

Powerful earthquake rocks Turkey, Syria

Associated Press

ADANA, Turkey — A powerful 7.8 magnitude earthquake rocked wide swaths of Turkey and neighboring Syria on Monday, killing more than 2,600 people and injuring thousands more as it toppled thousands of buildings and trapped residents under mounds of rubble.

Authorities feared the death toll would keep climbing as rescuers searched through tangles of metal and concrete for survivors in a region beset by more than a decade of Syria's civil war and a refugee crisis.

Residents jolted out of sleep by the pre-dawn quake rushed outside in the rain and snow to escape falling debris, while those who were trapped cried for help. Throughout the day, major aftershocks rattled the region, including a jolt nearly as strong as the initial quake. After night fell, workers were still sawing away slabs and still pulling out bodies as desperate families waited for news on trapped loved ones.

"My grandson is 1½ years old. Please help them, please. We can't hear them or get any news from them since morning. Please, they were on the 12th floor," Imran Bahur wept by her destroyed apartment building in the Turkish city of Adana. Her daughter and family were still not found.

Tens of thousands who were left home-

less in Turkey and Syria faced a night in the cold. In Turkey's Gaziantep, a provincial capital about 20 miles from the epicenter, people took refuge in shopping malls, stadiums and community centers. Mosques around the region were opened to provide shelter.

The quake, which was centered on Turkey's southeastern province of Kahramanmaraş, sent residents of Damascus and Beirut rushing into the street and was felt as far away as Cairo.

Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay said such a disaster could hit "once in a hundred years." Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said officials do not know how high the number of dead and injured will rise.

The quake piled more misery on a region that has seen tremendous suffering over the past decade. On the Syrian side, the area affected is divided between government-held territory and the country's last opposition-held enclave, which is surrounded by Russian-backed government forces. Turkey, meanwhile, is home to millions of refugees from the civil war.

No injuries were reported as of Monday afternoon among Defense Department personnel assigned to Incirlik Air Base, located about 8 miles east of the city of Adana, base officials told Stars and Stripes in a statement. The base, which hosts the 39th Air

Base Wing, appears to have avoided any major damage from the quake, officials said, noting the base sits about 124 miles from the epicenter.

The wing "sends our heartfelt condolences to the families who lost loved ones as a result of this morning's earthquake," the base statement said. "Our thoughts are with the families and friends of those not yet accounted for."

The U.S. military and the U.S. Consulate Adana "stand ready to support our Turkish allies," the wing said.

In the rebel-held enclave, hundreds of families remained trapped in rubble, the opposition emergency organization, called the White Helmets, said in a statement. The area is packed with some 4 million people displaced from other parts of the country by the war. Many of them live in buildings that are already wrecked from past bombardments.

Strained health facilities quickly filled with injured, rescue workers said. Others had to be emptied, including a maternity hospital, according to the SAMS medical organization.

The region sits on top of major fault lines and is frequently shaken by earthquakes. Some 18,000 were killed in similarly powerful earthquakes that hit northwest Turkey in 1999.

Services ground some Ospreys for part replacement

Stars and Stripes

Some V-22 Ospreys across three services have been grounded until a part related to an ongoing mechanical issue can be replaced, officials announced over the weekend.

The action affects an unspecified number of the tilt-rotor aircraft used by the Air Force, Marine Corps and Navy that have reached a certain number of flight hours, the Navy said in a statement Saturday.

Once the part is replaced, the grounded Ospreys will be returned to flight status, the Navy said.

There are 296 Ospreys in the Marines' active fleet, and 52 in use by Air Force Special

Operations Command, Defense News reported Sunday.

The Navy is in the middle of receiving 44 of the aircraft, according to the news site.

It's unclear how many of those need the repair or what the flight time limit is.

But the V-22 Joint Program Office recommendation to ground some of the aircraft came after an increase in "hard clutch engagement events and ongoing engineering analysis," the Navy said.

A hard clutch engagement happens when the clutch in a gearbox that connects one of two engines to the propeller rotor slips and then suddenly reengages, causing the aircraft to lurch, Stars and Stripes reported in

September following a related Osprey grounding.

After two incidents last summer, the Air Force grounded all its Ospreys in August, but the Marines and Navy continued flying the aircraft.

The Air Force subsequently resumed flying Ospreys a couple of weeks later after putting risk control measures into place.

Ospreys can take off and land like a helicopter, but once airborne they fly horizontally as a turboprop aircraft.

The Navy's version, the CMV-22B, functions as support to aircraft carriers, transporting personnel, mail, supplies and other cargo, according to the Navy's website.

Stateside B-1B Lancers return to Guam

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

An undisclosed number of B-1B Lancers from South Dakota landed on Guam last week for another of a series of bomber task force missions.

The aircraft, assigned to the 34th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., arrived Feb. 1 at Andersen Air Force Base, according to a Pacific Air Forces news release Friday.

