

## F-16 crashes following in-flight emergency

By DAVID CHOI  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — An Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon crashed Monday morning off South Korea's western coast, according to the 8th Fighter Wing.

The fighter from Kunsan Air Base was flying over the Yellow Sea when it experienced an in-flight emergency at 8:43 a.m., the wing said in a news release

Monday.

The pilot ejected and was rescued at sea by the South Korean navy and coast guard, 7th Air Force spokeswoman Maj. Rachel Buitrago told Stars and Stripes by phone Monday.

A South Korean air force helicopter airlifted the pilot to Kunsan, she added.

The pilot is awake and in stable condition, according to the release.

"We are grateful for the safe recovery of our airman by our [South Korean] allies and that the pilot is in good condition," wing commander Col. Matthew Gaetke said in the release.

No further details on the crash were provided; however, the wing's release said "the incident will be thoroughly investigated."

Kunsan, about 115 miles south of Seoul, is home to the 8th Fighter Wing, which operates roughly

30 F-16s.

The incident comes seven months after one of the wing's F-16s crashed into a farmer's field near Osan Air Base, 30 miles south of the capital, on May 6.

The pilot ejected and suffered non-life-threatening injuries, the wing said at the time. That incident prompted a three-day standdown of F-16 flights in South Korea.

## Philippine military leader aboard ship harassed by China

*Associated Press*

MANILA, Philippines — The head of the Philippine military said Monday he was with his forces aboard a supply boat when it was blasted with a water cannon, surrounded and shoved by Chinese coast guard ships over the weekend in the disputed South China Sea.

China, meanwhile, accused archrival the United States of encouraging the Philippines, its treaty ally, to provoke China for its own purposes, though it provided no direct evidence.

The successive days of heated confrontations underscore China's determination to assert its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea, despite the possibility of fomenting a larger conflict affecting shipping and other maritime activities in the crucial waterway.

Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. told The Associated Press in a telephone interview that China was escalating its aggression in the contested waters but said it would not deter Filipino forces from defending their territorial interests.

More than 100 official Chinese and other government-linked ships have swarmed the high seas around the contested Second

Thomas Shoal, where a marooned Philippine navy ship that Brawner visited has stood for decades. He said their presence was much bigger than in previous months.

"It's pure aggression," Brawner said. "I witnessed how many times the big Chinese coast guard and militia ships cut our path. They water-cannoned us, then bumped us. It's angering."

"This really needs a diplomatic solution at the higher level," he said, but added that the armed forces would continue to support front-line troops and protect fishermen.

Brawner, the U.S.-educated chief of the 150,000-member Armed Forces of the Philippines, joined navy personnel in a wooden-hulled supply boat, the Unnaza Mae 1, which brought Christmas gifts, food and other supplies to a small contingent of Filipino marines and navy personnel stationed aboard the BRP Sierra Madre at Second Thomas Shoal.

Although now crumbling with rust and holes, the slightly listing Sierra Madre remains an actively commissioned Philippine navy ship, meaning any assault on it would be considered an act of war. It has become a fragile sym-

bol of the territorial claims of the Philippines.

Brawner said he conveyed President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s Christmas greetings to the Filipino forces and shared with them a traditional rice lunch.

The United States has repeatedly warned it is obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, if Filipino forces, ships or aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea. China has warned the U.S. not to meddle in what it says is a purely Asian dispute.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning reinforced that message at a daily briefing Monday, saying the maritime disputes were "issues between the two countries, and no third party has the right to intervene."

"Recently, the U.S., in order to realize its own geopolitical interests, has encouraged, supported, and cooperated with the Philippines in its violations and provocations in the South China Sea, exaggerating differences and inciting confrontation," Mao told reporters.

Over the weekend, Philippine officials said the Chinese coast

guard and suspected militia ships targeted Philippine vessels two days in a row with water cannon blasts and rammed one of them, causing damage and endangering crew, off Second Thomas Shoal and separately in Scarborough Shoal off the northwestern Philippines.

More than a dozen countries, including the U.S., Japan, the European Union, Germany, France, Canada and Australia, expressed support for the Philippines and concern over the incidents, Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Teresita Daza said.

Philippine officials said the Chinese coast guard's high-pressure water cannon blasts disabled and damaged the engines of the Philippine supply boat M/L Kalayaan, which had to be towed back to a Philippine port. One of two Philippine coast guard escort ships, the BRP Cabra, sustained damage to its mast.

The Chinese coast guard said it had "implemented controls in accordance with laws and regulations."

The U.S. State Department said the actions by China's ship "were dangerous and unlawful" and undermined regional stability.

# Navy probes why panel fell from helo

By ALEX WILSON AND MARI HIGA  
*Stars and Stripes*

A panel fell off a U.S. Navy helicopter last week as it was flying over waters southwest of Tokyo, a Navy spokesman said, prompting fresh concerns about U.S. military aircraft operating in the country.

The MH-60S Seahawk from Helicopter Sea Squadron 12 was conducting extended training when the part fell off, Naval Air Facility Atsugi spokesman Gregory Mitchell said by phone Monday.

