

Military justice system overhaul sidelined

The Washington Post

A widely popular proposal to force sweeping changes in how the military prosecutes felony crimes is likely to be left out of this year's defense authorization bill, according to people familiar with the matter, ending for now what advocates called watershed legislation for equal justice in favor of a competing plan that focuses more narrowly on sexual assault and related offenses.

The proposal to establish an independent authority to determine when charges should be filed for numerous crimes was spearheaded by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y. For years, she has promoted this approach as the best way to dissociate the military justice system from the biases of commanders and ensure crime victims — particularly women and minorities — cannot be denied justice by their superiors.

Gillibrand's legislation struck a rare sweet spot in congressional politics this year, winning the support of most Democrats and a broad coalition of Republicans, and clear majorities in the Senate and the House. But last-minute procedural setbacks, coupled with resistance from the Pentagon, have sapped the momentum

it previously enjoyed.

Based on more than a dozen interviews with senior officials and advocates familiar with private negotiations on Capitol Hill, it appears the Gillibrand provision, short of a miracle, is out. Those talks involve the top Democrats and Republicans on the Senate and House Armed Services committees. The senior officials familiar with their discussions spoke on the condition of anonymity because the \$768 billion bill, which dictates funding for the Pentagon and other defense operations, has not been finalized.

In place of Gillibrand's legislation, the defense bill is expected to incorporate an alternative proposal that will revolutionize how the military justice system approaches cases of sexual assault and certain related crimes, and which already received the backing of three-fourths of the House as part of its version of the defense bill, officials said. Charging decisions in those cases will become the purview of an independent special victims prosecutor, reflecting recommendations the Pentagon endorsed earlier this year. The final defense bill is also likely to designate the crimes of murder and kidnapping as falling

under the authority of the special prosecutor, according to officials involved in negotiations.

But for many advocates of sexual assault reform in the military, those changes fall short. And lawmakers who want to address discrimination more broadly in military prosecutions point out that the list of crimes that would fall under the special prosecutor's purview does not include offenses for which service members who are racial minorities are disproportionately charged.

The forces behind Gillibrand's legislation are blunt in their assessment of the changes contained in the House's legislation.

"It's not good enough," Sen. Joni Ernst, the Iowa Republican who has been Gillibrand's chief partner in pressing for a more sweeping overhaul, said in an interview. "Sure, anything is better than nothing. But it doesn't solve the problem. It doesn't go nearly as far as we need it to."

Gillibrand, in a statement, responded to questions about the potential demise of her legislation by emphasizing its broad backing in Congress. To excise it from the National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, as the larger bill is known, would be a "disservice" to

military personnel, she said.

"The only way it does not become law in the NDAA is if a handful of powerful men rip it out behind closed doors," she said.

Much of Gillibrand's frustration is and has been directed toward Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jack Reed, D-R.I., who has expressed skepticism about her approach, despite allowing it into his panel's defense bill draft this year.

A spokeswoman for House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith, D-Wash., declined to comment. A spokeswoman for that panel's top Republican, Rep. Mike Rogers, of Alabama, did not respond to a request for comment. The Senate Armed Services Committee's top Republican, Sen. James Inhofe, of Oklahoma, said in an interview that negotiations on Gillibrand's bill were too much of "a moving target" to discuss publicly.

The debate about what reforms are necessary has been complicated by differences in Congress and within the military about how to level the playing field for women and minorities, and disagreement over what lawmakers should — and should not — demand from the Pentagon.

Biden, Putin set video call as tensions grow over Ukraine

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Presidents Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin will speak in a video call Tuesday, the White House and Kremlin said, as tensions between the United States and Russia escalate over a Russian troop buildup on the Ukrainian border that's seen as a sign of a potential invasion.

Biden will press U.S. concerns about Russian military activities on the border and "reaffirm the

United States' support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Saturday, confirming the planned call after first word came from Moscow.

Putin intends to express Russia's opposition to any move to admit Ukraine into the NATO military alliance. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said "the presidents will decide them-

selves" how long their talk will last.

The last known call between the leaders was in July, when Biden pressed Putin to rein in Russia-based criminal hacking gangs launching ransomware attacks against the United States.

Russia is more adamant than ever that the U.S. guarantees that Ukraine will not be admitted to NATO. Numerous former U.S. and NATO diplomats say any

such Russian demand to Biden would be a nonstarter.

U.S. intelligence officials, meanwhile, have determined that Russia has massed about 70,000 troops near its border with Ukraine and has begun planning for a possible invasion as soon as early next year, according to a Biden administration official who was not authorized to discuss that finding publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Okinawa-based Marine honored for bravery

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

CAMP COURTNEY, Okinawa — A Marine law enforcement officer was awarded for bravery after she stopped her roommate from an apparent suicide attempt in their Okinawa barracks last year.

Lance Cpl. Noelle Gallegos, 21, of Shenandoah, Pa., received the Marine Corps-Law Enforcement Foundation's Jim Kallstrom Award for her actions on Aug. 31, 2020. Brig. Gen. William Bowers, commander of Marine Corps Installations Pacific, handed Gallegos the award at a ceremony Nov. 3 at Camp Foster.

