

Navy ship 1st to visit Cambodia in 8 years

Littoral combat ship makes unusual visit to close ally of China

Associated Press

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — A U.S. Navy warship will make a port call next week in Cambodia, China's close ally in Southeast Asia, the first such visit in eight years, according to a Cambodian statement on Friday.

Cambodia's Ministry of National Defense said the littoral combat ship USS Savannah will dock at the port of Sihanoukville on the Gulf of Thailand from Monday to Dec. 20. Savannah carries a crew of 103, the ministry said.

The visit was scheduled after a U.S. request for a port call, it added, and would "strengthen and expand the bonds of friendship as well as promote bilateral cooperation" between the two nations.

The United States has not

yet announced the visit and there was no comment from the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital.

Relations have long been rocky and Washington has criticized Cambodia's government for political repression and human rights violations.

The U.S. has also been concerned about the upgrading of a Cambodian naval base near Sihanoukville, which it believes will be utilized by Chinese vessels to serve Beijing's strategic interests in the region.

The U.S. and others have also expressed concerns about China's navy establishing a base at Ream, which would give it easier access to the Malacca Strait, a critical shipping route between the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.

The Ream base, on Cambodia's southern coast, is not far from Sihanoukville.

Controversy over the Chinese activity at Ream initially arose in 2019 when The Wall Street Journal reported that an early draft of an agreement seen by U.S. officials would allow China 30-year use of the base, where it would be able to post military personnel, store weapons and berth warships.

Cambodia's government has denied such an agreement, emphasizing that the country's constitution did not allow foreign military bases on its soil. Still, Chinese work on the base has continued.

Savannah will not dock at the naval base, though the defense ministry said the planned port call will include

"a working meeting with the commander of the Ream Naval Base," meetings with provincial officials and "a friendship sports competition between the crews of the US Navy and the Cambodian Navy."

On Wednesday, Cambodia's foreign ministry noted "positive momentum of bilateral ties and cooperation" and "the reinvigoration of military-to-military cooperation" between Cambodia and the U.S.

In early June, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin visited Cambodia and held talks with Prime Minister Hun Manet and other senior officials.

He also met with Cambodian alumni of U.S. military training programs.

The prime minister graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Army, Navy team up for hypersonic missile launch

Orlando Sentinel

KENNEDY SPACE CENTER — Cape Canaveral Space Force Station had a different kind of launch on its plate Thursday when the Army and Navy teamed up to complete a test of a hypersonic missile.

The launch of what is known as the Dark Eagle Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon system was an end-to-end test using Space Launch Complex 46, which hosted a pair of Astra Space rocket launches in 2022.

The launch apparatus included a battery operations center and transporter erector launcher sending the missile streaking east over the Atlantic in a suc-

cessful test, according to a press release from the Department of Defense.

The conventional hypersonic missile test was performed by the Army's Rapid Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office with Navy Strategic Systems Programs. It was the second test of the year for the system, but the first "live-fire event," the DOD stated.

"This test builds on several flight tests in which the Common Hypersonic Glide Body achieved hypersonic speed at target distances and demonstrates that we can put this capability in the hands of the warfighter," said Secretary of the

Army Christine Wormuth.

The system is meant to be deployed on land or sea. Hypersonic missiles travel at more than five times the speed of sound offering a much more difficult weapon to counter after launch.

"This test is a demonstration of the successful Navy and Army partnership that has allowed us to develop a transformational hypersonic weapon system that will deliver unmatched capability to meet joint warfighting needs," said Vice Admiral Johnny R. Wolfe Jr, director of the Navy's Strategic Systems Programs.

The Navy, which leads the

program to design a common hypersonic missile, is partnering with the Army to allow for a quicker timeline and lower cost to getting operational weapons in the field, the DOD stated.

"This test marks an important milestone in the development of one of our most advanced weapons systems. As we approach the first delivery of this capability to our Army partners, we will continue to press forward to integrate Conventional Prompt Strike into our Navy surface and subsurface ships to help ensure we remain the world's preeminent fighting force," said Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro.

Waves of drones, missiles target Ukrainian power grid

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia launched a massive aerial attack against Ukraine on Friday, firing 93 cruise and ballistic missiles and almost 200 drones, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, describing it as one of the heaviest bombardments of the country's energy sector since Russia's full-scale invasion almost three years ago.

Ukrainian defenses shot down 81 missiles, including 11 cruise missiles that were intercepted by F-16 warplanes provided by Western allies earlier this year, Zelenskyy said.

Russia is "terrorizing millions of people" with such assaults, he said on his Telegram channel, renewing his plea for international unity against Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"A strong reaction from the world is needed: a massive strike — a massive reaction. This is the only way to stop terror," Zelenskyy said.

In Moscow, the Defense Ministry said the Russian military used long-range precision missiles and drones on "critically important fuel and energy facilities in Ukraine that ensure the functioning of

the military industrial complex."

The strike was in retaliation for a Ukrainian attack on Wednesday using U.S.-supplied the Army Tactical Missile System on a Russian air base, the ministry said.

