

Missiles miss fuel-filled ship in Red Sea

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Two missiles fired from territory held by Yemen’s Houthi rebels missed a commercial tanker loaded with Indian-manufactured jet fuel near the key Bab el-Mandeb Strait on Wednesday, two U.S. officials said. It is the first time they target an energy ship heading to the Suez Canal.

An American warship, the USS Mason, also shot down a suspected Houthi drone flying in its direction during the incident, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters. No one was hurt in the attack, the officials said.

The assault on the tanker Ardmore Encounter further escalates a campaign by the Iranian-backed rebels targeting ships close to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and also widens the international impact of the Israel-Hamas war raging in the Gaza Strip.

The Marshall Islands-flagged tanker was traveling north toward the Suez Canal in the Red Sea, satellite tracking data analyzed by The Associated Press showed. The vessel was on its way from Mangalore, India, and had an armed security crew aboard it, according to data transmitted by the ship. Those guards apparently opened fire to drive off skiffs loaded with men trying to board the vessel, the private intelligence firm Ambrey said.

Ardmore Shipping Corp., which owns and operates the ship, issued a statement to the AP acknowledging the attack.

“No one boarded the vessel and all crew members are safe and accounted for,” the statement said. “The vessel remains fully operational with no loss of cargo or damage on board.”

It added: “Ardmore is in close contact with the relevant authorities and military assistance is

now in the area providing support as required.”

The ship was carrying a load of jet fuel from Shell MRPL Aviation Fuels & Services Ltd., a joint operation of the oil giant and India’s national oil company. The fuel was heading to either Rotterdam in the Netherlands or Gavle, Sweden, Ardmore Shipping said. Shell declined to comment.

The Houthis did not immediately acknowledge the attack.

The British military’s United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, which provides warnings to sailors in the Middle East, earlier reported a separate incident off the coast of Oman. It said a vessel had been followed by smaller boats carrying machine guns and men in gray uniforms before escaping unharmed.

On Monday night, a missile also fired by Houthi rebels slammed into a Norwegian-flagged tanker in the Red Sea off Yemen near the

Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

The Houthis have carried out a series of attacks on vessels in the Red Sea and launched drones and missiles targeting Israel. In recent days, they have threatened to attack any vessel they believe is either going to or coming from Israel. There was no immediate link found between the Ardmore Encounter and Israel.

Analysts suggest the Houthis hope to shore up waning popular support after years of civil war in Yemen between the rebels and Saudi-backed forces.

France and the United States have stopped short of saying their ships were targeted in rebel attacks, but have said Houthi drones targeting their ships were shot down in self-defense. Washington so far has declined to directly respond to the attacks, as has Israel, whose military continues to insist the ships do not have links to their country.

Misconduct allegations in Japan prompts changes for Marines

**BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND MARI HIGA**

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The commander of Marine forces in Japan has ordered a liberty policy update following a rise in misconduct by U.S. military personnel in the island nation.

The revamp was drafted Monday by Lt. Gen. James Bierman Jr., commander of Marine Forces Japan, and released on the III Marine Expeditionary Force website the next day. It requires sergeants and below to carry tiered liberty cards while enjoying free time in Japan. Corporals and below must have a liberty buddy with them if they plan to consume alcohol anywhere other than a military base.

A liberty buddy can be any ac-

tive-duty service member, Defense Department civilian, accompanied or older family member, including a Japanese spouse, the policy states. The accompanying party is required to remain in the immediate vicinity until the service member returns home, to the base or temporary lodging.

Marines must “take care of one another and should make every reasonable effort to prevent inappropriate or illegal activities by other service members,” the policy said. “If service members are aware of such misconduct, they must directly report the information to their chain of command or other appropriate organization/office as soon as possible.”

The new order restates the 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. curfew for all Ma-

rines and sailors under age 20. All personnel are still required to refrain from drinking alcohol publicly during those hours.

The regulations replaced a previous version released by Bierman in December of last year.

Bierman’s instruction arrives as off-base misconduct by U.S. military personnel is on the rise.

Lance Cpl. Manuel Gomez, 21, a motor vehicle operator at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni near Hiroshima, was indicted Nov. 24 on charges he punched and injured an elderly Japanese woman earlier that month in Iwakuni city. Another U.S. service member was reportedly involved in a fight with a 67-year-old man following a break-in at a store in Iwakuni on Nov. 18.

In response, base commander Col. Richard Rusnok added uniformed patrols last month of the Kawashimo and Marifu nightlife areas.

On Okinawa, the number of U.S. service members arrested for criminal offenses, not including drunken driving or drugs, increased from 15 in 2018 to 37 in 2023, as of Nov. 1, according to the Okinawa Prefectural Police website.

Marines carrying liberty cards are required to produce them and their base ID cards upon request to any command representative, regardless of rank, including courtesy patrols and gate guards, the policy states. Officers are required to produce their military issued Common Access Cards.

Austin to visit Israel as war rages in Gaza

BY DOUG G. WARE
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will make a return visit to the Middle East in the coming days — his second in the last two months — to meet with leaders in three countries, including Israel, the Pentagon said Tuesday.