"I was very nervous," Gallegos said Monday. "The award's a big deal."

The annual awards go to two Marine law enforcement officers who exemplify "the ethos of

protect and serve," and who show a genuine concern for the well-being of the Corps, their fellow Marines and the community they serve, according to a Marine statement in February.

Gallegos recalled the incident that brought her the award during an interview Monday at her office.

"It was a crazy hour," she said.

A night-shift patrolman with the provost marshal's office at Camp Courtney, Gallegos said she was awakened at approximately 1:45 p.m. by screaming and the sound of things smashing.

Gallegos found her roommate in the bathroom amid an array of broken items, she said. The roommate was acting erratically and saying she might harm herself.

Earlier in the day, the roommate, who did not drink or use

drugs, had been acting out of character, Gallegos said.

Gallegos said she called 911 as she rushed to find the duty officer. When Gallegos' co-workers arrived, her naked roommate pulled a knife. Gallegos said she quickly disarmed the woman and stopped her from stabbing herself in the neck with a pen and jumping from a window.

The men among the military police officers who responded were wary about touching her roommate, Gallegos said, so she restrained the woman while a first responder checked her condition. As time came to take her into custody, the woman became aggressive. She kicked and screamed before being handcuffed, Gallegos said.

Gallegos, who received a certificate of commendation for her actions, was unaware she had been nominated by her com-

mand for the Jim Kallstrom Award.

"Gallegos has always been a hard-working Marine," provost marshal noncommissioned officer-in-charge Staff Sgt. Amanda Phelps said in a Marine Corps statement Nov. 14. "She has always been outgoing and she is easy to speak with. She has great people skills and maintains a mature personality."

The award was named for Marine Corps-Law Enforcement Foundation co-founder and former chairman James Kallstrom, a decorated Marine and FBI agent who died earlier this year. The organization has raised over \$80 million in aid for children who have lost a parent in service, Kallstrom's obituary said.

Gallegos plans to pursue a career practicing law after her enlistment in the Marine Corps is up, she said.

Australia, Papua New Guinea to revive WWII naval base

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

Australia and Papua New Guinea have completed the first steps and begun major refurbishment of a navy base built by U.S. forces on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea, during World War II.

The upgrades at Lombrum Naval Base are part of a deal the two countries reached in 2018. It gives Australian forces access to the strategically vital deep-water port while slamming the door on Chinese ambitions to gain a foothold on the island, The Australian newspaper reported at the time.

A chapel, medical facility and security fencing have been built and a communication center has been upgraded since work began in mid-2020, the Australian Defence Department said in an email Nov. 24.

U.S. Secretary of the Navy Car-

los Del Toro visited Manus in late October and met sailors assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5, which deployed to the island to build a dental facility, according to posts on the battalion's Facebook page.

Manus is an 800-square-mile rock in the Bismarck Sea north of New Britain. It is just over 1,000 miles south of Guam, where Marines are scheduled to relocate from Okinawa, and 1,300 miles east of Darwin, which hosts a U.S. Marine Corps rotational force.

During World War II, the U.S. constructed wharves, a 9,000-foot runway and accommodations for tens of thousands of troops on Manus. It was a venue for the trials of Japanese war criminals and, in recent years, served as an offshore processing center for immigrants attempting to illegally enter Australia by sea.

Report: China's navy seeks Atlantic base in West Africa

By **JOHN VANDIVER**
Stars and Stripes

China has its eyes on Equatorial Guinea for a new military base, which would give Beijing a new naval foothold in the Atlantic Ocean, according to a media report that comes following long-standing concerns about U.S. military leaders about China's ambitions in West Africa.

The Wall Street Journal, citing classified U.S. intelligence information, reported Sunday that China wants to set up a permanent base in the small coastal nation.

If those plans are realized, Chinese warships would be able to homeport opposite the U.S.'s eastern seaboard, making for "a threat that is setting off alarm bells at the White House and

Pentagon," the newspaper reported.

In April, U.S. Africa Command's Gen. Stephen Townsend raised the issue during congressional testimony, saying that Beijing wants bases in other parts of Africa to link up commercial seaport investments across the continent with Chinese military forces.

If it succeeds with its plan for a base in Equatorial Guinea, China will have two strategic military sites in Africa. In 2017, China inaugurated its first overseas base in the East African country of Djibouti, located just 7 miles from the U.S. military's Africa hub, Camp Lemonnier.

Over the past four years, China has continued to develop that outpost, which is now large enough to host aircraft carriers.

NYC to require vaccination for private sector

Associated Press

NEW YORK — All private employers in New York City will have to require their workers to get vaccinated against COVID-19, the mayor announced Monday, imposing one of the most aggressive vaccine rules in the nation.

The move by Mayor Bill de Blasio comes as cases are climbing again in the U.S. and the worrisome omicron variant is gaining a toehold in New York and elsewhere around the country.

“We in New York City have decided to use a preemptive strike to really do something bold to stop the further growth of COVID and the dangers it’s causing to all of us,” he said.

De Blasio, a Democrat with just weeks left in office as leader of the nation’s largest city, said the mandate will take effect Dec. 27.

Speaking on MSNBC’s “Morning Joe,” he said the move is aimed at staving off a spike of infections amid holiday gatherings and as cold weather drives more people indoors, where the virus is more likely to spread.

