-high 26 points with six three-pointers and short-handed Miami beat host Indiana.

**Pelicans 107, Mavericks 91:** Brandon Ingram scored 24 points and visiting New Orleans won two days after the losing to Dallas by 32 at home while letting it set a franchise record for shooting percentage.

**Rockets 118, Magic 116:** Eric Gordon scored 24 points and his short jumper with 1.6 seconds left lifted host Houston past Orlando for its fifth consecutive win.

# Purdue outlasts Iowa in Big Ten opener

Associated Press

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Trevion Williams showed his senior leadership down the stretch Friday night.

Not only did Williams motivate his teammates, but he led the way with his effort.

Williams contributed 13 points and 18 rebounds, including two huge ones late, Jaden Ivey scored 19 points and No. 2 Purdue held off a late Iowa rally to win 77-70 on Friday night in the Big Ten opener for both teams.

“Trevion was great on the glass,” Purdue coach Matt Painter said. “He could have been aggressive scoring. His ability to rebound was huge.”

Mason Gillis added 12 points off the bench for the Boilermakers (8-0).

The Hawkeyes (7-1) were without leading scorer and rebounder Keegan Murray, who injured his ankle in Monday’s victory at Virginia. Murray is averaging 24.6 points and 8.9 rebounds. His twin brother, Kris Murray, started in his place.

Patrick McCaffery led Iowa with 15

points. Tony Perkins scored 14 and Murray 12 for Iowa.

**No. 8 Kansas 95, St. John’s 75:** Christian Braun had a career-high 31 points, Ochai Agbaji scored 23 and the Jayhawks emphatically turned back a second-half charge to beat the Red Storm in the first basketball game at new UBS Arena, home of the NHL’s New York Islanders.

Senior forward David McCormack was a force inside with 15 points and 13 rebounds for the Jayhawks (6-1), who have bounced back from a one-point loss to Dayton last week with consecutive double-digit wins.

Remy Martin added 12 points and five assists, and Kansas clamped down on defense late.

Julian Champagnie scored all but four of his 24 points after halftime for the Red Storm (5-2).

**No. 7 Texas 88, Texas Rio Grande Valley 58:** At Austin, Tex., Christian Bishop scored 17 points and the Longhorns used suffocating defense in the second half to beat the Vaqueros.

Bishop, a senior transfer from Creighton, is a backup who played 14 minutes. He made all nine of his free throws.

Timmy Allen and Tre Mitchell scored 13 points each for Texas (6-1).

RayQuan Taylor led UTRGV (4-5) with 15 points, and Justin Johnson scored 12.

**No. 15 Houston 111, Bryant 44:** Tramon Mark tied a career high with 22 points, Josh Carlton added 17 and the host Cougars routed the Bulldogs for their third straight win.

Kyler Edwards had 12 points and 10 rebounds, and Marcus Sasser scored 12 points for Houston (7-1), which won its 30th straight home game. The Cougars shot a season-high 62% and made 10 of 23 three-pointers.

Houston scored a season high in points and had its largest margin of victory (67 points) since beating Florida Tech by 69 on Nov. 22, 2005.

Chris Childs scored 13 points for Bryant (3-5).

# Scheifele nets hat trick as Jets roll over Devils

Associated Press

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Mark Scheifele had three goals and an assist to end a seven-game goal-scoring drought, and the Winnipeg Jets beat the New Jersey Devils 8-4 Friday night.

Nikolaj Ehlers scored twice, and Kristian Vesalainen, Josh Morrissey and Adam Lowry also each scored for the Jets. Blake Wheeler had three assists and Pierre-Luc Dubois and Neal Pionk each added two. Connor Hellebuyck stopped 33 shots.

Ryan Graves had a goal and an assist, and Jack Hughes, Damon Severson and Nico Hischier also scored for the Devils. Jonathan Bernier gave up six goals on 32 shots through two periods. Mackenzie Blackwood took over in the third period and finished with six saves.

**Rangers 1, Sharks 0:** Ryan Strome scored in the first period, and Igor Shesterkin and Alexander Georgiev combined

for a 28-save shutout as host New York won its fifth straight.

Shesterkin had 19 saves before leaving at 5:08 of the third period after appearing to suffer a right leg injury stretching out face-down in the crease. The Russian goalie wasn’t putting any weight on the leg as he was helped off the ice by the Rangers’ trainer and banged the side of the runway in frustration as he departed down the tunnel.

Georgiev stopped all nine shots he faced to help the surging Rangers win their seventh straight at home and improve to 9-2-0 in their last 11 games overall.

Adin Hill had 26 saves as the Sharks snapped a three-game winning streak and lost for the second time in seven games.

**Kraken 4, Oilers 3:** Colin Blackwell and Alex Wennberg scored less than three minutes apart in the second period, and host Seattle held on to beat Edmonton.

Yanni Gourde and Adam Larsson scored in the first period for the expansion Kraken, and Philipp Grubauer had 29 saves — including 13 in the third period.

Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl and Evan Bouchard each had a goal and an assist for the Oilers. Stuart Skinner made 30 saves as Edmonton snapped a three-game winning streak.

**Flames 4, Ducks 3 (SO):** Johnny Gaudreau and Matthew Tkachuk scored in the shootout to lift visiting Calgary past Anaheim.

Sean Monahan had a goal and an assist for the Pacific Division-leading Flames, who are 6-0-2 in their last eight on the road. Blake Coleman and Elias Lindholm also had goals for Calgary in regulation and Dan Vladar stopped 31 shots.

The Ducks trailed 3-1 in the second period before rallying. Rickard Rakell scored with 36 seconds remaining in the peri-

od on a slap shot and Vinni Lettieri evened it 2:04 into the third with a one-timer from the left faceoff circle off Trevor Zegras’ pass.

Sonny Milano also had a goal for Anaheim and John Gibson made 33 saves.

**Golden Knights 7, Coyotes 1:** Max Pacioretty scored twice and Chandler Stephenson had a short-handed goal in a four-goal second period to lead visiting Vegas past Arizona.

Jonathan Marchessault, Michael Amadio, Evgenii Dadonov and Nicholas Roy also scored and Laurent Brossoit had 28 saves for the Golden Knights, who snapped a two-game skid. Vegas has won 15 of the 21 meetings with Arizona since joining the league in 2017.

Travis Boyd scored for the Coyotes and Karel Vejmelka had 25 saves.

The Golden Knights scored four goals in just under eight minutes of the second period to break the game open.