“He will also have an opportunity to meet some of our forces deployed to the region to thank them for their service,” said Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon’s top spokesman.

Austin last visited Israel in mid-October just days after the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas militants that killed hundreds of Israeli civilians.

The Pentagon did not provide details of the trip but Ryder said Austin will meet with leaders of Israel, Qatar and Bahrain.

Austin’s latest visit comes at a time of heightened tensions in the Middle East. Various militant groups have stepped up attacks in recent weeks against U.S. forces in the region, especially in Iraq and Syria. Since mid-October, groups aligned with Iran have launched at least 89 separate attacks on U.S. bases in the two countries. The Pentagon said the attacks have caused dozens of minor injuries, but no one has been seriously hurt and none of the bases have been seriously damaged.

“These are dangerous attacks, but they have largely been unsuccessful,” Ryder said. “We will do what we need to do to protect our forces.”

Austin’s trip also follows an escalation of violence on Monday when Houthi rebels in Yemen fired a missile at a Norwe-

gian-flagged fuel tanker in the Red Sea. The missile hit the ship and caused a fire, but no casualties were reported. The Iranian-aligned militant group claimed responsibility for the attack on Tuesday.

The attack on the tanker occurred near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a key chokepoint that connects the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, as well as northern and eastern Africa. The Pentagon said Tuesday that the USS *Mason*, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, was about 100 miles away at the time.

“The *Mason* was prepared to render assistance, but ultimately it was determined that was not required,” Ryder said. “But the *Mason* did remain in the vicinity of the ship and the area to deter any further aggression.”

The attack on the fuel tanker is the latest show of force by Houthi rebels in Yemen, who have been engaged in a civil war with the country’s government for almost a decade. The Pentagon said U.S. warships have shot down drones and missiles fired by the rebels in Yemen multiple times in recent weeks. Navy Cmdr. Jeremy Roberston, the commanding officer of the USS *Carney*, another Arleigh-class destroyer, said Saturday that his ship has shot down almost two dozen enemy drones and missiles so far. Ryder said the United States is now collaborating with partner countries to create a maritime task force to further add stability in the region.

“This is an international problem that requires an international solution,” he said. “We will have more to provide in the near future ... but we continue to patrol international waters throughout the region.”

USAF offers bonuses up to \$600,000 to keep pilots

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force is offering large bonuses worth up to \$600,000 to experienced aviators to continue flying in the service as it faces a yearslong pilot shortage.

The new retention incentives would pay pilots between \$15,000 to \$50,000 per year to commit to three- to 12-year contracts, Air Force officials announced recently. The payments would depend on the type of aircraft that a pilot flies and the number of years that a pilot commits to continuing military service, officials said.

The hefty bonuses come as the service remains nearly 2,000 pilots short of its needs, as it competes with commercial airlines and other organizations

who pay large salaries for experienced aviators. Air Force Maj. Gen. Adrian Spain, the service’s training and readiness director, said it’s critical to keep trained, experienced pilots in uniform as the United States faces many challenges, including increasingly aggressive actions throughout the world from China and Russia.

“The requirement to preserve critical skills in our Air Force has never been more important. Specifically, aviation-related skillsets, formed through the crucible of combat and daily execution of high-intensity operations, is the foundation necessary to continue to effectively deliver warfighting capability to the joint force and the American people,” Spain said in a Nov. 30 news release.

Senate panel may subpoena Coast Guard over cover-up

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

Sen. Richard Blumenthal pledged Tuesday to issue a subpoena to the Coast Guard if service officials do not provide emails on a cover-up of dozens of sexual assaults at the service academy that had not been properly handled or investigated.

“These critical documents must be provided without further delay,” Blumenthal, D-Conn., said during a Senate hearing that featured testimony from three former and one current cadet of the Coast Guard Academy. “We can certainly take that [subpoena] action, if necessary.”

Blumenthal is chairman of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs’ subpanel on

investigations, which is examining the cover-up of Operation Fouled Anchor — a 2020 report based on a six-year inquiry into the handling of sexual assault and harassment at the Coast Guard Academy.

The report’s existence only became known to the Senate subpanel and the public after reporters with CNN obtained a copy earlier this year.

Coast Guard officials in June briefed Congress about the report, which Blumenthal said reviewed 102 instances of rape or sexual assault at the academy dating back to the early 1990s through 2006.

It identified 43 alleged perpetrators and 63 victims. Only five cases had been reported to law enforcement at the time, he said.

Court appeal could undo riot charges

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court said Wednesday that it will hear an appeal which could upend hundreds of charges stemming from the Capitol riot, including against former President Donald Trump.

The justices will review an appellate ruling that revived a charge against three defendants accused of obstruction of an official proceeding.

The charge refers to the disruption of Congress' certification of Joe Biden's 2020 presidential election victory over Trump.

That's among four counts brought against Trump in special counsel Jack Smith's case that accuses the 2024 Republi-

can presidential primary front-runner of conspiring to overturn the results of his election loss. Trump is also charged with conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding.