A bomber task force demonstrates the Air Force's ability to "rapidly deploy anywhere, anytime and provide lethal precision" strike options, according to the release.

"Our mission here plays a cru-

cial role in ensuring this dynamic region is free from coercion and accessible to everyone," Lt. Col. Jeffrey Carter, the squadron's director of operations, said in the release.

A squadron spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment Monday.

Bombers routinely deploy to the island territory, a strategic U.S. military hub and home to Andersen, Naval Base Guam and Marine Corps Camp Blaz, still under construction.

The 37th Expeditionary Squadron, also out of Ellsworth, deployed to Guam in October as a bomber task force. Four Lancers also deployed in June. Those bombers flew a variety of mis-

sions, including exercises with the Japan Air Self-Defense Force and refueling operations with the Royal Australian Air Force.

Lancers from the 34th are expected to "continue to integrate and train with Allies and partners through various operations and exercises in the region," according to the release.

The task force missions support National Defense Strategy objectives of "integrated deterrence," create advantages for the U.S. military and enable the bombers to operate both overseas and near the continental U.S., the release said.

Guam is home to key regional power projection platforms and

logistical nodes and is an essential operation base for U.S. efforts to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific region, according to the National Defense Strategy.

"Within the context of homeland defense, an attack on Guam or any other U.S. territory by any adversary will be considered a direct attack on the United States, and will be met with an appropriate response," the document states.

A \$1 billion effort to establish a comprehensive, integrated missile defense system for Guam is underway, an endeavor some lawmakers regard as urgent given North Korea's stepped-up missile testing and China's military ambitions in the region.

Air Force spouses get boost with job program

By ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

An Air Force pilot program aims to address high unemployment among military spouses stationed overseas by helping them more quickly land a new job.

The new direct-hire authority program is designed to provide civilian spouses who face restrictive employment laws in foreign countries with easier access to base employment, the service said in a statement.

Employers participating in the effort would be able to allow spouses to skip the line of a longer, competitive hiring process for open positions.

"We recognize that spouse employment is a fundamental quality of life issue for our airmen and guardians, especially for families in overseas locations," John Carbone, Air Force director of civilian force management for manpower, personnel and services, said in the statement Thursday.

Direct-hire positions must be

permanently located overseas and compensated under the general schedule or federal wage system grade of GS-15 or below and equivalent, according to the Air Force statement.

The Air Force said it will use public notices via civilian personnel offices and will identify qualifying jobs on usajobs.gov and af-civilianservice.com.

U.S. citizens who are dependents with command sponsorship are eligible for the program, Air Force spokeswoman Laurel Falls told Stars and Stripes on Friday. Non-citizen spouses with U.S. resident visas and green cards would not be eligible.

The number of jobs that will be made available under the program is unclear because it will be up to hiring managers to choose whether to participate. Initial appointments to jobs under the program are limited to two years and can be extended twice for a maximum of six years, according to the Air Force statement.

Report: Military child care is tough to find and afford

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department is doing a good job offering quality child care options for military families, but accessibility and affordability remain challenges, a recent government watchdog agency report found.

Waitlists for on-base child care continue to be a pressure point for military families, and some, especially those of lower-ranking service members, are troubled by cost, according to a Government Accountability Office report released Thursday.

"When on-base child care was unavailable, families needed to use community-based, civilian child care centers, which can be more expensive than on-base care, even with fee assistance," according to the report, which included interviews with military family association representatives.

That pinch is evident across military communities world-

wide, potentially affecting family readiness and hurting military spouses who want to work.

For example, DOD child care centers in the Kaiserslautern Military Community in Germany were managing to handle only about 65% of demand in September, officials told Stars and Stripes at the time. That was due to chronic staffing shortages.

About 440 children were then on the waiting list at Army and Air Force care centers in the community. That figure was nearly identical to the tally four years earlier, reflecting a persistent backlog, the Stars and Stripes report found.

The 2021 Military Family Lifestyle Survey by Blue Star Families found that 20% of active-duty spouse respondents who were unemployed but wanted or needed to work cited child care unavailability as an impediment to taking a job, and 34% said child care was too expensive, according to the study released in March 2022.

DOD reports previous Chinese balloons in US

The Washington Post

The Defense Department has notified Congress of several previous incursions of U.S. airspace by Chinese surveillance balloons, with earlier sightings near Texas, Florida, Hawaii and Guam, U.S. officials said Sunday, as Republicans criticized the Biden administration for allowing a suspected surveillance balloon to track across much of the United States over the last week.

Rep. Michael Waltz, R-Fla., a member of the House Armed Services Committee, said in an interview that defense officials identified the locations in a discussion with lawmakers and staff on Saturday, disclosing for the first time that similar surveillance balloons had been spotted in U.S. airspace near the continental United States before. The existence of such balloons near Hawaii and Guam has been reported previously.

