

US Navy fires laser weapon in Mideast test

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The U.S. Navy announced Wednesday that it tested a laser weapon and destroyed a floating target in the Mideast, a system that could be used to counter bomb-laden drone boats deployed by Yemen's Houthi rebels in the Red Sea.

The test Tuesday saw the USS Portland test-fire its Laser Weapon System Demonstrator at the target in the Gulf of Aden, the body of water separating East Africa from the Arabian Peninsula.

The Navy's Mideast-based 5th Fleet described the laser as

having "successfully engaged" the target in a statement. Previously, the Portland used the laser to bring down a flying drone in May 2020.

The Gulf of Aden sits along the southern coast of Yemen, which has been at war since the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels seized its capital, Sanaa, in 2014. A Saudi-led coalition entered the conflict in March 2015 but the stalemate has dragged on for years, becoming the world's worst humanitarian disaster and killing an estimated 110,000 people.

The war has also bled into the surrounding waterways, like the

Red Sea and the Babel-Mandeb, which connects the sea to the Gulf of Aden. These waterways lead to the Suez Canal and onto the Mediterranean Sea, making them crucial for international shipping and global energy supplies.

The Houthis have deployed drone boats into these waters, which can be piloted remotely and sent up to a target before detonating. These boats are suspected of being built with Iran's help.

Emirati officials in 2018 showed off footage they described as coming from a drone boat computer that had Iranians

building components for the boat's guidance system, with a hat visible in the background of one picture bearing the symbol of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. Iran has denied arming the Houthis, though United Nations experts, independent analysts and Western nations point to evidence showing Tehran's link to the weapons.

The Portland, a San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock, has its home port in San Diego. The ship is deployed as part of the Essex Amphibious Ready Group that's now in the Mideast.

After 10 years, nukes still 'magic wand' for Kim, N. Korea

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — As Kim Jong Un marks 10 years in power this week, the world still doesn't quite know what to make of the North Korean leader.

Is he the playful scamp who once gave an underling a piggyback ride after a rocket engine test? Or the Western-educated leader tearfully commiserating with his people's economic misery? How about the global statesman, shaking hands with South Korean and American leaders? Or maybe the brutal pragmatist who had his uncle and virtual No. 2 — along with dozens of others — executed?

Since taking over supreme leadership a decade ago, Kim has presented many faces to an insatiably curious world, but while the image shifts, perhaps the most telling way to consider Kim is through his persistent pursuit of a nuclear weapons program meant to target America and its allies.

An arsenal of as many as 60 nukes, by some estimates, with the means to add as many as 18 more a year, has allowed Kim to solidify domestic unity and achieve some measure of the global prestige he's long coveted. It has also flummoxed Washington and its allies by building what Pyongyang

claims is a credible deterrence against U.S. hostility.

Crushing U.N. sanctions over that weapons build-up and pandemic-related difficulties may be giving Kim the hardest moment of his rule, observers have said, but those weapons are no closer to being wrenched away by outside negotiators than they were when Kim's father, Kim Jong Il, died on Dec. 17, 2011.

"Nuclear weapons are a magic wand for North Korea," said Kim Taewoo, former head of Seoul's Korea Institute for National Unification. "North Korea is one of the world's poorest countries, but it controls the relationship with South Korea because it has nukes. If it wasn't for its nuclear bombs, how could Pyongyang sit down for talks with the United States?"

In late 2011, many outsiders wondered if North Korea would survive with an untested, little-known 27-year-old in charge. Some predicted that Kim would push for economic reforms and possibly denuclearization because of his youth and childhood education in Switzerland. Some thought Kim might be a figurehead, relying on elderly officials installed by his father, and worried that North Korea could face political tur-

moil.

Instead, Kim orchestrated a spate of high-profile executions and purges, eliminating potential rivals and establishing the kind of absolute power enjoyed by his father, Kim Jong Il, and his grandfather and state founder, Kim Il Sung.

A think tank run by South Korea's spy agency said in a 2016 report that Kim executed or purged about 340 people during the first five years of his rule. That included the 2013 execution of his powerful uncle, Jang Song Thaek, and the 2012 purging of military chief Ri Yong Ho, both of whom helped shepherd Kim into power.

Kim also set aside his father's trademark "military-first" policy, restored the ruling Workers' Party's traditional control over the army and engineered small yet gradual economic growth in the first several years.

Nukes, however, have been a constant.

Kim will likely never abandon nukes, the core of his family's power, no matter how severe the economic difficulties his people face from sanctions, said Jung Chang Wook, head of the Korea Defense Study Forum think tank.

"The Kim family would lose its power, so he can't give them up," he said.

NATO, Russia dispute missile maneuvers

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Russia's latest threat to deploy intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe if NATO doesn't make new promises has one hitch: The U.S.-led NATO alliance says Moscow has already activated such weapons.

Moscow wants the U.S. to restart talks over the now defunct Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which Washington pulled out of in 2019, saying that Moscow had already broken the Cold War-era agreement.

The treaty put a ban on missiles with a range between 310 and 3,400 miles.

"It is not credible when (the Russians) now propose a ban on something they actual-

ly have already started to deploy," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters Tuesday in Brussels.

