

## Martial law declared in South Korea

By DAVID CHOI

*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's National Assembly voted Wednesday to demand President Yoon Suk Yeol lift his decree imposing emergency martial law only hours earlier.

The drama threatened a major political crisis in South Korea, where the U.S. maintains 28,500 troops, at a period of rising tension with Communist North Korea.

All 190 assembly members present early Wednesday morning voted to demand Yoon end martial law, according to Yonhap News. The assembly consists of 300 members.

Yoon in a televised speech declared martial law Tuesday evening "to eradicate pro-North Korean forces and protect free constitutional order."

He said he would eliminate "anti-state forces and normalize the country as soon as possible,"

through martial law.

The South Korean military said martial law will remain in force until Yoon himself lifts it, according to local media outlet YTN.

U.S. Forces Korea referred questions about the incident to the South Korean military.

About 300 South Korean police had gathered outside the presidential compound around 1 a.m. carrying riot shields, but no protesters had gathered. At the National Assembly building, about 150 demonstrators, some carrying signs, had gathered outside the gates, facing a line of police officers.

"Thankfully, the lawmakers stopped this," said Jeong Seung Hyun, an Ansan city council member and member of the opposition Democratic Party, at the gates.

Jeong said he drove from Ansan, parked on the traffic-choked streets and walked a half mile to

the gate.

Park Sung-soo, an office worker from Anyang city, said he'd been outside the assembly about three hours. He drove to Seoul after hearing the news of Yoon's martial law decree, ditched his car and walked to the gates. He carried a sign: "Impeachment is peace."

The only resolution to this crisis, he said, is to impeach Yoon.

Yoon in his speech referenced the National Assembly's impeachment efforts against members of his administration, calling it "an unprecedented situation since the founding of our country."

South Korea's Democratic Party, which holds the majority in the National Assembly, threatened to file motions to impeach state prosecutors last week in relation to their handling of a stock manipulation case against South Korean first lady Kim Keon Hee.

The declaration of emergency

martial law "will cause some inconvenience to the good people who believed in and followed the values of the constitution of [South Korea], but we will focus on minimizing these inconveniences," Yoon said.

The leader of Yoon's own conservative party, Han Dong-hoon, called the decision "wrong" and vowed to "stop it with the people," The Associated Press reported. Opposition leader Lee Jae-myung, who narrowly lost to Yoon in the 2022 presidential election, called Yoon's announcement "illegal and unconstitutional."

South Korea's Constitution allows its president to impose martial law during war time, armed conflict or national emergency.

The president is required to notify the National Assembly immediately following the declaration, the constitution states. If the majority of lawmakers vote to lift the declaration, the president "shall comply" with the request.

## NATO chief: Russia's war partnerships put US in peril

By JOHN VANDIVER

*Stars and Stripes*

The battlefield backing that Russia is getting from North Korea, China and Iran in Ukraine has strings attached that could threaten the American homeland, NATO's top official said Tuesday.

For example, the Kremlin is "no doubt" providing Pyongyang with missile technology in exchange for North Korean troops, Secretary-General Mark Rutte said as high-level talks got underway at alliance headquarters.

That technology could be used against both South Korea and the U.S. mainland, Rutte said,

adding that Beijing and Tehran are benefiting in a similar manner.

"This is all getting connected," Rutte said. "So whenever we get to a deal on Ukraine, it has to be a good deal."

A one-sided deal in Russia's favor would embolden adversaries, according to Rutte, who was in Florida last month to meet with President-elect Donald Trump.

Rutte said Tuesday that he had conveyed his view of the global security stakes of the Russia-Ukraine war. The talks came amid concerns about the durability of American support for Ukraine.

At NATO headquarters in Brussels, outgoing U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will be on hand to talk up recent pledges by Washington to surge weapons deliveries into Ukraine as President Joe Biden's administration heads into its final month.

But questions remain about how the incoming administration will proceed. Trump has long expressed opposition to arming Ukraine and has pledged to bring the war to a quick end.

It's unclear what the terms of a peace deal could look like, though any agreement would likely involve concessions by Kyiv.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told British media outlet Sky News on Friday that he would be willing to cease fighting and pursue the reclamation of occupied territory through diplomatic channels.

Ukraine in return would receive a NATO security guarantee, without which Zelenskyy said Ukraine would be at risk of being reinvaded by Russia.

Other plans reportedly being considered by the Trump team call for an international European peacekeeping force to occupy a demilitarized zone that would see Russia holding on to Ukrainian territory currently under its control.

# General promoted after senator drops hold

*The Washington Post*

The Senate on Monday confirmed an Army general's promotion to four-star officer after a Republican senator dropped the freeze on his nomination in the wake of backlash from retired military officers and some former Trump administration officials.

Sen. Markwayne Mullin, R-Okla., had placed a hold last month on the nomination of Lt. Gen. Christopher Donahue, who was on the ground during the evacuation of Afghanistan, to become a four-star general and the top commander at U.S. Army Europe and Africa. President Joe Biden nominated Donahue for the promotion, and the hold could have upended the general's career depending on how long it was extended. It came after President-elect Donald Trump pledged to fire any senior officer associated with the fall of Afghanistan.