Vaccine mandates across states and cities vary widely, with some states resisting any mandates and others requiring the shots for government employees or certain sectors that run a particularly high risk, such as health care workers.

But most officials have not announced mandates reaching as far into the private sector, nor mandates covering so many people.

President Joe Biden sought to impose a similar mandate nationally, applying to businesses with 100 or more workers, but federal courts have put that on hold ahead of a Jan. 4 deadline.

De Blasio said he expects his new mandate to survive any legal challenges. A spokesperson for the mayor said it will apply to roughly 184,000 businesses in the city, which has a population of 8.8 million.

Vaccinations are already required for hospital and nursing home workers and for city employees, including teachers, police officers and firefighters. A vaccination mandate for employees of private and religious schools was announced last week.

Also, the mayor announced that anyone 12 or older who wants to dine indoors at a restaurant, go to a gym or see a show will have to produce proof of full vaccination.

Vet returns to Pearl Harbor to remember those lost

Associated Press

HONOLULU — When Japanese bombs began falling on Pearl Harbor, U.S. Navy Seaman 1st Class David Russell first sought refuge below deck on the USS Oklahoma.

But a split-second decision on that December morning 80 years ago changed his mind, and likely saved his life.

“They started closing that hatch. And I decided to get out of there,” Russell, now 101, said in a recent interview.

Within 12 minutes his battleship would capsize under a barrage of torpedoes. Altogether 429 sailors and Marines from the Oklahoma would perish — the greatest death toll from any ship that day other than the USS Arizona, which lost 1,177.

Russell plans to return to Pearl Harbor on Tuesday for a ceremony in remembrance of the more than 2,300 American troops killed in the Dec. 7, 1941, attack that launched the U.S. into World War II.

About 30 survivors and 100 other veterans from the war are expected to observe a moment of silence at 7:55 a.m., the minute the attack began.

Survivors, now in their late 90s or older, stayed home last year due to the coronavirus pandemic and watched a livestream of the event instead.

Russell is traveling to Hawaii with the

Best Defense Foundation, a nonprofit founded by former NFL Linebacker Donnie Edwards that helps World War II veterans revisit their old battlefields.

Russell still thinks about how lucky he was. He ponders why he decided to go topside on the Oklahoma, knowing most of the men who stayed behind likely were unable to get out after the hatch closed.

In the first two days after the bombing, a civilian crew from the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard rescued 32 men trapped inside the Oklahoma by cutting holes in its hull. But many others perished. Most of those who died were buried in anonymous Honolulu graves marked as “unknowns” because their remains were too degraded to be identified by the time they were removed from the ship between 1942 and 1944.

In 2015, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency exhumed 388 sets of these remains in hopes of identifying them with the help of DNA technology and dental records. They succeeded with 361.

Russell’s brother-in-law was among them. Fireman 1st Class Walter “Boone” Rogers was in the fireroom, which got hit by torpedoes, Russell said. The military identified his remains in 2017, and he’s since been reburied at Arlington National Cemetery.

California parents knowingly sent COVID-19 positive child to school

Associated Press

CORTE MADERA, Calif. — Northern California parents knowingly sent their COVID-19 positive child and a sibling to school last month in violation of isolation and quarantine rules, causing a coronavirus outbreak in an elementary school, officials said Saturday.

The parents could face a fine or a misdemeanor charge for violating Marin County’s health order, under which people who test positive for the virus must isolate themselves for at least 10 days.

Dr. Matt Willis, the county’s public health officer, told The Associated Press that a decision will be made this week whether the family will face a penalty.

The child tested positive for the virus

during the week of Nov. 8, according to Brett Geithman, superintendent of the Larkspur-Corte Madera School District. Both children continued to attend school the rest of that week and into the following week.

The child and their sibling, who later tested positive as well, are students in the district’s Neil Cummins Elementary School in Corte Madera, a town in Marin County that’s 15 miles north of San Francisco.

A total of eight students tested positive: the original student, their sibling, three classmates of theirs who are suspected school-based transmissions and three students who are suspected household transmissions. None of the students experienced serious illness or had to be hospitalized.

Japan's military looks to build even further

Associated Press

ENIWA, Japan — Dozens of tanks and soldiers fired explosives and machine guns in drills Monday on Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, a main stronghold for a nation that is perhaps the world's least-known military powerhouse.

Just across the sea from rival Russia, Japan opened up its humbly named Self Defense Force's firing exercises to the media in a display of public firepower that coincides with a recent escalation of Chinese and Russian military moves around Japanese territory.

The drills, which foreign journalists rarely have a chance to witness, will continue for nine days and include about 1,300 Ground Self Defense Force

troops. On Monday, as hundreds of soldiers cheered from the sidelines and waved unit flags, lines of tanks shot at targets meant to represent enemy missiles or armored vehicles.

The exercises illuminate a fascinating, easy-to-miss point. Japan, despite an officially pacifist constitution written when memories of its World War II rampage were still fresh — and painful — boasts a military that puts all but a few nations to shame.

And, with a host of threats lurking in Northeast Asia, its hawkish leaders are eager for more.

