

## Austin addresses extremism in the ranks

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told top Pentagon leaders Wednesday that he will direct a military-wide stand-down to address extremism within the ranks, according to his top spokesman.

Austin wants all military units to take an operational pause to discuss extremism as he works to grasp the full scope of the issue and better address the long-standing problem, John Kirby, the Pentagon's chief spokesman, told reporters Wednesday. The pauses are expected to occur within the next 60 days, but Austin has yet to determine how the stand-downs are to be completed, Kirby said.

"The intent is to reinforce the [Pentagon's] policies and values with respect to this sort of behavior and to have a dialogue with the men and women of the force and to get their views on what they are seeing at their level," Kirby said. "He wants commands to take the necessary time to ... speak with troops about the scope of this problem. It's a two-way conversation."

Austin spoke frankly with the acting service secretaries and uniformed service

chiefs about his concerns about extremism in the military, including white supremacy, said Kirby, who attended the meeting. The new defense secretary, who is the first Black leader of the Defense Department, wants the service leaders to better grasp how pervasive the issue is within their formations and work with leaders to stamp it out, Kirby said.

The leaders concurred with Austin's belief the issue was problematic and perhaps more pervasive than past Pentagon officials have known, Kirby said.

"One of the first things he said was: 'This is a leadership issue, and it's a leadership that goes all the way down ... to small unit leadership level,'" he said.

The meeting on Wednesday was "an initial discussion" on the topic, Kirby said. He told reporters that he would provide specific details about the planned pauses and other actions that Austin might take in the near future.

The Pentagon was already reviewing its policies on extremism before Austin took over as defense secretary. Former acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller ordered that review in December.

Austin's thoughts on extremism have been shaped by his personal experience,

he has said. He was often one of the lone Black officers in units that he worked in or commanded.

In 1995, Austin was a lieutenant colonel at Fort Bragg, N.C., when soldiers based there were charged with the murders of two Black people in nearby Fayetteville, N.C. The soldiers turned out to be members of a neo-Nazi group.

Austin has said the event was seminal in his understanding that there were extremists around him in the ranks.

"We woke up one day and discovered that we had extremist elements in our ranks, and they did bad things that we certainly held them accountable for," Austin said last month during his confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee. "But we discovered that the signs for that activity were there all along. We just didn't know what to look for or what to pay attention to — but we learned from that."

The Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol by a mob of supporters of former President Donald Trump was a new "wake up call" for Austin, Kirby said. Among those charged in participating are more than two dozen military veterans and at least one current servicemember.

## White House offers 'full support' for Space Force

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The White House on Wednesday offered "full support" for Space Force, a day after the president's chief spokesperson provoked a backlash with seemingly dismissive comments about the Trump-era addition to the U.S. military.

"They absolutely have the full support of the Biden administration," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said at a briefing when asked if President Joe Biden backed the newest branch of the military branch or whether he would take steps to try to eliminate or diminish it.

"We are not revisiting the decision to establish the Space Force," she said.

Psaki noted that Congress would have to

initiate any dismantling of the force. She said the Defense Department's desire to focus more attention and resources on the security challenges in space has been of bipartisan concern for some time.

"Thousands of men and women proudly serve in the Space Force," Psaki said. "As you know, it was established by Congress and any other steps would actually have to be taken by Congress, not by the administration."

Psaki had struck a dismissive tone Tuesday when asked about Biden's intentions.

"Wow. Space Force. It's the plane of today!" she said, and called the question "interesting."

Hours later, Psaki tweeted an attempted cleanup after some lawmakers, including

Rep. Mike Rogers of Alabama, the top Republican on the House Armed Services Committee, called on her to apologize.

"We look forward to the continuing work of Space Force and invite the members of the team to come visit us in the briefing room anytime to share an update on their important work," she tweeted.

Space Force's top general said Wednesday that he would take Psaki up on the invitation.

"I am very proud of the guardians in the Space Force," Gen. Jay Raymond, chief of space operations, said at a virtual event with defense writers. "I see the value of this force each and every day. I'm willing to talk to anyone about their great work and I'd welcome the opportunity."

# Navy finishes 1st 2021 Taiwan Strait pass

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS  
*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The guided-missile destroyer USS John S. McCain steamed through the Taiwan Strait on Thursday, marking the Navy's first trip through the contentious waterway in 2021, according to a Navy statement.

Seventh Fleet spokesman Lt. Joe Keiley called the sail "routine" and "in accordance with international law."

"The ship's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific," he said in the statement.

The contested, 110-mile-wide waterway separates mainland China from the self-governed Taiwan. Beijing considers reuni-

fication a top priority and regularly protests Taiwan Strait transits, asserting that foreign vessels must first ask permission before sailing through. International law, however, considers the strait an open waterway, Keiley said.

"The United States military will continue to fly, sail and operate anywhere international law allows," he said in the statement.

The transit came less than two weeks after China sent eight nuclear-capable bombers and four fighter jets into the airspace southwest of Taiwan. The act was meant to pressure the island's leader, President Tsai Ing-wen, "into caving to Beijing's demand that she recognize Taiwan as a part of Chinese territory," The Associated Press re-

ported Jan. 23.