Stoltenberg's comments were in response to a new round of threats from Moscow, this time related to the status of intermediate-range nuclear range missiles in Europe.

In an interview Monday with state-owned Russian news agency RIA Novosti, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov warned that if the West doesn't agree to a moratorium on intermediate-range nuclear weapons, Moscow will be forced to position more weaponry near NATO borders.

"The absence of progress in the direction of a political-diplomatic solution to this problem will make it so that our response is mil-

itary," Ryabkov said. "That is, it will be a confrontation, the next round, the deployment of such tools from our side."

The threats marked the latest in a series of warnings and tit-for-tat threats between Russia, the U.S. and its allies in NATO in connection with escalating tensions over Russia's military buildup around Ukraine.

The U.S. and NATO say Russia's recently developed SSC-8 missile system violates the weapons ban and poses a new threat since it can reach European capitals within minutes.

On Tuesday, Stoltenberg blamed Russia for the treaty's demise, while also saying that NATO had no intention of countering Moscow by deploying similar nuclear-capable missiles in Europe.

Navy divers make progress removing jet fuel from well

Associated Press

HONOLULU — U.S. Navy divers are trying to remove jet fuel from a water shaft near Hawaii's Pearl Harbor after people using the water in their homes reported becoming sick.

Divers are beginning to make progress and are now able to start "skimming" contaminants that have floated to the surface, the Honolulu Star-Advertiser reported Monday.

"It's the beginning stages, we'll have to see where the Navy's gonna go next. But at least we're assessing how well we can start skimming," said Chief Warrant Officer Jose Castilla, commander of Mobile Diving and

Salvage Company 1-8.

The water supply serves about 93,000 people.

Navy officials believe about 14,000 gallons of jet fuel spilled at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility inside an access tunnel that provides fire suppression and service lines for the complex.

People using the Navy's water in and near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam reported becoming ill, and the Navy has moved more than 3,000 families off base into Oahu hotels.

A Navy official told state lawmakers last week that the Navy does not believe the contaminated water was caused by a leak from

aging underground storage tanks that sit above an aquifer.

When the work began, the Navy dive team had to wear specialized suits to protect them from the hazards in the water. But the suits are bulky and hot and concerns about overheating in the cramped space forced them to change their approach to protect divers.

"Nothing worked really well right off the bat, but we were able to make smattered minor changes in the way we put things together," said Castilla.

The operation is new to the experienced dive team, which regularly works in difficult underwater situations.

Navy Exchange will disconnect afloat phone service

By JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

Navy Exchange Service Command is hanging up its long running phone service for service members at sea, according to a news release from the command.

The Afloat Personal Telecommunications Service, or APTS, will end Dec. 31 after providing call service to personnel aboard Navy ships for more than 25 years, according to the release on Monday.

Personal cellphones and email eventually supplanted the afloat phone service, which also grew more expensive over the years, ac-

ording to an email Wednesday from exchange spokeswoman Kristine Sturkie.

Use of phone cards associated with the service has fallen by 75% since 2012, she wrote.

Sailors and Marines purchased calling cards or virtual minutes that they could use at payphones on their ships. Those calls became a relatively expensive 45 cents per minute, Sturkie said.

Along with declining demand came increasing operations and maintenance costs for continuing tests and use of satellite Wi-Fi technology, said Mary Johnson, vice president of the exchange command's telecommu-

nications program office, in the release.

Nonetheless, keeping Navy and Marine Corps service members connected to home through the afloat service was a privilege, Johnson was quoted as saying.

Navy Exchange Service Command was designated the manager of the afloat telecommunications service in 1994 by the chief of naval operations, according to the release. It supports all unofficial, personal communications services afloat and ashore.

Although the APTS ends Dec. 31, it will remain available aboard ships deployed by that date, according to the release.

USMC commandant discusses China strategy

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Marines, not just hypersonic missiles, are key to preventing a conflict with China and its growing military arsenal, the top general for the Marine Corps said Tuesday.

“The standoff [with missiles] from 1,000 miles away works right into [China’s] strategy,” Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger said during an event at the Center for a New American Security, a liberal-leaning Washington-based think tank. “We have to be in there [with troops], we have to be close-up and forward.”

In August, China successfully tested its first hypersonic missile—a feat the United States is working toward but has not accomplished. Some lawmakers, such as Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Wis., called the test “a call to action” for

American arms development, urging more be done to field such weapons.

The missiles, capable of flying five times the speed of sound, could be important in a future fight against China, but Berger said the Pentagon also cannot forget about its most precious assets—its troops—in preventing a war before it starts.

The general said there are two arguments for countering China. The first calls for a “standoff” with China, where the two countries — armed with precision-strike and long-range missiles — keep each other at bay for fear of conflict. The other argues the U.S. should place its forces within a contested area to challenge Chinese operations.

Berger said the answer lies somewhere in the middle.

“I’m convinced that you need both — you need a whole defense

in depth,” he said. “The standoff alone plays right into [China’s] threat strategy.”

To advance his strategy, Berger released a document Dec. 1 outlining his plan for using “stand-in forces” as the Marine Corps continues to adjust its focus from counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations to addressing near-peer adversaries such as China and Russia.