The Navy realized the panel — 2 feet long, 1 foot wide and weighing about 15 pounds — was missing sometime after the Seahawk returned to NAF Atsugi on Thursday, he said. The aircraft had been flying south-southwest over Sagami Bay,

about 25 miles southwest of Tokyo.

The incident is under investigation, Mitchell said.

The South Kanto Defense Bureau, an arm of Japan's Ministry of Defense, notified Kanagawa prefecture about the missing panel on Friday, the prefecture said in a news release that day.

Prefectural officials asked the bureau to “gather information on the damage and investigate the cause immediately.”

The incident comes just over a week after an Air Force CV-22 Osprey went down off southwestern Japan, killing all eight crew members aboard.

The crash led the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps to ground hundreds of Ospreys on Dec. 6 after a preliminary investigation pointed toward a materiel failure

and not human error.

Ayase, a city adjacent to NAF Atsugi, sent letters to Japanese Defense Minister Minoru Kihara and the base's commander, Capt. Nicolas Leclerc, to ensure air safety protocols are in place, the city said Friday in a news release.

“While we have always requested the aircraft safety measures to be thoroughly implemented and citizens are increasingly concerned about aircraft safety after the Osprey crash occurred off Yakushima on November 29, the occurrence of this incident has further heightened citizens' anxieties, and we take it very seriously,” the city wrote on its website.

The city echoed the prefecture's requests about a thorough investigation and asked that the findings be made public.

## Policy revision OKs dogs, cats for troops at Incirlik

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

A tiny Yorkshire terrier named Archer is the first pooch in years to set paw on Incirlik Air Base, where a longtime ban on pets has been lifted, to the delight of U.S. personnel stationed at the base in southeastern Turkey.

Archer belongs to Chief Master Sgt. Melissa Robbins, the senior enlisted leader of the 39th Mission Support Group. His presence on base has been a morale booster, Robbins said.

“Archer is not just my companion. He represents the beginning of a new era for Incirlik,” she said.

The pet policy revision allows for service members in single-occupancy homes — for one resident or a married couple — to have up to two dogs or cats, the 39th Air Base Wing said in a statement Monday.

The policy also authorizes

all troops to have an aquarium of up to 25 gallons. But no reptiles allowed; the aquarium can house only fish, the wing said.

“The significance of this cannot be overstated,” the wing statement said. “It marks a shift towards recognizing the importance of pets in the lives of military families.”

Archer is the first dog to take up residence at the base since 2016, when deteriorating security conditions in Turkey prompted U.S. military leaders to order hundreds of family members out of the country.

The move brought an end to accompanied tours at the base, where previously either standard tours with dependents or two-year assignments were the norm.

Concerns at the time about terrorist threats and the intense fighting against Islamic State across the border in Syria prompted the change.

## Computer chip plant 1st to get funding from new law

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration said Monday it would provide \$35 million to BAE Systems to increase production at a New Hampshire factory making computer chips for military aircraft, including F-15 and F-35 jets.

This is the first allocation of incentives from last year's bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act, which provides more than \$52 billion to boost the development and manufacturing of semiconductors in the United States.

The Commerce Department's choice of a military contractor instead of a conventional chip manufacturer reveals the national security focus of the law, as more and more weapons systems depend on advanced chips that could be decisive in both preventing and fighting wars.

President Joe Biden signed the incentives into law in Au-

gust 2022 partly out of concerns that a military attack on Taiwan could deprive the world of advanced computer chips and plunge the U.S. into a recession.

“We can't gamble with our national security by depending solely on one part of the world or even one country for crucial advanced technologies,” said Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, who called the investments a “once in a generation opportunity to advance our national and economic security and create a thriving, long lasting domestic semiconductor manufacturing industry.”

The coronavirus pandemic revealed the fragility of computer chip supplies as a worldwide shortage curbed U.S. auto production around the start of Biden's presidency.

Biden said the incentives his administration is providing have already led to more than \$230 billion in planned investments in electronics.

# More travelers in forecast for holidays

*Associated Press*

More Americans are expected to fly or drive far from home over Christmas than did last year, putting a cap on a busy year for travel.

Auto club AAA forecast Monday that 115.2 million people will go 50 miles or more from home during the 10 days between Dec. 23 and New Year's Day. That's 2.2% more than AAA predicted during the comparable stretch last year.

"That desire to get away is

stronger than we have seen in a very long time," said AAA spokeswoman Aixa Diaz. "People are willing to adjust their budgets in other areas of their life, but they want to keep traveling."

The AAA predicts that the holiday season will still fall 3% short of record travel in 2019, the last Christmas before COVID-19 hit the United States.

Air travel in the U.S. has already rebounded, surpassing 2019 levels.

The number of travelers going

through U.S. airport checkpoints is up 12.4% over last year and 1.4% higher than in 2019, according to the Transportation Security Administration. Travel around the Thanksgiving Day holiday topped 2019 numbers, peaking at 2.9 million — a single-day record for TSA — screened on Sunday, Nov. 26.

Airlines are predicting a blockbuster holiday season.

Airlines for America says 39 million people — about 2.8 million a day on average — will

board U.S. flights between Dec. 20 and Jan. 2. The trade group for big U.S. carriers expects about 3 million on the peak days — the Thursday and Friday before Christmas and the four days after the holiday.