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump said in an interview published in TIME magazine on Thursday that he was against allowing Ukraine to hit targets on Russian soil using U.S. provided weapons.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday that Trump's stance "conforms to our position."

Suspect in CEO killing wasn't client of insurer

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The man charged with killing UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson was not a client of the medical insurer and may have targeted it because of its size and influence, a senior police official said Thursday.

NYPD Chief of Detectives Joseph Kenny told NBC New York in an interview Thursday that investigators have uncovered evidence that Luigi Mangione had prior knowledge UnitedHealthcare was holding its annual investor conference in New York City.

Mangione also mentioned the company in a note found in his possession when he was detained by police in Pennsylvania.

"We have no indication that he was ever a client of UnitedHealthcare, but he does make mention that it is the fifth largest corporation in America, which would make it the largest healthcare organization in America. So that's possibly why he targeted that company," Kenny said.

UnitedHealthcare is in the top 20 largest U.S. companies by market capitalization but is not the fifth largest. It is the largest U.S. health insurer.

Mangione remains jailed without bail in Pennsylvania.

3,700 people return to Malibu homes

Associated Press

MALIBU, Calif. — More than 3,700 residents were allowed to return to their Malibu homes on Thursday after calmer winds and rising humidity in Southern California helped firefighters battle a blaze that had forced thousands, including college students and celebrities, to evacuate earlier this week.

But another 1,600 people with homes in Malibu remained under evacuation orders. All told, some 20,000 residents in the city and neighboring areas had been

affected by mandatory evacuation orders and warnings since the fire broke out late Monday.

Firefighters continued to battle the blaze, dubbed the Franklin Fire, which was only 20% contained over about 6.3 square miles Thursday. The flames were fed by powerful winds that swept through the region in the beginning of the week. But the weather improved so much Wednesday that meteorologists discontinued all red flag warnings, which indicate high fire danger, and fire crews were

able to successfully push back against the flames.

Winds would continue to ease, said meteorologist Mike Wofford with the National Weather Service's office for Los Angeles.

It's unclear how the fire started. Officials said four homes have been destroyed and at least six others have been damaged, though crews had only surveyed about 25% of the affected area, said Deputy Chief Eleni Pappas of the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

Pelosi hospitalized following injury in Luxembourg

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has been hospitalized after she "sustained an injury" during an official engagement in Luxembourg, a spokesman said.

Pelosi, 84, was in Europe to mark the 80th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. Her spokesman, Ian Krager, said in a statement that she is "currently receiving excellent treatment from doctors

and medical professionals" and is unable to attend the remaining events on her trip. He did not describe her injury or give any additional details.

Pelosi "looks forward to returning home to the U.S. soon,"

Krager said.

Pelosi stepped down from her leadership post two years ago but remained in Congress and was reelected to represent her San Francisco district in November.

IG: FBI made missteps before Jan. 6 riot

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The FBI should have done more to gather intelligence before the Capitol riot, according to a watchdog report Thursday that also said no undercover FBI employees were on the scene on Jan. 6, 2021, and none of the bureau's informants was authorized to participate.

The report from the Justice Department inspector general's office knocks down a fringe conspiracy theory advanced by some Republicans in Congress that the FBI played a role in instigating the events that day, when rioters determined to overturn Republican Donald Trump's 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden stormed the building in a violent clash with police.

The review, released nearly four years after the riot, was narrow in scope but aimed to shed light on gnawing questions that have dominated public discourse, including whether major intelligence failures preceded the riot and whether the FBI

in some way provoked the violence.

It's the latest major investigation about a day unlike any other in U.S. history, one that has already yielded congressional inquiries and federal and state indictments.

The report offers a mixed assessment of the FBI's performance in the run-up to the riot, crediting the bureau for preparing for the possibility of violence and for trying to identify known "domestic terrorism subjects" who planned to come to Washington that day.

But it said the FBI, in an action the now-deputy director described as a "basic step that was missed," failed to canvass informants across all 56 of its field offices for any relevant intelligence.

That was a step, the report concluded, "that could have helped the FBI and its law enforcement partners with their preparations in advance of January 6."

The report did find that 26 FBI informants were in Wash-

ington for election-related protests on Jan. 6, including three who had been tasked with traveling to the city to report on others who were potentially planning to attend the day's events. But while four informants entered the Capitol, none had been authorized to do so by the bureau or to break the law or encourage others to do so, the report said.

Many of the 26 informants did provide the FBI with information before the riot, but it "was no more specific than, and was consistent with, other sources of information" the FBI had acquired from other sources.

The FBI said in a letter responding to the report that it accepts the inspection general's recommendation "regarding potential process improvements for future events."

The lengthy review was launched days after the riot as the FBI faced questions over whether it had missed warnings signs or had adequately disseminated intelligence it had received, including a Jan. 5, 2021,

bulletin prepared by the FBI's Norfolk, Va., field office that warned of the potential for "war" at the Capitol. The inspector general found that the information in that bulletin was broadly shared.