Berger said the strategy was born out of discussions regarding how the “conventional force — not strategic, not nuclear ... [is] going to deter a peer adversary or a near-peer adversary.”

The idea is to disrupt an adversary’s plans by sending “small but lethal, low signature, mobile and relatively simple-to-maintain” forces from the Marine Corps, Navy and Coast Guard into contentious regions such as the South China Sea, Berger wrote in a Dec.

1 report on the strategy. The small forces can then conduct better reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance “below the threshold of violence” in contested areas, according to the report.

“This allows [the stand-in force] to assist in identifying and countering malign behavior, and if armed conflict does erupt, the joint force can attack effectively first and prevent the enemy from doing so,” the report said.

Berger said the strategy’s success lies in its counter to China’s strategy, which has long involved restricting access in the South China Sea and operating unnoticed.

“Their effort is to make sort of a bubble—a shield—push us way, way out, and then they operate in here without being seen,” he said. “That’s perfect for them, so they want to do that over and over again.”

Senate approves \$768B defense authorization bill

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Wednesday gave its approval to a record-setting \$768 billion defense authorization bill, readying it for President Joe Biden’s expected signature.

The 2022 National Defense Authorization Act contains several historic measures, including provisions to move prosecutions of sexual assault and related crimes involving military personnel outside their chain of command, and instructions to establish an independent commission that will scrutinize the legacy and errors of the 20-year Afghanistan War.

The bill includes multiple sections ordering close study of traditional and emerging threats, from adversary nations like Russia and China all the way to the undefined corners of outer space. It orders the Pentagon to report to Congress on a

“grand strategy” for countering China, the testing and development of hypersonic missiles, threats posed by “unidentified aerial phenomena,” and the pattern of mysterious debilitating incidents afflicting U.S. diplomats and spies abroad — what’s become known as Havana syndrome.

The defense authorization bill received a 89 to 10 vote in the Senate, after earning the support of more than 80% of the House last week.

The bill steers clear of repealing the Iraq War authorization from 2002—a move widely supported in the Senate that already received the backing of the House in a separate vote.

Negotiators of the defense bill also stripped a provision that would have included women in any future military drafts, by requiring them to register with the Selective Service System.

Navy commanders ordered to start removing holdouts

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Navy commanders have been ordered to begin the separation process for sailors who have refused to take the coronavirus vaccine, according to a draft of service guidance scheduled to be released Wednesday.

Rear Adm. James Waters, the Navy’s director of military personnel plans and policy, said the service wants “to keep every sailor in uniform,” but now more than two weeks since the service’s immunization deadline has passed it’s time to require vaccine refusers to leave the Navy.

“There are sailors who, in spite of our best efforts, continue to steadfastly refuse,” Waters told reporters Tuesday during a teleconference. “Personally, it disheartens me to see any sailors leave because they refuse the vaccine.”

However, sailors who missed the Nov. 28 deadline to receive the vaccine but change their mind can notify their chain-of-command and halt their separation if they get immunized, Waters said. So far, 919 sailors have gotten the shots since Nov. 15—the last day for active-duty sailors to receive the vaccine to meet the deadline.

“After the deadline, we [have been] working with each and every one of those sailors in an effort to retain them and we’ll do the same for anyone else who steps forward to get their shot,” Waters said.

The Navy’s announcement comes days after the Air Force on Monday announced it had discharged 27 service members for refusing the vaccine. The service’s Nov. 2 deadline was the earliest of all the services branches.

The Army has the last active-duty deadline, which is Wednesday.

Biden visits Ky. to survey tornado damage

Associated Press

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. — For the fifth time since taking office less than a year ago, President Joe Biden is taking on the grim task of visiting an area ravaged by natural disaster to offer comfort and condolences.

Biden landed in Kentucky on Wednesday morning to survey damage and pledge federal support for the victims of devastating winter tornadoes that killed dozens and left thousands more in the region without heat, water or electricity.

More than 30 tornadoes tore through Kentucky and at least

four other states over the weekend, killing at least 88 people, demolishing homes and downing power lines.

Biden was visiting Fort Campbell for a storm briefing and the towns of Mayfield and Dawson Springs to see the aftermath firsthand. The president planned to meet with victims and local officials to hear directly from them.

“The president’s message today is that he and the federal government intend to do whatever it takes for as long as it takes by providing any support that is needed to aid recovery

efforts and support the people of Kentucky and of other impacted states as they rebuild,” White House principal deputy press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said aboard Air Force One.

Jeff and Tara Wilson, a married couple from Mayfield, were at the Graves County Fairgrounds on Tuesday, where food, water and clothing are being passed out. The Wilsons, who said said their home was unscathed, were setting up a mobile site for storm victims to receive counseling.

Asked about Biden’s visit and

the reception he may find in a prominently Republican region, Tara Wilson replied: “Don’t know. I think that as long as everybody’s hearts are in the right place, we need to not focus on politics right now.” She said it was a “very positive thing” that Biden was coming, and she and her husband expressed hope the president might help unite the community.