Mullin dropped his hold, ac-

cording to two people familiar with the matter, allowing the Senate to proceed with a voice vote on his promotion. They spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

Mullin's office did not respond to requests Monday for comment.

Mullin, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has repeatedly said that no one in the U.S. government was held responsible for the chaos during the U.S. exit, in which more than 120,000 people were flown to safety. The operation was marred by scenes of desperation and violence, including an Islamic State suicide bombing that killed 13 U.S. troops and about 170 Afghans.

Donahue, however, arrived at the Kabul airport only three days after the fall of Kabul to bolster leadership and has served in numerous roles valued highly at the Pentagon, including a stint in

charge of the elite Army unit commonly known as Delta Force.

During the evacuation, Donahue served as commanding general of the 82nd Airborne Division. U.S. military officials said he was the last American service member with his boots on the ground in Afghanistan.

A night-vision photograph of him stepping onto a C-17 cargo plane to end the mission went viral, crystallizing a moment of mourning for many of the roughly 800,000 U.S. service members who served there during 20 years of war.

Donahue was later promoted in March 2022 to become commander of the Army's XVIII Airborne Corps, which oversees the 82nd Airborne and other prominent units, including the 101st Airborne Division, 10th Mountain Division and 3rd Infantry Division. In recent days, senior Army leaders had "wrapped their arms

around" him, encouraging him in phone calls as they sought resolution to the logjam, said one former defense official familiar with the issue.

"It's lonely when you get singled out for this kind of thing," the former defense official said, expressing bewilderment that Trump would not want Donahue in a senior position given his extensive experience in combat. "I am certain that if Trump met CD and had a conversation with him, he would say that this is the kind of Army general that he would have respect for."

Among those who backed Donahue are former Defense Secretary Mark Esper, who ran the Pentagon for about 18 months under Trump. Esper, in a message posted on X, said last month that Donahue was a "great pick" to lead U.S. forces in Europe and was "extremely talented, professional and apolitical."

## George Washington bans its sailors from drinking alcohol

BY ALEX WILSON  
AND HANA KUSUMOTO  
*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Sailors assigned to the USS George Washington will be hard-pressed to get a drink following new liberty restrictions imposed on the aircraft carrier's crew of 3,000.

Sailors are prohibited from consuming any alcoholic beverages on or off base, ship spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Mark Langford said Tuesday. Additionally, 18- and 19-year-old sailors assigned to the ship are prohibited from taking any overnight liberty, he said.

The restrictions, which went into effect Nov. 26, four days after the George Washington arrived at its new homeport, are not intended to be long-term, Langford said in a Monday email. An end

date for the "precautionary restrictions" has not been set, but the carrier's command will "continue to monitor activities in town and communicate any changes to the policy," he said.

All U.S. sailors in Japan must adhere to a midnight-to-5 a.m. ban on drinking in public establishments off base, according to an Oct. 1 order by Rear Adm. Ian Johnson, commander of Navy Region Japan. They may not even be in those places during those hours.

The weekend of the George Washington's arrival saw a sharp uptick in activity in Yokosuka's Honcho district, the nightlife area just across the street from the base's main gate. A Yokosuka Police Department spokesman said "alcohol-related troubles" occurred that weekend, but he did not elaborate further.

## Report: Hegseth quit vets groups following claims

*Bloomberg News*

Donald Trump's nominee to run the Department of Defense, former Fox News host Pete Hegseth, was forced to resign from two veterans' advocacy groups amid allegations of personal and financial misconduct, the New Yorker reported.

A 2015 whistleblower report obtained by the magazine described Hegseth as repeatedly intoxicated on the job as president of Concerned Veterans for America.

Hegseth's lack of experience running a large organization like the Defense Department and allegations he raped a woman in 2017 had already put his Senate confirmation in doubt.

Hegseth has repeatedly denied the rape allegations, and an advis-

er to Hegseth dismissed the New Yorker report as "outlandish claims laundered through The New Yorker by a petty and jealous disgruntled former associate of Mr. Hegseth's."

The New Yorker reported that Hegseth resigned from the group in early 2016.

Years earlier, a veterans' group Hegseth had also run, Vets for Freedom, closed amid allegations of financial mismanagement.

According to the New Yorker, Hegseth sent a letter to donors in 2009 acknowledging that the group had less than a thousand dollars in the bank and \$434,833 in unpaid bills. The donors merged VFF with another group, Military Families United, and Hegseth's responsibility declined over time, the magazine reported.

# Hunter Biden pardon frustrates some Dems

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Already reeling from their November defeats, Democrats now are grappling with President Joe Biden's pardoning of his son for federal crimes, with some calling the move misguided and unwise after the party spent years slamming Donald Trump as a threat to democracy who disregarded the law.

The president pardoned Hunter Biden late Sunday evening, reversing his previous pledges with a grant of clemency that covers more than a decade of any federal crimes his son might have committed. The 82-year-old president said in a statement that his son's prosecution on charges of tax evasion and falsifying a federal weapons purchase form were politically motivated.

