

## Report: US military cell killed Syrian civilians

By **CHAD GARLAND**  
*Stars and Stripes*

A clandestine U.S. military strike cell that directed attacks on Islamic State targets in Syria repeatedly skirted protocols meant to protect civilians, leading to numerous “bad strikes,” according to a new report.

At times made up of fewer than 20 people, the top-secret unit was called Talon Anvil. From 2014 to 2019, it worked 24/7 to find and strike enemy convoys, car bombs and fighting positions, The New York Times reported Sunday.

Although the vast majority of its targets were jihadi fighters, the unit’s disregard for military safeguards repeatedly led to attacks that killed people who had no part in the battle, said unidentified military and intelligence officials quoted in the report.

“They were ruthlessly efficient and good at their jobs,” said a former Air Force intelligence officer in the report who worked on missions from the U.S. almost

daily from 2016 to 2018. “But they also made a lot of bad strikes.”

Four officials who interacted directly with the unit on hundreds of strikes during the war spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the outfit, which never officially existed, the Times reported.

On shifts often led only by a Delta Force noncommissioned officer, the unit frequently hit targets with little supporting evidence, partly because of a lack of experience at running a strike cell, officials told the Times.

Talon Anvil frequently sidestepped formal procedures meant to limit unintended harm, the officials said.

Two sources said members of the unit also had a habit of turning drone cameras away from strikes at key moments to prevent collection of video evidence that might be used in investigations.

The latest Times report on the unit comes in the wake of another

asserting that the military had hidden details from the public and senior officials about a special operations strike in 2019 that killed dozens of women and children.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered an investigation into that strike, which the Times said was carried out by Talon Anvil. Officials told the newspaper that was part of a yearslong trend.

Several current and former senior special operations officers, however, denied the existence of a widespread pattern of carelessness about measures to limit civilian casualties.

The military has often touted the precision of its air campaign and “surgical strikes” during the anti-ISIS war.

Some critics even complained early on that strict rules President Barack Obama had imposed to curtail civilian casualties were slowing progress against the militant group.

But in 2016, shortly before Obama left office, procedures

were relaxed and commanders on the ground were given greater authority to approve strikes, officials said at the time.

Less stringent procedures were used for “dynamic” strikes ordered in self-defense for ground troops in combat or for quick repulsion of developing threats, officials in Iraq told Stars and Stripes at the time.

Talon Anvil circumvented the measures for preplanned strikes by improperly using the self-defense justification on numerous missions, even when targets were far from the fight, officials told the Times.

In Syria, the civilian casualty rate increased significantly each year Talon Anvil operated, Larry Lewis, a former adviser to the Pentagon and State Department, told the Times.

The rate was 10 times that of similar operations in Afghanistan, much higher than expected from a U.S. unit, said Lewis, who helped author a 2018 report on civilian casualties.

## Navy to hold hearing for sailor accused of igniting warship

*Associated Press*

SAN DIEGO — The Navy was holding a hearing Monday to determine whether there is enough evidence to order a court-martial for a San Diego-based sailor charged with setting the fire that destroyed the USS Bonhomme Richard in the summer of 2020.

Ryan Sawyer Mays, a junior sailor, was charged with aggravated arson and the willful hazarding of a vessel in a case that marked the maritime branch’s worst warship blaze outside of combat in recent memory.

Mays, who was a crew member, has maintained his innocence. He told investigators he helped fight the blaze. The amphibious assault ship burned for nearly five

days, sending acrid smoke over San Diego.

About 160 sailors and officers were on board when the fire started July 12, 2020, in the lower storage area of the 840-foot vessel, which had been docked at Naval Base San Diego while undergoing a two-year \$250 million upgrade.

More than 60 sailors and civilians were treated for minor injuries, heat exhaustion and smoke inhalation. Left with extensive structural, electrical and mechanical damage, the billion-dollar ship was later scrapped.

Mays was assigned to the ship after dropping out of training to become a Navy SEAL, and he was described by some fellow sailors as a person who had disdain for the Navy, according to investigators.

Officials assessing the ship’s damage found three of four fire stations on the ship had evidence of tampering: Fire hoses were disconnected and one was cut, according to court documents.

They also found uncapped bottles containing small amounts of highly flammable liquid near the ignition site, including one that tested positive for a heavy petroleum distillate such as diesel, kerosene or jet fuel, according to the court documents.

Mays told investigators he was in the hangar bay when he became aware of the fire, according to court documents. He described how he assisted firefighters, alerting at least one crew member of the threat, and eventually helped fight the blaze, according to court documents.

# End to Korean War agreed on 'in principle'

By DAVID CHOI  
*Stars and Stripes*

The United States, North Korea and China have agreed "in principle" to declare a formal end to the Korean War, South Korean President Moon Jae-in said Monday.

Speaking during a four-day summit in Canberra, Australia, Moon said the countries all support the idea of ending the 1950-53 war, though Pyongyang is still demanding "a prerequisite that the U.S. should fundamentally drop its hostile policy."

"The end-of-war declaration

itself is not an ultimate goal," Moon said before adding that he hoped the proclamation would generate "significant dialogue momentum" between the countries.

The Korean War ended with an armistice agreement rather than a peace treaty between China, North Korea and the U.N. Command.