The airlines count people more than once if they take connecting flights instead of non-stops, so their numbers are higher than those reported by TSA.

Travel is strong even though many Americans say they are worried about the economy.

## Applesauce lead cases in kids surge

*The Washington Post*

It started as a routine investigation: Two young siblings in western North Carolina had tested positive for lead poisoning in June. Alan Huneycutt, a longtime environmental health specialist with the state's department of health and human services, was doggedly trying to find the source.

He had ruled out the usual suspects in and around the children's home — old paint, contaminated water or tainted soil — yet the children's lead levels continued to climb.

What he eventually found — that the two siblings had eaten contaminated pouches of cinnamon applesauce — sparked an international investigation by the Food and Drug Administration and a massive national recall of cinnamon applesauce pouches manufactured by an Ecuador-based company, Austrofood, and sold under the brand names WanaBana, Schnucks and Weis.

Dozens of other children around the country are believed to have been poisoned. A Washington Post investigation has found the number of children affected is probably higher than official counts. As of Dec. 5, the FDA said it has received reports of 64 children under age 6 who have suffered

"adverse events" linked to the tainted cinnamon applesauce pouches.

But state health and environmental officials have told The Post they are investigating at least 118 confirmed or suspected cases in 31 states believed to be linked to the popular applesauce snacks. To determine the extent of the exposure, The Post contacted officials in 50 states and the District of Columbia, and received responses from all but Kansas.

The discrepancy in case counts is probably because of differences in how suspected and confirmed cases are reported at the state and federal level. The FDA said its count is based on self-reported information submitted by health care providers, consumers and some state partners. In some cases, parents of children with elevated lead levels don't have old applesauce pouches to test, but they have reported that their children had eaten the snacks in recent months.

As the investigation has expanded, experts have grown alarmed at the potential level of lead in the pouches, some of which have tested at more than 500 times acceptable thresholds, according to North Carolina health officials. Parents of exposed children told inves-

tigators that the applesauce pouches were a favorite treat, and some children reportedly consumed three, four or even as many as six pouches a day.

The recall has renewed questions about whether the FDA is doing enough to regulate toxic metals in baby and toddler foods. In 2021, two congressional reports found that many popular food products made for babies and toddlers contain significant levels of lead, arsenic, cadmium and mercury, yet an action plan to establish voluntary limits by April 2024 appears to have stalled.

While these metals are often in soil and can be found in trace amounts in many foods, there's growing concern about contamination of baby and toddler foods because young children often eat a limited diet, and metals such as lead can damage a developing brain.

"We know that lead has major impacts on child development and health," said Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., who co-sponsored legislation in 2021 that would have strictly limited the levels of harmful heavy metals in baby food, in an emailed statement. "It's clear our nation must do more to get lead out of the food we feed them."

## Trump won't testify again at fraud trial

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — Donald Trump said Sunday he has decided against testifying for a second time at his New York civil fraud trial, posting on social media a day before his scheduled appearance that he "very successfully & conclusively" testified last month and saw no need to do so again.

The former president had been expected to return to the witness stand Monday as a coda to his defense against New York Attorney General Letitia James' lawsuit.

James, a Democrat, alleges Trump inflated his wealth on financial statements used in securing loans and making deals. The case threatens Trump's real estate empire and cuts to the heart of his image as a successful businessman.

"I will not be testifying on Monday," Trump wrote in an all-capital-letters, multipart statement on his Truth Social platform less than 20 hours before he was to take the witness stand.

"I have already testified to everything & have nothing more to say," Trump added, leaving the final word among defense witnesses to an accounting expert.

# War in Gaza endangers delicate Iraq diplomacy

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Dozens of attacks on U.S. military facilities by Iran-backed factions in Iraq over the past two months as the Israel-Hamas war has raged have forced Baghdad into a balancing act that's becoming more difficult by the day.

A rocket attack on the sprawling U.S. Embassy in Baghdad on Friday marked a further escalation as Iraqi officials scramble to contain the ripple effects of the latest Middle East war.

Iran holds considerable sway in Iraq and a coalition of Iran-backed groups brought Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani to power in October 2022. At the same time, there are some 2,000 U.S. troops in Iraq under an agreement with Baghdad, mainly to counter the militant Islamic State.

Baghdad also relies heavily on Washington's sanctions waivers to buy electricity from Iran, and since the 2003 U.S. invasion, Iraq's foreign currency reserves have been housed at the U.S. Federal Reserve, giving the Americans significant control over Iraq's supply of dollars.

Al-Sudani's predecessors also had to walk a delicate line between Tehran and Washington, but the Israel-Hamas war has

considerably upped the stakes.

Since the war erupted on Oct. 7, at least 92 attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria have been claimed by an umbrella group of Iran-backed Iraqi militants dubbed the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. The militants say their attacks are in retaliation for Washington's backing of Israel and its military presence in Iraq and Syria.

Al-Sudani has condemned the attacks and U.S. counterstrikes as a violation of his country's sovereignty. He has also ordered authorities to pursue militants involved in the attacks, most of which caused no injuries and only minor damage.