Separately, the watchdog report said the FBI's New Orleans field office was told by a source between November 2020 and early January 2021 that protesters were planning to station a "quick reaction force" in northern Virginia "in order to be armed and prepared to respond to violence that day in DC, if necessary."

That information was shared with the FBI's Washington Field Office, members of intelligence agencies and some federal law enforcement agencies the day before the riot, the inspector general found.

But there was no indication the FBI told northern Virginia police about the information, the report said. An FBI official told the inspector general there was "nothing actionable or immediately concerning about it."

Amazon, Meta each giving \$1M for Trump inauguration

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Amazon is planning to donate \$1 million to Donald Trump's inauguration fund, a move that comes as major tech companies seek to improve their relationship with the incoming president.

A company spokesperson confirmed Thursday that the e-commerce giant will also stream Trump's inauguration on its Prime Video service, a separate in-kind donation worth another \$1 million.

Earlier in the day, Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, said it donated \$1 million to the inauguration fund.

Trump said Thursday morn-

ing that the Amazon's founder, Jeff Bezos, was planning to visit him in person next week.

The two men had feuded in the past. During his first term, Trump criticized Amazon and railed against the political coverage at The Washington Post, which Bezos owns.

Separately, the donation from Meta came just weeks after Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg met with Trump privately at Mar-a-Lago.

Stephen Miller, who has been appointed deputy chief of staff for Trump's second term, has said that Zuckerberg, like other business leaders, wants to support Trump's economic plans.

McKinsey & Company to pay \$650M over work on opioids

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — McKinsey & Company consulting firm has agreed to pay \$650 million to settle a federal investigation into its work for opioids manufacturer Purdue Pharma, according to court papers filed in Virginia on Friday.

As part of the deal with the Justice Department, McKinsey will avoid criminal prosecution if it pays the sum and follows certain conditions for five years, including ceasing work on the sale, marketing or promoting of controlled substances, the court papers said. A former McKinsey senior partner has also agreed to plead guilty to obstruction of justice for delet-

ing documents after he became aware of investigations.

Court filings say Purdue paid McKinsey more than \$93 million over 15 years for a number of products, including how to improve revenue from OxyContin.

One of the jobs, the papers said, was to identify which prescribers would generate the most additional prescriptions if Purdue salespeople focused on that. That resulted in prescriptions that "were not for a medically accepted indication, were unsafe, ineffective, and medically unnecessary, and that were often diverted for uses that lacked a legitimate medical purpose," the filing said.

Syrians celebrate first Friday prayers since fall of Assad

Associated Press

DAMASCUS — Thousands of Syrians gathered Friday in Damascus' historic main mosque for the first Muslim Friday prayers since the downfall of former President Bashar Assad, while giant crowds celebrated in the capital's largest square.

The gatherings were a major symbolic moment for the dramatic change of power in Syria, nearly a week after insurgents swept into Damascus, ousting the Assad-led state that had ruled the country for a half century with an iron grip.

It came as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with allies around the region looking to shape the transition, calling for an "inclusive and nonsectarian" interim government.

After talks in Jordan and Turkey — which backs some of the insurgent factions — Blinken arrived in Iraq on a previously unannounced stop. So far, U.S. officials have not talked of direct meetings with Syria's new rulers.

The main insurgent force, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, has been working to establish security

and start a political transition after seizing the capital early Sunday. At the same time, it has tried to reassure a public that is both stunned by Assad's fall and concerned over extremist jihadis among the rebel ranks. The insurgents' leadership says it has broken with its extremist past, though HTS is still labeled a terrorist group by the United States and European countries.

The group's leader, Ahmad al-Sharaa, formerly known as Abu Mohammed al-Golani, appeared in a video message Friday congratulating "the great Syrian people for the victory of the blessed revolution."

"I invite them to head to the squares to show their happiness without shooting bullets and scaring people," he said. "And then after we will work to build this country and as I said in the beginning, we will be victorious by the help of God."

Syrians celebrate in Damascus

Huge crowds, including some insurgent fighters, packed Damascus' historic Umayyad Mosque in the capital's old city for Friday prayers, many of

them waving the rebel opposition flag — with its three red stars — which has swiftly replaced the Assad-era flag with its two green stars. According to Arab TV stations, the Friday sermon was delivered by Mohammed al-Bashir, the interim prime minister installed by HTS this week.

The scene resonated on multiple levels.

The mosque, one of the world's oldest dating back some 1,200 years, is a beloved symbol of Syria, and sermons there like all mosque sermons across Syria had been tightly controlled under Assad's rule.

Also, in the early days of the antigovernment uprising in 2011, protesters would often emerge from Friday prayers to march in rallies against Assad — before he launched a brutal crackdown that turned the uprising into a long and bloody civil war.

"I didn't step foot in Umayyad Mosque since 2011," because of the tight security controls around it, said one worshipper, Ibrahim al-Araby. "Since 11 or 12 years, I haven't been this happy."