Moon alluded to the possibility of including China in four-party talks during a speech before the U.N. General Assembly in September. Since broaching the subject on the world stage,

South Korean diplomats have met with their U.S. and Chinese counterparts to discuss the proposition. Chinese diplomat Yang Jiechi responded positively to the idea, the presidential Blue House said in a statement earlier this month.

The U.S. confirmed it was ironing out the details of an end-of-war declaration in recent weeks. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said at a press conference Nov. 17 she was "very satisfied with the consultations ... on the best way forward to ensure the complete

denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula."

Moon, who will step down in May, has pushed to formally end the Korean War before his term ends. Supporters of the plan have argued that such a declaration would normalize relations with North Korea and jump-start denuclearization talks.

Critics have argued, however, that a declaration would pander to an unchanging Pyongyang and lead to the withdrawal of U.S. troops on the Korean Peninsula.

## Ex-airman: US must do more for personnel in German tax cases

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

A German tax office has rescinded its case against a retired U.S. airman, who said his situation should serve as a wake-up call to the military over its failure to defend its personnel from potential financial ruin.

Earlier this month, an attorney for former Master Sgt. Matthew Larsen received notification from the Kusel-Landstuhl finance office that it was ending its pursuit of the American.

Still, Larsen said his victory reinforces his view that the U.S. military in Europe has failed to stand up for a growing number of American personnel who still find themselves ensnared in high-stakes fights with German authorities.

"The Air Force didn't win this case for us," Larsen told Stars and Stripes last week. "Neither did DOD or the embassy. This is something we fought strictly alone."

His final years of active duty were marred by threats of fines

and even imprisonment if he didn't hand over his U.S. tax records to German authorities for inspection.

The State Department has said repeatedly that local tax offices are violating the NATO Status of Forces Agreement when they try to force U.S. personnel to pay German income taxes and penalties on their military pay and benefits.

Larsen drew the attention of tax officials because he is married to a German woman, which in their eyes can be justification for treating military personnel as taxable German residents despite their military visas.

In addition to being married to a German, factors that can put military members at tax risk include owning property, sending children to German schools or having lengthy tours of duty.

While talks aimed at resolving the diplomatic impasse drag on between Washington and Berlin, Americans remain targets and revenue sources for German garrison towns.

## Navy installations in Italy face uncertainty on COVID testing

*Stars and Stripes*

U.S. naval bases in Italy are waiting for COVID-19 test kits to arrive before starting mandatory testing of unvaccinated sailors, and there's no clear timetable for delivery of the kits, according to Navy officials.

In November, the service ordered all unvaccinated personnel to be self-tested at least weekly for COVID-19. The order specified that testing could begin as soon as Nov. 28 if testing kits were available.

Navy Region Europe Africa Central spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Matthew Comer said Monday that Naval Air Station Sigonella and Naval Support Activity Naples have not yet received the kits.

He could not provide an expected date for kit delivery or the start of testing. It was unclear Monday how many Navy bases or ships had started testing.

Meanwhile, Italy continues to grapple with a surge in COVID-19 cases. The Health Ministry reported 19,215 new cases of the virus and 66 deaths on Sunday. That was down slightly from

the day before, when there were 21,042 new cases and 96 deaths.

Three regions — Calabria, Bolzano and Friuli Venezia Giulia, which is home to Aviano Air Base — are considered yellow risk zones. That designation requires additional restrictions, such as mandatory mask-wearing outdoors.

Campania, home to NSA Naples, and Sicilia, home to NAS Sigonella, remain in the white zone.

But eight regions — including Campania, Sicilia and Lazio, home to another U.S. Navy base in Gaeta — have seen a rise in the number of COVID-19 patients placed in intensive care, the Ansa news agency reported Monday.

At the end of November, about 9,500 active-duty sailors, or roughly 4% of the total, were unvaccinated, the Navy said.

Unvaccinated naval reservists face weekly testing beginning Dec. 28, also if supplies are on hand. The order did not address civilians or contractors, saying that guidance for them would be issued later.

# Taliban seek ties with US, other ex-foes

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers are committed in principle to education and jobs for girls and women, a marked departure from their previous time in power, and they seek the world's "mercy and compassion" to help millions of Afghans in desperate need, a top Taliban leader said in a rare interview.

Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi also told The Associated Press that the Taliban government wants good relations with all countries and has no issue with the United States. He urged Washington and other nations to release upward of \$10 billion in funds that were frozen when the Taliban took power Aug. 15, following a rapid military sweep across Afghanistan and the sudden, secret flight of U.S.-backed President Ashraf Ghani.

"Sanctions against Afghanistan would...not have any benefit," Muttaqi said Sunday, speaking in his native Pashto during the interview in the sprawling pale brick Foreign Ministry building in the heart of the capital of Kabul.

"Making Afghanistan unstable or having a weak Afghan government is not in the interest of anyone," said Muttaqi, whose aides include employees of the previous government as well as those recruited from the ranks of the Taliban.

Muttaqi acknowledged the world's outrage at the Taliban-imposed limitations on girls' education and on women in the workforce. When they first ruled from 1996-2001, the Taliban shocked the world by barring girls and women from schools and jobs, banning most entertainment and sports, and occasionally carrying out executions in front of large

crowds in sports stadiums. But Muttaqi said the Taliban have changed since they last ruled.