The court's decision to weigh in on the obstruction charge could threaten the start of Trump's trial, currently scheduled for March 4.

The justices are separately considering whether to rule quickly on Trump's claim that he can't be prosecuted for actions taken within his role as president. A federal judge already has rejected that argument.

The obstruction charge has been brought against more than 300 defendants in the massive federal prosecution following

the deadly insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021, when a mob of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol in a bid to keep Biden, a Democrat, from taking the White House.

A lower court judge had dismissed the charge against three defendants, ruling it didn't cover their conduct.

U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols found that prosecutors stretched the law beyond its scope to inappropriately apply it in these cases.

Nichols ruled that a defendant must have taken "some action with respect to a document, record or other object" to obstruct an official proceeding under the law.

The Justice Department challenged that ruling, and the ap-

peals court in Washington agreed with prosecutors in April that Nichols' interpretation of the law was too limited.

Other defendants, including Trump, are separately challenging the use of the charge.

One defendant, Garret Miller, has since pleaded guilty to other charges and was sentenced to 38 months in prison. Miller, from the Dallas area, could still face prosecution on the obstruction charge. The other defendants are Joseph Fischer, from Boston, and Edward Jacob Lang, of New York's Hudson Valley.

More than 1,200 people have been charged with federal crimes stemming from the riot, and more than 650 defendants have pleaded guilty.

Hearing outlines case against false electors

Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. — Prosecutors began to outline their case Wednesday against 15 Michigan Republicans who face forgery and other charges for serving as false electors for then-President Donald Trump in 2020, in what is expected to provide the fullest glimpse yet at the state's case.

Former state Republican Party co-Chair Meshawn Maddock and Kathy Berden, a Michigan committeewoman for the Republican National Committee, were among the six defendants appearing for preliminary examinations, which are for the judge to determine if there's sufficient evidence to substantiate the charges.

Attorney General Dana Nessel announced the charges against Michigan's slate of 16 false electors in July. All defendants have pleaded not guilty, but one, James Renner, had all criminal charges dropped in

October after he reached a cooperation deal with the state. One defendant, Kenneth Thompson, on Wednesday had his case moved to a later date after his attorney did not show up. The other eight defendants will have preliminary examinations at later dates.

Investigators have said the group met at the Michigan GOP headquarters on Dec. 14, 2020, and signed a document falsely stating they were the state's "duly elected and qualified electors."

Each of the defendants faces eight criminal charges, including multiple counts of forgery.

President Joe Biden won Michigan by nearly 155,000 votes, a result confirmed by a GOP-led state Senate investigation in 2021.

Michigan's false electors have remained steadfast in their defiance, insisting that their actions were not illegal.

Vietnam War pilot famous for Pardo's Push dies at 89

BY JONATHAN SNYDER

Stars and Stripes

Bob Pardo, who left his mark in Air Force history for using an unorthodox maneuver, Pardo's Push, to save his wingmen's lives during a bombing mission over Vietnam, died Dec. 5. He was 89.

On March 10, 1967, Pardo and weapons officer 1st Lt. Steve Wayne were on a bombing run on an enemy steel mill north of Hanoi in an F-4C Phantom, flying alongside Capt. Earl Aman and 1st Lt. Robert Houghton.

The target — North Vietnam's only steel mill dedicated to war materiel — was heavily guarded by anti-aircraft guns and artillery.

During the mission, ground fire damaged both Pardo and Aman's Phantoms, causing both to lose fuel.

Aman, however, lost too much to return safely to base and Pardo knew he had to act quickly, according to a 2007 re-

counting of the mission by Gen. T. Michael Mosely, then the chief of staff of the Air Force.

"I knew if I didn't do anything, they would have to eject over North Vietnam into enemy territory, and that would have resulted in their capture for sure," Pardo said in a 2015 interview for the Air Force Veterans in Blue program. "At that time, if you were captured by civilians, you were probably going to be murdered on the spot."

Pardo decided to push Aman's plane using the nose of his aircraft against Aman's tailhook, a retractable hook on the underside of the plane used for arrested landings.

He successfully decreased the rate of descent of Aman's jet by 1,500 feet per minute, and successfully reached friendly territory.

Both aircrews safely ejected over the Laotian border and were rescued by friendly forces.

Kyiv hit with nighttime missile attack

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine's capital came under another missile attack early Wednesday, resulting in at least 45 injuries and several damaged buildings, the city's mayor said.

A series of loud explosions could be heard in Kyiv at 3 a.m. as the city's air defenses were activated for the second time this week.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said on Telegram that debris from intercepted missiles fell in the eastern Dniproviskyi dis-

trict, injuring at least 45 people. Eighteen people including two children were hospitalized while 27 people received medical treatment on the spot. An apartment building, a private house and several cars caught fire, while the windows of a children's hospital were shattered, Klitschko said. Falling rocket debris also damaged the water supply system in the district.

On Monday, a Russian missile attack destroyed several homes on the outskirts of Kyiv and left more than 100 house-

holds temporarily without electricity.