Two such incidents were reported near Florida, while there was at least one each in the other three locations, Waltz said.

The defense officials said that several of those events occurred during the Trump administration, Waltz said. Officials had also said that during a news briefing with reporters on Saturday.

The Defense Department was not specific about where in each state the previous incursions occurred, Waltz said.

He added that officials did not say whether the

balloons made it into U.S. airspace, which extends 12 nautical miles from the shore, or over U.S. territory, too. Fox News first reported the additional locations.

The account, verified by two U.S. officials speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, adds to an issue that has become vexing for the U.S. government.

One of the other officials, a congressional aide, said that the disclosure came during a phone briefing with congressional leaders and national security committees. The administration official briefing them said the other incidents had mostly been along or off the coast of the United States.

Several former Trump administration officials, including former Defense Secretary Mark Esper, said they do not recall reports of such balloons reaching their level, raising questions about how they were handled at the time.

A senior administration official, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, said Sunday that the previous occurrences were discovered after the Trump administration left office. U.S. intelligence officials are prepared to offer key officials from the Trump administration briefings about the balloon program, “which has not only violated our sovereignty but the sovereignty of countries across five continents,” the official said.

State of the Union to focus on economy

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden will use his second State of the Union address on Tuesday to remind Americans of how their lives have been improved over his first two years in office, as he tries to confront pessimism in the country and navigate the tricky politics of a newly divided Washington.

Rather than laying out major new policy proposals, Biden was expected to devote much of his speech to highlighting his efforts over the past two years to create jobs, fight inflation and improve the nation’s infrastructure. The speech comes as Biden is honing his pitch to voters ahead of his expected announcement in the next few months that he will seek another term in office despite voter frustrations about the direction of the nation.

“Next week, I’ll be reporting on the state of the Union,” Biden said Friday after a stronger-than-expected jobs report that saw the unemployment rate drop to the lowest level in more than 53 years. “But today, I’m happy to report that the state of the Union and the state of our economy is strong.”

Biden’s remarks will take place in a sharply different context from a year ago. Republicans now control the House of Representatives, rendering it unlikely that any significant legislation reaches Biden’s desk.

“Jobs are up, wages are up, inflation is down, and COVID no longer controls our lives,” Biden told the Democratic National Committee on Friday. “But now, the extreme MAGA Republicans in the House of Representatives have made it clear they intend to put it all at risk. They intend to destroy it.”

Explosion worries lead to warning: Leave derailment site or face arrest

Associated Press

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — Authorities were threatening to arrest anyone who doesn’t leave an evacuation zone near the smoldering wreckage of an Ohio train derailment near the Pennsylvania state line and warned Monday there was a high probability of a toxic gas release.

While crews were working to prevent a major explosion, residents were packing overnight bags, loading their pets into cars and searching for hotel rooms.

Police in the village of East Palestine moved out of their communication center as the threat of an explosion increased.

“I’m worried about leaving and not getting back,” Mallory Burkett, who lives just outside the evacuation area, said Monday just before her family drove out of town. “I’m definitely going to come back, but I’m not sure when.”

Officials warned hundreds of residents who had declined to evacuate earlier to do so Sunday night, saying a rail car was at

risk of a potential explosion that could launch deadly shrapnel as far as a mile.

About 50 cars, including 10 carrying hazardous materials, derailed in a fiery crash Friday night, according to rail operator Norfolk Southern and the National Transportation Safety Board. No injuries to crew, residents or first responders were reported.

Norfolk Southern said 20 of the more than 100 cars on the train were classified as carrying hazardous materials.

Russian forces pressing as anniversary nears

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian forces are keeping Ukrainian troops tied down with attacks in the eastern Donbas region as Moscow assembles additional combat power there for an expected offensive in the coming weeks, Ukrainian officials said Monday.

Intense fighting that has been raging for weeks continued around the city of Bakhmut and the nearby towns of Soledar and Vuhledar, Ukraine's presidential office said.

They are located in the Donetsk region, which with the neighboring Luhansk region makes up the Donbas, an industrial area bordering Russia.

"The battles for the region are heating up," Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said in televised remarks, adding that "the Russians are throwing new units into the battle and eradicating our towns and villages."

In Luhansk, Gov. Serhii Haidai said shelling there had subsided because "the Russians have been saving ammunition for a large-scale offensive."

Military analysts have said the Kremlin's forces may be probing Ukrainian defenses for weak points or could be making a feint while preparing for a main thrust through southern Ukraine.

Ukraine envisages possible Russian offensives in the east and the south, Ukrainian military intelligence spokesman Vadym Skibitsky said. He predicted Russia will likely press its offensive in the Donbas and could also launch an attack in the Zaporizhzhia region.

He didn't say when the offensive might start but noted that the Russian military would need another couple of months to complete the training of new units.