“This place is like a bomb has been dropped on it. And everyone needs to come together,” Jeff Wilson said. “So far that’s what’s happening. You’re seeing everyone pull together.”

NASA spacecraft ‘touches’ sun’s corona for 1st time

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — A NASA spacecraft has officially “touched” the sun, plunging through the unexplored solar atmosphere known as the corona.

Scientists announced the news Tuesday during a meeting of the American Geophysical Union.

The Parker Solar Probe actually flew through the corona in April during the spacecraft’s eighth close approach to the sun. Scientists said it took a few months to get the data back and then several more months to confirm.

“Fascinatingly exciting,” said project scientist Nour Raouafi of Johns Hopkins University.

Launched in 2018, Parker was 8 million miles from the center of the sun when it first crossed the jagged, uneven boundary between the solar atmosphere and outgoing solar wind. The spacecraft dipped in and out of the corona at least three times, each a smooth transition, according to scientists.

“The first and most dramatic time we were below for about

five hours ... Now you might think five hours, that doesn’t sound big,” the University of Michigan’s Justin Kasper told reporters. But he noted that Parker was moving so fast it covered a vast distance during that time, tearing along at more than 62 miles per second.

The corona appeared dustier than expected, according to Raouafi. Future coronal excursions will help scientists better understand the origin of the solar wind, he said, and how it is heated and accelerated out into space. Because the sun lacks a solid surface, the corona is where the action is; exploring this magnetically intense region up close can help scientists better understand solar outbursts that can interfere with life here on Earth.

Preliminary data suggest Parker also dipped into the corona during its ninth close approach in August, but scientists said more analyses are needed. It made its 10th close approach last month.

Parker will keep drawing ever closer to the sun and diving deeper into the corona until its grand finale orbit in 2025.

Karzai ‘invited’ Taliban into Afghan capital to stop chaos

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban didn’t take the Afghan capital — they were invited, said the man who issued the invitation.

In an Associated Press interview, former Afghan President Hamid Karzai offered some of the first insights into the secret and sudden departure of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani — and how he came to invite the Taliban into the city “to protect the population so that the country, the city doesn’t fall into chaos and the unwanted elements who would probably loot the country, loot shops.”

When Ghani left, his security officials also left. Defense minister Bismillah Khan even asked Karzai if he wanted to leave Kabul when Karzai contacted him to know what remnants of the government still remained. It turned out there were none. Not even the Kabul police chief had remained.

Karzai, who was the country’s president for 13 years after the Taliban were first ousted in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, refused to leave.

In a wide-ranging interview at his tree-lined compound in the center of the city where he lives

with his wife and young children, Karzai was adamant that Ghani’s flight scuttled a last-minute push by himself, the government’s chief negotiator Abdullah Abdullah and the Taliban leadership in Doha, Qatar, that would have seen the Taliban enter the capital as part of a negotiated agreement.

Early on the morning of Aug. 15, the capital was fidgety and on edge. Rumors were swirling about a Taliban takeover. Karzai called Doha. He was told the Taliban would not enter the city.

At noon, the Taliban called to say that “the government should stay in its positions and should not move that they have no intention to (go) into the city,” Karzai said. By about 2:45 p.m., though, it became apparent Ghani had fled the city.

Today, Karzai meets regularly with the Taliban leadership and says the world must engage with them. Equally important, he said, is that Afghans have to come together.

“Afghans have suffered on all sides,” he said. “Afghans have lost lives on all sides. ... The Afghan army has suffered. Afghan police have suffered, the Taliban soldiers have suffered.”

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

'Large, pink & elusive': Police seek ruinous pig

SC SUMTER — Authorities in South Carolina are searching for a pig they said has been “wreaking havoc” in people’s yards.

Police in Sumter posted on their Facebook page that the department had received calls about a “large, pink and elusive” pig suspected of causing damage in some neighborhoods.

Alongside the post were photos of a large pig, as well as large dirt piles in the yard of a home.

Police said they have asked officials with South Carolina Department of Natural Resources for help in finding the porcine renegade.

Trucker gets 110 years in prison for fatal pileup

CO GOLDEN — A truck driver who was convicted of causing a fiery pileup that killed four people and injured six others on Interstate 70 west of Denver was sentenced to 110 years in prison.

Rogel Aguilera-Mederos, 26, was convicted in October of vehicular homicide and other charges stemming from a crash on April 25, 2019. He testified that the brakes on his semitrailer failed before he plowed into vehicles that had slowed because of another wreck.

Aguilera-Mederos was traveling at least 85 mph on a part of the interstate where commercial vehicles are limited to 45 mph because of a steep descent from the Rocky Mountain foothills, according to investigators. The initial impact caused a 28-vehicle chain-reaction wreck.

Police said that just before the

crash, the truck traveled past a ramp on the side of the interstate that is designed to safely stop trucks and other vehicles that have lost their brakes.

Mountain lion kittens found under picnic table

CA THOUSAND OAKS — Two mountain lion kittens that survived after a litter of four was found under a picnic table are being cared for at a Southern California veterinary hospital, officials said.