Blackouts plague Iran; some blame bitcoin

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's capital and outlying provinces have faced rolling power blackouts for weeks, with electricity cuts disrupting people's lives and businesses. And while several factors are likely involved, some suspect cryptocurrency mining has played a role in the outages.

Iran economy has been hobbled for years by international sanctions over its advancing nuclear program. The country's fuel reserves have plummeted, with the government selling off more to cover budget shortfalls as wars rage in the Middle East and Tehran grapples with mismanagement.

The demand on the grid has not let up, however — even as Iranians stopped using air conditioners as the weather cooled in the fall and before winter months set in, when people fire up their gas heaters.

Meanwhile, bitcoin's value has rocketed to all-time highs after the U.S. election was clinched by Donald Trump. It hit \$100,000 for the first time last week, just hours after the president-elect said he intends to nominate cryptocurrency advocate Paul Atkins to be the next chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The surge has led some to suspect that organized cryptocurrency mining — sucking away huge amounts of power — has played a part in the outages in Iran.

"Unfortunately, some opportunistic and exploitative individuals use subsidized electricity, public networks and other resources for cryptocurrency mining without authorization," Mostafa Rajabi, the CEO of Iran's government-owned power company, said.

Topless women with chain saw arrested after Ukraine war protest, vandalism

Associated Press

GENEVA — At least three feminist activists were detained on Friday after vandalizing a monument outside the United Nations complex in Geneva to protest Russia's war against Ukraine and what they see as the U.N.'s failure to stop the conflict.

Two topless women with the group FEMEN, which is known for its provocative protests, used a chain saw to cut into the

wooden sculpture known as the "Broken Chair."

One woman with white flowers in her hair left several large gashes in a leg of the sculpture, a 40-foot-tall giant chair with a broken leg.

The artwork symbolizes the dismemberment caused by land mines and is a call to ban the devastating weapons, which have also been used in the war in Ukraine.

The two women wore bands

in the blue and yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag on their legs. They had words including "stop mines" and "F— russia" painted on their bare chests and backs in near-freezing temperatures, and shouted expletives repeatedly against the United Nations and Russia.

At least three women — including a colleague of the two demonstrators — were later detained by police officers in three cars.

Rams defeat 49ers without touchdowns

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Four nights after winning the highest-scoring game of the NFL season, the Los Angeles Rams won the only game this year that didn't have a touchdown.

Joshua Karty kicked four field goals and the Rams survived a slugfest a week after winning a shootout, beating the San Francisco 49ers 12-6 on Thursday night in a key game in the NFC West race.

"What's really cool is this team has found a bunch of different ways to be able to win football games," coach Sean McVay said. "You come off a 44-42 game the other day and then you win 12-6. Our group did what they needed to do to be able to get it done."

The Rams (8-6) followed up the high-scoring win over Buffalo by winning for the seventh time in nine games following a 1-4 start. The Rams moved a

half-game behind division-leading Seattle. Los Angeles won a game without a touchdown for the first time since 2016.

The 49ers (5-8) led 6-3 heading into the fourth quarter but came up short, dealing a major blow to the dwindling playoff hopes for the defending NFC champions.

This marked the fourth time this season that the Niners lost to a division opponent after leading by at least three points in the fourth quarter, making them the first team to do that since New England in 2000 in coach Bill Belichick's first season with the Patriots.

"It was the story of the year," linebacker Fred Warner said. "Just not doing enough to win games. Not playing complementary. Just coming out a little too short."

Karty capped a 17-play drive with a game-tying 23-yard field goal early in the fourth quarter and then hit a 27-yarder after

Matthew Stafford connected on a 51-yard pass to Puka Nacua.

Karty made all four kicks after missing four in the past five games of his rookie season.

"He's steady," McVay said. "He's consistent. He's kind of unflappable."

The Niners then drove into field-goal range but Brock Purdy was intercepted on a deep pass into the end zone by Darius Williams, helping the Rams secure their first series sweep against the 49ers since 2018.

Stafford then led a clock-killing drive that was capped by Karty's fourth field goal with 18 seconds to play. Stafford went 16 for 27 for 160 yards, with 137 of those yards coming after half-time when the heavy rain stopped.

"In the second half, the weather was good enough to do it all," Stafford said. "We had the feeling that that was the kind of way this game was going to be

played and it's going to have to be one of those games. We scored 44 four nights ago and come out here and score 12 but they both count for one [win]."

Purdy finished 14 for 31 for 142 yards as the Niners failed to score a touchdown in a game for the first time since 2019.

The first half was played in a downpour and it had a major impact on the offensive performances with neither team able to move the ball.

The Rams had no first downs on their first four drives for the first time since 2013 before getting a late field goal to tie the game.

The Niners went three-and-out three times and got one field goal.

The teams combined for 11 punts, nine first downs and 197 yards four days after they both had season highs in points.

The rain mostly stopped at halftime, but the offenses still struggled.