His office declined further comment.

Washington has sent messages that its patience is wearing thin.

After the embassy attack, the Pentagon said that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin "made clear (to al-Sudani) that attacks against U.S. forces must stop."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told al-Sudani that Washington expects Iraqi officials to take more action to prevent such attacks, and believes they have the capability to do so, a U.S. official told The Associated Press.

# Israel fights militants in Gaza's largest cities

Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip — Israeli forces battled Palestinian militants in Gaza's two largest cities on Monday, with civilians still trapped in the fighting even after hundreds of thousands have fled to other parts of the besieged territory.

Israel has pledged to keep fighting until it removes Hamas from power, dismantles its military capabilities and returns all of the hostages taken by militants during Hamas' Oct. 7 surprise attack into Israel that ignited the war.

The U.S. has provided unwavering diplomatic and military support for the campaign, even as it has urged Israel to minimize civilian casualties and further mass displacement. The war has killed thousands of Palestinian civilians and driven nearly 85% of the territory's 2.3 million people from their homes.

Residents said there was heavy fighting in and around the southern city of Khan Younis, where Israeli ground forces opened a new line of attack last week, and battles were still underway in parts of Gaza City and the urban Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza, where large areas have been reduced to rubble.

In central Gaza, an Israeli air-

strike overnight flattened a residential building where some 80 people were staying in the Maghazi refugee camp, residents said.

Ahmed al-Qarah, a neighbor who was digging through the rubble for survivors, said he knew of only six people who made it out. "The rest are under the building," he said.

Several of the dead were brought to a nearby hospital, where their loved ones could be seen sobbing and holding funeral prayers.

In Khan Younis, Radwa Abu Frayeh saw heavy Israeli strikes overnight around the European Hospital, where the U.N. humanitarian office says tens of thousands of people have sought shelter. She said one hit a home close to hers late Sunday.

"The building shook," she said. "We thought it was the end and we would die."

Hussein al-Sayyed, who fled Gaza City earlier in the war with his three daughters, is staying in a three-story home in the city with around 70 others. He said they have been rationing food for days. "I don't know where to go," he said. "No place is safe."

Hamas is believed to have suffered heavy losses, but on Monday it fired a barrage of rockets that set off sirens in Tel Aviv.

# Russia attacks Kyiv amid vulnerable energy infrastructure

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — A Russian missile attack on Ukraine's capital early Monday destroyed several homes and left more than 100 households without electricity.

The predawn attack on Kyiv came amid warnings that Russia will step up its attacks on the country's energy infrastructure as winter sets in with freezing temperatures.

A series of loud explosions

followed by air raid sirens broke the silence in Kyiv just after 4 a.m. as the city was under its nightly curfew.

Ukraine's military said its air defenses intercepted all eight ballistic missiles. However, falling debris from rockets damaged homes on the ground, leaving one person wounded and three others suffering severe shock, officials said.

AP journalists witnessed some of the destruction in the

district of Bortnychi on the southeastern outskirts of Kyiv. A home under construction was ripped apart and nearby buildings were partially damaged, with gaping holes.

Victor Demchenko, the owner of the destroyed house, was clearing debris from his property, next to a crater about 16 feet deep in the backyard. Demchenko said he was in another part of the city when he heard the explosions.

"Then the neighbor called ... and said all that is left of the house is a crater," he said. "I didn't believe him, so I took the car and drove here. Well, you can see it yourself, there is nothing to be found here."

The attack also left some 120 households in the city without electricity, Ukraine's Ministry of Energy said. Ukrainian officials have warned that Russia will target energy infrastructure like it did last winter.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Menu signed by Chairman Mao fetches \$275,000

**MA** BOSTON — An official menu for a state banquet that bears the signature of former Chinese leader Mao Zedong has been auctioned for \$275,000.

Boston-based RR Auction said the menu auctioned was for a banquet held in Beijing on Oct. 19, 1956, and commemorated the first state visit to China by Pakistan's Prime Minister Hu-seyn Shaheed Suhrawardy.

The menu was signed in fountain pen by six influential Chinese statesmen, including Mao and Premier Zhou Enlai. The banquet featured foods from both nations and included delicacies such as "Consommé of Swallow Nest and White Agaric," "Shark's Fin in Brown Sauce" and "Roast Peking Duck."

Other items auctioned off included a fully operational World War II-era Enigma coding machine for \$206,253 and a Thomas Edison-signed document for a light bulb patent for \$22,154.

### Senator's son charged in crash that killed deputy

**ND** BISMARCK — The 42-year-old son of U.S. Sen. Kevin Cramer was charged with manslaughter and fleeing an officer after a police pursuit ended in a crash that killed a North Dakota sheriff's deputy who had just laid a tire deflation device on the road and was taking cover behind his squad car, according to court documents.

Ian Cramer, of Bismarck, was traveling over 100 mph and already had two flat tires when he

slammed head-on into Deputy Paul Martin's squad car, pushing it "directly into Martin's person and launching him for about 100 feet," according to charging documents. Martin, 53, was killed.

According to Bismarck police, Ian Cramer was driven by his mother to Sanford Health emergency room in Bismarck over concerns about his mental health.