It's not an easy sell. In a nation still reviled by many of its neighbors for its past military actions, and where domestic pacifism runs high, any military buildup

is controversial.

Japan has focused on its defensive capabilities and carefully avoids using the word "military" for its troops. But as it looks to defend its territorial and military interests against an assertive China, North Korea and Russia, officials in Tokyo are pushing citizens to put aside widespread unease over a more robust role for the military and support increased defense spending.

As it is, tens of billions of dollars each year have built an arsenal of nearly 1,000 warplanes and dozens of destroyers and submarines. Japan's forces rival those of Britain and France, and show no sign of slowing down in a pursuit of the best equipment and weapons money can buy.

Not everyone agrees with this buildup. Critics, both Japan's neighbors and at home, urge Tokyo to learn from its past and pull back from military expansion.

There's also domestic wariness over nuclear weapons. Japan, the only nation to have atomic bombs dropped on it in war, possesses no nuclear deterrent, unlike other top global militaries, and relies on the so-called U.S. nuclear umbrella.

Proponents of the new military muscle flexing, however, have said the expansion is well-timed and crucial to the Japanese alliance with Washington. China and Russia have stepped up military cooperation in recent years in an attempt to counter growing U.S.-led regional partnerships.

Myanmar leader Suu Kyi gets 4 years in trial seen as political

Associated Press

BANGKOK — Aung San Suu Kyi, the civilian leader of Myanmar who was ousted in a de facto coup this year, was convicted of incitement and another charge Monday and sentenced to four years in prison — in a trial widely criticized as yet a further attempt by the country's military rulers to roll back the democratic gains of recent years.

It also serves to cement a dramatic reversal of fortunes for the Nobel Peace laureate, who spent 15 years under house arrest for resisting the Southeast Asian nation's generals but then worked uncomfortably alongside them when they promised to usher in democratic rule.

Monday's verdict was the first expected in a series of cases against 76-year-old Suu Kyi, who was arrested when the army seized power on Feb. 1 and prevented her National League for Democracy party from starting a second five-year term in office following a landslide electoral victory.

If found guilty of all the charges she faces, Suu Kyi could be sentenced to more than 100 years in prison. She is being held by the military at an unknown location, and the court did not make clear Monday whether she would be moved to a prison or kept under some form of house arrest, according to a legal official, who relayed the verdict to The Associated Press and who insisted on anonymity for fear of being punished by the authorities.

The cases against Suu Kyi are widely seen as contrived to discredit her and keep her from running in the next election since the constitution bars anyone sent to prison after being convicted of a crime from holding high office or becoming a lawmaker.

Yanghee Lee, the former U.N. Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar, described the charges as well as the verdict as "bogus," declaring that any trial held in the country is unfair as the judiciary is subservient to the military-installed government.

Chris Cuomo was accused of harassment before CNN firing

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A new allegation of sexual harassment against Chris Cuomo emerged just days before CNN announced it was firing the anchor amid an investigation into work he did defending his brother from similar harassment allegations.

Attorney Debra Katz said Sunday that her client was the victim of "serious sexual misconduct" by Cuomo and that she had contacted CNN about the woman's allegations on Wednesday.

CNN suspended Cuomo last week after details emerged about how he assisted his brother, former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, as the politician faced sexual harassment allegations. Network officials said "additional information has come to light" when announcing Chris Cuomo's firing Saturday, but did not elaborate.

Katz said the accuser decided to come forward after the New York attorney general's office

released evidence showing Cuomo had taken a much more active role than previously thought in strategizing and helping to craft a response to the allegations his brother was facing. When the initial allegations surfaced against Andrew Cuomo, Chris Cuomo had told viewers he had "always cared very deeply about these issues," Katz said.

"Hearing the hypocrisy of Chris Cuomo's on-air words and disgusted by his efforts to try to discredit these women, my client retained counsel to report his serious sexual misconduct against her to CNN," Katz said in the statement.

The new misconduct allegation comes after a veteran TV executive, Shelley Ross, wrote a column for The New York Times in September saying Chris Cuomo had groped her at a party 16 years ago, when they both worked for ABC News. Cuomo told the newspaper that "I apologized to her then, and I meant it."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

State's high point to be repository for flag ashes

AL DELTA—The highest point in Alabama, Cheaha Mountain, will soon become a repository for the ashes of retired American flags.

A vault called “Old Glory Loo-kout” has been added to Cheaha State Park in Delta and will be dedicated on Tuesday, the 80th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. It will hold the remains of old U.S. flags, which are supposed to be destroyed by fire.

A statement from Alabama's state park system said the container consists of a steel vault encased in quartzite that was cut by members of the Civil Conservation Corps, a New Deal program formed in the 1930s under then-President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The vault is on the eastern slope of a ridge near a public boardwalk.

The project is a joint effort between an American Legion post in Atmore and the park, located about 80 miles east of Birmingham. Paul Chason, adjutant for the American Legion post, said military, veteran and civic organizations will be able to inter flag ashes at the site.

Kids get new shoes from medical school students

IL SPRINGFIELD — Dozens of schoolchildren got new athletic shoes this week from students at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine in Springfield.