The U.S. State Department in a statement the same day noted "with concern the pattern of [China's] ongoing attempts to intimidate its neighbors, including Taiwan."

"We will continue to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability," department spokesman Ned Price said in the statement. "Our commitment to Taiwan is rock-solid and contributes to the maintenance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and within the region."

The U.S. last sent a vessel through the Taiwan Strait on Dec. 31, marking its 13th passage through the waterway in 2020. That trip broke the Navy's previous record of 12 such transits in one year, which was set in 2016.

## Experts urge US to delay pullout from Afghanistan

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The United States should urgently reopen talks with the Taliban to delay a full withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan beyond the May 1 deadline agreed to by the Trump administration, a bipartisan experts group recommended Wednesday after months of studying potential pathways to peace.

Sticking to the deadline without first achieving a decline in violence and progress in peace talks could lead to a collapse of the Afghan state and a resumption of civil war, the Afghan Study Group said in its report. On the other hand, it noted that if the Taliban don't accept a delay beyond May in completing the withdrawal of foreign troops, the militants might abandon the nascent peace process.

"The overall strategy that the group is proposing, however, depends on the U.S. negotiating team making clear to the Taliban that they have not fulfilled the conditions in the Doha agreement under which a U.S. withdrawal can take place," the report said. It was referring to the deal struck in Doha, Qatar, last February that raised hopes of concluding America's longest war, which in October will mark its 20th year.

The recommendation, part of a broader

proposed strategy, offers a possible way forward for a Biden administration that, like its predecessor, sees no military solution in Afghanistan but seems more doubtful of the Taliban's commitment to a negotiated peace.

Although the administration is not required to accept the group's recommendation, the report could be given some consideration by policymakers because the study group was created by Congress in a bipartisan 2019 vote.

Pentagon officials in recent days have expressed skepticism of fulfilling the withdrawal commitment made one year ago in Doha. The Pentagon's chief spokesman, John Kirby, said last week that the Taliban have made it "that much more difficult for final decisions to be made about force presence by their reticence to commit to reasonable, sustainable and credible negotiations at the table."

Kirby said the administration is undertaking a broad review of Afghanistan policy.

The Doha deal was widely seen as a hopeful step toward easing Afghans' prolonged suffering after decades of conflict. It includes a number of Taliban commitments, including a pledge to break ties with al-Qaida and other extremist groups that threaten the security of the U.S. and its allies.

## Moon, Biden agree to work on shared N. Korea strategy

*Associated Press*

SEOUL, South Korea — The South Korean and U.S. presidents agreed on the need for a comprehensive strategy on North Korea as they push to work together to achieve denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula, officials said.

During their first phone talks since President Joe Biden's Jan. 20 inauguration, South Korean President Moon Jae-in proposed the allies make joint efforts for lasting peace and denuclearization.

Biden said it's important for Washington and Seoul to have the same position and that his government will closely cooperate with South Korea to achieve joint objectives, Moon's office said.

The two leaders agreed on the need to soon map out a "comprehensive strategy on North Korea if possible," Moon's spokesman, Kang Min-seok, said.

The White House said in a statement that Biden spoke with Moon to "stress his commitment to strengthening the United States-(South Korea) alliance, which is the linchpin for peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia." It said the leaders agreed to closely coordinate on North Korea.

Earlier Thursday, Moon tweeted that he had "a great conversation" with Biden.

# House GOP keeps Cheney as No. 3, backs Greene

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republicans decided Wednesday to stand by two GOP lawmakers who have polarized the party, voting to retain Rep. Liz Cheney as their No. 3 leader and saying they'd fight a Democratic push to kick Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene off her committees.

In a 145-61 secret-ballot vote, House Republicans overwhelmingly rebuffed a rebellion by hard-right conservatives to toss Cheney, R-Wyo., from leadership after she voted last month to impeach then-President Donald Trump.

Hours earlier, after Democrats slated a House vote for Thursday that would remove Greene from her committees, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., ridiculed them for it. His comments signaled he was dismissing bipartisan demands that the hard-right Georgia Republican be punished for her online embrace of racist and violent views and bizarre conspiracy theories.

The decisions on Greene and Cheney have subjected the GOP to a politically agonizing test of its direction as it moves beyond the Trump presidency. Since Trump grudgingly vacated the White House last month, the party has been ideologically adrift as it's struggled over whether to embrace his norm-busting divisiveness or the party's more traditional, policy-oriented conservative values.

But as Wednesday's internal showdowns concluded, McCarthy and the House GOP

decided against punishing two of their most high-profile women, whose views enrage opposite ends of the party.

The moves were typical of McCarthy's preference to avoid ruffling feathers as he seeks to someday become House speaker.

"You know what that's going to mean?" he told reporters after the lengthy evening meeting. "Two years from now, we're going to win the majority. That's because this conference is more united. We've got the right leadership team behind it."

Cheney is a daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney and a fixture of the party establishment, and she is viewed as eager to rise even higher in Washington's GOP hierarchy.