Campbell refuses to play after losing starting spot

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — San Francisco linebacker De'Vondre Campbell refused to enter Thursday night's game in the third quarter after losing his starting job when Dre Greenlaw returned from an injury.

Campbell had started 12 of the first 13 games of the season and played 90% of defensive snaps for the 49ers but was benched for San Francisco's 12-6 loss to the Los Angeles Rams after Greenlaw came back for his first game since tearing his left Achilles tendon

in last season's Super Bowl.

Greenlaw had eight tackles in the first half but left the game in the third quarter with soreness in his Achilles tendon. That's when Campbell refused to enter the game.

"He said he didn't want to play today," coach Kyle Shanahan said after the loss, which left the 49ers (6-8) on the brink of playoff elimination.

Shanahan said he has never seen that before in his coaching career and said the team will "figure out something" on how to deal with it going forward.

Campbell walked to the lock-

er room, leaving his teammates bewildered and angry.

"He's a professional," cornerback Charvarius Ward said. "He's been playing for a long time. If he didn't want to play he shouldn't have dressed out. He could have told them that before the game. I feel like that was some selfish (stuff) that he did. It definitely hurt the team. Dre went down and we needed a linebacker. ... For him to do that, that's some selfish (stuff) to me in my opinion. He's probably going get cut soon."

The 31-year-old Campbell signed a one-year, \$5 million

deal in the offseason with San Francisco after being cut by Green Bay in March.

He had been an All-Pro in 2021 for the Packers but his play fell off the last two seasons in Green Bay.

He had a few bright moments in San Francisco this season but struggled frequently with tackling and in coverage.

"It's one person making a selfish decision," tight end George Kittle said. "I've never been around anybody that's ever done that and I hope I'm never around anybody who does that again."

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Belichick move a sign of rising pro influence

Associated Press

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — Bill Belichick spent time after his NFL exit talking with college coaches wanting his thoughts on managing new wrinkles at their level that looked a lot like the pros.

The two-minute timeout. The transfer portal as de facto free agency. Collectives generating name, image and likeness (NIL) money for athletes becoming like a payroll. The impending arrival of revenue sharing.

It didn't take long for Belichick to envision how a college program should look based on his own NFL experience.

"I do think there are a lot of parallels," Belichick said.

And that's at least partly why the six-time Super Bowl-winning head coach is now taking over at North Carolina. Years of rapid change have only increased the professionalization of college football across the country, with schools adjusting staffing to handle growing duties once seemingly more fitting for a pro team.

UNC just happens to be making the most audacious of those bets, bringing in a 72-year-old

who has never coached in college and asking him to build what amounts to a mini-NFL front office. But plenty could follow.

"I really think there's going to be some of those guys that maybe don't have a job in the NFL anymore," Kansas State general manager Clint Brown said, "and now that this is going to be structured in a way where there is a cap that that's going to be something they're interested in."

The rapid changes in college athletics have fueled that, notably with players able to transfer and play right away without sitting out a year and be paid through NIL endorsement opportunities in the past five years. Recruiting is now just as much about bringing in veteran talent through the portal as signing recruits out of high school, mirroring the NFL with free agency and the draft, respectively.

And a bigger change looms with revenue sharing, the result of a \$2.78 billion legal settlement to antitrust lawsuits.

Specifically, that model will allow the biggest schools to es-

tablish a pool of about \$21.5 million for athletes in the first year, with a final hearing in that case set for April 2025. It will be up to schools to determine how to distribute that money and in which sports, though football's role as the revenue driver in college sports likely means a prominent cut everywhere as a direct parallel to a professional team's salary cap.

Throw all that together, and it's why coaches are adjusting their staffs like Florida's Billy Napier interviewing candidates to be the Gators' general manager.

"We're built to do it now," Napier said. "The big thing here is that we're getting ready to be in a business model. We have a cap. We have contracts. We have negotiation. We have strategy about how we distribute those funds, and it's a major math puzzle."

Still, that also explains why Nebraska head coach Matt Rhule, the former head coach of the NFL's Carolina Panthers, said: "This job as a head coach is a juggernaut. There's way more to do here than I had to do in the NFL."

And it explains why the Tar Heels are betting on Belichick to be the right fit for today's changing climate.

"If I was 16 or 17 years old, a coach who came at you and won how many Super Bowls? And he said, 'Come play for me,'" said New York Giants offensive lineman Joshua Ezeudu. "I mean, that's pretty hard to turn down now, especially in this day and age, he's telling you to come play for him and he's offering you some money, too. I mean, you can't go wrong with that choice."

The timing worked for UNC with Belichick, who was bypassed for some NFL openings after leaving the New England Patriots last year and instead spent months taking a closer look at the college game. Those conversations with coaches — some in the Atlantic Coast, Big Ten and Southeastern conferences, he said Thursday — made him understand how the changes in college aligned with his pro experience.

"College kind of came to me this year," Belichick said. "I didn't necessarily go and seek it out."