Through the national “Shoes that Fit” program, SIU medical students have provided more than 1,000 pairs of shoes to area students since 2007. The (Springfield) State Journal-Reg-

ister reported.

The medical students organize the event and purchase the shoes, according to Hope Cherry, program director for SIU Medicine's Center for Clinical Research in the Department of Community and Family Medicine. There was a “casual day” to raise money for the campaign and faculty, staff and students all donated shoes.

High schooler arrested for assault on player

IA CARLISLE — An Iowa high school basketball player has been arrested following an apparent assault on an opposing player at the end of a game as the two teams lined up to shake hands, authorities said.

The attack reportedly followed a boys' high school basketball game last week between Nevada High School and Carlisle High School in Carlisle's gym. A video that has been viewed millions of times on Twitter shows a Carlisle player suddenly punch a Nevada player who had his hand extended for a handshake as the teams passed each other in a traditional practice of sportsmanship following a game.

In the video, the Carlisle player appears to hit the Nevada player at least two more times before he's pulled away.

The Nevada player suffered a concussion and required stitches for a cut to his mouth. The 17-year-old Carlisle player faces a felony charge of willful injury.

'Trees for Troops' gets over 450 from 2 states

NH BETHLEHEM — Over 450 Christmas trees from 25 growers in New

Hampshire and Vermont have been sent to U.S. military families as part of the national “Trees for Troops” effort.

The trees were recently collected at the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests' Rocks Christmas Tree Farm in Bethlehem, N.H.

Trees were donated by growers, regional businesses, schools and individuals.

The trees were being delivered to military bases in Georgia.

Newspaper photographer gets robbed at gunpoint

CA SAN FRANCISCO — A San Francisco Chronicle photographer was robbed at gunpoint on Friday afternoon in West Oakland, Calif., during an assignment, the newspaper reported.

The robbery came on the heels of the death of a security guard, who was shot Nov. 24 in Oakland while protecting a KRON4 News reporter from an attempted armed robbery. Kevin Nishita died Nov. 27 from his injuries.

Multiple suspects stole two cameras from The Chronicle photographer on Friday around 3:30 p.m. and drove away, according to the newspaper. The photographer was not injured.

People can trade toys for community service

SC GREENWOOD — A South Carolina prosecutor is again giving people a chance to get out of a little trouble this Christmas season by donating a new toy to needy children.

The program by the 8th Circuit Solicitor's Office knocks off some community service time for people in programs mostly

designed for first-time offenders, Solicitor David Stumbo told The Index-Journal of Greenwood.

Bicycles, action figures, board games, sports equipment and stuffed animals are already crowding offices. The drive runs through Dec. 10 and then the toys will be distributed through community organizations like the Abbeville Angel Tree program, the Salvation Army of Greenwood, the state Department of Social Services in Laurens and the sheriff's office in Newberry County.

The offer is available for people in programs such as pretrial intervention, drug court and veterans court.

Donations bell ringer robbed, suspect caught

WA VANCOUVER — A man was chased down and caught by deputies in Washington state after allegedly assaulting a Salvation Army bell ringer and fleeing with his donations kettle.

Clark County deputies responded just before 8 p.m. Saturday night to a reported robbery at a grocery store in Vancouver and attempted to stop the suspect as he fled on foot through traffic.

Two deputies chased down the suspect and detained him after a brief struggle, the Clark County Sheriff's Office said. The cash kettle had been discarded by the suspect but was recovered with help from a police dog, Apollo.

The bell ringer suffered minor injury. The suspect was booked into the Clark County jail on charges of robbery, theft, resisting arrest and obstructing law enforcement.

— From wire reports

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Decision when to gamble is tough one for coaches

Associated Press

John Harbaugh has the best kicker in the NFL, currently and possibly ever. Yet, trailing by one point, he left Justin Tucker on the sideline Sunday night and went for a two-point conversion in the dying seconds at Pittsburgh.

Lamar Jackson didn't quite have enough touch on his pass to an open Mark Andrews, and the Ravens (8-4) fell 20-19 to the Steelers. The defeat dropped Baltimore from the overall lead in the AFC.

It seemed one of the stranger decisions of a strange NFL season. But Harbaugh, one of the league's best coaches, quickly explained his reasoning.

"We tried to win the game right there. We were pretty much out of corners at that point in time," Harbaugh said without noting that Ravens' secondary has been leaky all season no matter who is playing. "It was an opportunity for us to win the game right there."

Considering the versatility of Jackson, it probably was a strong opportunity. But the one item not a major part of Jackson's bag of tricks is the finesse pass, which is what this play called for.

"You saw the play. It's that close," Harbaugh said. "It's a game of inches. You saw the speech in, 'Any Given Sunday,' right? That's football. It's just that close."

As is the entire AFC race.

Baltimore's decision surprised its archrivals. And didn't.

"I was a little surprised because I ran off the field," said DE Cam Heyward, who is not on special teams. "But we called the timeout, bought me an extra couple of seconds. At first, I thought (Andrews) scored, because he had it in his hand and then he dropped it. But I mean, it's just one or two plays that go your way."

Harbaugh's gamble was in character, according to Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger, who has gone up against the Ravens coach for nearly 14 seasons.