The day's action began when the Democratic-led House Rules Committee cleared the way for Thursday's vote punishing Greene.

After that meeting, McCarthy released a statement saying Democrats were "choosing to raise the temperature" by attempting a "partisan power grab." He condemned Greene's past endorsements of conspiracy theories — after weeks of saying little critical of her — and said the first-term congresswoman had recognized in a private conversation that she must meet "a higher standard" as a lawmaker.

Greene has shown support for calls to violence against Democrats, bizarre fictions about faked school shootings and unfounded QAnon theories about Democrats joining in child abuse rings.

# Biden flexible on virus relief plan, says to 'act fast'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden encouraged Democratic lawmakers to "act fast" on his \$1.9 trillion COVID rescue plan but also signaled he's open to changes, including limiting the proposed \$1,400 direct payments to Americans with lower income levels, which could draw Republican support.

Biden told lawmakers in private comments Wednesday that he's "not married" to an absolute number for the overall package but wants them to "go big" on pandemic relief and "restore the soul of the country."

"Look, we got a lot of people hurting in our country today," Biden said on a private call with House Democrats. "We need to act. We need to act fast."

On the direct payments, Biden said he doesn't want to budge from the \$1,400 promised to Americans. But he said he is willing to "target" the aid, which would mean lowering the income threshold to qualify.

"I'm not going to start my administration by breaking a promise to the American people," he said.

Biden spoke with House Democrats and followed with a meeting of top Senate Democrats at the White House, deepening his public engagement with lawmakers on his American Rescue Plan. Together the virus and economic aid is his first legislative priority and a test of the administration's ability to work with Congress to deliver.

Biden's remarks to the Democratic House caucus were relayed by two people who requested anonymity.

While Biden is trying to build bipartisan support from Republicans, he is also prepared to rely on the Democratic majority in Congress to push the package into law. Democrats moved ahead with preliminary steps, including a House budget vote Wednesday largely along party lines, to approve it on their own, over Republicans' objections. A group of 10 Republican senators offered a \$618 billion alternative with slimmer \$1,000 direct payments and zero aid for states and cities, but Biden panned it as insufficient, though private talks with the Republicans continue.

At the start of his meeting with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and 10 top Senate Democratic committee chairmen in the Oval Office, Biden sounded confident he could still win over GOP support.

# Proud Boys designated a terrorist entity by Canadian government

Associated Press

TORONTO — The Canadian government designated the Proud Boys group as a terrorist entity on Wednesday, noting they played a pivotal role in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6.

The group was an agitator during earlier protests and the Capitol riot on Jan. 6. The Proud Boys is a far-right, male chauvinist extremist group known for engaging in violent clashes at political rallies. Canada is the first country to designate them as a terrorist entity.

Senior officials said authorities had been monitoring and collecting evidence about the Proud Boys before the Capitol insurrection, but confirmed that the event provided information that helped with the decision to list the organization.

Enrique Tarrío, the chairman of Proud Boys, called the terrorist designation "ridiculous."

"There is no basis for it. It's infringement of free speech rights. All the Canadian Proud Boys have ever done is go to rallies," Tarrío said in a phone interview.

# US unemployment claims fall to 779K

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits declined to 779,000 last week, a still-historically high total that shows that a sizable number of people keep losing jobs to the viral pandemic.

Last week's total dropped from 812,000 the previous week, the Labor Department said Thursday, and is the lowest in two months. Still, before the virus erupted in the United States in March, weekly applications for jobless aid had never topped 700,000, even during the Great Recession.

Thursday's report reflects a U.S. job market that is still suffering from the pandemic, with hiring having weakened for six straight months. It is a key reason why President Joe Biden is pushing Congress to enact a \$1.9 trillion economic rescue program, on top of a \$900 billion federal aid package that was approved late last year.

All told, 17.8 million people were receiving unemployment benefits in the week that ended Jan. 16, the latest period for which data are available. That's down from 18.3 million from the week before.

Despite the generally dim picture of the economy, some hopeful signs have emerged this week. Auto sales rose solidly in January, and a gauge of business growth in the service sector picked up. So did spending on home construction.

That doesn't mean a rebound is near in the job market, which typically lags behind recoveries in the broader economy. Employers have been hesitant to hire at a time when consumer spending has faltered.

## Delaware

DOVER — Despite the disproportionate number of deaths related to COVID-19 in long-term care facilities in Delaware, many workers at the state veterans home are refusing to get the vaccine.

Residents of long-term care facilities such as the Delaware Veterans Home in Milford account for less than 3% of COVID-19 cases in the state but more than half of coronavirus-related deaths.

Secretary of State Jeff Bullock told members of the legislature's budget-writing committee Wednesday that there have been no COVID-19-related deaths at the veterans home, and only three cases.

"All of our residents who are medically able have been vaccinated now, so that's a really, really good thing," he noted. "I wish I could say the same for the staff."

The veterans home has not been accepting new residents because of the coronavirus and currently has only 56 residents, less than half its capacity of 144. The total number of staff is 176.

Officials have held two vaccination events at the home, but only about 60% of staff have received at least one dose, compared with 98% of residents who have received both doses.