The four tiny cats estimated to be about 6 weeks old were spotted Nov. 29 outside an office building near foothills in the Los Angeles suburb of Thousand Oaks, according to a statement from the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

Two of the kittens were found dead Dec. 2, and biologists took the other two to a veterinary hospital in Orange County, the statement said.

The animals will be temporarily housed at the Orange County Zoo until a permanent home can be found for them.

Grocery in 150-year-old building burns down

IA MALVERN — A historic grocery housed in a nearly 150-year-old building in the western Iowa town of Malvern was destroyed in a fire.

Mulholland Grocery on the town’s Main Street burned in a multialarm fire that required the efforts of nearly a dozen area fire departments to extinguish, Omaha, Neb.-based television station KETV reported.

Firefighters said the fire broke out while the store was still open for business, but no

one was hurt.

Owner Tom Mulholland said the building first opened in the 1870s as a dry goods store. It’s been in the Mulholland family for all but 17 years since.

Sisters’ food truck, used to pay for school, taken

NV LAS VEGAS — Two Las Vegas sisters said the food truck they operate to help pay for school and gain real world business experience was stolen.

Karla and Eileen Enriquez told KLAS-TV that their Amigo Taco food truck was taken last week.

Surveillance video shows a 1996 to 1999 silver Dodge Ram with the mobile eatery hitched to the vehicle, which had been in a lot secured by a locked gate.

The two women are studying business at University of Nevada, Las Vegas. They only debuted the food truck two months ago. They said it’s been a valuable way to learn about running a business.

Phone company worker convicted in scheme

NC NEW BERN — A former telephone company worker was convicted of using stolen personal information to sell expensive phones on the black market, according to government prosecutors.

Alejandro Garlynn Williams, 40, was found guilty on 21 counts of conspiracy, access device fraud and aggravated identity theft, the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Raleigh, N.C., said in a news release. Sentencing will occur later.

Williams and a co-conspirator

— who pleaded guilty in the matter in June — hatched a scheme whereby his cohort passed along personal information like Social Security numbers and dates of birth to Williams, according to the government.

The co-conspirator, identified as Anthony Jamison, of Hamlet, would then send “recruits” to the store who acted like customers, so that Williams could open accounts without suspicion. The information would be used to activate services and issue cell-phones that were passed along to Jamison for sale, according to the release.

Shooting accident leads to over 70 cats in home

NH KENSINGTON — An accidental shooting led police in New Hampshire to a house that was overrun with more than 70 cats and was declared uninhabitable because it was covered with feline feces and urine.

Police in Kensington got a call from a hospital that a man was admitted to the emergency room with a gunshot wound to the abdomen. Police went to the hospital and spoke to the man, who said he was cleaning a rifle and put it on a workbench when it fell to the floor and discharged a round, injuring him. Police concluded it was an accidental shooting.

Police also went to the home, where they initially found at least 30 cats.

Police called the New Hampshire Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which initially removed 67 black and white cats.

— From wire reports



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Curry breaks career mark for threes

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Stephen Curry never wanted to say it himself, even if others have been saying it for years.

He refused to call himself the greatest shooter of them all until the numbers said so.

And now?

“I got that baby,” Curry said, raising his arms high in the air.

He struck the same pose hours earlier Tuesday night after shooting his way to the top of the NBA record book with his 2,974th regular-season three-pointer during the first quarter of the Golden State Warriors’ 105-96 win over the New York Knicks.

Curry broke the record set by Ray Allen, who held it for 10 years after passing Reggie Miller. They were both at the game and gave Curry a jersey with 2,974 on the back.

That number could be 4,000 or more by the time Curry is done playing a game in a way that barely existed before him.

“He has totally changed the game of basketball as we know it,” teammate Draymond Green

said.

Curry hit the record shot from the right wing with 7:33 remaining in the first quarter, waving his arms toward the sky, blowing a kiss and pounding his chest as he jogged backward down court. The Warriors then committed a foul and quickly called timeout to let the celebration begin.

Curry went and embraced his father, Dell Curry, who was seated along a baseline, while Bob McKillop, his coach at Davidson, stood in the stands and beamed alongside Larry Riley, who drafted Curry for the Warriors. Then came a hug from Green, among others and, finally, Curry trotted back across the court for a long embrace and a few congratulatory words from Allen.

Curry already owns two of the top three seasons for three-pointers — including the only season with 400 threes — and now has the career record.

It came at Madison Square Garden, where Curry had one of his early career highlights on Feb. 27, 2013, when he made 11

three-pointers and scored 54 points. He’s gone on to win two MVP awards and three championships while becoming one of the biggest, most popular stars in the game.

Fans waited long afterward while he conducted a postgame interview on the court, chanting “MVP! MVP!” when he finished.

“I think fans are attracted to him just because of his humility and his story and how hard he’s had to work, so from that standpoint it transcends sports somewhat,” Golden State coach Steve Kerr said before the game.

Curry had been far from his best beyond the arc to start this road trip, going 3-for-14 in Philadelphia and then 5-for-15 in Indiana. But with his ability to go from slumping to surging in a hurry, Kerr predicted a breakout would be coming soon.

It came quickly Tuesday. Curry hit from straightaway on his first attempt, and fans around the arena stood as he was dribbling the ball across

center court on the next possession. He launched an ugly attempt that he missed.