"You know what, coach Harbaugh, Miami (Ohio) guy, nothing surprises me," Big Ben said. "And that's why he's, you know, I consider him a great football coach because he takes those chances and believes in his team, and as a player, I'm sure they love that belief in them."

Fair enough, and who is to say Baltimore

would have won a coin toss to start overtime, marched downfield and scored a touchdown to end it without putting their secondary on the field?

But the decision brings into focus just how difficult crunch time can be for coaches. There is no accepted manual on how to manage such situations. Many times, the gut feeling is the best approach.

Unfortunately, very few head coaches have the, well, guts to go with their gut. Far too many of them coach not to lose rather to win. Is there anything more frustrating than watching your team go into the prevent defense? Cliche warning: All the prevent defense does is prevent you from winning.

See what happened in Detroit, which is pretty emblematic of what the Vikings have gone through in 2021. A team talented enough to be high in the mix for the NFC wild card spots, it fell to 5-7 in great part because it shut down the throttle. Minnesota added a two-point defeat to losses by eight, seven and four points, by three points in a pair of overtime games and 34-33 at Arizona.

In pretty much handing the Lions (1-10-1) their initial victory of the season, the Vikings went into such a defensive shell, and offense-challenged Detroit went 75 yards in 1:50. Without a timeout.

Jared Goff threw an 11-yard touchdown pass to Amon-Ra St. Brown just beyond the goal line as time expired — with Minnesota's defensive backs far too deep in the end zone.

The Vikings' three-man rush backfired big time.

"In hindsight, we would have loved to have gotten more pressure on him," coach Mike Zimmer said of Goff, "but I didn't think we were covering very well. I thought we needed more people in coverage than we did up front. Obviously, that didn't work."

It very often doesn't.

The lesson? It hurts more to be passive and lose than to be super aggressive and lose.

"Honestly if we would've converted the two-point conversion, we would've been having a different conversation right now," said Ravens linebacker Josh Byner. "Let's be real. We'd be talking about how we found a way to win."

Winless no more: Lions top Vikings

Associated Press

DETROIT — Jared Goff dropped back, looked left and let the football loose that Amon-Ra St. Brown squeezed tight as he sat in the end zone.

That set off a roar in Ford Field loud enough it might've been heard on Motor City streets.

Detroit finally found a way when Goff threw an 11-yard touchdown pass to St. Brown as time expired, lifting the previously winless Lions to a 29-27 victory over the Minnesota Vikings on Sunday.

"It feels good to stand in front of you now," Goff said to reporters before answering a question.

Not only was the finish dramatic, it was stunning.

Goff led Detroit on a 75-yard decisive possession without a timeout after Kirk Cousins threw a go-ahead 3-yard touchdown pass to Justin Jefferson with 1:50 left. The Vikings failed on a 2-point conversion for the third time, and those missed opportunities proved costly.

Goff threw two touchdown passes in the first half to put his team ahead by 14 points, its biggest lead this season. Then he turned over the ball twice in the second half to help Minnesota rally.

He came through in the end, leading the long drive and delivering a sharp pass without pressure against a three-man rush to a rookie receiver, who took advantage of the Vikings secondary playing too deep in the end zone.

"It was actually crazy," St. Brown said. "They were 3 or 4 yards in the end zone."

The Lions (1-10-1) ended a 15-game winless streak that lasted 364 days since winning at Chicago last season, giving first-year coach Dan Campbell his first victory with the franchise.

"You want this so bad for the players because they're the ones who put in all the hard work, the sweat, the tears," Campbell said. "When you lose, it hurts, but it's also why winning is so great, because it isn't easy to do."

The Vikings (5-7) hurt their chances of earning a wild card spot in the playoffs by losing a game they were favored to win by a touchdown.

Jazz hold off Cavs, extend streak to 4

Associated Press

CLEVELAND—Once the shot left Darius Garland's hands, the Utah Jazz couldn't do anything but hope it didn't drop.

Sometimes, defense comes down to a simple wish.

Garland missed a potential game-winner with 2.9 seconds left as the Jazz, who got 35 points from Donovan Mitchell, survived Cleveland's late surge for their fourth straight win, 109-108 over the Cavaliers on Sunday.

Rudy Gobert had 20 rebounds and five blocks, Bojan Bogdanovic added 16 points and Rudy Gay had 15 for Utah, which made 20 three-pointers and gave away a 15-point lead in the fourth.

Cleveland had a chance to win, and coach J.B. Bickerstaff put the ball in Garland's hands. But his 28-footer was long, and Jarrett Allen couldn't get his tip to drop as the Cavs had their winning streak stopped at four.

"That last possession, I knew it was going to go to him because I've known J.B. as a head coach for quite a while," Jazz guard

Mike Conley said. "I just tried to stay up as high as I could and make sure it was contested. I told him (Garland), it was like playing against myself."

Bickerstaff didn't second-guess his decision.

"If I could do it over again, I would do the same thing and let him make a play," he said.

Garland scored 31 points, Allen added 17 points and 11 rebounds and rookie Evan Mobley had 14 points and 12 rebounds for Cleveland, which was back at home after beating Dallas, Miami and Washington.