## Kentucky

LOUISVILLE — A group of Kentucky parents are suing several public school districts, seeking to put an end to online learning and return students to classrooms in-person, nearly one year after the coronavirus pandemic forced schools to pivot to virtual or hybrid models.

Northern Kentucky lawyer Chris Wiest told The Courier-Journal on Tuesday that he filed the statewide class-action lawsuit in Boone Circuit Court. The formal complaint was not yet publicly available Wednesday morning. Wiest said he would share it once it was processed, according to the newspaper.

The plaintiffs include parents in Boone County. Parents from Fayette and Jefferson counties were expected to join the suit in the coming weeks, he added. Defendants were set to be the

school boards of each public district named in the suit.

Jefferson and Fayette, two of the largest school districts in the state, have not reopened any schools to in-person learning since they closed in spring 2020. Other districts have reopened at differing levels depending on coronavirus cases in their areas, and recently Jefferson has come under increasing pressure from parents wanting the district to reopen, The Courier-Journal said.

The lawsuit was dependent upon the Republican-controlled legislature's overrides of Gov. Andy Beshear's vetoes on bills aiming to limit the Democratic governor's authority to order restrictions to combat COVID-19.

## Mississippi

JACKSON — Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves is extending an order that requires people to wear masks in public places in most parts of the state, to guard against spread of the coronavirus.

The Republican governor said Wednesday that the new order is in place through March 3. It is for 75 of Mississippi's 82 counties.

"We as Mississippians have to continue to take this virus seriously," Reeves said in a statement. "We are continuing to work to get shots in arms and provide vaccines to those who meet the requirements. Please continue to social distance, wear your mask and keep your gatherings small."

The state Health Department reported Wednesday that the state had 791 new confirmed cases of the virus as of Tuesday evening. The department also reported 26 deaths Wednesday, 22 of which happened between Jan. 20 and Tuesday.

## Missouri

O'FALLON — A new task force in Kansas City, Mo., will seek to ensure that Black and Hispanic residents have equal

opportunities to get COVID-19 vaccinations, Mayor Quinton Lucas said Wednesday.

The Democratic mayor announced the formation of Kansas City's COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force. Lucas said the rate of Hispanic residents in the city dying from the coronavirus is nearly three times that of white residents.

"Every loss is one too many and, with the vaccine, is preventable," Lucas said in a statement. "Kansas City's vaccine distribution will reflect where the most COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths have occurred to as quickly as possible mitigate community spread," and reduce the number of people in hospitals.

## Virginia

ALEXANDRIA — A northern Virginia businessman who was awarded \$38 million in federal contracts to provide high-quality masks during the coronavirus pandemic that he never possessed pleaded guilty Wednesday to fraud and making false statements.

Robert Stewart, 35, of Arlington, was owner of a company called Federal Government Experts that won contracts from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Veterans Affairs after he told the agencies he had N95 masks and other personal protective equipment available.

At a plea hearing in federal court in Alexandria, Stewart admitted he never provided any equipment.

Prosecutors say the government lost no money on the contracts because he was to be paid on delivery.

But the government was cheated out of more than \$330,000 in two other schemes. In one, Stewart obtained more than \$260,000 by submitting fraudulent loan applications for government programs designed to help businesses during the pandemic.

**AMERICAN ROUNDUP**

**Police: Man deliberately crashed car into store**

**MA** ATTLEBORO — A man apparently deliberately crashed his car into the front of a Massachusetts hobby store early Tuesday, knocked over displays, and then drove from the scene, police said.

“This was not a case where a foot slipped off the brake and hit and gas,” Attleboro police Chief Kyle Heagney told *The Sun Chronicle*.

A worker spreading salt in the Hobby Lobby store’s parking lot at about 5 a.m. saw the car spinning around in the lot before it accelerated straight for the building, Heagney said. The witness told police the driver struck the front door, backed up and then plowed inside.

The store was not open and no one was hurt. There was no structural damage to the building.

Responding officers found a license plate inside and a vehicle with heavy front-end damage and no front license plate was stopped nearby. The driver, Rick Woodruff, 36, from Somerville, was taken to the hospital for an evaluation, the chief said. He will be summoned to court to face charges.

**2 rescued from 80-foot limestone pile ledge**

**IL** LEHIGH — Two women were rescued by firefighters from the ledge of an 80-foot-high limestone pile near a quarry in eastern Illinois.

They were part of a group of four women who apparently wanted to sled down the pile late Sunday, *The (Kankakee)*

*Daily-Journal* reported Monday. Two women made it back down and spent an hour trying to get the trapped women off the ledge before calling for help, said Mike Whalen, Limestone Township Fire Protection District chief.

It took 45 minutes for rescuers to bring each down.

“Obviously, this is not a place you want to do something like this,” Whalen said. “There are a lot of risks and dangers.”

All four received tickets for trespassing.

**School’s pet tortoise stabbed by intruder**

**CA** SAN JOSE — A tortoise named Michelangelo is recovering after a man broke into a San Francisco Bay Area preschool and stabbed and beat the pet, which is estimated to be about 70 years old, authorities said.