Wednesday's attack came as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited Washington, where he made an impassioned plea to Congress to approve additional aid to fight Russia's invasion.

As winter sets in and hampers troop movements, allowing little change along the front line, air bombardment plays a growing role in the war.

Ukrainian officials have warned that Russia will target

energy infrastructure to cause power outages and blackouts like it did last winter.

Cyberattacks are also a busy battleground. Ukrainian telecom provider Kyivstar, which serves more than 24 million across the country, said its services were disrupted Tuesday by a "powerful" attack by hackers. It also disrupted the air raid warning system in part of the Kyiv region, according to the head of the Kyiv regional administration, Ruslan Kravchenko.

Gaza City ambush kills at least nine Israeli soldiers

Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip — Palestinian militants ambushed Israeli troops in a dense Gaza City neighborhood, killing at least nine of them, the military said Wednesday, as Hamas put up stiff resistance in areas that Israel has isolated and pounded with airstrikes for over two months.

The air and ground war has killed thousands of Palestinian civilians and pushed nearly 85% of Gaza's population from their homes, sparking international outrage. The United States has repeatedly called on Israel to take greater measures to spare civilians, even as it has blocked international calls for a ceasefire and rushed military aid to

its close ally.

More than six weeks after Israeli soldiers invaded Gaza's north in the wake of Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, ground troops are still locked in heavy combat with Palestinian fighters in and around Gaza City. Clashes raged overnight and into Wednesday in multiple areas, with especially heavy fighting in Shijaiyah, a dense neighborhood that was the scene of a major battle during the 2014 war between Israel and Hamas.

"It's terrifying. We couldn't sleep," Mustafa Abu Taha, a Palestinian agricultural worker who lives in the neighborhood, said by phone. "The situation is getting worse and we don't have a safe place to go."

Troops who were searching a cluster of buildings in Shijaiyah on Tuesday lost communication with four soldiers who had come under fire, the military said. When the other soldiers launched a rescue operation, they were ambushed with heavy gunfire and explosives.

Among the nine dead were Col. Itzhak Ben Basat, 44, the most senior officer to have been killed in the ground operation, and Lt. Col. Tomer Grinberg, a battalion commander.

Heavy rainfall overnight swamped tent camps in Gaza's south, where Israel has told people to seek refuge, even as that region has also come under repeated aerial bombardment.

In the central city of Deir al-

Balah, the storm brought cold winds and flooded a shelter area behind a hospital, sending torrents of water coursing between the tents. "The situation is catastrophic," said Ibrahim Arafat, a father of 13 who fled Shijaiyah.

Because of the fighting and Israel's blockade of Gaza, the health care system and humanitarian aid operations have collapsed in large parts of the territory, and aid workers have warned of starvation and the spread of disease among displaced people.

Israeli strikes overnight hit two residential buildings in the southern province of Khan Younis, where Israeli ground forces had launched a new line of attack earlier this month.

Lawmaker puts out menorah candles in Polish parliament

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — A far-right lawmaker in the Polish parliament on Tuesday extinguished candles on a menorah that were lit for the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, creating disruption and scandal as a new pro-EU government was beginning its work.

All major political forces

quickly denounced the unprecedented incident by Grzegorz Braun, one of the most controversial lawmakers in parliament, and said there would be no tolerance for antisemitic and xenophobic behavior in the parliament.

Braun, a pro-Russian member of the Confederation party, has in the past falsely claimed

that there is a plot to turn Poland into a "Jewish state" and has called for homosexuality to be criminalized.

The speaker of the parliament, Szymon Holownia, called the act "absolutely scandalous" and excluded Braun from the day's parliamentary session, expressing hopes that "he will not return soon." He said he was

reporting him to prosecutors.

The parliament also slapped the highest possible financial penalty on Braun, forcing him to lose half of three months of his salary and per diems for half a year.

According to video footage of the incident, Braun grabbed a red fire extinguisher and put out candles on the menorah.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Released inmates will receive \$2,400 in Calif.

CA LOS ANGELES — Hundreds of Californians released from prisons could receive direct cash payments of \$2,400 — along with counseling, job search assistance and other support — under a first-in-the-nation program aimed at easing the transition out of incarceration and reducing recidivism.

Recipients will get the money over a series of payments after meeting certain milestones such as showing progress in finding places to live and work, according to the Center for Employment Opportunities, which runs the program announced this week.

The goal is to give people a chance “to cover their most essential needs” like bus fare and food during the crucial early days after exiting incarceration, said Samuel Schaeffer, CEO of the national nonprofit that helps those leaving lockups find jobs and achieve financial security.

Prison, probation for last suspects in governor case

MI LANSING — A judge handed down the last sentences last Thursday in a plot to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, sending one man to prison and putting another on probation, the climax to a remarkable investigation that became public on the eve of the 2020 presidential election but produced mixed results in court.

Judge Charles Hamlyn offered his own conclusion, describing political polarization in the U.S. as “mind-boggling” and

“terrifying.”

Whitmer, a Democrat, was targeted as part of a broad effort by anti-government rebels who were hoping to trigger a civil war around the time of the 2020 election, investigators said.