"He believes in the justice system, but he also believes that politics infected the process and led to a miscarriage of justice," said White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, who along with Biden and other White House of-

ficials insisted for months that Hunter Biden would not get a pardon.

That explanation did not satisfy some Democrats, angry that Biden's reversal could make it harder to take on President-elect Trump, who has argued that multiple indictments and one conviction against him were a matter of Biden and Democrats turning the justice system against him.

"This is a bad precedent that could be abused by later Presidents and will sadly tarnish his reputation," Colorado Gov. Jared Polis wrote of Biden on the social media platform X.

Rep. Greg Stanton, D-Ariz., said on X: "This wasn't a politically motivated prosecution. Hunter committed felonies and was convicted by a jury of his peers."

Sen. Peter Welch, D-Vt., called the pardon "understandable" if viewed only as the "action of a loving father." But Biden's status as "our nation's Chief Executive," the senator said, rendered the move "unwise."

# Trump demands Hamas release Oct. 7 hostages

Associated Press

NEW YORK — President-elect Donald Trump is demanding the immediate release of Israeli hostages still being held in Gaza, saying that if they are not freed before he is sworn into office for a second term there will be "HELL TO PAY."

"Please let this TRUTH serve to represent that if the hostages are not released prior to January 20, 2025, the date that I proudly assume Office as President of the United States, there will be ALL HELL TO PAY in the Middle East, and for those in charge who perpetrated these atrocities against Humanity," Trump wrote in a post on his Truth Social site.

He added that, "Those responsible will be hit harder than anybody has been hit in the long and storied History of the Unit-

ed States of America. RELEASE THE HOSTAGES NOW!"

It was not immediately clear whether Trump was threatening to directly involve the U.S. military in Israel's ongoing campaign against Hamas in Gaza. Trump allies have said he hopes there will be a ceasefire and hostage release deal before he returns to office early next year.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office declined comment. But the country's president, Isaac Herzog, welcomed Trump's comments in a social media post.

"Thank you and bless you Mr. President-elect @realDonaldTrump," he wrote on X. "We all pray for the moment we see our sisters and brothers back home!"

# Senators seek ban on using troops against Americans

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Two Democratic senators are calling on President Joe Biden and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to issue a directive prohibiting the mobilization of active-duty troops against Americans before President-elect Donald Trump returns to power.

Sens. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., said they want protections in place in case Trump makes good on his threat to root out "the enemy from within" by utilizing the National Guard, "or if really necessary, by the military."

The senators said they fear

Trump will invoke the Insurrection Act beyond its legal limits in a quest to target political opponents. The law allows the president to deploy military personnel within U.S. borders in narrow circumstances of insurrection, rebellion or extreme civil unrest.

"As many of us wrote previously, 'it is antithetical to what those in uniform have sworn to protect and defend, and a serious threat to our democratic system' to weaponize the military to advance the president's political interests," the senators wrote in a letter to Biden and Austin on Sunday.

During his first term, Trump came close to putting active-du-

ty troops on the streets of Washington to tamp down racial justice protests in 2020. Active-duty units were deployed to the outskirts of the capital before the defense secretary at the time, Mark Esper, sent them home without telling the White House.

"I couldn't trust they wouldn't reverse my decision," Esper later wrote in his book.

He also wrote that Trump "launched into a tirade" and accused his defense secretary of betrayal after Esper told reporters he did not support using the Insurrection Act to stamp out the unrest.

Warren and Blumenthal said Sunday that a new policy direc-

tive must make clear that the Insurrection Act should only be used in instances "when state or local authorities are so overwhelmed and that the chief executive of the state requests assistance or attacks against the U.S. government overwhelm state or local authorities."

The directive should also state that the president must consult with Congress to the "maximum extent practicable" before invoking the act, the senators wrote.

They urged Biden and Austin to shore up guidelines as soon as possible given the uncertainty created by a recent Supreme Court decision on presidential immunity.



# Israel warns of strikes if ceasefire collapses

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israel's defense minister warned that if the shaky ceasefire with Hezbollah collapses, Israel will widen its strikes and target the Lebanese state itself.

He spoke the day after Israel carried out a wave of airstrikes that killed nearly a dozen people. Those strikes came after the Lebanese militant group fired a volley of projectiles as a warning over what it said were previous Israeli violations.

Speaking to troops on the northern border Tuesday, Defense Minister Israel Katz said any violations of the agreement would be met with "a maximum response and zero tolerance."

He said if the war resumes, Israel will widen its strikes beyond the areas where Hezbollah's ac-

tivities are concentrated, and "there will no longer be an exemption for the state of Lebanon."

During the 14-month conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, which came to an end last week with a ceasefire brokered by the United States and France, Israel largely refrained from striking critical infrastructure or the Lebanese armed forces, who kept to the sidelines.

When Israeli strikes killed or wounded Lebanese soldiers, the Israeli military said it was accidental.

The ceasefire agreement that took effect last week gives 60 days for Israel to withdraw its forces from Lebanon and for Hezbollah militants to relocate north of the Litani River. The buffer zone is to be patrolled by

Lebanese armed forces and U.N. peacekeepers.