The 65-pound African sulcata tortoise was found Saturday with a piece of wood and a rake handle stabbed through his outer shell. The attacker apparently used garden tools taken from the school.

“I thought he was dead ... So it was almost a good feeling when he hissed at me because I knew he was alive,” Tammy Lariz, the administrator at Play ‘N’ Learn Preschool in San Jose, told KPIX-TV.

Michelangelo, named after the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles character, had surgery to repair his shell and remove debris, Dr. Tal Solomon of Archvet Animal Hospital, which is providing the treatment for free, told KTVU-TV.

The animal’s organs weren’t damaged and he should make a

full recovery, Solomon said.

George Robles, 40, of San Jose, was arrested and accused of animal abuse and felony vandalism and was placed on a 72-hour mental health examination, authorities said.

**Former cop pleads not guilty to on-duty DUI**

**OR** KLAMATH FALLS — A former Klamath Falls Police Department detective pleaded not guilty last week to charges stemming from a November on-duty crash in which he was allegedly driving under the influence of fentanyl.

According to an Oregon State Police investigation, Thomas Reif, 27, stole fentanyl from the police evidence locker and was under the influence of the drug when he crashed into two other vehicles on Nov. 27, *The Herald and News* reported.

Reif entered not guilty pleas to DUII, reckless driving, five counts of reckless endangering, two counts of criminal mischief, unlawful possession of a schedule II controlled substance, official misconduct, theft and tampering with physical evidence.

After a police department investigation recommended that Reif be fired, he resigned.

**Store employee shot while chasing suspect**

**AZ** PHOENIX — A person standing outside a Phoenix hardware store shot and wounded a store employee while trying to shoot a shoplifting suspect being chased by the employee, police said Saturday.

The shoplifting suspect who had run from the store was gone when police arrived while the person who shot the employee

remained at the scene and was cooperating with police, said Sgt. Mercedes Fortune, a Police Department spokeswoman.

The employee was taken to a hospital for treatment of a serious wound not considered life-threatening, Fortune said. No identities were released.

Fortune said police were continuing to investigate the incident.

**Fire kills cats at home that doubled as shelter**

**NE** CHAPPELL — At least 48 cats were killed in a fire at a western Nebraska house that doubled as an animal shelter.

The Jan. 29 fire started in the laundry room of Michelle Tynan’s house in Chappell, about 370 miles west of Omaha.

Tynan, who co-founded the Nebraska Loves Cats nonprofit, said she discovered the dryer was on fire when she awoke to the smell of smoke shortly after midnight. Tynan said she called 911, grabbed as many cats as she could and broke some windows so other cats could escape as she ran outside.

Tynan said first responders wouldn’t let her re-enter the house to rescue more animals.

Nebraska Loves Cats said 48 cats died in the fire.

Tynan said Nebraska Loves Cats is licensed as an animal shelter, but in December Tynan was found guilty of violating a city ordinance by keeping more than five cats in a residential area.

Tynan is appealing that conviction; the case is pending.

— From wire reports



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**Reporting World, National and Military News**

# Bucs get second shot at Chiefs, Hill

Associated Press

Tyreek Hill sprinted past cornerback Carlton Davis again, caught the ball in stride and then cut so sharply that safety Mike Edwards ended up flailing at him with one arm near the sideline. Hill casually jogged a few more yards before pausing at the goal line and doing a backflip into the end zone.

It was the second and most impressive of three scores for Hill, who was the star of Kansas City's 27-24 victory at Tampa Bay in Week 12. Hill finished with 13 receptions for 269 yards — both career highs — and proved to be a mismatch for Davis and the Buccaneers.

Tampa Bay gets another shot at Hill and the Chiefs in the Super Bowl next Sunday, the first rematch in the NFL finale in nearly a decade.

Same teams, same venue, much higher stakes.

The Chiefs are counting on the same outcome. The Bucs, who have won seven straight since that late November loss, are looking to become the eighth team in 14 tries to beat an opponent in the Super Bowl that it lost to in the regular season.

Both sides expect to lean on — and learn from — that previous meeting.

"We'll help a little bit more

than we did in that ballgame," Bucs coach Bruce Arians said.

Tampa's biggest and most obvious mistake was trying to single-cover Hill, one of the fastest players in the league. Davis was burned repeatedly, including on consecutive TD passes from Patrick Mahomes to Hill (75 and 44 yards) in the first quarter. Davis gave up their third scoring connection, too, but had much tighter coverage on what was a perfect throw and catch.

Hill had seven receptions for 203 yards and two TDs in the first quarter alone, but just six catches for 66 yards and a score the rest of the way. The difference?

"I just got tired. I got tired of running," Hill joked this week.

"No, let me stop," he continued. "Todd Bowles is a great defensive coordinator. He's been doing it for a long time. I'm sure he's seen guys like me throughout his career. Just being able to dial up (coverages) and things like that to slow me down.

"Also ... bringing the safety over the top a bit to double me and (Travis) Kelce. That kind of slowed us down a lot, plus their front seven is tremendous. Once they get clicking on defense, they're a great defense. They fly around the field;

they're great. I feel like I just got lucky and was able to get open."

