

## US eyes China's surveillance program

*The Washington Post*

The U.S. intelligence community has linked the Chinese spy balloon shot down on Saturday to a vast surveillance program run by the People's Liberation Army, and U.S. officials have begun to brief allies and partners who have been similarly targeted.

The surveillance balloon effort, which has operated for several years partly out of Hainan province off China's south coast, has collected information on military assets in countries and areas of emerging strategic interest to China including Japan, India, Vietnam, Taiwan and the Philippines, according to several U.S. officials, who, like others interviewed for this story, spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the matter's sensitivity.

Officials have said these surveillance airships, operated in part by the PLA air force, have been spotted over five continents.

"What the Chinese have done is taken an unbelievably old technology, and basically married it with modern communications and observation capabilities" to try to glean intelligence on other nations' militaries, said one official. "It's a massive effort."

On Monday, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman led a briefing on China's balloon espionage for some 150 people from about 40 embassies, said a senior administration official familiar with the matter. The

department has also sent to every U.S. Embassy a "detailed information" on the espionage that can be shared with allies and partners.

Separately, U.S. officials have begun to share specifics with officials in countries such as Japan whose military facilities were targeted by Beijing.

"There has been great interest in this on the part of our allies and partners," said a senior administration official.

"Many of them recognize that they, too, may be vulnerable or susceptible to this or an object of interest to the PRC," the official said, referring to the People's Republic of China.

In Japan in 2020, an aerial orb drew speculation. "Some people thought this was a UFO," said a Japanese official. "In hindsight, people are realizing that was a Chinese espionage balloon. But at that time, it was purely novel — nobody had seen this. ... So there's a lot of heightened attention at this time."

While most of China's long-range surveillance efforts are conducted by its expanding military satellite array, PLA planners have identified what they consider to be an opportunity to conduct surveillance from the upper atmosphere at altitudes above where commercial jets fly, using balloons that fly between 60,000 and 80,000 feet or higher, officials said.

Analysts still don't know the size of the balloon fleet, but there have been "dozens" of missions since 2018, said one U.S. official. They take advantage of technology provided by a private Chinese company that is part of the country's civil-military fusion effort — a program by which private companies develop technologies and capabilities used by the PLA.

In a news briefing Saturday, senior Pentagon officials alluded to the PLA program, noting that balloons had been operating elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere. "These balloons are all part of a PRC fleet of balloons developed to conduct surveillance operations, which also violated the sovereignty of other countries," said one senior defense official.

The official flatly rejected China's assertion that the airship moving over the United States was a weather balloon that had been blown off its course. "This is false," the official said. "This was a PRC surveillance balloon. This surveillance balloon purposefully traversed the United States and Canada. And we are confident it was seeking to monitor sensitive military sites."

Some commentators have made light of the Chinese effort, noting that balloons are not the most high-tech of platforms. But others have cautioned against dismissing the balloons' potential.

## Hope fades for finding survivors from earthquake

*Associated Press*

GAZIANTEP, Turkey — With the hope of finding survivors fading, stretched rescue teams in Turkey and Syria searched Wednesday for signs of life in the rubble of thousands of buildings toppled by a catastrophic earthquake. The confirmed death toll from the world's deadliest quake in more than a decade neared 12,000.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan toured a "tent city" in hard-hit Kahramanmaraş where people forced from their homes were living. Amid calls for his government to send more help to the disaster zone, Erdogan conceded initial shortfalls in the response to Monday's 7.8 magnitude

quake but vowed that no one would "be left in the streets."

Search teams from more than two dozen countries have joined tens of thousands of local emergency personnel on the ground in Syria and Turkey, and aid pledges have poured in from around the world. But the scale of destruction from the earthquake and its powerful aftershocks was so immense and spread over such a wide area, including places isolated by Syria's ongoing civil war, that many people were still waiting for help.

Experts said the survival window for those trapped under the rubble or otherwise unable to obtain basic necessities was clos-

ing rapidly. At the same time, they said it was too soon to abandon hope.

"The survival ratio on average within 24 hours is 74%, after 72 hours it is 22% and by the fifth day it is 6%," said Steven Godby, a natural hazards expert at Nottingham Trent University in England.

Stories of rescues continued to provide hope that some people still trapped might be found alive. A crying newborn still connected by the umbilical cord to her deceased mother was rescued Monday in Syria. In Turkey's Kahramanmaraş, rescuers pulled a 3-year-old boy from the rubble, and rescuers sent by the Israeli military saved a 2-year-old boy.

# Biden asks Congress to ‘finish the job’

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden exhorted Congress Tuesday night to work with him to “finish the job” of rebuilding the economy and uniting the nation as he delivered a State of the Union address aimed at reassuring a country beset by pessimism and fraught political divisions.