Brian Higgins, a resident of Wisconsin Dells, Wis., acknowledged he went on a night ride to scout Whitmer’s vacation home in northern Michigan with a camera rigged to his pickup truck. The judge sentenced Higgins to probation for three years, noting he had spent 217 days in jail after his arrest and was addressing mental health needs. He had pleaded guilty to attempting to provide material support for terrorism.

Shawn Fix was sentenced to three years in state prison after pleading guilty to providing material support for terrorism.

Court reverses murder conviction on violations

NM SANTA FE — The New Mexico Supreme Court has upheld a man’s murder conviction, overruling a state Court of Appeals decision that found his constitutional right to a speedy trial had been violated.

Jeremiah Gurule waited nearly six years in jail before a jury convicted him in 2016 of murder and evidence tampering in the stabbing death of his girlfriend, the Albuquerque Journal reported.

But the state’s high court ruled 3-2 last Thursday that Gurule’s speedy trial rights weren’t violated because the circumstances involved lengthy considerations of his mental competence to stand trial. Gu-

rule, 36, was convicted by a 2nd Judicial District Court jury of second-degree murder and tampering with evidence in the April 2010 stabbing death of 22-year-old University of New Mexico student Elizabeth Brito.

Cancer patients receive threatening emails

WA SEATTLE — Some patients of a Seattle-based cancer center received threatening emails following a data breach last month.

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center officials said a Nov. 19 hack hit a portion of the health care system’s clinical network, possibly leaking patient data.

Recently some former and current patients received threatening emails claiming names, Social Security numbers, medical history and other data of more than 800,000 patients had been compromised, The Seattle Times reported.

Officers acquitted of excessive force in arrests

IN INDIANAPOLIS — Two Indianapolis police officers were acquitted early Saturday of using excessive force to strike two women with batons during arrests at a May 2020 protest against racial injustice and police brutality.

Officers Jonathan Horlock and Nathaniel Schauwecker had been charged with battery and official misconduct in the case. They were among officers ordered to arrest people gathered at a downtown Indianapolis intersection in violation of an 8 p.m. curfew.

After more than 10 hours of deliberation, the jury found the

officers not guilty of four of the charges they faced. The jury could not reach verdicts on one charge of battery and one charge of official misconduct, local news outlets reported.

Prosecutors argued the officers did not respond in a reasonable way to actions by the two women, Ivore Westfield and Rachel Harding. The arrests reportedly left the women with multiple bruises and sore areas.

Voters OK 1% sales tax to build arena for NBA team

OK OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma City voters on Tuesday approved a 1% sales tax for six years to help fund a new downtown arena for the NBA’s Thunder that is expected to cost at least \$900 million.

The Oklahoma State Election Board reported that 71% of the city’s voters approved the plan.

“We are grateful to the people of Oklahoma City for the confidence they have shown in both the Thunder and the NBA as we embark on a new era of global sports and entertainment,” NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said in a statement.

Under the deal, the Thunder agree to stay in Oklahoma City through at least 2050.

The Thunder’s ownership group will contribute \$50 million toward construction of the new arena. The deal also calls for \$70 million in funding from a sales tax approved by voters in 2019 for upgrades to the existing Paycom arena.

The NBA franchise — which used to be the Seattle SuperSonics — moved to Oklahoma City in 2008.

— From wire reports

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Chargers lose Herbert for rest of season

Associated Press

COSTA MESA, Calif. — Justin Herbert's fourth year as an NFL starting quarterback is over with four games remaining in the season.

The Los Angeles Chargers placed Herbert on injured reserve Tuesday after he had surgery to repair the broken index finger on his right hand.

With Herbert sidelined, Easton Stick will get his first NFL start on Thursday night at Las Vegas. Los Angeles is 5-8 and has dropped four of its past five.

"Obviously, this isn't how I envisioned it," Stick said. "When they selected me five years ago, this is what you want as a kid — an opportunity to go play. I'm excited for that."

Stick said he has talked to Herbert the past couple of days and that they will remain in communication.

Herbert visited two hand specialists on Monday after he suffered the injury during the sec-

ond quarter of Los Angeles' 24-7 loss to visiting Denver on Sunday.

Coach Brandon Staley said Herbert's surgery went well and that "he's on the road to recovery."

Herbert is the seventh starting quarterback in the league to be lost for the season because of an injury, provided the Jets' Aaron Rodgers does not return from his torn Achilles tendon. That includes the two QBs who signed the highest-value extensions before the season.

Herbert signed a \$252.5 million extension on the first day of training camp and Cincinnati's Joe Burrow finalized a five-year extension worth \$275 million three days before the Bengals' first game.

Stick said he has been following the progress of Burrow's backup, Jake Browning, closely since they were in the same draft class. Browning has won two of his three starts since stepping in

for Burrow, who suffered a season-ending wrist injury in a Nov. 16 loss at Baltimore.

"It's been really cool watching him get his opportunity and have a bunch of success. We follow it as much as anybody," Stick said. "A lot of the top players at our position have gotten hurt. It's unfortunate, but it's part of the game."