"We have made progress in administration and in politics... in interaction with the nation and the world. With each passing day, we will gain more experience and make more progress," he said.

Muttaqi said that under the new Taliban government, girls are going to school through grade 12 in 10 of the country's 34 provinces, private schools and universities are operating unhindered, and 100% of women who had previously worked in the health sector are back on the job.

He claimed the Taliban have not targeted their opponents, instead announcing a general amnesty and providing some protection. Leaders of the previous government live without threat in Kabul, he said, although most of them have fled.

Last month, the international group Human Rights Watch published a report that said the Taliban summarily killed or forcibly disappeared more than 100 former police and intelligence officials in four provinces. There have been no reports of large-scale retribution, however.

Muttaqi said the Taliban have made mistakes in their first months and that "we will work for more reforms which can benefit the nation." He did not elaborate on the mistakes or possible reforms.

Muttaqi pushed back against comments by U.S. Marine Corps Gen. Frank McKenzie, who told the AP last week that al-Qaida has grown slightly in Afghanistan since U.S. forces left.

"If McKenzie has any proof, he should provide it. With confidence, I can say that this is a baseless allegation," he said.

## Britons rush to get booster as COVID variant invades

Associated Press

LONDON — Long lines formed Monday at vaccination centers across England as people heeded the government's call for all adults to get booster shots to protect themselves against the omicron variant, as the United Kingdom recorded its first death of a patient infected with omicron.

In a televised announcement late Sunday, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said everyone 18 and up would be offered a third vaccine dose by Dec. 31 — less than three weeks away, and a month earlier than the previous target.

Johnson said boosters would "reinforce our wall of vaccine protection" against an anticipated "tidal wave of omicron." The British government raised the country's official coronavirus threat level on Sunday, warning that the rapid spread of omicron "adds additional and rapidly in-

creasing risk to the public and health care services."

U.K. health authorities have said omicron cases are doubling every two to three days in Britain. But it's unclear whether the expected wave of infections will inundate the country's state-funded health care system.

More than 80% of people age 12 and up in Britain have received two vaccine doses, and 40% of adults have had three. Giving the rest boosters by the end of the month will require almost 1 million vaccine shots delivered a day. Johnson acknowledged that many routine medical procedures would have to be postponed to meet the goal.

Johnson is facing a major rebellion from unhappy Conservative lawmakers when Parliament votes on the new virus restrictions Tuesday. Dozens are expected to oppose the restrictions — especially vaccine passports.

## Biden vows better access for government services

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Monday will sign an executive order aimed at saving Americans time and frustration when seeking a broad array of federal services, like renewing passports, applying for Social Security benefits and getting aid after natural disasters.

The White House released details about the order Monday, ahead of a planned afternoon signing by Biden. Parts of the order also were provided in advance to advocacy groups that have called for the government to improve its level of service to the public. The order is aimed at reducing the current bureaucratic runaround, under which people often have to visit offices, endure long phone calls or struggle with the delays of mail and fax machines when trying to contact federal agencies.

The new executive order

should bring government services into the digital era, said Bill Sweeney, senior vice president of government affairs for AARP, an association for older Americans.

"We do our banking online," Sweeney said. "We do our work online. We can order food online. We can order groceries from our phone. I think people are accustomed to that now and they're demanding that government keep up as well."

For retirees and the nearly 4 million Americans who turn 65 each year, the order requires that they be able to claim Social Security benefits online more easily.

For travelers, Americans will be able to renew their passports online. New security machines and computers with advanced screening features are to streamline the process of going through security lines for the roughly 2 million people who fly daily.

## Images suggest space launch in Iran imminent

*Associated Press*

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran appears to be preparing for a space launch as negotiations continue in Vienna over its tattered nuclear deal with world powers, according to an expert and satellite images.

The likely blast off at Iran's Imam Khomeini Spaceport comes as Iranian state media has offered a list of upcoming planned satellite launches in the works for the Islamic Republic's civilian space program, which has been beset by a series of failed launches. Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard runs its own parallel program that successfully put a satellite into orbit last year.

Conducting a launch amid the Vienna talks fits the hard-line posture struck by Tehran's negotiators, who already described six previous rounds of diplomacy as a "draft," exasperating Western nations. Germany's new foreign minister has gone as far as to warn that "time is running out for us at this point."

But all this fits into a renewed focus on space by Iran's hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, said Jeffrey Lewis, an expert at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies who studies Tehran's program. With Iran's former President Hassan Rouhani, who shepherded the nuclear deal, out of office, concerns about alienating the talks with launches that the U.S. asserts aids Tehran's ballistic missile program likely have faded.

"They're not walking on eggshells," Lewis said. "I think Raisi's people have a new balance in mind."

Iranian state media did not acknowledge the activity at the spaceport and Iran's mission to the United Nations did not respond to a request for comment. The U.S. military, which tracks space launches, did not respond to requests for comment.

Satellite images taken Saturday by Planet Labs Inc. obtained by The Associated Press show activity at the spaceport in the desert plains of Iran's rural Semnan province, some 150 miles southeast of Tehran.