Skibitsky added that Russia

plans to mobilize another 300,000-500,000 troops in addition to the 300,000 mobilized in the fall.

David Arakhamia, who leads President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Servant of the People party in parliament, said Sunday that Ukraine is preparing for a Russian offensive while planning to counterattack and reclaim its occupied territory.

Arakhamia, noting that "time and circumstances call for strengthening and regrouping," also announced that Ukraine's Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov would be moved to another government post and replaced by the head of military intelligence, Kyrylo Budanov. But Arakhamia abruptly changed course Monday and said no shakeup will happen this week.

Mariana Bezuhla, a Servant of the People party lawmaker, said officials decided to postpone the reshuffle following the

analysis of "risks for the system as a whole" ahead of next week's meeting with NATO allies.

One of Reznikov's deputies recently lost his job amid Zelenskyy's crackdown on corruption. Reznikov said over the weekend that he was ready to step down if Zelenskyy decides it is best.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is hungry for some battlefield success, especially securing illegally annexed territory in eastern Ukraine, to mark the anniversary of his invasion on Feb. 24.

Russian forces made gains in the first few months of the war, though they failed to clinch key objectives and were then driven back from large areas by a Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Ukraine's presidential office said Monday that at least one civilian had been killed and 10 others wounded by Russian shelling over the past 24 hours.

Poland moves Patriot missiles to capital for drills

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — Patriot missile batteries that Poland acquired from the United States last year have been deployed to the country's capital, Warsaw, as part of a military exercise, according to Poland's defense ministry.

Poland is taking additional steps to strengthen its defensive capabilities as Russia's war in neighboring Ukraine en-

ters its second year later this month.

At least three ground-to-air missile launchers were seen Monday at Warsaw's Bemowo airport.

Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak said on Twitter over the weekend that the redeployment of the missile batteries from their base in Sochaczew, central Poland, to Warsaw was "an important element to the training" of the 3rd Warsaw

Brigade of Missile Air Defense.

The Patriot batteries are part of Poland's multibillion-dollar armaments purchases from the U.S., South Korea and elsewhere.

Poland has also received Patriot batteries from Germany, to boost its air defenses in the east, where a stray missile came from across the border with Ukraine and killed two civilians last year.

Pope, Protestant leaders denounce anti-gay laws

Associated Press

ABOARD THE PAPAL PLANE — Pope Francis was backed by the ceremonial head of the Anglican Communion and top Presbyterian minister in calling for gays to be welcomed by their churches as he again decried laws that criminalize homosexuality as unjust.

The three Christian leaders spoke on LGBTQ rights during

an unprecedented joint airborne news conference Sunday while returning home from South Sudan, where they took part in a three-day ecumenical pilgrimage to try to nudge forward the young country's peace process.

They were asked about Francis' recent comments to The Associated Press, in which he declared that laws that criminalize

gay people were "unjust" and that "being homosexual is not a crime."

South Sudan is one of 67 countries that criminalizes homosexuality, 11 of them with the death penalty. LGBTQ advocates have said even where such laws are not applied, they contribute to a climate of harassment, discrimination and violence.

The Archbishop of Canterbu-

ry, Justin Welby, recalled that LGBTQ rights were very much on the agenda of the Church of England, and said he would quote the pope's own words when the issue is discussed at the church's upcoming General Synod.

"I wish I had spoken as eloquently and clearly as the pope. I entirely agree with every word he said," Welby said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Hunt ends for mountain lion that attacked boy

CA HALF MOON BAY — California wildlife officials have called off the search for a mountain lion that attacked a 5-year-old boy who was on a hiking trail in rural Northern California, saying there was little chance of capturing the animal.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife said Friday that DNA testing confirmed a mountain lion was responsible for the attack last Tuesday in San Mateo County, south of San Francisco.

But efforts to track down and capture the lion were hampered because investigators have been denied access to private property near the attack site.

Shortly before 7 p.m. Tuesday, the boy was on the trail along Tunitas Creek Road and had raced ahead of his mother and grandparents when the big cat pounced on him and pinned him to the ground, authorities and family members said. His mother, Suzie Trexler, charged the cougar and it let the boy go and ran off.

The boy wasn't bitten, said Capt. Patrick Foy, a department spokesman. His face was scratched and he had a fractured bone near his eye, his aunt, Amie Wagner, told the Chronicle.

Vegas-bound flight lands early with engine issues

NE LINCOLN — A United Airlines flight headed from Chicago to Las Vegas made an unplanned stop in Nebraska on Saturday after the pilot reported engine problems.

Mark Grant, a communications operator at the Lincoln Airport, said 326 passengers and crew members were aboard the Boeing 777 when it took off from O'Hare International Airport.

After the plane lost the use of one of its engines about 70 miles west of Lincoln, the pilot turned around. Grant said the pilot landed the plane safely at the Lincoln Airport at 11:41 a.m.