Stick will be only the fourth Chargers starting quarterback since 2006, the lowest total in the league in that span, according to Sportradar. Green Bay is next with seven.

By comparison, Cleveland has had a league-leading 29 starting QBs over the same period.

Stick attended North Dakota State — the same college that produced Carson Wentz and Trey Lance — and graduated as the winningest quarterback in FCS history (49-3) after leading the Bison to three national championships. He finished his

career with 8,693 passing yards and 88 touchdowns. He also rushed for 2,523 yards and 41 TDs.

He was drafted in the fifth round in 2019 but had only seen two snaps in a regular-season game until he came in with 1:52 remaining in the first half Sunday. He completed 13 of 24 passes for 179 yards.

"There's no way around it — reps are the way you get better. Live reps. That was huge to get some of those under my belt," Stick said. "Look, we're playing a really good defense. They haven't let up very many points this year, especially lately. They have a really good rush. They've added a guy in the secondary that's a really good player. The linebackers play really fast. It's a big challenge."

Max Duggan, who was selected in the seventh round of this year's draft, will be Stick's backup after he was activated off the practice squad.

Tentative deal would move Wizards, Caps to Virginia

Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin has reached a tentative agreement with the parent company of the NBA's Washington Wizards and NHL's Washington Capitals to move those teams from the District of Columbia to what he called a new "visionary sports and entertainment venue" in northern Virginia.

The proposal, which would need the state legislature's approval, calls for the creation of a \$2 billion sports and entertainment district south of Washington in Alexandria, just miles from the existing arena, Youngkin told The Associated Press ahead of a news conference Wednesday at the site. It would include an arena for what would be the state's first pro sports teams in almost 50 years, as well as a new Wizards

practice facility, a separate performing arts center, a media studio, new hotels, a convention center, housing and shopping.

"The Commonwealth will now be home to two professional sports teams, a new corporate headquarters and over 30,000 new jobs — this is monumental," Youngkin said in a statement.

Monumental Sports & Entertainment CEO Ted Leonsis appeared with Youngkin and city officials at Wednesday's announcement. He endorsed the proposal, thanked Youngkin and said he had "goosebumps" at the thought of the project coming together "if all goes as planned."

Monumental also owns the WNBA's Mystics, and Leonsis said he expected Capital One Arena, where the Wizards and

Capitals currently play, to host women's sports and other events like concerts.

"Our intention is to expand here and keep Capital One Arena in D.C. a great place," Leonsis, a wealthy entrepreneur and former AOL executive, said.

The new development would be located in the Potomac Yard section of Alexandria, near Virginia Tech's ambitious Innovation Campus, an under-construction graduate school focused on technology.

To help finance the project, Youngkin will ask the Virginia General Assembly in the 2024 session to approve the creation of a Virginia Sports and Entertainment Authority, a public entity with the ability to issue bonds. Those bonds would be repaid partly by tax revenues from the project.

Still, on Tuesday night ahead of the announcement, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser unveiled a counterproposal aimed at keeping the teams. The legislation would direct a half billion dollars to modernize Capital One Arena.

"The modernization of the Capital One Arena will be an invaluable investment for continued success and our future prosperity," Bowser said in a statement. "This proposal represents our best and final offer and is the next step in partnering with Monumental Sports to breathe new life and vibrancy into the neighborhood and to keep the Washington Wizards and the Washington Capitals where they belong — in Washington, DC."

Bowser said that the proposal has unanimous support from the D.C. Council.

No. 12 Volunteers too much for Eagles

Associated Press

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Jonas Aidoo had 29 points and 11 rebounds, and No. 12 Tennessee beat Georgia Southern 74-56 on Tuesday night.

The winless Eagles (0-11) had no answer for the 6-foot-11 Aidoo, who also had two steals and two blocks. Aidoo was the only double-digit scorer for the Volunteers (8-3).

“(Aidoo) was really good tonight,” Tennessee coach Rick

Barnes said. “Now, it’s about consistency. Can he do it the next time out?”

After trailing by as many as 28 points shortly after halftime, Georgia Southern cut the difference to 13 with a 10-point spurt midway through the second half. Derrick Harris came off the bench to score all but two of his 13 points in the second half for the Eagles.

Aidoo shot 10-for-16 from the field in the first half. Ten-

nessee’s other four starters combined to go 6-for-23 and committed 11 turnovers.

Aidoo scored the first 10 points of the game and had 21 by halftime as the Vols led 49-21. It was the most first-half points scored by a Tennessee player in 10 years.

No. 21 Duke 89, Hofstra 68: Kyle Filipowski had 28 points, 12 rebounds and a career-best eight assists as the host Blue Devils easily beat

the Pride.

The 7-foot preseason Associated Press All-American made four 3-pointers and blocked three shots for Duke (7-3), which shot 55%, made 11 of 22 3-pointers and had four players in double figures. Jeremy Roach scored 19 points.

Darlinstone Dubar scored 24 points and hit seven 3s to lead Hofstra (6-4), which shot 50% but committed 14 turnovers.