A support vehicle stood parked alongside a massive white gantry that typically houses a rocket on the launch pad. That support vehicle has appeared in other satellite photos at the site just ahead of a launch. Also visible is a hydraulic crane with a railed platform, also seen before previous launches and likely used to service the rocket.

## Thousands in US lack water, heat in wake of tornadoes

*Associated Press*

MAYFIELD, Ky. — Residents of a Kentucky town devastated by a tornado could be without heat, water and electricity in chilly temperatures for a long time, the mayor warned Monday, as officials struggled to restore services after a swarm of twisters leveled neighborhoods and killed dozens of people in five states.

Authorities are still tallying the devastation from Friday night's storms, though they believe the death toll will be lower than initially feared since it appeared many more people escaped a candle factory in Mayfield, Ky., than first thought.

"This is a tough morning ... but it's OK, we're still going to be all right," Mayfield Mayor Kathy Stewart O'Nan said on "CBS Mornings."

But those who survived faced highs in the 50s and a low below freezing Monday without any utilities.

"Our infrastructure is so damaged. We have no running water. Our water tower was lost. Our wastewater management was lost, and there's no natural gas to the city. So we have nothing to rely on there," she told CBS. "So that is purely survival at this point for so many of our people."

Across the state, about 26,000 homes and businesses were without electricity, according to poweroutage.us, including nearly all of those in Mayfield.

Kentucky was the worst-hit by far in the cluster of twisters across several states, re-

markable because they came at a time of year when cold weather normally limits tornadoes. At least 64 people died in the state, Gov. Andy Beshear said Monday. There were at least another 14 deaths in Illinois, Tennessee, Arkansas and Missouri.

Authorities are still trying to pin down the full death toll, and the storms made door-to-door searches impossible in some places. "There are no doors," said Beshear.

"We're going to have over 1,000 homes that are gone, just gone," he said.

Over the weekend, Beshear had said that the state's toll could exceed 100 — but he scaled that back after it appeared fewer people died in the candle factory than first thought.

Debris from destroyed buildings and shredded trees covered the ground in Mayfield, a city of about 10,000 in western Kentucky. Twisted sheet metal, downed power lines and wrecked vehicles lined the streets. Windows were blown out and roofs torn off the buildings that were still standing.

Firefighters in the town had to rip the doors off the fire station to get vehicles out, according to Fire Chief Jeremy Creason on "CBS Mornings."

"Words cannot describe the bravery, the selflessness that they've exhibited," he said of his employees. "We had to try and navigate through all the debris up and down our streets. We were responding with ambulances with three and four flat tires."

## 2 people missing after cargo ships collided in Baltic Sea off Sweden

*Associated Press*

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Two cargo ships collided in the Baltic Sea off southern Sweden and at least two people were reported missing Monday. One of the vessels capsized and will be towed to a Swedish port, authorities said.

At least 11 vessels, an airplane and a helicopter searched for the missing crewmembers, but the Swedish Maritime Administration said later in the day that it had ended its operation without locating the pair.

The capsized vessel was being towed closer to land so divers from the Swedish Armed

Forces and the Coast Guard, among others, can search it. Police also plan to take over the case and to examine the ship.

"We have no idea when the work can be completed," the maritime agency said in a statement.

Swedish Coast Guard prosecutor Jonatan Tholin said prosecutors opened a preliminary investigation on potential charges of gross negligence in maritime traffic and "gross sea drunkenness." However, the cause of the collision was still unclear, Swedish Maritime Administration said. At the time, fog caused poor visibility in the area.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Police: Over 20 weapons stolen from gun store

**VA** VIRGINIA BEACH — Federal agents have gotten involved in seeking the culprits who police said stole more than 20 firearms from a Tidewater Virginia gun shop.

The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives is working with Virginia Beach police to locate the weapons, which included handguns and rifles. They were stolen from DOA Arms during a Thursday morning burglary, news outlets reported.

Authorities said they're looking for the owners of four cars that they believe were involved in the thefts, and released photos of the vehicles. Police didn't confirm how many people participated in the burglary.

Virginia Beach Crime Solvers, the ATF and the National Shooting Sports Foundation are offering rewards for information that leads to an arrest.

### Floating trash traps get tested in coastal bayous

**MS** JACKSON — Mississippi is using BP oil spill money in a test to see whether floating trash traps placed in coastal waterways can make a big reduction in the amount of litter in the Mississippi Sound.

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality wants to learn "if these traps can substantially reduce the amount of litter which enters the Mississippi Sound from upland areas," executive director Chris Wells said.

The \$162,000, one-year pilot

project is putting the litter collectors made in Alabama into three bayous and a canal in Mississippi's three coastal counties, according to a news release sent Wednesday. The devices are anchored with floating booms that steer trash and natural debris into the traps, and which wildlife and boaters can go under or over.

Mississippi State University's Coastal Research and Extension Center used a department grant to contract with Osprey Initiative of Mobile, Ala., which makes the devices, a department spokesman said. Osprey also sets them out, maintains them and sorts the trash, recycling as much as possible.

### Sheriff charged with 4 misdemeanors in crash

**MN** ALEXANDRIA — Prosecutors in Douglas County late Friday charged Hennepin County Sheriff David Hutchinson with four misdemeanors for drunkenness after he crashed his vehicle.