United Airlines described what happened in a news release as a "technical issue" and said another plane was sent to Lincoln to pick up the passengers of Flight 1888 so they could finish their trip.

No spectators at school games after fight, death

VT ALBURGH — Spectators will not be permitted to attend home basketball games for the rest of the season at a middle school in northern Vermont after a brawl broke out and one of the participants died, school officials said Thursday.

"We recognize that the vast majority of spectators at our events support and model the values of teamwork, collaboration, sportsmanship, health and well-being in student activities. However, we can not ignore the increase in spectator misconduct at school sporting events throughout Vermont, including in our gymnasiums," Grand Isle Supervisory Union administrators said in a statement.

The administrators called their decision "difficult," and said they would call on all leaders in Vermont to not only condemn spectator violence at sporting events "but also con-

sider how best to respond to misbehavior by spectators; and how to better structure educational athletic events to ensure all participants, including spectators, support and exhibit the values of teamwork, collaboration, sportsmanship, health and well-being."

The administrators welcomed ideas about improving the current environment, calling it a "We are all participants" campaign.

Students change street named for KKK leader

NY MALVERNE — A street that honored a leader of the Ku Klux Klan in New York has a new name after a yearslong campaign led by high school students.

The village board of Malverne, on Long Island, voted last year to rename Lindner Place, named after Paul Lindner, a banker who helped develop the village more than a century ago and also served as great titan of the New York State Klan.

The change became official last week when Lindner Place became Acorn Way.

Students pressed for the street name to be changed in school forums and with the village board, which voted to change the name in September 2022.

Man faces pipe bomb charges in school threat

MT GREAT FALLS — A Montana man arrested last year for alleged threats against a high school was charged in federal court Wednesday with possession of pipe bombs, possession of an

unregistered silencer and attempted property damage.

Logan Sea Pallister, 24, pleaded not guilty in U.S. District Court in Great Falls before federal Magistrate Judge John Johnston.

Pallister was arrested at his home in May 2022, a day after allegedly telling a witness he was going to make bombs to use in a school and showing the witness explosive devices.

Federal prosecutors said he intended to "maliciously damage" public school buildings and took a "substantial step" toward that goal prior to his arrest. Court documents did not provide further details on the alleged plans.

'Possible blanks' fired by man in synagogue

CA SAN FRANCISCO — Police in San Francisco are investigating a shooting inside a synagogue during which the unidentified suspect may have fired blanks rather than live rounds Wednesday night in what a synagogue official called an attempt to terrorize Jewish people.

The synagogue did not report the incident until Thursday morning. No injuries or property damage were reported.

Officers responded to a report of threats at the synagogue on Balboa Street around 9:30 a.m. Thursday, the San Francisco Police Department said in a statement early Friday.

The person who made the report described an incident around 7:20 p.m. Wednesday in which an unknown man entered the building and "shot several times," police said.

— From wire reports

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Source: Mavericks get Irving from Nets

Associated Press

DALLAS — Kyrie Irving is getting his wish. He's getting traded.

And Luka Doncic is getting another All-Star to help him in Dallas.

The Mavericks and Brooklyn Nets agreed Sunday on a blockbuster trade: Irving — the super-talented and often-enigmatic eight-time All-Star point guard — heads to Dallas, ending the pairing with Kevin Durant that never really had a chance to click.

The Nets bring Spencer Dinwiddie back to Brooklyn along with Dorian Finney-Smith and a package of draft picks, according to a person familiar with the terms of the deal who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because it had not been finalized. Dallas is also getting Markieff Morris.

The Athletic and ESPN first reported the trade agreement. It will become complete once the teams have a call with the NBA, which is standard for all trades.

The move comes just two days after Irving told the Nets that he wanted to be traded by Thursday's league deadline, after talks about a contract beyond this season didn't go to his liking. He wasn't with the Nets for their game Saturday, and by Sunday afternoon, his time with the franchise he cheered for growing up in New York and New Jersey appeared to be at an end.

"Thank you NetsWorld fans and supporters for the Love on and off the court," Irving tweeted early Monday morning. "I will forever be grateful I got to live out my dream I had as a Kid with y'all. It will always be Love from me and my family."

It was not immediately clear when Irving would make his debut with Dallas. The Mavericks played at Utah on Monday night. ESPN reported that Irving would take a physical in Dallas on Monday with a plan to join the team for a game Wednesday at the Los Angeles Clippers.

Irving is averaging 27.1 points,

5.3 assists and 5.1 rebounds this season. Doncic is averaging 33.4 points, 8.9 rebounds and 8.2 assists. They instantly become one of the NBA's top duos, and figure to make Dallas even a stronger contender in a Western Conference that has no shortage of championship-capable teams.