Israel has carried out multiple strikes in recent days in response to what it has said are violations by Hezbollah.

Lebanon's parliament speaker, Nabih Berri, accused Israel of violating the truce more than 50 times in recent days by launching airstrikes, demolishing homes and violating Lebanon's airspace. Berri, a Hezbollah ally, had helped mediate the ceasefire.

Meanwhile, Palestinian officials have said Fatah and Hamas are closing in on an agreement to appoint a committee of politically independent technocrats to administer the Gaza Strip after the war. It would effectively end Hamas' rule and could help advance ceasefire talks with Israel.

The rival factions have made several failed attempts to reconcile since Hamas seized power in Gaza in 2007. Israel has meanwhile ruled out any postwar role in Gaza for either Hamas or Fatah, which dominates the Western-backed Palestinian Authority.

A Palestinian Authority official confirmed Tuesday that a preliminary agreement had been reached following weeks of negotiations in Cairo. The official said the committee would have 12-15 members, most of them from Gaza.

It would report to the Palestinian Authority, which is headquartered in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, and work with local and international parties to facilitate humanitarian assistance and reconstruction.

## Insurgents capture 4 central Syrian towns

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Syrian insurgents captured four new towns early Tuesday, bringing them closer to the central city of Hama, opposition activists said, while government forces retook some territory they lost last week.

The new push came as Turkey's president — whose country is a main backer of insurgent groups — said that Syria's government must engage "in a genuine political process" to prevent the situation from deteriorating further.

The capture of the towns is the latest in the push by insurgents led by the salafi jihadi Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, as well as Turkey-backed opposition fighters. Insurgents are now about 6 miles from Hama.

The latest push is part of a wide offensive by forces opposed to Syrian President Bashar Assad that over the past several days has captured large parts of the

northern city of Aleppo, Syria's largest, as well as towns and villages in southern parts of the northwestern Idlib province.

The insurgents' military operations administration said gunmen killed 50 government forces as they captured 14 central villages and towns including Halfaya, Taybat al-Imam, Maardis and Soran. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, confirmed that the four towns were taken.

"We are going in the direction of Hama the city and after that, God willing, to Homs, and then to Damascus and the rest of Syria will be liberated again with God's will," said HTS member Abu Abdul Hamawi.

The long war between Assad and his foreign backers and the array of armed opposition forces seeking his overthrow has killed an estimated half-million people over the past 13 years.

## Japan spots Russian submarine off its coast

Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan's military said it dispatched a surveillance plane and a navy ship Tuesday after spotting a Russian submarine off the coast of a southwestern island near Taiwan.

The Russian Kilo-class submarine was sighted just 31 miles south of Yonaguni Island, Japan's westernmost territory just east of Taiwan, the Japanese Joint Staff said in a statement.

The submarine, accompanied by a Russian naval ship, was moving northeast between Yonaguni and the nearby island of Iriomote. It was the first sighting of a Russian submarine in those waters, the Joint Staff said.

It added that Japan deployed a combat support ship and a P-3 survey aircraft for warning and reconnaissance operations. There was no breach of Japan's territorial waters by the Russian warships, it said.

Their passage came one day after the Philippine military reported sighting a Kilo-class Russian submarine in the South China Sea.

Japan is increasingly concerned about China's growing military activity around the Japanese waters and airspace, and has significantly reinforced its defenses in the area, including remote islands that are key to Japan's defense strategy. Japan is also worried about Russia's military activity and their joint operations with China.

A Chinese frigate Sunday sailed east of another Japanese southwestern remote island of Miyako.

In September, the Chinese aircraft carrier Liaoning and two destroyers sailed between Yonaguni and Iriomote, entering Japan's contiguous zone, an area just outside of a country's territorial waters in which it can still exercise some control over maritime traffic.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Officials hunt for coyote that attacked 4-year-old

**CO** DENVER — Colorado Parks and Wildlife officers are hunting a coyote that attacked a 4-year-old girl on Thanksgiving after she mistook it for a dog crouching behind a tree, the agency announced over the weekend.

The girl and another child approached the coyote in northern Colorado Springs, about an hour's drive south of Denver, when the animal lunged, grabbing the back of her head and causing serious injuries that led to a night in the hospital, CPW said in a news release Saturday.

The girl's father jumped in to stop the attack and scare off the coyote, said Tim Kroening, a CPW wildlife manager, in a statement. "This could have been much worse," Kroening said.

Officials were alerted Friday, after the girl was released from the hospital, and began organizing their search.

## GOP AG plans to enforce restrictions on abortions

**MO** COLUMBIA — Missouri's Republican attorney general has pledged to enforce some laws restricting abortion despite a new constitutional amendment widely expected to undo the state's near-total ban on the procedure.

In an opinion requested by incoming GOP Gov. Mike Kehoe, Attorney General Andrew Bailey wrote that his office will continue enforcing a ban on abortion after fetal viability.

There is an exception carved out in the amendment for cases in which a health care provider deems an abortion necessary to

"protect the life or physical or mental health of the pregnant person."