Hutchinson rolled his county SUV on Interstate 94 near Alexandria during the early morning hours Wednesday. He had been attending the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association winter conference in the city, the St. Paul Pioneer Press reported. An analysis of his urine determined that his blood alcohol content was 0.13%, while the state legal limit is 0.08%. Hutchinson had acknowledged he had been drinking before the crash and called the decision "inexcusable."

The Douglas County Attorney said three of the charges were for driving while impaired and

the fourth is for carrying a pistol while under the influence of alcohol. Minnesota law would bar Hutchinson from carrying a gun for a year if he was convicted on the gun charge. He could also face fines and jail time.

### Revere family artifacts sold for \$20K at auction

**MA** BOSTON — Artifacts once owned by Paul Revere's family have been sold at auction for \$20,000.

The items were found in the attic of a home in Canton, Mass., believed to have been owned by the family of the legendary Revolutionary War figure, The Boston Globe reported.

They include tools such wrought iron calipers, letters and other personal items. There's also an account book belonging to Paul Revere's descendants and a sign painted black bearing the name of Paul Revere's son, Joseph W. Revere.

John McInnis Auctioneers in Amesbury sold the items as a single lot in an auction that concluded Saturday. The auction house estimated the lot to sell for between \$1,000 and \$2,000.

### B-52 cockpit to be displayed at museum

**ME** BANGOR — A B-52 bomber that was one of the last two planes to depart Dow Air Force Base before it closed is getting a new lease on life.

The cockpit of the aircraft dubbed "City of Bangor" is being restored and will be displayed starting next year at the Tillamook Air Museum in Oregon, the Bangor Daily News re-

ported.

The bomber departed Bangor on April 5, 1968, along with the last KC-135 tanker. But that wasn't the end of its service. It went to Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana before returning to Maine in 1972 to serve at Loring Air Force Base. Then it transferred to bases in Guam, Texas, California, North Dakota and Washington.

It flew combat missions in the 1991 Gulf War, based out of Spain and England, before it was decommissioned and chopped up.

### Sheriff: Suspects stole 3.6K pieces of mail

**SC** YORK — Authorities have charged two people with stealing more than 3,600 pieces of mail and dozens of packages in North and South Carolina.

Sheriff Kevin Tolson of York County, S.C., said Saturday that a man and a woman were arrested last week after a citizen called with a tip that someone was tossing mail out of a car in a Walmart parking lot.

Investigators recovered 74 packages and thousands of other pieces of mail taken from nearly 2,000 mailboxes on either side of the state line in the area of Charlotte, N.C., reported The Herald of Rock Hill, S.C.

The sheriff said the parcels are being returned to their rightful owners in six counties. York County detectives had already hand-delivered stolen mail to victims in their community. Tolson said his office was working with the U.S. Postal Service to return mail to victims in North Carolina.

— From wire reports

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# Blowouts become common for bad NFL teams

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Josh Allen wouldn't let Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers cruise to a lopsided victory after the Buffalo Bills fell behind by 21 points at halftime.

Allen led an impressive comeback with his arm and legs to force overtime before Brady connected with Breshad Perriman for a 58-yard catch-and-run touchdown to win it.

Several other teams didn't show Buffalo's fight on Sunday. Most had less at stake.

Seven games were decided by 15 or more points, including five by at least 20.

The worst loss of the day belonged to Las Vegas. The Chiefs routed the Raiders for the second time in five games. Kansas City won this one 48-9. The Raiders (6-7) are clinging to playoff hopes, but they've lost five of six and aren't going anywhere.

"I try my best to stay positive, but it sucks," Carr said.

He could've been speaking on behalf of many players on the bad teams that were blown out.

The Lions (1-11-1), Jaguars (2-11), Texans

(2-11), Jets (3-10) and Giants (4-9) were outscored 158-53. They'll spend the final four weeks fighting for draft positioning, and on the wrong side of more routs.

"It's going to flip," Jets coach Robert Saleh promised after a 30-9 loss to New Orleans. "This crappy part is part of the process, but at the same time it's not discouraging by any sense of the imagination because we've got a lot of young guys getting a lot of good playing time. And I promise you they're learning from all this."

The team's fans can't be blamed for being skeptical. New York will miss the playoffs for the 11th straight year and has only had one winning season in that span.

Coming off its first win of the season, Detroit stayed close for a half in Denver. The Broncos then pulled away for a 38-10 win.

"It just wasn't good enough," Lions coach Dan Campbell said.

They've been saying the same thing for decades in Detroit. The Lions haven't won a playoff game since 1992.

The dysfunctional Jaguars lost 20-0 at Ten-

nessee following a report that rookie coach Urban Meyer and his staff aren't getting along. Jacksonville has just one winning season in the last 14 years, yet has suffered more embarrassment under Meyer in only 13 games.

"It hasn't exactly materialized the way I expected it to have, the experience of winning games," said Meyer, a three-time national championship at Florida and Ohio State who has learned it's not easy to win in the NFL.

The Texans fell to the Seahawks 33-13, their 23rd loss in 29 games. They couldn't win with Deshaun Watson last year. They can't win with him getting paid to sit out games this season.