One of Kevin Cramer's daughters tracked the SUV through a cellphone and alerted authorities.

### Maternal mortality rate higher for Black women

**MS** JACKSON — Black people make up about 38% of Mississippi's population, but a new study showed that Black women were four times more likely to die of causes directly related to pregnancy than white women in the state in 2020.

"It is imperative that this racial inequity is not only recognized, but that concerted efforts are made at the institutional, community, and state levels to reduce these disparate outcomes," wrote Dr. Michelle Owens and Dr. Courtney Mitchell, leaders of the Maternal Mortality Review Committee that conducted the study.

The Mississippi State Department of Health published the findings.

The committee said 80% of pregnancy-related deaths in Mississippi between 2016 and 2020 were considered preventable, and cardiovascular disease and hypertension remain top contributors to maternal mortality.

Women need comprehensive

primary care before, during and after pregnancy, but many people live in areas where health care services are scarce, Owens and Mitchell wrote.

### White House pledges \$6B to high-speed rail routes

**CA** SACRAMENTO — The Biden administration said it will give more than \$6 billion to a pair of high-speed electric rail routes in the U.S. West, injecting new life into long-stalled projects hailed by supporters as the future of public transportation but be-moaned by critics for their high price tags and lengthy construction times.

U.S. senators from California and Nevada said the federal government will give \$3 billion for a planned privately-owned route between Las Vegas and the Los Angeles area plus another \$3.1 billion for an initial segment of California's publicly-funded effort to eventually connect Los Angeles and San Francisco.

The money is a fraction of the total cost to build the routes. But it signals the Biden administration's commitment to high-speed rail, a mode of transportation commonplace in Europe and Asia but bypassed in the U.S. and its car-obsessed culture.

### Pilot back after duck crashed into windshield

**IA** SIOUX CITY — An Iowa helicopter pilot is back in the air, two weeks after a waterfowl smashed through the windshield of his chopper and knocked him for a loop.

Pilot Troy McCormick told

KCAU-TV that he's lucky he wasn't hurt worse when what he believed was a duck came crashing through the windshield.

McCormick flies for Wings Rescue in Sioux City. He was en route to Storm Lake Hospital to pick up a patient. The chopper was near the hospital, "and just about that time, 'wham!'" McCormick recalled. "The bird came through the windscreen and hit me right in the side of the head here, 'boom,' and then exploded all over in the inside of the aircraft."

McCormick, covered in blood and feathers, was able to divert to Storm Lake Airport and land, though he remains fuzzy about how that happened.

### Ex-labor leader convicted of embezzling from union

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — Former Philadelphia labor leader John "Johnny Doc" Dougherty and a codefendant were convicted of using more than \$650,000 in union funds for personal use, marking the second conviction federal prosecutors have secured against the long-powerful figure since a sweeping 2019 indictment.

Dougherty, who led Local 98 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers for nearly three decades, was convicted of conspiracy, embezzlement and dozens of other charges by a jury after a month-long trial. Prosecutors said he and codefendant Brian Burrows, Local 98's former president, used the money for items including home renovations, concerts, groceries and even a cookie tray for the christening of a relative's baby.

— From wire reports

STARS  AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit [www.stripes.com](http://www.stripes.com).

Reporting  
World, National  
and Military News

# Cowboys pull even with Eagles atop NFC East

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Mike McCarthy was nervous for an NFC East showdown with Philadelphia after the Dallas coach missed two days during the week because of an emergency appendectomy.

Not to worry, thanks to his quarterback, kicker and opportunistic defense.

Dak Prescott threw for two touchdowns, Brandon Aubrey made four field goals to start his career a record 30-for-30 and the Cowboys pulled even in the

division with their 15th consecutive home victory, 33-13 over the Eagles on Sunday night.

The Cowboys (10-3) weren't deterred by Jalen Carter's 42-yard fumble return for a touchdown, winning their fifth consecutive game since a loss at Philadelphia that gave the Eagles a two-game division lead.

Dallas owner Jerry Jones said it was the biggest win in McCarthy's four seasons as coach.

"And it has to do with the fact that he came up off the operating table and did not even wince and

stand there and fight it all night and coach it," Jones said.

The Eagles (10-3) lost three fumbles and didn't score an offensive touchdown as quarterback Jalen Hurts, who had the first fumble, lost consecutive games for the first time since October 2021. But while the Cowboys currently hold the tiebreaker with an extra NFC East victory, the defending NFC champion Eagles would take the division title on subsequent tiebreakers if they win their remaining four games.

"The role's the same as it's always been," coach Nick Sirianni said. "And now we're going through some adversity. And so adversity can do a couple of things to you. It can break you or it can make it way better."

Aubrey became the first kicker with two field goals of at least 59 yards in the same game, connecting from 60 yards late in the first quarter. His 59-yarder in the third allowed him to surpass Greg Zuerlein and Harrison Butker, who each had a pair from at least 58 yards.

# Bills win after penalty negates late Chiefs touchdown

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Sean McDermott thought for a moment that a difficult week for himself and the Buffalo Bills would end with one last gut punch, an audacious touchdown pass by the Kansas City Chiefs with just over a minute left to steal a win Sunday.