Paralympics employee on leave after abuse reports

Associated Press

The U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee placed an employee on administrative leave Thursday after The Associated Press reported that one of its coaches was accused of sexually abusing a young biathlete, causing her so much distress that she attempted suicide.

Rocky Harris, USOPC chief of sport and athlete services, sent an email to U.S. Biathlon national team members to address the "concerning allegations of abuse" raised by several biathletes in the AP report.

"We want to commend these athletes for their immense courage and strength in coming for-

ward," the email said. "Effective immediately, we have placed a USOPC staff member on administrative leave pending an internal investigation."

Harris did not name the employee, but Gary Colliander was the only USOPC coach named in the AP report. Jon Mason, a USOPC spokesperson, told the AP that no additional information would be released while the inquiry is underway.

Grace Boutot told the AP that after Colliander began coaching her when she was 15, he gave her a lot of attention, including long hugs and inappropriate touching. The conduct escalated after she turned 18 to "kiss-

ing, sexual fondling and oral sex," according to a treatment summary by therapist Jacqueline Pauli-Ritz, shared with the AP.

Boutot said she begged Colliander to stop but he ignored her.

She said he warned her against telling anyone, saying his life would be ruined and her biathlon career would end.

In September 2010, Pauli-Ritz contacted Colliander and told him Boutot was suffering from major depression and post-traumatic stress disorder and he should stop coaching her, the treatment summary said.

"He did not do this until after the suicide attempt," Pauli-Ritz wrote, referring to Boutot's Oct. 7, 2010, overdose on antidepressants while at a training camp in Soldier Hollow, Utah. She was found by a teammate and hospitalized.

The next day, Colliander resigned his position with the Maine Winter Sports Center. He was hired in December 2016 by the U.S. Paralympic team, where he is associate director of high performance for U.S. Paralympics Nordic Skiing.

Colliander did not immediately respond to email and phone messages seeking comment.

Penguins score 6 in 3rd to rout Canadiens

Associated Press

MONTREAL — Bryan Rust scored three goals and the Pittsburgh Penguins scored six times in the third period to rout the Montreal Canadiens 9-2 on Thursday night.

Rust scored twice in the second period and again midway through the third for his sixth career hat trick. Rickard Rakell had two goals and two assists for Pittsburgh.

Kris Letang, Anthony Beauvillier, Matt Nieto and Noel Acciari also scored in the third as fans at Bell Centre booed and left early.

Sidney Crosby had three assists to reach 1,026 in his career and surpass Gordie Howe (1,023) for fifth most with one NHL franchise.

Tristan Jarry stopped 21 shots, bouncing back after allowing five goals in Pittsburgh's 6-2 loss to Colorado on Tuesday. The Penguins have won six of eight.

Nick Suzuki and Joel Armia scored for Montreal, which wrapped up a 3-2 homestand.

■ Devils 3, Kings 1: Jack Hughes scored the go-ahead goal and added two assists and New Jersey ended Los Angeles' six-game winning streak.

Hughes snapped his 12th goal of the season past Kings goaltender David Rittich with 7:02 left in the third period to give the Devils their first lead. Ondrej Palat and Brett Pesce also scored for New Jersey, which won for the first time in three games.

Kings defenseman Jordan Spence opened the scoring when he fired a one-timer past Markstrom with 3:19 left in the second. The goal was assisted by New Jersey native Alex Laferriere and Phillip Danault.

Palat answered — assisted by Hughes and Jesper Bratt — with 1:04 left in the second.

Pesce's goal was his first as a Devil and came with 2:43 left to cement the win as Devils goaltender Jacob Markstrom im-

proved to 14-6-2 this season.

■ Flyers 4, Red Wings 1: Scott Laughton scored a career-high four goals to break out of a drought and help Philadelphia beat Detroit.

After scoring just once in his previous 25 games, Laughton had his second career hat trick and became the first Flyers player to score four goals since John LeClair in 2002.

Laughton opened the scoring in the second period with a breakaway goal on a slap shot from the left circle. He added a short-handed goal in the third, tipping a pass from Travis Konecny, and had two empty-net goals.

Ben Chiarot scored a late goal for Detroit, his first of the season.

■ Maple Leafs 3, Ducks 2: Max Pacioretty had two goals and an assist and Toronto beat Anaheim.

William Nylander also scored and John Tavares had two assists for the Maple Leafs, who have won two straight. Anthony Stolarz started in goal and stopped seven before leaving due to a lower-body injury. Joseph Woll took over to start the second period and had 19 saves.

Jackson LaCombe had a goal and an assist, Frank Vatrano also scored and Ryan Strome had two assists for the Ducks in their fifth straight loss.

Pacioretty and Nylander scored in the first period to give the Maple Leafs a 2-0 lead before Vatrano got the Ducks on the scoreboard with a power-play goal on a shot from the sideboards with 4:04 to go in the period.

Pacioretty's second goal gave Toronto a 3-1 advantage midway through the second. LaCombe then scored 1:05 later with a shot from the high slot.