Houston visits Jacksonville next week. The winner may be the real loser for dropping a spot in the draft order.

The Giants are one loss away from securing their fifth straight losing season and eighth in nine years after a 37-21 loss to the Chargers. The biggest question in New York will be coach Joe Judge's job security after only two seasons.

# Cowboys top Redskins, deliver on coach's guarantee

Associated Press

LANDOVER, Md. — Beating Washington looked far from a guarantee for the Dallas Cowboys after their big lead shrunk, but coach Mike McCarthy said he's plenty confident winning a close game is good for his team.

Micah Parsons sacked Taylor Heinicke twice and forced a fumble that was returned for a touchdown, helping the Cowboys make good on McCarthy's "We're going to win this game" guarantee by holding on to beat Washington 27-20 Sunday and snap their rival's winning streak at four.

Dallas led 24-0 and 27-8 before Kyle Allen replaced Heinicke and led a 73-yard TD drive and Cole Holcomb intercepted Dak Prescott and ran it back for a pick-6. Washington's comeback bid came to an end when Allen fumbled with 2:24 remaining.

"There's so much value in those moments," McCarthy said. "To get where we want to go, we need to thrive in those situations.

Now we created some of it today, don't get me wrong, but there's still benefit in adversity football."

The Cowboys staked themselves to such a big lead thanks to a big first-half showing by their defense. Dallas forced four turnovers and had five sacks.

Doran Armstrong recovered the fumble Parsons forced and returned it 37 yards for a touchdown, and Randy Gregory picked off Heinicke and forced Allen to fumble on a sack the day after he was activated off injured reserve. Armstrong and his teammates celebrated his TD with some of the many Cowboys fans in attendance for what felt like a home game for the NFC East leaders, complete with custom benches on the visiting sideline.

"They were great benches," Prescott said. "They were heated, so they did the deed and did what we needed them to, so I guess that's why we brought them in."

In the aftermath of McCarthy

saying, "We're going to win this game — I'm confident in that," his team sputtered late but took care of business. Prescott threw a touchdown pass to Amari Cooper and two interceptions, Ezekiel Elliott ran 12 times for 45 yards through a knee injury and Dallas (9-4) distanced itself from Washington (6-7) in the NFC East.

"We got high standards and high expectations for ourselves," said Prescott, who was 23 of 39 for 211 yards. "Got going pretty early, got a big lead, but we've got to be able to finish it off and not let them back in the game."

Tensions boiled over with 10:29 left when Washington rookie William Bradley-King — promoted off the practice squad in the morning because of COVID-19 absences — shoved Prescott near the Cowboys sideline. Elliott shoved Bradley-King, and Dallas right tackle La'el Collins was ejected for his role in the skirmish.

With blue and white jerseys outnumbering burgundy and

gold at FedEx Field, the Cowboys made themselves at home by ordering heated benches with the silver star logo and team wordmarks. Owner Jerry Jones made a point this week to say the D.C. area is his team's biggest concentration of fans outside of Texas.

By far the biggest crowd to witness a Washington home game this season saw Heinicke get sacked four times and exit with a left knee injury. Heinicke finished 11-for-25 for 122 yards, a 43-yard TD pass to Cam Sims and a diving 2-point conversion after his miserable first half.

Antonio Gibson fumbled for the sixth time this season, Allen was 4 of 9 for 53 yards and Washington's streak came to a screeching halt after allowing 18 points in the first quarter — more than it was giving up per game over the past month.

"The Washington Football Team versus Dallas should be a big game like it was today," coach Ron Rivera said. "We've just got to play better."

# Brady's 700th TD pass lifts Bucs in OT

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — A change of uniforms hasn't affected Tom Brady's mastery of the Buffalo Bills.

The 44-year-old quarterback beat his former AFC East rivals for the 10th straight time Sunday, becoming the NFL's all-time completions leader and throwing his 700th touchdown pass for the winning score in Tampa Bay's 33-27 overtime victory. The Buccaneers are on the brink of their first division title in 14 years.

In his first game against the Bills since moving to Tampa Bay in 2020, Brady threw for 363 yards and two touchdowns with no interceptions. He also scored on a quarterback sneak set up by the 7,143rd completion of an unmatched 22-year career that includes seven Super Bowl titles.

The Bucs (10-3) won it on Breshad Perriman's 58-yard catch-and-run with 5:31 left in OT — the 700th TD pass of Brady's career, including playoffs.

"It was pretty cool. I'd rather it not come down to that, but in the end they all count the same," Brady said. "We've got to learn from

it and move on. Next week we're playing for a division championship and that's pretty exciting."

Despite blowing a 21-point halftime lead, the reigning Super Bowl champs won their fourth straight game to retain a four-game lead over New Orleans and Atlanta in the NFC South, which Tampa Bay hasn't won since 2007.

"We did a three-and-out in overtime, and when you give No. 12 on the other side that opportunity, you know, he has a chance to win the game at any time," Bills center Mitch Morse said.

"It's heartbreaking," Buffalo running back Devin Singletary added. "It's the only way I can put it."