Irving is, for now, scheduled to become a free agent after the season. The Los Angeles Lakers were believed to have been one of a few teams interested in Irving — a notion that could have reunited Irving with LeBron James, with whom he won a title in Cleveland in 2016.

The trade does again pair Irving with Dallas general manager Nico Harrison, who was a Nike executive before taking over the Mavericks in 2021.

Irving had a relationship with Nike for the entirety of his NBA career until earlier this season, when the sneaker giant dropped him — and canceled the planned release of his next signature shoe just before it dropped — as part of

the massive fallout from Irving posting a link to an antisemitic film on his Twitter account.

That was one of many drama-filled sagas that marked Irving's time with the Nets. He wouldn't get vaccinated against COVID-19 and, because of New York City workplace rules, had to miss most of Brooklyn's home games last season. He also took two leaves of absence during the 2020-21 season.

He has also expressed no shortage of controversial opinions during his career — including repeated questioning whether the Earth was round before eventually apologizing to science teachers.

The various issues limited Irving to 143 games in three-plus seasons with the Nets, and he and Durant were together for just 74 of them after their celebrated pairing in the summer of 2019. Irving signed as a free agent while Durant joined the Nets on a sign-and-trade with Golden State.

Randle, Brunson rally Knicks past Embiid, Sixers

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Julius Randle had 24 points, nine rebounds and seven assists, Jalen Brunson scored 21 points and the New York Knicks overcame an early 21-point deficit to beat the Philadelphia 76ers 108-97 on Sunday night.

Evan Fournier came off the bench to add 17 points for the Knicks, who were playing a night after an overtime loss to the Los Angeles Clippers.

"It was great," Randle said. "I think the biggest difference between last night and tonight, where I thought we could have won, was tonight it was our defense."

Joel Embiid had 31 points for the 76ers, going 18-for-19 from the free-throw line, and grabbed 14 rebounds.

Philadelphia had won nine of its previous 10 games. The 76ers also blew a 21-point lead in a 119-109 loss to Orlando on Monday.

"It's never easy," Embiid said. "A 20-point lead in the NBA, that's nothing. Any team can come back and that's what they did tonight."

Raptors 106, Grizzlies 103: Pascal Siakam scored 19 points, including a pair of free throws with 9 seconds left, and visiting Toronto rallied from a 15-point deficit to beat Memphis.

Jaren Jackson Jr. missed a three-pointer with 5.2 seconds left that would have tied the game for the Grizzlies, who played without star Ja Morant because of right wrist soreness.

Toronto won its second straight game and went 4-3 on its season-long seven-game road swing. Memphis has lost three straight and eight of nine.

Timberwolves 128, Nuggets 98: D'Angelo Russell had 18 points and 10 assists, Anthony Edwards scored 20 and host Minnesota cruised past Denver, which was missing two-time MVP Nikola Jokic and three other starters on the second night of a back-to-back.

Rudy Gobert had 16 points for the Timberwolves, who never trailed and opened a 20-point advantage in the second quarter on the way to a seventh win in 10 games.

Along with Jokic, the Nuggets played without Jamal Murray, Aaron Gordon and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope because of injuries. Michael Porter Jr., the lone regular starter in the lineup, led Denver with 22 points.

Pelicans 136, Kings 104: Trey Murphy III made six three-pointers and scored 30 points as host New Orleans overcame the absence of several starters to beat Sacramento.

CJ McCollum scored 24 points for the Pelicans, Willy Hernangomez had 22 points and 16 rebounds, and Naji Marshall scored 17 points with New Orleans missing Zion Williamson, Brandon Ingram and Jonas Valanciunas.

Magic 119, Hornets 113: Paolo Banchero had 22 points and 10 rebounds, Wendell Carter Jr. added 20 points and 12 rebounds and visiting Orlando took advantage of Charlotte's poor foul shooting.

Cavaliers 122, Pacers 103: Darius Garland scored 24 points, Isaac Okoro added 20 and visiting Cleveland made 15 three-pointers to rout Indiana.

Shiffrin posts DNF in 1st worlds race

Associated Press

MERIBEL, France — American skier Mikaela Shiffrin missed what looked like a certain gold medal Monday on the opening day of the world championships, skiing out of the women's combined race with the finish in sight.

Shiffrin straddled the third-to-last gate in her slalom run while appearing to be close to beating first-run leader and eventual winner Federica Brignone of Italy.

"It doesn't happen very often, no. I felt like I was skiing really well," said Shiffrin, who was the defending champion in the race. "I had a really good run."

Shiffrin was competing in her first major event since failing to win a medal in six starts at last year's Beijing Olympics.

The American is having a standout season on the World

Cup circuit, where she has won 11 races, including five slaloms, in 23 starts and looks to be on the way to her fifth overall title — generally regarded the most important prize in ski racing.

She won three races within six days two weeks ago to raise her career tally to 85 World Cup wins, beating former teammate Lindsey Vonn's women's record of 82 and moving within one of the overall record set by Swedish great Ingemar Stenmark in the 1970s and 80s.