In his 73-minute speech, Biden sought to portray a nation dramatically improved from the one he took charge of two years ago: from a reeling economy to one prosperous with new jobs; from a crippled, pandemic-weary nation to one that has now reopened, and a democracy that has survived its biggest test since the Civil War.

“Folks, the story of America is a story of progress and resilience. Of always moving forward. Of never, ever, giving up,” Biden said. “It’s a story unique among all nations. We’re the only country that has emerged from every crisis we’ve ever entered stronger than when we got into it.”

“We’re not finished yet by any stretch of

the imagination,” he declared.

The backdrop for the annual address was markedly different from the previous two years, with a Republican speaker now sitting expressionless behind Biden and newly empowered GOP lawmakers in the chamber sometimes shouting criticism of him and his administration.

As Biden, 80, prepares for a likely reelection bid, he sought to prove to a skeptical nation that his stewardship has delivered results both at home and abroad. He highlighted record job creation during his tenure as the country has emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, and pointed to areas of bipartisan progress in his first two years in office, including on states’ vital infrastructure projects and high-tech manufacturing.

And he said, “There is no reason we can’t work together and find consensus on important things in this Congress as well.”

“The people sent us a clear message. Fighting for the sake of fighting, power for

the sake of power, conflict for the sake of conflict, gets us nowhere,” Biden said. “That’s always been my vision for the country: to restore the soul of the nation, to rebuild the backbone of America — the middle class — and unite the country.”

“We’ve been sent here to finish the job!”

But the challenges for Biden are many: economic uncertainty, a wearying war in Ukraine, growing tensions with China and more. Signs of past trauma at the Capitol, most notably the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection, were unavoidable: A large fence encircled the complex, and lawmakers and those in attendance faced tighter-than-usual security.

From the start, the heightened partisan divisions were clear. Democrats — including Vice President Kamala Harris — jumped to applause as Biden began his speech. New Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, though he had greeted the president warmly when he entered the chamber, stayed in his seat.

## Zelenskyy thanks UK in person, seeks fighter jets

Associated Press

LONDON — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pushed for fighter jets to ensure his country’s victory over Russia in a dramatic speech before the U.K. Parliament, where he also thanked the British people for their support since “Day One” of Moscow’s invasion.

The embattled leader’s surprise visit to Britain in a bid for more advanced weapons comes as Ukraine braces for an expected Russian offensive and hatches its own plans to retake land held by Moscow’s forces. Support from Western allies has been key to Ukraine’s surprisingly stiff defense, and the two sides are engaged in grinding battles.

At a joint news conference in front of a tank at the Lulworth Camp training base, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said fighter jets were “part of the conver-

sation” about support for Ukraine.

“Nothing is off the table,” he said. “We must arm Ukraine in the short term, but we must bolster Ukraine for the long term.”

It was only Zelenskyy’s second foreign trip since Russia invaded on Feb. 24, 2022, after a December visit to Washington. French President Emmanuel Macron’s office said he would host Zelenskyy and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Paris later in the day, and expectations were growing that he might meet European Union leaders in Brussels on Thursday.

Before that, Sunak and Zelenskyy flew by helicopter to a British army base to meet Ukrainian troops being trained on the Challenger 2 tanks that the U.K. is sending as part of the hundreds that Kyiv says it needs.

Hundreds of lawmakers and

parliamentary staff packed the 900-year-old Westminster Hall, the oldest — and, on a cold winter day, unheated — part of Parliament for Zelenskyy’s speech.

Zelenskyy, wearing his trademark olive drab sweatshirt, urged allies to send his country jets, saying combat aircraft would be “wings for freedom.”

In a pointed and dramatic gesture, Zelenskyy presented the speaker of the House of Commons with a Ukrainian air force helmet, inscribed by a Ukrainian pilot: “We have freedom. Give us wings to protect it.”

The president is trying to soften allies’ reluctance to send advanced fighter jets, both because they are complex to fly and for fear of escalating the war.

The U.K. has repeatedly said it’s not practical to provide the Ukrainian military with British

warplanes, but its stance may be changing. The government said Wednesday it would train Ukrainian pilots on “NATO-standard fighter jets,” without saying what kind.

Zelenskyy, who planned to meet later with King Charles III, noted that the British monarch was a qualified military pilot.

“The king is an air force pilot,” Zelenskyy said, and “in Ukraine today, every air force pilot is a king.”

Zelenskyy was greeted with applause, cheers and cries of “Slava Ukraini” — “Glory to Ukraine” — as he arrived in Parliament, where Ukraine’s cause has wide support from both the Conservative government and opposition parties.

Zelenskyy addressed the U.K. Parliament remotely in March, two weeks after the start of the invasion.