Brady, who ruled the Bills and won 17 AFC East titles during a two-decade stint with the New England Patriots, improved to 33-3 against Buffalo. He broke Drew Brees' record for most completions in a career late in the second quarter and finished 31 of 46 with no interceptions.

Josh Allen shrugged off a slow start to throw for 308 yards and two touchdowns for

the Bills. He also rushed for 109 yards and a TD, becoming the fourth player in league history to throw for over 300 yards and also rush for 100-plus in the same game.

Allen also left Raymond James Stadium with his left foot in a walking boot. He will undergo tests on Monday, coach Sean McDermott said.

"Finished the game. I don't think it's going to be a big deal," Allen said. "It's pretty sore. It's football."

Since starting 4-1, Buffalo (7-6) has hardly resembled the team that won its first division title since 1995 and enjoyed its deepest playoff run in 27 years before losing to Kansas City in the AFC championship game last January.

It is 3-5 over its last eight games and has lost two in a row for the first time this year, jeopardizing its playoffs hopes with four weeks remaining in the regular season.

The Bucs, who have won four straight on the heels of a two-game skid, exposed the Bills offensively and defensively before Allen and the league's No. 1 ranked defense got back on track after halftime.

# Predators slip past Rangers for 5th straight win

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Rookie forward Philip Tomasino scored early in the second period and Juuse Saros made 32 saves for his second shutout of the season as the Nashville Predators beat the New York Rangers 1-0 on Sunday night.

The Predators have won five straight — with the last four coming on the road, including a sweep of the three New York area teams over a four-day stretch. They beat the Islanders 4-3 on Thursday night and New Jersey 3-2 on Friday night.

"All the games were different. I give the players credit," Nashville coach John Hynes said about the rare trio of road wins in the New York region. "I really liked the mental focus of the guys. They rose to the task."

Saros had six saves in the first period, 10 in the second and 16 in the third to pick up his 16th career shutout.

"We were pretty tight around the net, big blocks and the (penal-

ty-kill) was good, too," Saros said. "When you get big points on the road, it boosts the team."

**Ducks 3, Blues 2 (OT):** Troy Terry scored his second goal of the game on a penalty shot in overtime to lift Anaheim to a win at St. Louis.

Scott Perunovich was called for slashing with just over a minute remaining in the extra period, giving Terry a penalty shot. He beat fifth-string goalie Jon Gillies on a backhander at 3:58 for his team-leading 17th goal of the season.

Buddy Robinson also scored for the Ducks, who ended the Blues' seven-game home winning streak. Anthony Stolarz made 23 saves.

Nathan Walker and Oskar Sundqvist scored for St. Louis. Gillies finished with 36 saves.

**Avalanche 3, Panthers 2:** Andre Burakovsky notched his first career hat trick and host Colorado beat Florida.

Burakovsky got his three goals

in a span of 12:05 from late in the second into the third for the Avalanche's fourth straight win. Mikko Rantanen had three assists and Darcy Kuemper stopped 31 shots for the team.

Joe Thornton and Brandon Montour scored in the third period for the Panthers, and Sergei Bobrovsky had 23 saves.

Avalanche was without captain Gabriel Landeskog, who will miss two weeks with a lower-body injury suffered Friday against Detroit. Colorado then lost defenseman Jacob MacDonald after he took a hard check from Ryan Lomberg early in the second period. MacDonald was taken off on a stretcher but the team announced he was still at the arena and was responsive.

**Golden Knights 6, Wild 4:** Mark Stone scored the tiebreaking goal on a power play in the third period and host Vegas beat Minnesota.

The Golden Knights' top line of Stone (goal, two assists), Max Pa-

cioretty (goal, two assists) and Chandler Stephenson (four assists) combined for 10 points as Vegas won for the ninth time in 12 home games.

Zach Whitecloud scored twice, and Evgenii Dadonov, Pacioretty and Alex Pietrangolo added goals for the Golden Knights. Robin Lehner made 23 saves.

Alex Goligoski, Mats Zuccarello, Nick Bjugstad and Marcus Foligno scored for the Wild. Cam Talbot stopped 30 shots. Minnesota, which was on an 8-0-0 run since Nov. 24, lost consecutive games after falling 2-1 in Los Angeles on Saturday.

**Canucks 2, Hurricanes 1:** Elias Pettersson and Brock Boeser scored and host Vancouver won its fourth straight.

Thatcher Demko had 28 saves for the Canucks, who remained undefeated under new coach Bruce Boudreau.

Martin Necas scored for the Hurricanes, and Antti Raanta stopped 24 shots.

# Durant scores 51 in defeat of Detroit

Associated Press

DETROIT — Kevin Durant scored an NBA season-high 51 points in the Brooklyn Nets' 116-104 victory over the Detroit Pistons on Sunday.

With James Harden resting, Durant scored at least 10 points in all four quarters.

"I knew I probably needed to pick up a little more of the scoring tonight," said Durant, who had his seventh 50-point game of his career. "We were turning the ball over more than we should, and I was doing as much of that as anyone, so I figured I better just keep shooting."

Patty Mills added 18 points for the Nets, who outscored the Pistons 30-13 in the fourth quarter.

"It was fun just to watch K.D. when he's playing like that," Mills said. "Being a part of it is even better. You don't see many games like he had tonight."