The Chiefs scored on three of their first four possessions and led 17-0 before the Bucs crossed midfield. The margin could have been even greater had Tampa's defense not forced a field goal after Kansas City ran two plays from the 1-yard line.

Davis knocked down Kelce's pass to Mahomes, a nifty trick play that started when Mahomes flipped to Hill, who pitched to Kelce, who expected to find Mahomes open in the end zone. It was Davis' best play of the afternoon.

Kansas City settled for the chip-shot field goal on the opening possession. Mahomes and Co. had a chance to extend their 17-0 lead early in the second, but Shaq Barrett stripped the quarterback on a first-and-goal play from the 8 and forced the Chiefs' lone turnover.

Tampa Bay waited until the fourth to make its comeback. Tom Brady threw two interceptions in the third quarter and the Bucs trailed 27-10 before a furious rally.

Brady found Mike Evans for scores of 31 and 7 yards, the first one coming on a fourth-and-3 play early in the quarter and the second one coming after a pair

of roughing-the-passer penalties on Frank Clark.

Down three with 4:10 to play, Tampa turned to its defense to get a stop and get Brady the ball back. But Mahomes didn't let it happen, scrambling for one first down and then rolling left on third-and-7 and finding — who else? — Hill for a first down in front of — who else? — Davis. Mahomes then took a knee to end the game.

"You learn from mistakes and you learn from really good things, and there were some really good things in that game," Arians said. "So we've got a lot of stuff to build on."

Mahomes completed 37 of 49 passes for 462 yards and three TDs. Hill finished with the 14th-most receiving yards in any game in NFL history and the most since Julio Jones notched 300 against Carolina in 2016.

Brady completed 27 of 41 passes for 345 yards, with three scores and two picks.

Neither team will be completely the same in the rematch.

Hill and Davis, though, are sure to be lined up across from each other at some point.

"You go back and look at the game and what matchups you had," Arians said. "That's a formidable challenge, but our guys will be up for it."

## Kansas City looking to become rare repeat champs

Associated Press

Do it again?

Not in the NFL, at least not lately.

On Feb. 7, the Kansas City Chiefs will be the latest franchise to attempt winning successive Super Bowls when they take on the Buccaneers. In Tampa, of all places. Against Tom Brady, of all people.

It's an achievement simply to get this far once again.

"The thing I see as a positive is the record, that we've persevered through some tough games," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said, "and so the mental toughness to do that individually each week was important, knowing that you're going to get people's best shot, and

there's the respect factor."

Only twice since the Patriots pulled off the most recent repeat in the 2003 and 2004 seasons has a champion gotten back to the big game. Seattle failed in the 2014 season — against New England, no less; remember Malcolm Butler's goal-line interception? — and the Patriots in the 2017 season, the Super Bowl featuring the Philly Special.

Super Bowl repeats once were relatively common. The first two went to the Lombardi Packers. Don Shula's Dolphins soon replicated the feat, even throwing in a perfect season for 1972. And Pittsburgh's Steel Curtain not only went back to back in the 1974 and '75 seasons, they did so again in 1978

and '79.

We're not done. The Bill Walsh/Joe Montana 49ers were the 1988 and '89 champions; Dallas and its Hall of Fame Triplets of Emmitt Smith, Troy Aikman and Michael Irvin pulled off the double in 1992 and '93; then John Elway finished off his illustrious Broncos career with two straight NFL titles in 1997 and '98.

But since Tom Brady took New England to the top 2003 and '04, nothing.

So now, the man mainly responsible for the previous repeat will try to prevent the next one, and perhaps the next NFL dynasty. Against the same coach he secured the most recent double.

# St. John's shuts down No. 3 Villanova

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Posh Alexander scored 16 points and St. John's smothered No. 3 Villanova, upsetting the ice-cold Wildcats 70-59 on Wednesday night to halt their nine-game winning streak.

Julian Champagnie had 14 points — all in the second half — and a career-high 13 rebounds for the suddenly surging Red Storm (12-7, 6-6 Big East), who have won five straight games and six of seven.

With active hands all over the court, St. John's turned up its pressure defense and forced the experienced Wildcats (11-2, 6-1) into 17 turnovers and 32% shooting in an ugly performance. Villanova fell behind 58-41 with about 6:45 left and was held 12 points below its previous season low for its first loss since Nov. 28 to Virginia Tech in overtime.

Caleb Daniels scored 16 points for Villanova, and Jeremiah Robinson-Earl had 14.

**East Carolina 82, No. 5 Houston 73:** Jayden Gardner had 21 points and 15 rebounds to help the Pirates stun the vis-

iting Cougars, securing their first win against a ranked opponent in nearly two decades.

Tremont Robinson-White added 17 points for East Carolina, which defied season-long offensive struggles against one of the nation's top defensive teams.

East Carolina (8-6, 2-6 American Athletic Conference) hadn't won a game in more than a month between five straight losses and three postponements.

DeJon Jarreau matched his career high with 25 points to lead the Cougars (15-2, 10-2).