■ Capitals 2, Blue Jackets 1, OT: Aliaksei Protas scored his second goal of the night 2:23 into overtime to lift Washington over Columbus.

Protas had scored 31 seconds

into the third period to tie a game that featured terrific performances from both goaltenders. The OT goal was the 11th of the season for Protas.

Charlie Lindgren made 32 saves for the Capitals, including three during a lengthy possession by Columbus to start the overtime period.

Zach Werenski got the 100th goal of his career with 5:48 left in the second period and Jet Greaves stopped 35 shots in his 11th NHL game and first start this season.

Late in the second period, Werenski picked up a pass from Kent Johnson on a power play and unloaded a long shot from the slot that beat the shielded Lindgren.

■ Islanders 5, Blackhawks 4: Simon Holmstrom had a goal and two assists, Noah Dobson had a goal and an assist and New York held on to beat Chicago.

Dennis Cholowski, Bo Horvat, and Max Tsyplov also scored for New York, and Jean-Gabriel Pageau had three assists. Ilya Sorokin made 27 saves as the Islanders improved to 3-2-1 in their past six games.

Tyler Bertuzzi scored twice, Connor Bedard had a goal and an assist, and T.J. Brodie also scored for Chicago, which has lost six of seven. Arvid Soderblom made 14 saves for Chicago before he was replaced by Drew Comesso, making his NHL debut, at 7:58 of the third period. Comesso finished with two saves.

Holmstrom gave the Islanders a 2-1 lead with 5:54 left in the second period, and Dobson, Horvat and Tsyplov each scored in a 2:17 span early in the third to push the lead to 5-1.

Brodie pulled the Blackhawks to 5-2 with just under 9 minutes remaining, and Bertuzzi scored twice a minute apart to make it a one-goal game with 1:10 to go.

■ Sharks 4, Blues 3: Rookie Macklin Celebrini scored twice and had an assist in San Jose's

victory over St. Louis.

Tyler Toffoli and Jake Walman also scored, and Alexandar Georgiev made 17 saves to help the Sharks snap a three-game losing streak in the final game of a six-game, 13-day trip.

Jake Neighbours, Brayden Schenn and Jordan Kyrou scored for St. Louis, and Jordan Binnington made 27 saves. The Blues are 5-2-1 since Jim Montgomery took over as coach.

Kyrou scored his team-leading 11th goal of the season 7:57 into the third period to cut the Sharks' lead to 4-3.

Schenn scored 5:34 into the third period, but Walman replied 27 seconds later to restore San Jose's two-goal lead.

Celebrini, the first overall pick in the June draft, scored his 10th goal of the season and second of the game on a power play with seven seconds remaining in the second period to extend San Jose's lead to 3-1. He put the Sharks ahead with a goal earlier in the period.

■ Predators 4, Stars 1: Ryan O'Reilly scored two of three Nashville goals within a three-minute span midway through the second period as they snapped an eight-game losing streak that tied a franchise record and beat Dallas.

O'Reilly also assisted on Zachary L'Heureux's empty-net goal. Tommy Novak scored for the Predators, whose eight wins this season are the fewest in the NHL.

Justus Annunen made 37 saves for his first win in two starts with Nashville after being acquired Nov. 30 from the Colorado Avalanche.

Stars defenseman Lian Bichsel scored in his NHL debut for Dallas, which had a four-game home winning streak snapped. Jake Oettinger stopped 22 shots, losing at American Airlines Center for the first time in 11 starts this season.

O'Reilly has scored in three of his past five games. He missed

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Celtics cruise past Detroit for 20th win

Associated Press

BOSTON — Payton Pritchard scored 27 points, and the Boston Celtics used a big second half to post their 20th victory and roll past the Detroit Pistons 123-99 on Thursday night.

Pritchard finished with seven 3-pointers to continue to build his early case for Sixth Man of the Year honors.

Derrick White added 23 points and also had seven 3s help the Celtics win for the fourth time in five games. Pritchard made his 500th career 3-pointer, becoming the 10th Celtic to reach that mark.

Boston connected on 20 3s for

the night and led by as many as 32 points in the fourth quarter. Six Celtics reached double figures.

Cade Cunningham had 18 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for the Pistons.

■ **Kings 111, Pelicans 109:** Domantas Sabonas scored a season-high 32 points and matched a season best with 20 rebounds, and Sacramento beat New Orleans.

DeMar DeRozan scored 29 points, while De'Aaron Fox and Keegan Murray each added 18 points for the Kings.

CJ McCollum hit a season-high six 3-pointers and scored

36 points for New Orleans. His three-point play on a floater off the glass as he was falling down after being fouled by Fox made it 111-109 with 1:20 left.

The Pelicans then got two straight defensive stops, giving them a chance to shoot for a tie or victory in the final seconds. But Malik Monk took the ball from Dejounte Murray in what was technically scored as a block and Sabonis grabbed the loose ball for his final rebound to seal the result.