Then the Bills' coach saw the yellow flag on the field.

The pass from Patrick Mahomes to Travis Kelce, which was then lateraled across the field to Kadarius Toney for the 49-yard score, was called back by an offside penalty on none other than Toney himself.

And when the Bills proceeded to hold the Chiefs on downs, they escaped Arrowhead Stadium with a heart-stopping and head-scratching 20-17 victory.

"As the play unfolded," McDermott said, "Kelce got wide open. The play after he caught the ball, I've never seen a play like that in the NFL. But I saw the referees signaling that direction. I didn't know if it was a pick or what. It turned out to be offside."

Rarely is offside called on an offensive player. But replays showed that Toney's foot was clearly across the line of scrimmage.

That didn't make the call sit any easier with Mahomes, who chased after three different officials for an explanation. Or with Chiefs coach Andy Reid, who was still incensed after walking out of the locker room afterward.

"It's a bit embarrassing for the National Football League for that to take place," Reid said.

"Loss for words, man," Mahomes said. "To end another game and we're talking about referees, it's bad for the NFL."

The Bills' Josh Allen threw for 233 yards with touchdowns running and throwing, though he also threw an interception for the ninth consecutive game. James Cook had 58 yards rushing and caught five passes for 83 yards and a score.

**Ravens 37, Rams 31 (OT):** Tylan Wallace returned a punt 76 yards for a touchdown in overtime, and host Baltimore snapped Los Angeles' three-game winning streak.

Wallace, who committed a crucial penalty on special teams earlier in the game that led to points for the Rams (6-7), eluded a couple of tackles after fielding the punt and stayed on his feet when Shaun Jolly made a diving attempt at him along the left sideline.

**Vikings 3, Raiders 0:** Minnesota and Las Vegas played the lowest-scoring NFL game in 16 years, with Greg Joseph's 36-yard field goal with 1:57 left giving the visiting Vikings the victory.

It was the first 3-0 game since Pittsburgh beat Miami on Nov. 26, 2007, the third in the past 40 years and the seventh in the Super Bowl era.

**Browns 31, Jaguars 27:** Joe Flacco threw for 311 yards and three touchdowns in his home debut for Cleveland, which survived a late rally by Jacksonville.

The 38-year-old Flacco, who was signed three weeks ago by the Browns (8-5), went 26 of 45 and improved to 10-2 as a starter in Cleveland. His previous wins came while playing for Baltimore and the New York Jets.

**Broncos 24, Chargers 7:** Russell Wilson threw two touchdown passes and visiting Denver beat Los Angeles, which lost quarterback Justin Herbert to a broken finger on his right hand.

Wilson completed 21 of 33 passes for 224 yards, including a 46-yard touchdown to Courtland Sutton in the third quarter for the Broncos (7-6), who have won six of seven.

**49ers 28, Seahawks 16:** Deebo Samuel scored on a catch and a run and host San Francisco beat Seattle for its 11th straight win over an NFC West opponent.

Samuel had his second straight game with multiple touchdowns to lead the 49ers (10-3) to the brink of winning back-to-back division titles for the first time since 2011-12. The Niners lead the Seahawks (6-7) and Rams by four games with four to play.

**Jets 30, Texans 6:** Zach Wilson threw a pair of second-half touchdown passes in his return from a two-game benching as host New York beat Houston to stop a five-game skid.

**Bears 28, Lions 13:** Justin Fields threw for a touchdown and ran for another, and host Chicago beat NFC North-leading Detroit.

**Buccaneers 29, Falcons 25:** Baker Mayfield threw an 11-yard touchdown pass to Cade Otton with 31 seconds remaining, and visiting Tampa Bay beat Atlanta to move into a three-way tie for first place in the NFC South.

**Bengals 34, Colts 14:** Jake Browning threw two touchdown passes and ran for a score in his second straight outstanding performance as host Cincinnati pounded Indianapolis.

**Saints 28, Panthers 6:** Derek Carr returned from a recent concussion and upper-body injuries to throw touchdown passes to Chris Olave and Jimmy Graham, and host New Orleans beat NFL-worst Carolina.

# Bronny James makes debut for USC

*Associated Press*

LOS ANGELES — Bronny James showed off his defensive skills in his college debut for Southern California nearly five months after he suffered cardiac arrest and expressed gratitude for the doctors and family who supported him.

He had four points, three rebounds and two assists on Sunday, coming off the bench to play in front of his superstar father, LeBron James.

“I just want to say I’m thankful for everything,” Bronny James said afterward in brief comments to a horde of media. He thanked the Mayo Clinic, where he received treatment, as well as his parents, siblings, coach Andy Enfield and his teammates “during this hard time in my life.”

He left without taking any questions.

The Trojans lost in overtime to Long Beach State, 84-79. James walked off with his deflated teammates and didn’t greet his father who sat court-side.

James logged 16 minutes, including starting the five-minute

extra session, but he wasn’t a factor then before coming out for the last time. He was 1-for-3 shooting, hitting a 3-pointer in the second half.