**No. 10 Alabama 78, LSU 60:** Jaden Shackelford scored 19 points and the host Crimson Tide beat the Tigers to widen their lead in the Southeastern Conference standings.

After setting a league record with 23 made threes in their previous matchup on Jan. 19, Alabama (15-4, 10-0 SEC) showed it has multiple ways to win, this time by holding LSU (11-5, 6-4) to its lowest scoring output of the season.

Cameron Thomas scored 22 points for LSU.

**No. 14 Virginia 64, North**

**Carolina State 57:** Sam Hauser and Trey Murphy III each scored 18 points and the visiting Cavaliers produced a strong finishing stretch to beat the Wolfpack.

Jay Huff added 12 points for Virginia (12-3, 8-1 Atlantic Coast Conference), which had its 15-game ACC winning streak stretching to last season halted Saturday night at then-No. 20 Virginia Tech.

Jericole Hellems poured in 23 points before fouling out for N.C. State (7-7, 3-6), which won just one game in January.

**Georgetown 86, No. 15 Creighton 79:** Jahvon Blair scored 22 points to lead three teammates in double figures, and the Hoyas used their best shooting in weeks to build a big lead and beat the host Bluejays.

Georgetown (5-8, 3-5 Big East), a 13-point underdog, won its second straight after a three-week layoff because of a COVID-19 outbreak.

Denzel Mahoney led the Creighton (13-5, 9-4) with 20 points.

**Pittsburgh 83, No. 16 Virginia Tech 72:** Xavier Johnson scored a career-high 32 points

and the Panthers beat the visiting Hokies to end a three-game skid.

Johnson shot 11-for-17 from the floor, including 4-for-7 from three-point range, as the Pitt (9-5, 5-4 Atlantic Coast Conference) had its way against Virginia Tech (13-4, 7-3).

**No. 18 Missouri 75, Kentucky 70:** Dru Smith scored a season-high 26 points, Xavier Pinson added 14 and the host Tigers withstood a second-half charge to beat the Wildcats.

Smith also had seven rebounds and five assists to go along with 6-for-11 shooting to help Missouri (12-3, 5-3 Southeastern Conference) hold on.

Davion Mintz led Kentucky (5-11, 4-5) with 18 points and made four threes.

**South Carolina 72, No. 22 Florida 66:** At Gainesville, Fla., AJ Lawson scored 22 points, Seventh Woods added 12 and the Gamecocks beat the Gators.

The Gamecocks (5-6, 3-4 Southeastern Conference) dominated the Gators (10-5, 6-4) inside, outscoring them 50-30 in the paint and getting 13 offensive rebounds.

# Pastrnak, Bergeron rally Bruins past Flyers

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — David Pastrnak had a hat trick and assisted on Patrice Bergeron's goal 31 seconds into overtime, and the Boston Bruins completed yet another comeback, this time beating the Philadelphia Flyers 4-3 on Wednesday night.

Pastrnak tied it with 14.9 seconds left in regulation on the power play, then set up Bergeron's winner with a shot from above the left circle. He took two whacks at the rebound, and the second went in for the Bruins' third power-play goal.

"Those always feel good," Pastrnak said. "Great character win."

Boston overcame a 3-1, third-period deficit for the third straight game after topping the Washington Capitals 4-3 in overtime Saturday and 5-3 on Monday.

"It's a good feeling knowing you can come back in different ways," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said.

Pastrnak's tying goal came after a scramble in front. He swatted at the puck as it floated out of the air to his stick.

The two-time All-Star now has five goals in three games

since coming back from September hip surgery that sidelined him through training camp and the start of the regular season.

Bergeron also had two assists for the Bruins, who have won six of seven.

Joel Farabee, Jake Voracek and Kevin Hayes scored for the Flyers, who had their four-game winning streak snapped.

**Lightning 5, Red Wings 1:** Alex Killorn had a goal and an assist, and host Tampa Bay posted its third consecutive win.

Victor Hedman, Ryan McDonagh, Anthony Cirelli

and Brayden Point also scored for Tampa Bay, which remained unbeaten in five home games this season. Blake Coleman had two assists to reach 100 career points, and Andrei Vasilevskiy made 15 stops.

The Lightning stretched their home winning streak against the Red Wings to 15 dating back to Dec. 12, 2013.

Anthony Mantha scored for Detroit, which dropped its seventh straight game, including two overtime losses. Thomas Greiss was pulled after allowing three goals on five shots, and Calvin Pickard made 17 saves.

# Clippers use threes to rout Cavs

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Paul George missed the first two games of the Los Angeles Clippers' long road trip. He barely missed anything in the finale.

George drained 8 of 9 three-pointers and scored 36 points, Kawhi Leonard added 24 and Los Angeles found enough energy on tired legs to end a six-game road swing with a 121-99 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers on Wednesday night.

Just 24 hours after dropping a tight game in Brooklyn that had an NBA Finals vibe, the Clippers bounced back by making 20 three-pointers to avoid losing two straight for the first time this season. They are the only team in the league not to drop two in a row.

George said the 124-120 loss to the Nets — he scored 26, but missed 13 shots and took just one free throw — inspired his performance against the Cavs.