# USS Little Rock retires after flaws, delays

*The Buffalo (N.Y.) News*

Some 8,500 people turned out on Dec. 16, 2017, to watch the commissioning of the \$440 million USS Little Rock — draped in red, white and blue bunting — at Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park.

That now appears to have been the ship's only bright moment.

Not even six years later, the USS Little Rock will be decommissioned on March 31 at Mayport Naval Station in Florida, where it is stationed.

The 387-foot-long vessel was imperiled from the start with significant design flaws that the Navy has concluded cannot be overcome.

U.S. Navy officials first announced at a media briefing almost a year ago that nine Freedom-class littoral combat ships would be decommissioned as part of the 2023 fiscal

year budget.

"It's somewhat of an embarrassment," said Paul Marzello, the Naval Park's executive director. "It was a happy moment, a proud moment on Dec. 16, 2017, and here it is five-and-a-half years later, and she's being decommissioned."

"It is really a disappointment," said Maurice Naylor, who chaired the commissioning committee. "We were so proud of the way we joined forces for this historic event, and it certainly put a nice sheen on Buffalo's reputation."

The Little Rock suffered a major failure at sea in 2020, six weeks after departing Mayport on its first deployment due to a flaw in the propulsion system, according to defense-news.com.

The nine Lockheed Martin-built high-speed vessels were designed to operate in

shallow waters, and they were outfitted with some 8,000 computer sensors. All were hit with the propulsion problem. The ships will likely be scrapped or sunk to the bottom of an ocean — the fate of many decommissioned ships.

Rear Adm. John Gumbleton, the deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for budget, put the cost of the nine vessels — the newest of which was commissioned in 2020 — to be decommissioned at \$4.5 billion, according to defenseneews.com.

"That's a lot of money going, literally, right down the drain," said Mike Vogel, president of the Buffalo Lighthouse Association. "It was a very expensive ship that had all kinds of potential, and it was certainly an honor to have it commissioned here in Buffalo. It's kind of heartbreaking to see it a little bit later being decommissioned and probably scrapped."

## Report finds high levels of toxins on Okinawa

By **MATTHEW M. BURKE**  
AND **KEISHI KOJA**

*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP KINSER, Okinawa — A Marine Corps report in 2019 detailed high levels of toxins at Camp Kinser logistics base on southern Okinawa, but concluded they posed no risk to the base population.

A "human health risk assessment" by the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center, from Oct. 16, 2019, revealed high levels of dioxin and pesticides at three spots on Camp Kinser.

The Okinawa Times obtained the document through the Freedom of Information Act and first reported on it Jan. 16. Marine Corps Installations Pacific responded to the Times article afterward and later provided Stars and Stripes a copy of the health center's report on Jan. 24.

While the levels were reportedly not high enough to induce cancer, they exceeded U.S. Environmental Protection Agency safety standards, according to the document's authors. In November and December 2018, however, when the soil samples were taken, the toxin levels po-

tentially posed a "substantial impact to human health and safety" in at-risk populations like children and landscapers, the report states.

"Measures including fencing and signage were implemented in those specific areas to prevent exposure to Camp Kinser workers and residents," Marine spokeswoman 1st Lt. Ashleigh Fairrow said in a statement emailed Jan. 20. "There is no current risk to human health in these areas."

### Exposed to elements

The health center launched the study in 2018 due to a congressional inquiry from U.S. Rep. Julia Brownley, the report said. The California Democrat made the inquiry after receiving a letter from a concerned constituent with a grandson stationed in Japan.

Kinser was once home to the Makiminato Service Area, where "large amounts" of Vietnam War-era chemicals were stored in the late 1960s to early '70s, according to a 1993 U.S. Forces Japan position paper. The chemicals included insect, rodent and plant killers, along

with acids, alkalis, degreasers and solvents.

The barrels were exposed to the elements for long periods and their contents leaked into the soil, which then seeped into the sea, according to the paper.

Makiminato occupied the area that extends south from the Kinser Fitness Center to just south of the dental and medical clinics, the health center's report said. Contaminated soil removed from that area was later used as fill in the vicinity of Kinser Elementary School and the adjacent sports fields.

### 'Potentially hazardous'

The health center found the toxic equivalent of 0.0025 milligrams per kilogram of the dioxin 2,3,7,8-Tetrachlorodibenzo-dioxin in the area of Maintenance Building 1304, an outdoor exercise facility and the base's skatepark, the health center's report said.

That is more than 500 times the EPA's carcinogenic screening level of 0.0000048 milligrams per kilogram for dioxin, according to data on the EPA's website, and more than double Japan's safe soil standard of

0.001 milligrams per kilogram, a spokesman from Japan's environment ministry told Stars and Stripes on Jan. 25.

The EPA considers values below the carcinogenic screening level to be "negligible," the health center's report said.