World championship races do not count toward World Cup wins.

Shiffrin was trailing Brignone by 0.96 seconds after the super-G portion of Monday's race but had made up 0.88 of that difference in her slalom run before skiing out.

Brignone had her own costly mistake that slowed her down

just before the flat finishing section. She didn't believe the lead she had built earlier in the super-G portion of the race would hold up.

The combined event adds the results of a super-G run and a slalom run.

Minutes later, though, Brignone screamed and put her hands on her head in disbelief.

"I am so happy and grateful for today," said Brignone, who became the first world champion from Italy in the women's combined. "It was an amazing day. I did two really good runs, also super-G and then slalom. What's missing in my career was a gold medal and I'm so, so excited and so happy about today."

It's the first time since the Olympics that Shiffrin failed to finish a run of a technical race.

"The only way I have a

chance is to ski full, full gas. So I was doing that, take the risk that you don't finish," Shiffrin said. "This is what you have to do if you want to earn a medal at the world championships. On the end, it was like letting it go to the finish just one gate too soon and then you're out."

Shiffrin reacted with apparent open-mouthed astonishment before bending over her ski poles.

"So, that's disappointing, but it's always quite positive how I was skiing," said Shiffrin, whose next race at the worlds is the super-G on Wednesday. "I have some work to do to figure out where I can make up some time in the super-G. It's so much fun to ski this hill so I'm looking forward to it."

Shiffrin has won six world titles and 11 medals from 13 starts at world championships.

No. 3 Houston thwarts Temple's second upset bid

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Kelvin Sampson stepped on Temple's court and saw a rare packed house ready to give Houston as much of a hard time as the Owls did in an unlikely triumph in Texas only two weeks ago.

For a moment, Sampson thought about what a scene like this meant for the coach down the sideline — Temple's Aaron McKie — and the feelings the late Temple coach John Chaney might have had before such a big game.

"My first thought was coach Chaney," Sampson said. "How proud he would have been of Aaron. I know what this looked like when Aaron got here. There's been a steady growth and he's got a good team."

Good. Just not good enough to sweep a Houston team that doesn't lose very often to any team — much less twice to the same one.

Jarace Walker scored 23 points, Marcus Sasser had 13 and No. 3 Houston (22-2, 10-1 American Athletic Conference) earned retribution against Temple with an 81-65 win on Sunday night.

The Owls failed in their bid for a second upset after they toppled the Cougars from No. 1 in the AP men's college basketball poll with a 56-55 win last month in Houston.

Khalif Battle led Temple (14-10, 8-3) with 24 points.

Temple has traditionally struggled to draw a full house at Liacouras Center, even for games that include city rivals or Top 25 teams or in seasons full of NCAA Tournament promise. The arena was packed Sunday, and Owls students swayed behind the basket from the opening tip. There was a T-shirt "white out" that put some needed school spirit on display.

"Kudos to the Temple stu-

dents. They were giving it to us from the baseline," Sampson said.

Temple gave fans plenty of reason to cheer with nine three-pointers in the first half. Battle hit a three for a 26-25 lead, Zach Hicks hit one for a three-point lead and Damian Dunn buried one that sent the Owls into half-time ahead 37-33.

"You never know when you'll get a crowd like that again," Battle said.

Unlike the first game, the Owls couldn't take it to the wire. Houston trailed at halftime for only the third time this season before it rallied to win for the 13th time in 14 games. The Temple loss was the only one in that streak.

Playing the biggest home game in McKie's four seasons, the Owls wilted offensively and didn't have the defensive chops to slow Houston. The Cougars burst the game open with a 13-0

run to open the second half and never let the Owls make a serious run the rest of the way. The Owls were 7-for-24 shooting (29%) from the floor in the second half.

"When a guy made a mistake or didn't make a shot, they dropped their head," in the second half, McKie said. "We just couldn't find a way to get out of our own way."

Consider, in the first game, Temple did not make a bucket over the final 7:18 and was 5-for-21 from the field in the second half. Yet the offensive woes were offset by holding Houston to 34% shooting.

When Walker hit a three for a 56-48 lead Sunday with 8:47 left, it was good enough for one more point than Houston scored in the first game. The Cougars had 25 more in them.

"They're a good team," Battle said. "I feel like we're just as good, if not better."

Bruins roll while rest push for playoffs

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Bruce Cassidy's Vegas Golden Knights lost eight of 10 games going into the All-Star break after leading the Pacific Division at the midway point of the NHL season.

They're still safely in a playoff spot in the Western Conference, but they can't keep it up.

"We're still in a good position — that's the way we look at it," Cassidy said. "There's not too many teams that can cruise home the last 30 games in this league, and we're certainly not one of them."

Cassidy's old team, the Boston Bruins, probably could. They're atop the NHL and running away with the Atlantic Division.