"I had some good looks, and I just told myself that if I got the same open shots, I would

knock them down," George said.

The Clippers started the trip down two All-Stars as both George and Leonard were sidelined by COVID-19 protocols. They sat out games in Atlanta and Miami, but now that they're back, a team with title aspirations is gaining confidence.

"We're getting better," coach Tyrone Lue said after his team's 4-2 trip. "We've got some things we've still got to get better at. We've still got a long way to go."

George went 13-for-20 from the field and Los Angeles made 20 of 34 on threes, outscoring Cleveland 60-12 from behind the arc.

George banked in a 32-footer at the horn to end the third, capping his 16-point quarter that gave the Clippers a 14-point cushion heading into the fourth.

"I didn't know he was 8 of 9 from three," Lue said. "But I knew he was shooting the rock."

The Cavs were hanging around and only down 10 when the Clippers went on a 12-0

run that featured threes by George and Lou Williams that ended any hopes of a Cleveland comeback.

## Tip-ins

**Clippers:** Ivica Zubac had 16 rebounds. ... Dropped their first five 3-pointers and went 6 of 9 from deep in the first quarter. ... Los Angeles went 4-2 on the trip, is 11-2 in its last 13 overall. ... Lue has known Cavaliers guard Collin Sexton for years and is not surprised by the guard's quick rise to stardom. "He's a hard worker," said Lue, who was fired six games into Sexton's rookie season. "When I was here we had to kick him out of the gym because he was doing too much."

**Cavaliers:** F Larry Nance Jr. missed his fourth game with a sprained right wrist. Nance came back after sitting out two games, but aggravated the injury. ... F Kevin Love is getting closer to playing after being sidelined for months with a severe right calf strain. He's finally doing individual basketball activities.

# Embiid leads 76ers past Hornets for 4th straight win

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Joel Embiid had 34 points and 11 rebounds, and the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Charlotte Hornets 118-111 on Wednesday night for their fourth straight win.

Tobias Harris scored 26 points and Ben Simmons added 15 points and nine assists for the 76ers, who stretched their winning streak against the Hornets to 14 games, tied for the longest active streak in the NBA. The Clippers have also won 14 straight against the Magic.

Gordon Hayward and LaMelo Ball each had 22 points for the Hornets, who had their three-game win streak snapped.

**Bucks 130, Pacers 110:** Giannis Antetokounmpo had 21 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists despite sitting out the fourth quarter, and host Milwaukee routed Indiana.

The reigning two-time MVP shot 7-for-8 from the floor and 7-for-8 from the line in a remarkably efficient performance.

The Pacers' Domantas Sabonis scored a career-high 33 points and had 12 rebounds and six assists. Justin Holiday had 15 points for the Pacers. Doug McDermott had 13, Malcolm Brogdon 12.

The Bucks had balanced scoring with seven players in double figures.

**Mavericks 122, Hawks 116:** Luka Dončić scored 27 points and dished out 14 assists as Dallas snapped a six-game losing streak with a win at Atlanta.

Kristaps Porzingis added 24 points and 11 rebounds for the Mavericks, including a crucial tip-in of a miss by Dončić with 32 seconds remaining that helped Dallas hold off a furious Hawks comeback.

John Collins led Atlanta with 35 points and 12 rebounds.

**Kings 116, Celtics 111:** De'Aaron Fox had 26 points and 11 assists, Buddy Hield made two free throws with six-tenths of a second remaining and host Sacramento held off short-handed Boston.

Hield finished with 15 points and 11 rebounds, Harrison Barnes scored 24 points and Tyrese Haliburton added 21.

Jayson Tatum had 27 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds for the Celtics. Jaylen Brown scored 21. Boston played without three of its top ballhandlers due to injuries.

**Wizards 103, Heat 100:** Bradley Beal scored 32 points and Washington rallied from a 13-point, second-half deficit to win at freefalling Miami.

Deni Avdijja added 13 for the Wizards, who pulled off this comeback just three nights after digging their way out of an 18-

point hole to beat the Brooklyn Nets.

Rui Hachimura and Davis Bertans each scored 11 for Washington.

**Knicks 107, Bulls 103:** Julius Randle scored 27 points and tied a career high by hitting five three-pointers, and New York won at Chicago.

Elfrid Payton added 20 points and eight rebounds. RJ Barrett scored 17, and the Knicks picked up the win after dropping five of six.

Zach LaVine led the Bulls with 24 points. Thaddeus Young scored 19. Lauri Markkanen, coming off back-to-back outings with 30 or more, cooled off with nine points as Chicago lost for the fourth time in five games. It also fell to 3-7 at home.

**Thunder 104, Rockets 87:** Kenrich Williams scored 19 points and host Oklahoma City bounced back from a 30-point loss two days earlier and beat Houston.

**Spurs 111, Timberwolves 108:** DeMar DeRozan scored 30 points and host San Antonio rallied from a 16-point deficit to beat Minnesota.

**Pelicans 123, Suns 101:** Zion Williamson punctuated a 28-point performance with a soaring, one-handed alley-oop jam during a decisive fourth-quarter surge, and host New Orleans routed Phoenix.