His biggest impression came on defense. All of James’ rebounds were on the defensive glass and he had two steals.

“I thought Bronny played well,” Enfield said. “He defended at a high level. He guarded the quick ballhandlers on the other team pretty well.”

James was quick to pass to his teammates, even when it appeared he could have taken a shot.

Enfield said James’ minutes would continue to be monitored by USC’s medical staff.

He played six minutes in the first half, when the Trojans led 45-30 at the break. In his second three-minute stint, James made a huge block on Jadon Jones, who was streaking to the basket on a fastbreak, riling up the fans.

James assisted on a dunk by Vincent Iwuchukwu, who also suffered cardiac arrest as a freshman. He returned to play 14 games last season.

“It’s great to see Bronny out there. He’s put a lot of work in the gym,” Iwuchukwu said. “We talked before the game and I told him to go out there and have fun.”

James entered the game for the first time about seven minutes in, with some in the crowd standing and cheering. He missed his first shot, a 3-point attempt. Moments before, he tipped the ball away from a Long Beach State player, but the visitors got it back. The possession ended in a shot-clock violation for Long Beach. James also snagged a rebound.

“He makes the right play all the time,” said Boogie Ellis, USC’s top guard. “Everybody wants a guy like that on their team. He defends well at a high level.”

LeBron James arrived seconds before the national anthem, holding hands with 9-year-old daughter, Zhuri, and tapped his son’s rear as he passed the Trojans who were lined up across the court for the anthem.

The younger James’ debut capped a big weekend for the

family. LeBron helped the Lakers win the NBA’s new In-Season Tournament on Saturday night in Las Vegas, earning everyone on the team a \$500,000 payday each.

“It was exciting for everybody to see him out there,” Enfield said, “and I’m sure his family was the most excited.”

The NBA was well-represented in the game. One of James’ teammates is DJ Rodman, the son of Dennis Rodman, who fouled out. Long Beach’s roster includes Chayce Polynice, the son of 15-year NBA veteran Olden Polynice.

James joined his teammates for on-court warmups 90 minutes before tipoff. He took a variety of jumpers under the watchful lenses of a baseline full of photographers.

Although there were pockets of empty seats in the 10,258-seat arena, James’ debut helped the Trojans draw their largest crowd of 9,806 this season.

James suffered cardiac arrest on July 20 during a workout at Galen Center. He was found to have a congenital heart defect that was treatable.

## Pacers guard Haliburton’s star continues to rise

*Associated Press*

LAS VEGAS — Indiana Pacers guard Tyrese Haliburton doesn’t care about his stats, he doesn’t want to be put in any conversations regarding All-Star teams, and he certainly isn’t interested in talks about being an MVP candidate.

He just wants to win.

And while it may not have happened Saturday night, when the Los Angeles Lakers beat Indiana 123-109 in the In-Season Tournament championship game, the rest of the league should be on notice about Haliburton and the Pacers.

“I think last year we snuck up on teams, teams didn’t really

know what to expect,” said Haliburton, who had 20 points and 11 assists. “But I think now when you play the Pacers you know what to expect. ... Obviously, people didn’t expect us to get here, the championship game, but I think teams are prepared for us.”

Indiana got back to the regular season Monday with the league’s No. 1 offense led by Haliburton who is averaging 26.9 points and a league-high 12.1 assists.

And whether he likes it or not, those numbers have him almost assuredly on his way to a second straight All-Star appearance and have placed him in early

season MVP chatter.

In seven tournament games, he led all players who made it to the final with an average of 26.7 points per game on 52.4% shooting, and had 13.3 assists per contest.

“Tyrese is a great young player that has all the tools, has the personality and has the desire,” Indiana coach Rick Carlisle said. “The month, seven weeks that he’s put together so far in this season, people are talking about him for MVP, and rightly so.

“He was completely unfazed by the limelight and it brought his game to a higher level (during tournament games). Like

Reggie Miller, he’s very similar to him. Body type stature, personality, and just overall character. He wants the responsibility for winning and losing.”

Special enough that NBA commissioner Adam Silver loved the championship storyline of having one of the most storied players in NBA history — LeBron James — facing a young team with a budding star.

“People have said MVP, or all-NBA All-Star or whatever,” Haliburton said. “But at the end of the day I just want to play basketball and I want to succeed as a team. I know (with) the team’s success, individual success comes with that.”

# Oilers top Devils to win seventh straight

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Calvin Pickard made 26 saves for his first NHL victory in almost two years and the Edmonton Oilers ran their winning streak to seven, beating the New Jersey Devils 4-1 on Sunday.

Pickard last won in the NHL on Jan. 28, 2022, with the Detroit Red Wings. He made his fourth appearance of the season for the Oilers and has also played four games this season for Bakersfield in the American Hockey League.

“You can’t put too much pressure on yourself when you don’t play very often, but I felt good in practice and I wanted to keep it going,” Pickard said. “I thought we played a great game all the way through, very defensive, really good special teams and deserved the win.”

The 31-year-old Pickard started the season in Bakersfield and was called up to replace Jack Campbell when Campbell had a tough start to the season.