The record-breaker came on his next shot and was vintage Curry. He gave the ball up and eventually raced back to the outside, getting the ball back and seemingly launching it in the same motion before a defender could get out to him.

Not an easy shot, but Curry has made it so many times he knew this one was pure.

“Oh, for sure,” he said.

None of Curry’s stardom was guaranteed when he entered the league in 2009 as the No. 7 pick from Davidson, far from one of the basketball powerhouses that usually produce the top players.

Curry could put the record well out of reach at his current pace: He entered the night making 5.4 three-pointers per game this season, the best of his career.

Curry, 33, has now played 789 games, with perhaps a few more seasons at the top. At the same point in his career, Allen had 1,918 threes.

Durant helps Nets outlast Raptors in overtime

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Patty Mills made a three to force overtime, Kevin Durant had 34 points, 13 rebounds and 11 assists, and the Brooklyn Nets beat the Toronto Raptors 131-129 on Tuesday night.

Durant was upgraded from questionable just before the game because Brooklyn has seven players in the NBA’s health and safety protocol, including starters James Harden, LaMarcus Aldridge and DeAndre’ Bembry. He responded to the last-minute add with the 14th triple-double of his career.

“I felt like it was something I could play on, so I knew I was

going to play this morning,” Durant said. “I hate that my teammates are out. I wish everybody was playing.”

Brooklyn won its third straight, with Mills adding 30 points. It was the fourth career 30-point game in Mills’ career, and his first since Nov. 1, 2019, when he was a member of the San Antonio Spurs. The Nets also got 17 from Kessler Edwards, 16 from Nic Claxton and 13 from Blake Griffin before he fouled out in overtime.

The loss snapped a two-game winning streak for Toronto (12-15). Fred VanVleet led the Raptors with 31. Gary Trent Jr. and Pascal Siakam each finished with 25.

“We know how good of a team we can be when we are clicking and doing what we are supposed to do,” Siakam said. “Every time we haven’t done that in season we pay for it.”

Scottie Barnes had 23 points, but missed what would have been a game-winning, buzzer-beating three in overtime.

“I feel like we’re right there as a team,” Barnes said. “We’ll get this thing really going as a unit.”

Suns 111, Trail Blazers 107 (OT): Deandre Ayton had 28 points and 13 rebounds in his return from a non-COVID-19 illness, and visiting Phoenix held off Portland in overtime.

Chris Paul, who made the

jumper that forced overtime, added 24 points and 14 assists for a Suns team still missing leading scorer Devin Booker because of a hamstring injury.

Damian Lillard had 31 points and 10 assists for the Trail Blazers, who lost their sixth straight.

Phoenix has just five losses this season, but one of them came the night before against the Los Angeles Clippers. The Suns had lost two of four before facing the struggling Blazers.

Cam Johnson’s deep three-pointer gave Phoenix a 107-104 lead in overtime.

Paul’s jumper tied it at 102 with 8.2 seconds to go in the fourth quarter.

Rested No. 2 Duke routs South Carolina St.

Associated Press

DURHAM, N.C. — AJ Griffin scored 19 points and No. 2 Duke cruised past South Carolina State 103-62 on Tuesday night.

In 21 minutes off the bench, Griffin shot 7-for-8 with four rebounds and four assists. He was one of six Blue Devils to score in double digits. Trevor Keels had 14 points, Joey Baker scored 13, and Paolo Banchemo had 12 points, seven rebounds and six assists.

Wendell Moore Jr. scored 11 points and Mark Williams had 10 points and three blocks for Duke (8-1), which returned to the court after a two-week break for exams.

Edward Oliver-Hampton had 13 points to lead the Bulldogs (3-8).

Memphis 92, No. 6 Alabama 78: DeAndre Williams had 20 points and six assists, Jalen Duren added 14 points and the host Tigers finally played to their potential in stopping a four-game skid.

Landers Nolley added 13 points for Memphis (6-4), which came into the season with a highly touted recruiting class and topped out with the No. 9 ranking in the AP Top 25. But the Tigers got pounded by Iowa State and lost close games to Georgia, Ole Miss and Murray State to fall out of the poll.

Keon Ellis led the Crimson Tide (8-2) with 19 points.

No. 13 Auburn 70, North Alabama 44: Walker Kessler had 14 points, Jabari Smith and Devan Cambridge each scored 13 and the host Tigers won without coach Bruce Pearl as

he completed a two-game suspension.

Auburn (9-1), which won its sixth straight, didn't push its lead into double digits until five minutes into the second half but made up for it with a 25-2 run to put away the Lions (6-4).

The Tigers rolled to blowouts in both games Pearl missed while serving an NCAA-imposed suspension. His son, Steven Pearl, served as head coach on Tuesday after Wes Flanigan presided over a 99-68 win Saturday against Nebraska.

No. 14 Houston 71, Louisiana-Lafayette 56: Josh Carlton had 17 points and nine rebounds, Jamal Shead scored 16 and the host Cougars defeated the Ragin' Cajuns.