"Under the express terms of the amendment, the government may still protect innocent life after viability," Bailey wrote. "The statutes thus remain generally enforceable after viability."

Bailey said his office will also continue to honor a Missouri law requiring parental permission for minors to receive abortions.

## Lawsuit challenging city gun ordinance dismissed

**GA** SAVANNAH — A judge has thrown out a lawsuit by a Georgia gun owner who sought to challenge a Savannah city ordinance that imposes fines and potential jail time for people who leave firearms inside unlocked cars.

The ruling by Chatham County Superior Court Judge Benjamin Karpf did not address the civil lawsuit's argument that the Savannah ordinance violates a Georgia state law that broadly prohibits local governments from regulating guns.

Instead, the judge dismissed the case Nov. 22 after finding that gun owner Clarence Belt lacked legal standing to sue the city. Belt isn't a Savannah resident and hasn't been cited for violating the city's gun ordinance.

## Taiwan's president visits East-West think tank

**HI** HONOLULU — Taiwan's president visited a U.S. State Department-funded think tank and educational institution Sunday on the second day of a two-day visit to Hawaii. It's part of a Pacific island tour which

has already triggered criticism from Beijing.

Lai Ching-te met and exchanged gifts with the president of the East-West Center, which is on the University of Hawaii's flagship Manoa campus. He spoke to an audience at the center, but journalists were escorted out of a conference hall before he began speaking.

China's Foreign Ministry said it "strongly condemned" U.S. support for Lai's visit and had lodged a complaint with the United States.

## Police detective accused in sexual assaults dies

**KS** TOPEKA — A white Kansas police detective accused of sexually assaulting Black women and girls—and terrorizing those who tried to fight back—is dead, prosecutors said as his trial was set to begin Monday.

Prosecutors say female residents of poor neighborhoods in Kansas City, Kan., feared that if they crossed paths with Roger Golubski, he'd demand sexual favors and threaten to harm or jail their relatives.

Golubski, 71, was facing six felony counts of violating women's civil rights. But he did not appear in court Monday morning for the start of jury selection. Prosecutors later confirmed in court that Golubski had died. They did not say how or when he died.

## Admission priority sought for slaves' descendants

**CA** SACRAMENTO — A California lawmaker was introducing a bill Monday that would give admission priority to the descendants of slaves at

the University of California and California State University, the state's two large public university systems.

Assemblymember Isaac Bryan, a Democrat who represents parts of Los Angeles, told The Associated Press he would introduce the bill as lawmakers meet in the Capitol to swear in new members for a new legislative session. They will also convene a special session to consider ways to protect the state's progressive policies ahead of another Trump administration.

The incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump is expected to make dismantling diversity, equity and inclusion programs a priority.

## Gas tax set to climb by nearly 3 cents next year

**NJ** TRENTON — Filling up your vehicle's gas tank in New Jersey will cost an extra 2.6 cents a gallon starting New Year's Day.

Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy's administration said Monday that the state's gas tax will climb about 6% to 44.9 cents a gallon.

The change stems from a review required under a new law to support the state's fund for transportation infrastructure through 2029. State Treasurer Elizabeth Maher Muoio said that in order to hit a statutory target of about \$2 billion, the law requires the tax on petroleum products be adjusted to meet the revenue requirement.

The increase would keep New Jersey among the top 10 or so states with the highest tax on gasoline in the country, according to nonprofit Tax Foundation.

— From wire reports

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# Broncos overcome record night from Browns

Associated Press

DENVER — Jameis Winston had a night to remember — and one to forget.

Ja'Quan McMillian returned an interception 44 yards for a game-sealing touchdown with 1:48 remaining, and Denver spoiled career-best performances by Winston and ex-Broncos wide receiver Jerry Jeudy in beating the Cleveland Browns 41-32 on Monday night.

The good for Winston: He threw for a franchise-record 497 yards and four touchdowns.

The not-so-good: He tossed two interceptions that Denver returned for scores. The Broncos had three picks for 171 interception return yards against him.

"It was my fault," Winston said. "I've got to play better."

It was fully reminiscent of his best — and worst — year in 2019 with Tampa Bay, when he led the NFL in yards (5,109) and was second in TD passes (33) but al-

so led the league in picks (30).

"I know I'm better than this," Winston said. "I'm just praying for the Lord to deliver me from pick-6s. That's not me. Phenomenal game on offense, do some great things, but I mess it up."

Meanwhile, Jeudy had nine catches for 235 yards — the most in NFL history by a receiver against his former team — and a TD.

Nik Bonitto intercepted a Winston pass and returned it 71 yards for a touchdown late in the second quarter. Winston became the first NFL quarterback to throw for 400 or more yards with four or more TD passes and two pick-6s.

Bo Nix finished with 294 yards passing, including a gorgeous deep ball from his own end zone that Marvin Mims Jr. hauled in for a 93-yard touchdown. Nix also threw two interceptions.

Denver (8-5) enter its bye week in the seventh and final playoff spot in the AFC. Denver

has a 76% probability of making the postseason, according to the NFL. The team hasn't been in the playoffs since winning the Super Bowl after the 2015 season.