Hornets 130, Hawks 127: Miles Bridges scored 32 points for a short-handed Charlotte team that leaned on its best three-point shooting game of the season to beat host Atlanta.

Kelly Oubre Jr. made six threes and scored 28 points for the Hornets, who made a season-high 17 threes.

John Collins led the Hawks with a season-best 31 points and 12 rebounds.

The four Charlotte players held out after being placed in the NBA's health and safety COVID-19 protocols were leading scorer La-

Melo Ball, starting guard Terry Rozier, center Mason Plumlee and forward Jalen McDaniels. They'll be sidelined for at least 10 days.

Raptors 102, Wizards 90: Pascal Siakam scored 31 points, Precious Achiuwa had 10 points and 14 rebounds, and Toronto beat visiting Washington.

Chris Boucher scored 14 points, Scottie Barnes had 11 and Fred VanVleet 10 to help the Raptors win back-to-back games for the first time since a five-game winning streak from Oct. 27 to Nov. 3.

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored a season-high 26 points and Bradley Beal had 14 for the Wizards, who couldn't dig out of a hole after shooting poorly in the first quarter.

Rockets 118, Pelicans 108: Eric Gordon and Christian Wood both scored 23 points, and host Houston beat New Orleans for its sixth straight win.

Brandon Ingram scored a season-high 40 points for the Pelicans, which was his most since dropping 40 against Brooklyn on Nov. 4, 2019. Jonas Valanciunas finished with 17 points and 10 rebounds for New Orleans.

Mathurin carries No. 11 Arizona past Oregon State

Associated Press

CORVALLIS, Ore. — Benedict Mathurin scored a season-high 29 points, including four three-pointers, and No. 11 Arizona beat Oregon State 90-65 on Sunday.

Christian Koloko added 12 points for the Wildcats (7-0, 1-0 Pac-12), who won their fourth straight against the Beavers. Mathurin finished with six rebounds.

"The first thing that really got Benn going was the offensive rebounding. That's something he and I have been talking about," Arizona coach Tommy Lloyd said. "Making plays in the effort areas and not just hunting jump shots. Then he hunted some good threes and our guys found him in that zone."

Jerod Lucas scored 17 points to lead the Beavers (1-8, 0-2), who haven't won since their opener against Portland State.

The Wildcats fell behind 13-7

early, responded with a 16-0 run capped by Mathurin's three-point play and steadily pulled away, never relinquishing the lead.

Oregon State got within six points early in the second half, but a layup by Azuolas Tubelis made it 52-41 with 17:13 left and the Beavers didn't get within 10 points the rest of the way.

"I was really excited the way our guys came out ready for fight. And then just seems like what's cost us against all teams is little spurts in each half," Beavers coach Wayne Tinkle said. "We got down in the first half and then battled back. Second half, same thing. We just we couldn't keep the ball in front. We couldn't grab a rebound. We turned it over way too much."

Kerr Kriisa finished with 11 points for Arizona and Tubelis scored 10.

Oregon State were thwarted by turnovers, with 22 that the

Wildcats turned into 27 points.

"I don't know if I envision stats going into the game, but I definitely knew we wanted to pressure them and force them to make tough plays in tight windows. Our guys did a good job of that," Lloyd said.

Arizona was supposed to open Pac-12 play at home on Thursday against Washington, but the game was postponed because of COVID-19 issues with the Huskies. That game has been rescheduled for Jan. 25.

"We played one game basically in the last two weeks. So maybe it took us a little bit to get our feet underneath us, but I'm really proud of how our bench came in and changed the game, pressuring defensively and making some things happen," Lloyd said.

The Wildcats are averaging more than 90 points per game under Lloyd, who's in his first season as their coach after 20

years as an assistant at Gonzaga.

Tip-ins

Arizona: The Wildcats' No. 11 ranking is their highest since they were No. 9 in January of 2018. ... Arizona has three wins this season by 45 or more points.

Oregon State: The Beavers have not led a game at halftime this season. ... Oregon State has defeated Arizona nine times at Gill Coliseum when the Wildcats have been ranked, most recently on Jan. 12, 2020, when the Beavers beat then-No. 24 Arizona 82-65.

Corvallis Cool

Mathurin, a sophomore, had a career-high 31 points against the Beavers at Gill Coliseum last season.

"To be honest, I'm from Canada and Corvallis is pretty much the same as Canada, so I'll just say it's the weather," he joked after the game.

Blackhawks hand Isles 11th straight loss

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Patrick Kane scored the only goal in the shootout and the Chicago Blackhawks beat the Islanders 3-2 Sunday night, sending New York to its 11th straight loss overall and its sixth straight setback in its new arena.

Kane beat Semyon Varlamov with Chicago's second shootout attempt, and Marc-Andre Fleury denied all three chances by the Islanders to secure the win.

The Islanders tied the game at 2-all with four seconds left in the third period on a goal by defenseman Noah Dobson.

Brandon Hagel and Dylan Strome scored in regulation for the Blackhawks. Fleury finished with 22 saves.

Jean-Gabriel Pageau also scored for New York, which earned a point for the third straight game but fell to 0-8-3 in its losing streak. Its last three losses have been in overtime or shootouts after eight straight regulation losses. Varlamov finished with 24 saves.