Cade Cunningham had 26 and Frank Jackson added 25 for Detroit, which lost its 12th straight. The Pistons' last win was Nov. 17 against the Pacers, and they still haven't won back-to-back games this season.

"We didn't get this win, but we are moving in the right direction," Jackson said. "I know it doesn't look like that, given all the losses, but we're working hard and getting better."

Detroit also was missing leading scorer Jeremi Grant, who is sidelined indefinitely by a thumb injury.

"We have to play with the guys we have," Pistons coach Dwane Casey said. "We can't think about 'What if Jeremi could play?' We gave ourselves a chance to win the game, but we have to finish one of these out."

Hours after Durant was fined \$25,000 for using expletives at a fan who yelled "Durant, stop crying," during a game Friday in Atlanta, he also bested Stephen Curry's 50-point total for the league high this season.

**Mavericks 103, Thunder 84:** Jalen Brunson had 18 points and nine rebounds while starting in place of injured star Luka Doncic, leading Dallas over host Oklahoma City.

It was the first time this season the Mavericks won without Doncic, who experienced a flareup of a previous ankle injury in Friday's game against Indiana and is being held out for back-to-back games.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder with 18 points.

**Timberwolves 113, Trail Blazers 111:** Karl-Anthony Towns had 23 points and 10 rebounds, and visiting Minnesota snapped a five-game losing streak by beating Portland.

Anthony Edwards added 24 points for the

Timberwolves, who also ended an eight-game losing streak in Portland. The loss was the Blazers' fifth straight.

Anfernee Simons had 26 points off the bench for Portland and Damian Lillard returned from an abdomen injury to score 24 points and pull down 11 rebounds.

**Bucks 112, Knicks 97:** Khris Middleton scored 24 points and Giannis Antetokounmpo had his first triple-double of the season to lead Milwaukee over host New York.

Antetokounmpo had 20 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds. The Bucks won their second straight game and 10th out of 12 overall.

The Knicks have lost three in a row and seven of 10. In his first NBA start, Quentin Grimes scored 27 for the Knicks and set a team record for the most three-pointers made in a game by a rookie with seven.

**Spurs 112, Pelicans 97:** Jakob Poeltl had 24 points and 12 rebounds, Derrick White added 24 points and San Antonio beat visiting New Orleans.

Dejounte Murray added 10 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists as the Spurs won for the fifth time in nine games. White added nine assists and eight rebounds.

The Pelicans have lost four of six as they try to rebound from a nine-game skid during the first few weeks of the season.

# No. 2 Baylor shuts down No. 6 Villanova

Associated Press

WACO, Texas — James Akinjo had 16 points with seven rebounds and second-ranked Baylor defensively dominated No. 6 Villanova 57-36 on Sunday, a victory that's likely to put the defending national champion Bears in the top spot in the new poll.

The Bears (9-0) never trailed in their first nonconference home game against a top-six opponent, this one a rematch of an NCAA Sweet 16 game last March in Indianapolis. This Big East/Big 12 Battle matchup featured the teams that won three of the last five NCAA titles.

The Wildcats (7-3) shot only 22% (12-for-54) and had several extended scoring droughts while being held to its fewest points in 689 games under

coach Jay Wright, who is in his 21st season.

Adam Flagler had 10 points as Baylor, which won its 15th game in a row dating to last season, shot 39% (22 of 56) and was held under 69 points for the first time this season. Jeremy Sochan had nine points and 10 rebounds before fouling out.

Justin Moore had 15 points for the Wildcats.

**No. 1 Purdue 82, North Carolina State 72 (OT):** At New York, Trevion Williams had a season-high 22 points to go with 12 rebounds and a career-best nine assists to help the Boilermakers rally past the Wolfpack in overtime in the Basketball Hall of Fame Invitational.

Jaden Ivey added 22 points for Purdue (9-1), which had to rally from 13 down midway

through the second half. It never led in regulation, taking its first lead on Sasha Stefanovic's three-pointer 15 seconds into the extra period.

**No. 16 Southern California 73, Long Beach State 62:** At Los Angeles, Isaiah Mobley had 21 points and 12 rebounds, and the Trojans pulled away at the beginning of the second half on their way to beating the Beach.

USC (10-0) continued their best start since the 2016-17 season, when it opened 14-0. Drew Peterson added 15 points and Max Agbonkpolo had 11 points the Trojans, and Mobley had his fourth double-double in five games.

**No. 17 Iowa State 47, Jackson State 37:** T.J. Otzelberger became the first Cyclones

coach to win his first 10 games with the team, guiding them past the visiting Tigers.

Iowa State (10-0) ended last season with 18 straight losses. The Cyclones beat Jackson State last Dec. 20, then didn't win again in finishing 2-22.

**Maryland 70, No. 20 Florida 68:** At New York, Donta Scott scored on a leaning shot in the post with 16.8 seconds left, the Gators missed their final-play three-pointer and the Terrapins won in the Basketball Hall of Fame Invitational.

**No. 23 Seton Hall 77, Rutgers 63:** At Newark, N.J., Bryce Aiken scored 22 points and Jared Rhoden had 16 points and nine rebounds to lead the Pirates past the Scarlet Knights in the Garden State Hardwood Classic.