"It wasn't perfect, by any means, but we were able to finish," Broncos coach Sean Payton said. "Big plays — the game was full of them."

Winston surpassed the Browns record of 457 yards passing set by Josh McCown in 2015 against Baltimore. He threw a 70-yard TD pass to Jeudy and two scores to tight end David Njoku in falling to 2-3 as a starter for Cleveland (3-9) since replacing the injured Deshaun Watson.

The Browns led 32-31 on Winston's 5-yard TD pass to Nick Chubb when Nix drove Denver to the Cleveland 9. On fourth-and-1, Payton lined up to go for it but changed his mind after a timeout. Wil Lutz kicked a go-ahead 27-yard field goal with 2:54 remaining.

Winston and the Browns had plenty of time to drive for a winning score, but Winston's throw to Elijah Moore was late and McMillian jumped the route. He fell to the turf untouched after making the catch, got up and sprinted to the end zone.

"The fact they did it twice was kind of crazy," Nix said of the interception returns. "I'm over there sitting, the benches have the heaters over there, and I don't even have to move. It's pretty nice for the offense when they bail us out like that."

Jeudy, a first-round draft pick in 2020, was traded to Cleveland this spring after an up-and-down four seasons with the Broncos.

"We had a plan going into it in terms of trying to get him open. I thought the plan was solid," Browns coach Kevin Stefanski said. "Jerry executed the plan really well. Got him open. Jameis made some throws. It's hard in the losing effort to feel good about anything."

## 49ers RB McCaffrey to miss rest of regular season

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — San Francisco 49ers star running back Christian McCaffrey will not need surgery on his injured right knee, but he will miss the rest of the regular season.

Coach Kyle Shanahan said Monday that McCaffrey will be out at least six weeks after injuring his posterior cruciate ligament in a loss to the Buffalo Bills on Sunday night. McCaffrey will be placed on injured reserve for the second time this season after previously missing the first eight games with Achilles tendinitis.

"I just feel for him," Shanahan said. "It was a real frustrating year for him. He worked his ass off to get back to this point and I think he was really feeling good and about to take off and just had that real unfortunate injury last night. I know he's as crushed as anyone, but he'll get through this. He's a hell of a player, a hell of a person and an unbelievable 49er. He'll be back stronger than ever next year to help us."

San Francisco (5-7) sits alone in last place

in the NFC West standings, two wins behind division-leading Seattle, and in jeopardy of missing the playoffs a year after losing to Kansas City in the Super Bowl.

The 49ers also lost McCaffrey's backup to an injury, with Jordan Mason also set to go on injured reserve after suffering a high ankle sprain in the game against the Bills.

It has been a frustrating season for McCaffrey, who won the 2023 AP Offensive Player of the Year then signed a lucrative contract extension in the offseason.

McCaffrey injured his Achilles tendon early in training camp and missed the first eight games of the season. He rushed for just 149 yards on 43 carries in his first three games back as he struggled to get back to form.

He looked much better early Sunday night with seven carries for 53 yards, including a 19-yarder that was his longest of the season. He appeared to hurt his knee on an 18-yard run in the second quarter. He then went down immediately on his next carry on a sweep to the left on a snow-

slicked field for a 5-yard loss.

Mason had played well as McCaffrey's replacement, rushing for 789 yards and averaging 5.2 yards per carry this season.

San Francisco will now turn to rookie Isaac Guerendo and promote Patrick Taylor from the practice squad. Shanahan said the team will also look to add another running back to the mix.

In other injury news from the game, defensive lineman Kevin Givens tore his pectoral muscle and will be out for the rest of the season.

Shanahan said cornerback Deommodore Lenoir should be back at practice Wednesday after missing the game with a knee injury and that stars Nick Bosa (hip, oblique) and Trent Williams (ankle) will be evaluated as the week goes on.

Bosa and Williams have both missed the last two games. Williams has also been dealing with family tragedy, as his wife announced on Instagram that she gave birth to stillborn Trenton O'Brien Williams Jr. on Nov. 24.



# LeBron, Lakers offense struggling

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — LeBron James is in quite the shooting slump — especially from long distance.

James missed all four of his 3-point attempts for the Los Angeles Lakers in a 109-80 loss at Minnesota on Monday night, stretching his skid to 0-for-19 from deep the past four games.

After going 4-for-16 from the floor overall with six of his team's 20 turnovers for a season-low 10 points against the Timberwolves, James was asked to reflect on the Lakers reaching the quarter mark of their schedule under rookie coach J.J. Redick at 12-9.

"I wouldn't say I'll take it. I would never want to say that," the four-time NBA MVP said.

"It is what it is. This is our record. We've just got to continue to get better at both ends of the floor."

Particularly offensively. James' average of 22 points per game is his lowest since he was a rookie 21 years ago.

"We're just not good offensively right now. I think we spent so much time trying to get our defense corrected that our offense took a toll and took a back seat to that," he said.

James hasn't made a 3-pointer since he tied Kyle Korver for seventh on the league's career list (2,450) last week. His fourth attempt against the Timberwolves from behind the arc was an air ball, causing an audible gasp from the crowd at Target Center.