The last-place Islanders, missing leading scorer Brock Nelson and defenseman Ryan Pullock due to injuries, fell to 0-4-2 at UBS Arena as their winless streak reached 11 (0-8-3). The skid dropped their season record to 5-10-5.

The team's longest winless run came during its expansion season, from Nov. 21-Dec. 20, 1972, when it went 15 games (12 losses, three ties) without a victory. New York lost 12 straight games twice in franchise history, from Nov. 22-Dec. 15, 1988, and Dec. 27, 1972 to Jan. 16, 1973.

Lightning 7, Flyers 1: Corey Perry had two goals and an assist and Ryan McDonagh scored and had two assists to lead Tampa Bay to a win at slumping Philadelphia.

Mathieu Joseph, Taylor Raddysh, Boris Katchouk and Pat Maroon also scored for the Lightning, who won their third in a row and ninth of their last 12. Victor Hedman had three assists to boost his team-leading total to 21. Brian Elliott, Tampa Bay's backup goalie who played the previous four seasons with the Flyers, made 38 saves.

Cam Atkinson scored for Philadelphia, which has lost eight in a row. The team is two losses away from tying the club record of 10 consecutive defeats. Carter Hart made 10 saves before being replaced by Martin Jones, who also had 10 saves.

Jets 6, Maple Leafs 3: Blake Wheeler had two assists in his 1,000th NHL game and Connor Hellebuyck made 32 saves, leading host Winnipeg past Toronto.

Pierre-Luc Dubois, Andrew Copp, Evgeny Svechnikov, Kyle Connor, Nikolaj Ehlers and Mark Scheifele scored, and Hellebuyck earned his ninth win of the season for the Jets.

Golden Knights 3, Flames 2: Evgenii Dadonov scored his seventh goal of the season and host Vegas beat Calgary.

Less than two minutes after the Flames' Elias Lindholm cut the Golden Knights' 2-0 lead in half, Dadonov responded by smacking a rebound past Calgary goalie Jacob Markstrom to give Vegas a 3-1 lead.

Kings 5, Oilers 1: Adrian Kempe scored a pair of goals and Los Angeles snapped a two-game skid with a win at Edmonton.

Rasmus Kupari, Drew Doughty and Trevor Moore also scored for the Kings. Doughty added two assists, and Jonathan Quick made 21 saves.

Blue Jackets 6, Sharks 4: Adam Boqvist scored twice, Andrew Peeke had two assists and host Columbus snapped a four-game losing streak with a come-from-behind win over San Jose.

Sean Kuraly, Cole Sillinger, Jack Roslevic and Alexandre Texier scored and Elvis Merzlikins stopped 30 shots as the Blue Jackets won their fourth straight home game.

Oklahoma hires Clemson's Venables to replace Riley

Associated Press

Oklahoma hired Clemson defensive coordinator Brent Venables as its head coach to replace Lincoln Riley on Sunday night, bringing back a former Sooners assistant with a long track record of success.

Venables was introduced Monday morning on the campus in Norman.

The 50-year-old Venables was on Oklahoma's staff under Bob Stoops as co-defensive coordinator from 1999 to 2003 and defensive coordinator from 2004 to 2011. He was co-defensive coordinator when the Sooners won the 2000 national title. He left Oklahoma for Clemson in 2012 and won the Broyles Award in 2016 as the nation's top assistant. He's been on the staff of teams that have won three national titles and appeared in eight na-

tional championship games.

"He knows the formula to win national championships and has the toughness, the attitude and the fight that I think will elevate our program in a lot of positive ways," said Stoops, who has been serving as interim coach since Riley's surprising departure last week for Southern California. "I've always loved his energy, excitement and passion for the game — it clearly spills over to his players."

Venables, who will be a head coach for the first time, said in a statement he's excited to add to the history of a program that's won seven national titles and had seven Heisman Trophy winners. He also said he's embracing the Sooners' eventual move to the Southeastern Conference, which is set for 2025.

"There's no question we are

equipped to compete at the very highest level and attract the best players from across the country," he said. "The OU logo has never been stronger."

Under Venables, the Tigers led the nation in scoring defense in 2018, and his 2020 unit tied for the lead in sacks. This season, Clemson ranks second nationally in scoring defense, ninth in total defense, eighth in rushing defense and sixth in pass efficiency defense.

Oklahoma was caught off guard when Riley took the job at USC. Stoops took over on an interim basis to calm things down during recruiting.

Venables quickly emerged as a fan favorite for the job. Many had hoped the Sooners could lure him back from Clemson as defensive coordinator after Oklahoma fired coordinator Mike

Stoops in 2018. The Sooners chose Alex Grinch, who left to join Riley at USC.

Venables' first concerns will be to prevent players from transferring and salvage as much of the recruiting class as possible. Several players announced their intentions to enter the transfer portal after Riley's decision, including quarterback Spencer Rattler. Numerous recruits decommitted, including Malachi Nelson — a five-star quarterback who said he is heading to USC.

Riley set the bar high. He went 55-10 in five seasons with the Sooners and led them to three College Football Playoff appearances. Quarterbacks Baker Mayfield and Kyler Murray both won Heisman trophies and were No. 1 overall picks in the NFL draft.