Doncic, Hardaway help Mavericks edge Lakers

Associated Press

DALLAS — Luka Doncic had 33 points and 17 assists, Tim Hardaway Jr. scored a season-high 32 points and the Dallas Mavericks beat Los Angeles 127-125 on Tuesday night in the Lakers’ first game since winning the inaugural In-Season Tournament.

Anthony Davis finished with 37 points and 11 rebounds, while LeBron James had 33 points, nine assists and eight boards as the Lakers’ season-best four-game winning streak ended. LA erased a 15-point deficit early in the third quarter to set up an entertaining finish.

Dante Exum scored a season-high 26 points with a career-best seven 3-pointers on nine attempts, going 5-for-7 in the fourth quarter to help the Mavs stay in front. Austin Reaves had 22 for the Lakers.

With Doncic’s All-Star sidekick, Kyrie Irving, sidelined a second consecutive game with a bruised right foot, Hardaway was 10-for-21 from the field, including 5-for-10 from 3, and 7-for-8 on free throws.

“Knowing how they’re defending Luka, I had to just try to put a stamp on the game,” said Hardaway, who had missed three of the previous five games with back issues. “When any shooter has any kind of daylight

and you see the first shot go up and it goes in, the basket feels like an ocean.”

The Lakers took their first lead since early in the first quarter on Davis’ first 3-pointer since Oct. 29 for a 95-93 edge with 0.1 seconds left in the third.

Doncic and James traded go-ahead and tying buckets twice midway through the fourth quarter before James was called for an offensive foul. Doncic’s 14th assist led to a 3-pointer from Exum for a five-point edge.

Suns 119, Warriors 116: Devin Booker scored 32 points, Bradley Beal added 16 in his return from a back injury and host Phoenix held on late to beat Golden State.

Golden State’s Draymond Green was ejected in the third quarter after receiving a Flagrant 2 foul for hitting Jusuf Nurkic in the face. Stephen Curry led the Warriors with 24 points.

The third quarter was marred when Green was ejected for the 18th time in his career, the most among active NBA players.

Green and Nurkic were battling for position when they got tangled. Green appeared to slightly lose his balance, but then inexplicably wheeled

around and smacked Nurkic in the face.

Nurkic immediately crumpled to the ground but eventually got up and stayed in the game. The referees reviewed the play before calling Green for a Flagrant 2 foul.

Nuggets 114, Bulls 106: Reggie Jackson scored 25 points and short-handed Denver held off host Chicago after star Nikola Jokic was ejected in the second quarter.

Michael Porter Jr. had 17 points and Aaron Gordon finished with 14 points, seven rebounds and six assists, helping Denver to a gritty second straight win after a 129-122 victory at Atlanta on Monday night.

Jackson made five 3-pointers as the reigning NBA champions went 14-for-30 from behind the arc.

It was unclear what exactly Jokic did to warrant the ejection. It looked as if the two-time NBA MVP felt he was fouled when he missed a reverse layup with 1:12 left in the first half, and he said something in the direction of a referee as he made his way back down the court.

Celtics 120, Cavaliers 113: Jayson Tatum had 25 points and 10 rebounds, Jaylen Brown also scored 25 and Boston remained unbeaten at home with

a victory over Cleveland.

Kristaps Porzingis had 21 points and 10 rebounds, Derrick White added 17 points and Boston held Cleveland scoreless for a stretch of 2 minutes, 40 seconds in the fourth quarter while finally putting away the Cavaliers, who had played on the road the night before.

Donovan Mitchell had 29 points and Darius Garland scored 26 for the Cavs, who couldn’t overcome the cold stretch in the fourth quarter.

Cleveland was also outrebounded 45-35 in the opener of a two-game series. The teams play again Thursday in Boston.

Clippers 119, Kings 98: Kawhi Leonard scored 31 points in three quarters, giving him 106 in his last three games, and host Los Angeles routed Sacramento for its season-high fifth straight victory.

James Harden added 15 points, seven assists and six rebounds to help the Clippers sweep a back-to-back for the first time this season. They have won 10 of their last 13 games.

Keegan Murray led Sacramento with 17 points and Domantas Sabonis added 15 points and 10 rebounds. De’Aaron Fox had 14 points as Sacramento’s two-game winning streak was snapped.

McDavid, Oilers rally past Blackhawks

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Connor McDavid had two assists and the streaking Edmonton Oilers overcame an early goal by rookie Connor Bedard to beat the Chicago Blackhawks 4-1 on Tuesday night in the first NHL matchup between the young stars.

Sam Gagner had a goal and an assist in the highly anticipated Clash of the Connors, helping the Oilers (13-12-1) win their eighth game in a row. Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Leon Draisaitl and Zach Hyman also scored for Edmonton, and defenseman Evan Bouchard added a pair of assists.

Bedard gave the banged-up Blackhawks (9-18-1) a 1-0 lead with his 12th goal 3:21 into the first period, but Chicago lost its seventh consecutive road game.

McDavid was the No. 1 overall draft pick in 2015, and Bedard was selected first this past summer.