Taze Moore added 14 points and 10 rebounds, Fabian White Jr. finished with 12 points and nine rebounds, and Kyler Edwards had 12 points and seven rebounds for Houston (9-2), which shot 39% and struggled on three-pointers, making just two of 21 attempts.

The Cougars never trailed despite playing without leading scorer Marcus Sasser, starting forward Reggie Chaney and reserve guard Tramon Mark due to injuries.

No. 17 Texas 63, Arkansas-Pine Bluff 31: Tre Mitchell scored 14 points and the host Longhorns held the Golden Lions without a basket for nearly 12 minutes to start the game.

A run of four consecutive three-pointers capped by a long shot from Mitchell opened a

17-1 lead and Texas (7-2) was in complete control over Arkansas-Pine Bluff (1-11).

Texas led 36-16 at halftime and Arkansas-Pine Bluff managed just two baskets over the first six minutes of the second half. The Longhorns held the Golden Lions to 31% shooting and scored 23 points off 20 turnovers.

No. 18 Tennessee 96, South Carolina Upstate 52: Olivier Nkamhoua had 21 points and eight rebounds to lead the host Vols over the Spartans.

Tennessee (8-2) scored the first 13 points and wasn't challenged. Kennedy Chandler had 15 points and 10 assists, and John Fulkeron scored 12. The Vols shot 56% from the field and 44% behind the three-point line.

No. 19 LSU 89, Northwestern State 49: Tari Eason had 18 points and the host Tigers beat the Demons to open 10-0 for the first time in 22 years.

Eason scored all but five of his points in the second half, when LSU already had a big lead. Xavier Pinson added 15 points, Efton Reid had 15 points and 10 rebounds, and Darious Days scored 13 for the Tigers.

No. 25 Texas Tech 75, Arkansas State 62: Kevin McCullar scored 21 points and the host Red Raiders celebrated their return to the national rankings with a victory over the Red Wolves.

Texas Tech (8-1), a national finalist in 2019, was coming off a five-point overtime victory against then-No. 13 Tennessee.

Mayfield, Beckham headline NFL's COVID outbreak

Associated Press

The Cleveland Browns' COVID-19 outbreak has widened and worsened.

Quarterback Baker Mayfield and coach Kevin Stefanski tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday and will likely miss Saturday's game against Las Vegas as Cleveland deals with a widespread outbreak during its playoff pursuit.

While this is on a larger scale, the Browns dealt with a similar outbreak late last season. Stefanski tested positive on the eve of Cleveland's playoff appearance and watched the Browns beat rival Pittsburgh in an AFC wildcard game from his basement at home.

"We've been here before." Stefanski said. "Next man up."

Stefanski's positive test was first announced by the team, which then put Mayfield, starting safety John Johnson III, nickel back Troy Hill, starting defensive tackle Malik McDowell and defensive end Ifeadi Odenigbo on the reserve/COVID-19 list.

The Browns' announcement came on the heels of news Tuesday that Los Angeles Rams receiver Odell Beckham Jr. was added to the COVID-19 reserve as the NFL reported 28 more positive tests among players in the league's worst two-day outbreak since the pandemic started.

There were 37 positive tests

among players Monday, and the Kansas City Chiefs placed one key player in the health and safety protocols each day with a crucial AFC West matchup against the Los Angeles Chargers looming Thursday.

Safety Jordan Fuller, the Rams' leading tackler, and fellow defensive backs Terrell Burgess and Juju Hughes went on the list along with tight end Brycen Hopkins, tackle Alaric Jackson, injured nose tackle Sebastian Joseph-Day and practice squad members Jonah Williams and Tyler Hall. Only Beckham and Fuller have played regularly in a major role for LA this season.

The Rams are home against Seattle on Sunday after beating

NFC West-leading Arizona on Monday night. Cornerback Jalen Ramsey missed the 30-23 victory over the Cardinals after being placed in the protocols hours before kickoff. Beckham had a TD catch in the win.

Two-time Pro Bowl defensive tackle Chris Jones of the Chiefs was placed in the COVID-19 protocol a day after receiver Josh Gordon tested positive.

The league's worst outbreak comes just as it was distributing a memo, a copy of which was obtained by The Associated Press, that set a deadline of Dec. 27 for coaches, front-office staff and team personnel to receive a booster shot in order to still be considered fully vaccinated.

Atkinson's 3 goals leads Flyers past Devils

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Cam Atkinson had three goals and an assist to lead the Philadelphia Flyers to a 6-1 victory over the New Jersey Devils on Tuesday night.

Travis Sanheim and Oskar Lindblom each had a goal and an assist, and Justin Braun also scored for the Flyers, who won their third game in a row after losing 10 straight. Philadelphia improved to 3-2 under interim coach Mike Yeo, who took over Dec. 6 when Alain Vigneault was fired.

P.K. Subban scored for the Devils, who have lost three straight and seven of eight. New Jersey was without captain Nico Hischier and top defenseman Ryan Graves, who each missed a second straight game due to COVID-19 protocols.

Atkinson upped his team-leading total to 12 goals this season.

Golden Knights 4, Bruins 1: Max Pacioretty scored — twice — in his seventh straight game to lead Vegas to a win at COVID-depleted Boston.