Derek Ryan, Evan Bouchard, Connor McDavid and Evander Kane, with an empty-netter, scored to help Edmonton im-

prove to 12-12-1. Kane and McDavid each added an assist, and Bouchard extended his points streak to 11 games and McDavid pushed his to nine.

Jesper Bratt scored for New Jersey, and Akira Schmid made 26 saves. Coming off their third straight victory Saturday in Calgary, the Devils dropped to 14-11-1.

**Rangers 4, Kings 1:** Jonathan Quick made 25 saves against his former team and host New York handed Los Angeles its second road loss in two nights following an NHL-record 11 consecutive victories away from home to start the season.

Los Angeles lost 3-2 in overtime to the New York Islanders on Saturday night.

Mika Zibanejad, Jimmy Vesey, Johnny Brodzinski and Will Cuyile scored for New York. Quick improved to 8-0-1. He played 16 seasons for the Kings, winning Stanley Cups in 2012 and 2014.

**Golden Knights 5, Sharks 4 (SO):** Jonathan Marchessault scored twice in regulation and had a goal in the shootout to lift host Vegas past San Jose.

Chandler Stephenson and Brayden McNabb also scored for the defending champion Golden Knights, who have won three straight and five of their last six to lead the NHL with 43 points. Jiri Patera stopped 35 shots in his season debut.

**Wild 3, Kraken 0:** Filip Gustavsson stopped 24 shots for his second shutout of the season as visiting Minnesota handed Seattle its eighth straight loss.

Matt Boldy, Marco Rossi and Joel Eriksson Ek scored for Minnesota. The Wild are 5-2-0 since John Hynes replaced the fired Dean Evason as coach Nov. 27.

**Panthers 5, Blue Jackets 2:** Gustav Forsling had a goal and an assist, and visiting Florida had a three-goal third period to beat Columbus for its third straight victory.

Carter Verhaeghe scored for his 200th NHL point, Aleksander Barkov had a power-play goal, and Matthew Tkachuk and Eetu Luostarinen added empty-net goals. Sam Reinhart had four assists for his 13th multi-point game of the season, and Anthony Stolarz stopped 18

shots.

**Jets 4, Ducks 2:** Gabe Vilardi broke a tie with 1:42 left with the third of visiting Winnipeg’s four third-period goals in a comeback victory over Anaheim.

Winnipeg rallied after losing scoring leader Kyle Connor to a knee injury in the second period when he took a knee from Ducks defenseman Ryan Strome, who received a game misconduct.

**Capitals 4, Blackhawks 2:** Nic Dowd scored twice, Darcy Kuemper made 32 saves and visiting Washington beat Chicago for its second straight victory.

Anthony Mantha, Dylan Strome and Dowd scored in a 7:12 span in the second period to put Washington ahead. Dowd sealed it with his second of the night with 4:02 left in the third.

**Predators 2, Canadiens 1:** Colton Sissons scored twice, Juuse Saros made 36 saves and visiting Nashville held off Montreal.

Captain Roman Josi assisted on both goals to help Nashville rebound from a 4-0 loss at Toronto on Saturday night. The Predators have won 10 of 13 to improve to 15-13-0.

## LSU quarterback Daniels heads AP All-America team

Associated Press

Heisman Trophy winner Jayden Daniels from LSU was one of seven players in either their fifth or sixth season of college football selected to The Associated Press All-America team announced Monday.

Daniels, a fifth-year quarterback, won the Heisman and AP player of the year honors last week after accounting for 50 touchdowns and nearly 5,000 yards of offense this season.

He was joined in the backfield by Missouri’s Cody Schrader, a sixth-year running back and former Division II player who leads the nation at 124.9 rushing yards per game.

The other sixth-year player

of the AP first team was North Carolina State linebacker Payton Wilson, who won the Chuck Bednarik Award as national defensive player of the year.

Kansas State guard Cooper Beebe, edge rushers Laiatu Latu from UCLA and Jalen Green from James Madison, and Texas defensive tackle T’Vondre Sweat were the other fifth-year players to make the first team.

College players who were in school during the 2020 pandemic season were granted an extra year of eligibility and they are still making their presence felt around the country.

Eleven more fifth-year

players made the second and third teams and there were eight sixth-year players selected to those teams, including Washington quarterback Michael Penix Jr., the Heisman runner up. Penix and the second-ranked Huskies face No. 3 Texas in the College Football Playoff’s Sugar Bowl semifinal on Jan. 1.

Notre Dame offensive tackle Joe Alt and Ohio State receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. were selected first-team All-Americans for the second straight year. Beebe and Georgia tight end Brock Bowers moved up from second team last season to first this year.

No. 5 Alabama led all teams

with three first-team All-Americans, all on the defensive side: cornerbacks Kool-Aid McKinstry and Terrion Arnold and linebacker Dallas Turner.

The Crimson Tide, seeded fourth in the College Football Playoff, face No. 1 Michigan in the Rose Bowl semifinal on Jan. 1.

First-team All-Americans (by conference)

**SEC** — 9.

**Big Ten** — 6.

**Pac-12** — 4.

**Big 12** — 3.

**ACC** — 1.

**MAC** — 1.

**Sun Belt** — 1.

**Independent** — 2.