Red Wings 6, Blues 4: Lucas Raymond and Robby Fabbri scored in the third period to lift visiting Detroit over scuffling St. Louis.

Moritz Seider, Jake Walman, Jonathan Berggren and Michael Rasmussen also had goals for the Red Wings, who were 0-2-1 in their previous three games.

Ville Husso (9-4-2) stopped 33 shots in his first game against the Blues since they traded him to Detroit in July 2022.

Kevin Hayes scored twice for the Blues, who also got goals from Marco Scandella and Brandon Saad. St. Louis has lost five of six overall.

Jordan Binnington made 26 saves and fell to 8-9-1.

Maple Leafs 7, Rangers 3: Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner each scored twice, and veteran Martin Jones made 28 saves in his first start for visiting Toronto in its victory over New York.

Matthews added two assists and the Maple Leafs also got goals from Conor Timmins, Calle Jarnkrok and David Kampf in improving to 5-0-2 in their last seven games.

Toronto led 4-1 after 20 minutes, but New York scored twice late in the second period to narrow the deficit to one. Marner got his second of the night on a power play early in the third, and the Maple Leafs put it away with two late goals.

Penguins 4, Coyotes 2: Jeff Carter and Jake Guentzel both scored twice and host Pittsburgh's beleaguered power play finally broke through against Arizona.

The Penguins scored twice

with the man advantage while ending an 0-for-37 drought that stretched over a month.

Guentzel scored the team's first power-play goal in 31 days when he beat Carter Ingram just over a minute into the game. Guentzel added an empty-netter from his belly to seal it.

Hurricanes 4, Senators 1: Sebastian Aho had two goals and an assist to lead visiting Carolina over Ottawa.

Matin Necas and Seth Jarvis also scored for Carolina. Pyotr Kochetkov made 31 saves as the Hurricanes snapped a four-game skid.

Predators 3, Flyers 2 (OT): Filip Forsberg scored 18 seconds into overtime and Juuse Saros made 38 saves in his fifth consecutive victory as host Nashville defeated Philadelphia.

Gustav Nyquist and Michael McCarron also scored for the Predators, who have won five of six.

Sean Couturier and Travis Sanheim scored for the Flyers, who had won four straight. Samuel Ersson made 18 saves as Philadelphia fell to 4-0-2 in its last six games.

Golden Knights 5, Flames 4 (OT): Mark Stone scored his second goal of the game in overtime to lift host Vegas over Calgary.

Chandler Stephenson, Ivan Barbashev and William Karlsson also scored for the Golden Knights.

Vegas extended its point streak to nine games, now 6-0-3 since Nov. 27. It was the seventh time in 13 games the Golden Knights went to extra time.

Kraken 4, Panthers 0: Joey Daccord made 24 saves for his first career shutout, Kailer Yamamoto scored the first of two goals from the fourth line and host Seattle snapped an eight-game losing streak with a win over Florida.

Canucks 4, Lightning 1: Brock Boeser scored a hat trick, Quinn Hughes had three assists and host Vancouver topped Tampa Bay.

Andrei Kuzmenko also scored for the Canucks, winners of three straight, and J.T. Miller added two assists.

Sharks 2, Jets 1: William Eklund scored a tiebreaking power-play goal with 4:51 remaining as host San Jose beat Winnipeg.

Justin Bailey had a goal for the Sharks, his first since March 2018 with Buffalo. Mikael Granlund extended his point streak to six games with an assist.

Brenden Dillon scored for the Jets, who had their four-game winning streak snapped. Dillon spent six seasons with San Jose.

Blues fire Berube, coach who led them to 2019 Cup

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — The St. Louis Blues fired Craig Berube on Tuesday night, severing ties with the coach who led the team to its only Stanley Cup title.

Blues General Manager Doug Armstrong announced Berube's firing hours after a 6-4 loss to the Detroit Red Wings.

The loss was the season-worst fourth straight for the Blues, who are off to a 13-14-1 start to the season.

St. Louis is in sixth place in

the Central Division, nine points behind division-leading Colorado. The Blues are in 10th place out of 16 teams in the Western Conference.

The Blues rank 26th in the NHL in goals per game (2.82) and have the second-worst power play (7-for-83) in the league at 8.4%.

The 57-year-old Berube guided the Blues to the Stanley Cup championship in 2019. He replaced Mike Yeo as coach Nov. 20, 2018, as the interim coach

and led an amazing turnaround. He led St. Louis to a 38-19-6 record in 2018-19.

Berube, in his sixth season with the Blues, had a record of 206-131-44. He registered 24 playoff victories in 51 games.

St. Louis led 4-3 going into the third period against Detroit on Tuesday night before giving up two goals and an empty-net goal late, losing for the fifth time in six games.

"You've got to earn everything, right? It's not just going to

happen," Berube said after the game. "You've got to earn it. You've got to play the right way to earn it. You've got to do the little things right. We did a lot of good things tonight. We scored enough goals to win the game, but in the end, we didn't take care of the front of our net very well tonight."

The Blues named Drew Bannister, coach of the Springfield Thunderbirds of the American Hockey League, as interim coach.