The long ball isn't the only

shot he's struggling with. The mid-range is on his list, too.

"Just period, just everything," James said. "Just a rhythm. I just feel off rhythm the last few games."

How does he fix it?

"Work. Just work. That's all," James said.

His stated goal of playing in all 82 games this season is still intact, but his recent performances have raised the question about whether such a quest would be wise.

"We are measuring the players, and we can tell if a guy is running hot or whatever," Redick said. "He does a remarkable job of taking care of his body and getting recovery. I don't know if that's in the best interest of us and him if he does that, but if he's feel-

ing well and good then he should play."

James said the 82 games remains a goal in his age-40 season (his birthday is Dec. 30). He declined to discuss the possibility of resting.

The much bigger issue for now is getting the Lakers back on track offensively. Their 80-point output at Minnesota was the team's lowest since a 122-73 loss at Dallas in 2017, according to Sportradar.

"Sometimes we look like a team that can compete with anyone, and sometimes we look like a team that is terrible and not going to do anything this season," Lakers star Anthony Davis said. "We've just got to figure out what team that we want to be the rest of the season."

## Brown leads Celts in rout; Pritchard has 25 off bench

Associated Press

BOSTON — Jaylen Brown scored 29 points, Jayson Tatum had 18 points and 11 rebounds and Payton Pritchard scored 25 off the bench on Monday night as the Boston Celtics beat the Miami Heat 108-89.

Derrick White added 19 points as the defending NBA champions won for the eighth time in nine games.

Jaime Jaquez Jr. had 19 points and 10 rebounds and Tyler Herro scored 19 for Miami.

Herro was 2 for 10 from 3-point range, and the Heat shot 23% from beyond the arc and 36% from the field.

Both teams were without key players for the second night of a back-to-back after losing on Sunday.

Miami played without Jimmy Butler, who has missed five of the first 19 games with a knee injury. The Celtics were without Jrue Holiday, Al Horford and Kristaps Porzingis.

Miami scored the first seven

points and then went cold while the Celtics ran off 17 of the next 19 points to take the lead. Boston made it a double-digit lead early in the second quarter and went up by 20 in the third.

**Hawks 124, Pelicans 112:** Trae Young had 12 points and 15 assists for his 15th double-double of the season, and host Atlanta beat skidding New Orleans for its fourth straight win.

DeAndre Hunter scored a team-high 22 off the bench for the Hawks on his 27th birthday.

CJ McCollum led New Orleans with 29 points, one shy of his season high. Dejounte Murray, cheered in his first return to Atlanta since being traded by the Hawks last offseason, finished with seven points and 10 assists.

The depleted Pelicans (4-18) have lost nine in a row overall, and 11 of 12 on the road this season. The team's long injury list includes star players Zion Williamson and Brandon Ingram.

**Bulls 128, Nets 102:** Josh

Giddey had 20 points, 13 rebounds and 11 assists, helping host Chicago beat Brooklyn.

It was Giddey's first triple-double of the season and No. 12 for his career.

Nikola Vucevic had 21 points and 10 rebounds for Chicago, which had lost three of four. Matas Buzelis scored 20 points and Zach LaVine finished with 18.

Brooklyn lost its third consecutive game — all in the last four days. Darius Whitehead scored 18 points for the Nets, and Dennis Schroder had 16 points and 10 assists.

Brooklyn played without forward Cam Johnson because of a sprained left ankle — part of a long list of injuries for the Nets. He scored 26 points in Sunday's 100-92 loss to Orlando.

Chicago guard Coby White also was sidelined by a sprained left ankle.

The Bulls started to pull away in the third quarter, outscoring the Nets 36-22 in the period. Buzelis' basket off a pass from Gid-

dey made it 92-72 going into the fourth.

**Timberwolves 109, Lakers 80:** Julius Randle scored 18 points and Rudy Gobert had 17 points and 12 rebounds to lead Minnesota past visiting Los Angeles.

Naz Reid and Nickeil Alexander-Walker each scored 15 for the Wolves (10-10).

Anthony Edwards had only eight points on 3-for-13 shooting for the Wolves, but his Olympic teammates LeBron James and Anthony Davis were just as quiet for the Lakers (12-9).

James, who has missed 19 straight 3-pointers, had 10 points on 4-for-16 shooting. Davis had 12 points and 11 rebounds. D'Angelo Russell scored 20 in his return from illness and to the starting lineup.

After beating Utah 105-104 on Sunday, the Lakers traveled another time zone east to face a team they beat 110-103 in the season opener behind 36 points and 16 rebounds from Davis.

# Sharks 1st-round rookies catching fire

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. — Macklin Celebrini came into the NHL with a ton of fanfare as the top pick in the draft and the immediate face of the franchise for the San Jose Sharks.

He has a sidekick in Will Smith, another blue-chip prospect and hope for the future of the organization who also doubles as his roommate on the road. Those watching Celebrini had to pump the brakes on any hype because of a hip injury that sidelined him for nearly a month following his pro debut.