Trey Murphy III scored 21 points for New Orleans, but just five after the first quarter. Murray finished with 20 points for

the Pelicans, who've lost 21 of their last 24 games.

■ **Heat 114, Raptors 104:** Bam Adebayo had 21 points and 16 rebounds and five assists and Miami beat Toronto for their fourth straight victory.

Tyler Herro led Miami with 23 points, Nikola Jovic added 14 and Jimmy Butler and Dru Smith each had 11.

Gradey Dick scored 22 points, and Jake Poeltl added 16 for the Raptors.

Team scoring leader RJ Barrett had a triple-double with 13 points — on 5-of-18 shooting — and 11 rebounds and 10 assists. Toronto is 1-12 on the road.

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Nashville's previous three games with a lower-body injury.

■ **Oilers 7, Wild 1:** Leon Draisaitl scored his NHL-leading 21st goal and had three assists, sending Edmonton past Minnesota for their fourth straight victory.

Zach Hyman, Kasper Kapanen, Connor Brown, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Troy Stecher and Derek Ryan also scored for the Oilers, who stopped a six-game losing streak at Minnesota that spanned nearly five years.

Calvin Pickard stopped 27 shots for the Oilers, who handed Wild goalie Filip Gustavsson his first loss in six starts.

Gustavsson, who took the NHL's best goals-against average into the game, gave up five goals in two periods before being pulled for Marc-Andre Fleury.

Freddy Gaudreau had a power-play goal for the Wild.

■ **Golden Knights 3, Jets 2, OT:** Ivan Barbashev scored at 3:47 of overtime to boost Vegas past Winnipeg.

Barbashev beat Connor Helleson on the blocker side after a Winnipeg turnover for his 14th goal of the season. Vegas has won four in a row.

Keegan Kolesar and Victor

Olofsson also scored for the Golden Knights. Shea Theodore had two assists, and Adin Hill made 18 saves.

Nikita Chibrikov and Josh Morrissey scored for Winnipeg.

■ **Utah 4, Avalanche 1:** Dylan Guenther had two goals and an assist as Utah beat Colorado.

Vladislav Kolyachonok and Kevin Stenlund also scored as Utah improved to 3-0-1 in its last four games. Karel Vejmelka stopped 22 shots.

Nathan MacKinnon scored his 11th goal of the season for Colorado, and Scott Wedgewood had 19 saves in his first home start with the Avalanche since coming over in a trade with Nashville on Nov. 30.

Guenther opened the scoring at 8:26 of the first period when his centering pass deflected off Artturi Lehkonen's skate and past Wedgewood.

Kolyachonok and Guenther then scored 1:47 apart midway through the second period to put Utah up 3-0.

MacKinnon made it 3-1 with 4:34 left in the third, but Stenlund scored into an empty net 23 seconds later.

■ **Lightning 8, Flames 3:** Nikita Kucherov had a goal and five assists, Jake Guentzel

scored a hat trick and Tampa Bay beat Calgary.

Brayden Point had a goal and three assists and Anthony Cirelli, Brandon Hagel and Connor Geekie also scored for Tampa Bay, which was without captain Victor Hedman with a lower-body injury.

Jonathan Huberdeau had a goal and an assist, and Nazem Kadri and Connor Zary also scored for Calgary.

Tampa Bay scored four unanswered goals to lead 4-1 with two power-play goals from Cirelli and Point, a breakaway goal from Kucherov and Guentzel's first goal of the night.

Kadri and Zary countered to pull the Flames within one, but Hagel struck just 43 seconds into the third period to swing the momentum to the Lightning again. Tampa Bay poured it on with two goals by Guentzel and one from Geekie.

■ **Canucks 4, Panthers 0:** Carson Soucy and Danton Heinen scored in the first period, Kevin Lankinen stopped 27 shots for his third shutout of the season, and Vancouver beat Florida.

Jake DeBrusk and Brock Boeser also scored and Max Sasson, Teddy Blueger, Quinn

Hughes and J.T. Miller each had two assists for the Canucks. Lankinen's shutout was the sixth of his NHL career.

Sergei Bobrovsky made 15 saves for the Panthers, who were 6-0-1 in their past seven games and lost in regulation for the first time since Nov. 25.

■ **Kraken 5, Bruins 1:** Oliver Bjorkstrand scored twice and Philipp Grubauer made 33 saves as Seattle beat Boston.

Jaden Schwartz and Vince Dunn also scored for the Kraken. Jared McCann had an empty-net goal and an assist, and Shane Wright added two assists.

Brad Marchand scored on a penalty shot for Boston in the second period.

Seattle jumped to a 2-0 lead early in the first. Bjorkstrand scored on a power play 24 seconds in, just eight seconds after David Pastrnak took a double minor for high-sticking. Schwartz backhanded the puck over goalie Joonas Korpisalo about five minutes later.

Dunn batted the puck into Boston's net early in the third period and the goal stood after a replay review.

Seattle made it 4-1 when Wright set up Bjorkstrand for his 11th goal at 9:16.