Robin Lehner made 23 saves for the Golden Knights, who won for the fifth time in six games. Shea Theodore also scored for Vegas, and Jonathan Marchessault had a goal with 0.6 seconds left in the first period to send the Bruins to their locker room to the boos of the hometown crowd.

Hours after Boston put leading scorer Brad

Marchand in the COVID-19 protocol, and one day after coach Bruce Cassidy returned from his positive test, the Bruins' loss snapped a two-game winning streak.

Senators 8, Panthers 2: Josh Norris scored two goals and Anton Forsberg made 33 saves to lift Ottawa to a win at Florida.

Nick Brown scored two late power-play goals, and Drake Batherson had a goal and two assists. Tim Stutzle, Dylan Gambrell and Austin Watson also scored for the Senators. Connor Brown had three assists.

Lightning 3, Kings 2 (OT): Mathieu Joseph scored with 1:35 left in overtime to give host Tampa Bay a win over Los Angeles.

The Lightning's Andrei Vasilevskiy made 28 saves to win his 62nd game in 2021 regular-season and playoff games, tying Marc-Andre Fleury's 2009 NHL record for a calendar year set with Pittsburgh.

Penguins 5, Canadiens 2: Evan Rodrigues scored his ninth goal of the season and added two assists to lead host Pittsburgh over reeling Montreal.

Kasperii Kapanen, Mike Matheson, Brian Dumoulin and Brian Boyle also scored for the Penguins, who won their fifth straight. Tristan Jarry finished with 28 saves to improve to 8-1-1 in his last 10 starts.

Red Wings 2, Islanders 1: Alex Nedeljkovic made 33 saves and host Detroit ended a three-game skid with a victory over New York.

Dylan Larkin got his team-high 11th goal and Michael Rasmussen also scored for the Red Wings.

Sabres 4, Jets 2: Rasmus Dahlin scored twice and Buffalo snapped a seven-game winless streak with a victory at Winnipeg.

Anders Bjork and Jeff Skinner also scored for the Sabres, who are 1-5-2 in their last eight games. Tage Thompson and Victor Olofsson each had two assists.

Blues 4, Stars 1: Justin Faulk, Ryan O'Reilly and Vladimir Tarasenko scored in the third period and St. Louis snapped Dallas' eight-game home winning streak.

Maple Leafs 5, Oilers 1: Auston Matthews had two goals and Toronto won its second straight game, winning at struggling Edmonton.

Avalanche 4, Rangers 2: Valeri Nichushkin had two goals, Cale Makar and Mikko Rantanen also scored and host Colorado beat New York and extended its winning streak to five games.

Kraken 3, Sharks 1: Ryan Donato broke a scoreless tie early in the third period of his return to San Jose and visiting Seattle snapped a three-game skid.

Canucks 4, Blue Jackets 3: Bo Horvat scored twice and host Vancouver rallied from three goals down to beat Columbus, the team's fifth straight win since Bruce Boudreau took over as coach.

Quarantine worries loom over NHL's Olympic plans

Associated Press

NHL MVP Connor McDavid calls the idea of potentially having to quarantine for up to five weeks in China following a positive COVID-19 test unsettling as the NHL's participation at the 2022 Winter Games remains up in the air.

The Edmonton captain and one of three players already named to Canada's provisional Olympic team spoke Tuesday as coronarivus cases and postponements continue to rise across the league.

"It's obviously going to be a very fluid situation," McDavid said. "There hasn't been a ton of information come out, and then there's that three-to-five week (quarantine) thing ... it's kind of been floating around. Obvious-

ly, it's unsettling if that were to be the case when you go over there."

The NHL skipped the 2018 Olympics in South Korea, but committed to Beijing as part of the extension to the current collective bargaining agreement signed with the NHL Players' Association. As recently as last week, Commissioner Gary Bettman said the plan was to go, but the league has until Jan. 10 to nix the plan without financial penalty if COVID-19 causes enough of a disruption to its season.

"I'm still a guy that's wanting to go play in the Olympics," McDavid said, according to The Canadian Press. "But we also want to make sure it's safe for everybody. For all the athletes, not just for hockey players."

The International Olympic Committee has said an athlete who tests positive for COVID-19 in China will need to produce two negative results 24 hours apart. If they're unable to do so, the quarantine period could last from three to five weeks.

Vegas defenseman Alex Pietrangolo — named alongside McDavid and Pittsburgh captain Sidney Crosby as provisional members of the Canadian squad — said he was not sure if he will be going to China because of the potential of being away from family in a long quarantine. Golden Knights goaltender Robin Lehner, a Swede, has already said he will not go.

Medical experts for the league and players' association have a previously scheduled

meeting set for later this week to review COVID-19 protocols. All but one NHL player — Tyler Bertuzzi of the Detroit Red Wings — is believed to be fully vaccinated, though the league is currently only recommending booster shots. Asked if the increase in positive tests and postponements were giving him flashbacks to March 2020 when the sports world and much of society ground to a halt, Calgary general manager Brad Treliving wouldn't go quite that far.

"I don't think anything is going to feel like that," he said. "That was a cold slap (to the face)."

The NHL went to every Olympics from 1998 through 2014 before declining to send its players three years ago.