Back healthy and feeling himself, Celebrini is the league's rookie of the month and its first star of the week for what he did to end November. Smith is also riding a four-game point streak, and confidence is building for the Sharks' two most important building blocks a quarter of the way through this season as rookies.

"Obviously, we're happy for each other whenever we're producing or playing good," Smith said. "It's my first year, it's Mack's first year, also (coach Ryan Warsofsky's). As a team, we've found kind of a groove here, and we're trying to keep through it."

San Jose lost its first nine games, eight of them without Celebrini, and has gone 9-6-3 since that rough start. Celebrini has caught fire with four goals and three assists in his last four games.

The 18-year-old learned of his NHL first star of the week honor minutes after stepping off the ice from practice and before taking off his skates.

"First star of what?" Celebrini said. "In the NHL?"

Celebrini has 14 points in his first 15 games, an average of 0.93 that is tops among rookies.

He has also passed Philadelphia's Matvei Michkov as the betting favorite to win the Calder Trophy as rookie of the year on BetMGM Sportsbook.

That goes beyond his production. According to Sportlogiq, Celebrini leads all players in puck battles won per game — ahead of more experienced two-way centers like John Tavares, Sean Couturier and Ryan O'Reilly.

"He's not afraid to stick his nose in there, and that's extremely impressive for an 18-year-old in the National Hockey League to go up against some bigger guys," Warsofsky said.

"He puts his nose in there,

and he fights for pucks and I think that's the competitiveness that he has."

Washington coach Spencer Carbery, tight with Warsofsky since hiring him to coach South Carolina of the ECHL in 2016, probably watches more Sharks games than other teams out West and has been caught off guard by Celebrini's shot.

"That's been impressive: his release and how hard it comes off," Carbery said. "Elite, elite shooter, and then obviously he has a ton of other tools. But that has been maybe the one that I was like, 'Ooh, I didn't know he has that type of a release and that pace on his shot.'"

Smith went his first eight games without a point before scoring twice on Oct. 31 against Chicago. The coaching staff has been managing his minutes and kept him out of back-to-backs until the weekend, and the 19-year-old is showing marked improvement with three goals and four assists over his past four games.

"You can tell he's feeling more comfortable out there," veteran linemate Mikael Granlund said. "What it looks like is he's not really forcing anything

anymore. He's such a talented, smart player out there, he's just got to do the right things all over again and all the sudden the game kind of comes to you."

Celebrini had 64 points in 38 games at Boston University last season, while Smith had 71 in 41 at Boston College on the way to the NCAA title game. Going from that to the NHL is an adjustment but one the 2023 No. 4 pick was prepared to handle.

"I still came here to win and came here to help this team," Smith said. "It's a different level. ... You're in the NHL. It's the best league in the world, so even if you go a game without scoring and you still have a bunch of chances, it's still good for your confidence even when it doesn't go in."

Also good for the young players is the brain trust available to help, beyond older teammates like Tyler Toffoli and coaches. Celebrini is living with Joe Thornton and Smith with Patrick Marleau, so San Jose's stars of the past are playing a role in molding the team's future.

"Just the resources they have from both those players is remarkable," Warsofsky said.

## Matthews scores 1st goal since return in Leafs' win

Associated Press

TORONTO — Auston Matthews scored his first goal since returning from injury as the Toronto Maple Leafs beat the Chicago Blackhawks on Monday night.

John Tavares, Fraser Minten and Matthew Knies, into the empty net, provided the rest of the offense for Toronto. Anthony Stolarz made 27 saves. Mitch Marner had two assists in his 600th regular-season game.

Lukas Reichel scored for Chicago, which has lost three straight. Arvid Soderblom stopped 18 shots.

Matthews, Toronto's 27-year-old center, missed nine games with an upper-body injury before picking up two assists in his return to the lineup Saturday in a victory over the Tampa Bay Lightning.

The center opened the scoring in the first period before Tavares doubled Toronto's lead on a deflected shot in the second. Reichel made it 2-1 early in the third, but Minten restored the home side's two-goal cushion 21 seconds later.

**Devils 5, Rangers 1:** Jesper Bratt had a goal and three assists, Jack Hughes scored twice

and Jacob Markstrom made 39 saves as New Jersey won at New York.

Dawson Mercer and Dougie Hamilton also scored and Luke Hughes had two assists for the Devils, who won for the fifth time in seven games. New Jersey is nine points ahead of the Rangers, who had the best record in the NHL last season.

Chris Kreider ruined Markstrom's shutout bid with a power-play goal with 6½ minutes left in the second period.

Igor Shesterkin finished with 22 saves while losing his fifth straight start to fall to 8-9-1 this

season.

**Stars 2, Utah 1:** Evgeni Dadonov and Jamie Benn each scored to help Dallas beat host Utah for its third straight victory.

Casey DeSmith stopped 34 shots for Dallas, which has won eight of its last 11 games.

Nick Schmaltz scored and Karel Vejmelka finished with 19 saves for Utah, which fell to 3-2-1 in its last six.

Dadonov scored on the power play at 7:07 of the second period and Benn made it 2-0 in the final minute of the period.