With 39 wins and 83 points through 51 games, Boston is on pace to break the record for the best regular season in NHL history. The Carolina Hurricanes, who beat Boston in seven games in the first round last year, are next in the standings at 76 points.

"Top to bottom, there's no weaknesses," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said.

The Bruins are in a class of their own, but the playoff races behind them in the Eastern and Western conferences should be hot down the stretch with roughly 30 games to go before the chase for the Stanley Cup begins.

Metropolitan Division

The Hurricanes rode a seven-game winning streak into the break, putting some fear into the Bruins in the race for the Presidents' Trophy and home-ice advantage through

the postseason. Winger Max Pacioretty re-tearing his right Achilles tendon five games into his return didn't slow them down, and if their goaltending holds up, Carolina stands a good chance of reaching the East finals.

The second-place New Jersey Devils are contending for the first time since 2018. Bottoming out the next season helped them win the lottery for No. 1 pick Jack Hughes, a two-time All-Star who has them winning ahead of schedule.

They're followed by the New York Rangers, Washington Capitals, Pittsburgh Penguins and New York Islanders. All three New York-area teams could make it, which was the expectation for the Rangers after reaching the East finals last year.

Atlantic Division

The Rangers lost to the Lightning in six games last spring, when two-time champion Tampa Bay reached the Stanley Cup Final for the third consecutive season before getting beat by the Colorado Avalanche.

The Lightning are almost certain to face the Toronto Maple Leafs — who haven't won a playoff series since the NHL salary cap era began in 2005 — in the first round and remain a threat to the Bruins.

But Boston has separated itself despite starting the season without top left winger Brad Marchand and No. 1 defenseman Charlie McAvoy. The Bruins have lost only 12 games under new coach Jim Montgomery.

The Islanders should have some more confidence after acquiring 30-goal scorer Bo Horvat from Vancouver, but still need to

make up ground to get in.

Central Division

Defending champion Colorado climbed in the standings — winning seven of eight going into the break despite an injury-riddled first half of the season. Captain Gabriel Landeskog still has not made his season debut since undergoing knee surgery. It would be foolish to bet against the Avs coming out of the West again.

They still trail the Dallas Stars, Winnipeg Jets and Minnesota Wild in the Central, and the Nashville Predators are on their heels. Only the Stars and Jets are essentially guaranteed a spot.

Pacific Division

Undisputed MVP favorite Connor McDavid and the Edmonton Oilers, who were swept by Colorado in the West finals, have a little bit of catching up to do in the Pacific Division. The top spot is held by the Seattle Kraken, who surprisingly are on pace to make the playoffs in their second season but still need to fend off the Los Angeles Kings and the Vegas Golden Knights.

Edmonton — and the Battle of Alberta rival Calgary Flames — have the talent to not only get in but make a run. McDavid leads the league with 41 goals and 92 points, 16 more than No. 2 scorer and teammate Leon Draisaitl, and is producing unlike anyone since Hall of Famer Mario Lemieux in the mid-1990s.

Now he'll try to carry the Oilers into the playoffs and beyond.

Truex wins sloppy return to Los Angeles Coliseum

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Martin Truex Jr. won NASCAR's return to the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum for its season-opening exhibition race — a sloppy Sunday night extravaganza in which the Wiz Khalifa halftime show might have been the most entertaining part of the event.

Truex took the lead with 25 laps to go in the Busch Light Clash, a 150-lap race that was moved from Daytona International Speedway last year to the Coliseum. NASCAR built a temporary quarter-mile track in-

side the iconic venue in a bold attempt to try something radically different.

Truex, who contemplated retirement during last year's winless season, won for the first time since Sept. 11, 2021.

"Last year was a pretty rough season for us with no wins, and to come out here and kick it off this way, really proud of all these guys," Truex said.

Last year's race was considered a smashing success based on the new fans drawn to the event and excitement over the progressive approach to creating a brand new type of racing.

NASCAR knew it was going to be difficult to duplicate the success in its return, and the racing Sunday wasn't great — there were 25 cautions, and laps under yellow didn't count. There were only five cautions in last year's race.

"Last year's show I felt like was relatively clean and good racing, some bumping, some banging, but we could run long stretches of green flag action," said Kyle Busch. "Today was, I would call it a disaster with the disrespect from everybody of just driving through each other.

"But it's a quarter mile. It's

tight-quarters racing. Actually this is probably how it should have gone last year, so we got spoiled with a good show the first year. Maybe this was just normal."

Truex put Joe Gibbs Racing in victory lane to start 2023 after a horrible close to last year. Austin Dillon and Busch, in his debut for Richard Childress Racing, finished second and third for RCR.

Alex Bowman and Kyle Larson went fourth and fifth for Hendrick Motorsports, and Tyler Reddick was sixth in his debut for 23XL.