The fields surrounding the base medical clinic registered 0.00066 milligrams per kilogram of 2,3,7,8-Tetrachlorodibenzo-dioxin, more than 100 times the EPA carcinogenic screening level, the health center's report said. This area was deemed potentially hazardous to children.

### Removal request

The Urasoe city assembly on Tuesday expressed concerns over the contaminated soil and voted unanimously to request its removal prior to the handover of any base land back to local authorities, which is slated to begin after 2025, a city spokesman told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday.

The request is being sent to Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, Japan's defense and foreign affairs ministers and other top political authorities.

# Memphis officer took, shared photos of Nichols

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Documents released Tuesday provided a scathing account of what authorities called the “blatantly unprofessional” conduct of five officers involved in the fatal police beating of Tyre Nichols during a traffic stop last month—including new revelations about how one officer took and shared pictures of the bloodied victim.

The officer, Demetrius Haley, stood over Nichols as he lay propped against a police car and took photographs, which Haley sent to other officers and a female acquaintance, according

to documents released by the Tennessee Peace Officers Standards and Training Commission.

“Your on-duty conduct was unjustly, blatantly unprofessional and unbecoming for a sworn public servant,” the Memphis Police Department wrote in requesting that Haley and the other officers be decertified.

Haley’s lawyer declined to comment, and lawyers for the other four officers either declined to comment or did not respond to requests from The Associated Press.

The five officers — Haley, Desmond Mills Jr., Tadarrius Bean, Justin Smith and Emmitt Martin III — have all been fired and charged with second-degree murder.

The new documents offer the most detailed account to date of each officer’s actions.

Another officer has also been fired and a seventh has been relieved of duty in connection with the latest police killing to prompt angry nationwide protests and an intense public conversation about how police officers treat Black residents.

As many as 13 Memphis offi-

cers could end up being disciplined, officials said Tuesday.

The newly released documents are part of a request by the Memphis Police Department that the five officers who have been charged with murder be decertified and prohibited from working in law enforcement again. Memphis Police Chief Cerelyn “CJ” Davis signed each of the five requests to decertify the officers.

Nichols died three days after the beating. His family attended the State of the Union address Tuesday as guests of first lady Jill Biden.

## Fed: Strong hiring could force further rate hikes

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said Tuesday that if the U.S. job market further strengthens in the coming months or inflation readings accelerate, the Fed might have to raise its benchmark interest rate higher than it now projects.

Powell’s remarks followed the government’s blockbuster report last week that employers added 517,000 jobs in January, nearly double December’s gain. The unemployment rate fell to its lowest level in 53 years, 3.4%.

“The reality is if we continue to get strong labor market reports or higher inflation reports, it might be the case that we have to raise rates more” than is now expected, Powell said in remarks to the Economic Club of Washington.

Though price pressures are easing and Powell said he envisions a “significant” decline in inflation this year, he cautioned that so far the central bank is seeing only “the very early stages of disinflation. It has a long way to go.”

Even as the Fed has raised rates dramatically — by 4.5 percentage points, to a range of 4.5% to 4.75%, the fastest increase in

four decades — the job market has remained surprisingly resilient. In addition, inflation, though still high, slowed to a year-over-year rate of 6.5% in December from 9.1% in June.

The slowdown in inflation, even while the economy has stayed healthy, has raised hopes in financial markets that the Fed might be able to achieve its goal without having to raise borrowing rates so high as to cause a steep recession. But Powell brushed aside that notion Tuesday.

“There’s been an expectation that it’ll go away quickly and painlessly,” Powell said. “I don’t think that’s at all guaranteed.”

Instead, he warned that in his estimation, “it will take some time, and we’ll have to do more rate increases and then we’ll have to look around and see if we’ve done enough.”

Inflation has slowed at the same time that the unemployment rate has declined — a trend that defies most economic models. Powell said that phenomenon reflects the unique nature of the post-pandemic U.S. economy.

“It’s just confounded all sorts of attempts to predict what it will do,” he said.

## Man jailed in monkey case says he’d steal more animals

Associated Press

DALLAS — A 24-year-old man now linked to an unusual string of crimes that kept the Dallas Zoo on the lookout for missing animals told police that after he swiped two monkeys from their enclosure, he took them onto the city’s light rail system to make his getaway, court records show.

Davion Irvin also said he loves animals and that if he’s released from jail, he would steal more, the documents said.

Irvin, who remained jailed Tuesday on \$25,000 bond, was arrested last week after asking questions at a downtown Dallas aquarium about animals there. He is charged with six counts of animal cruelty and two counts of burglary. An attorney listed for Irvin in court records did not respond to a request for comment.

Irvin told police that on Jan. 29, he waited until dark, jumped a fence to get onto zoo grounds, cut the metal mesh of an enclosure and took the two emperor tamarin monkeys, according to arrest warrant affidavits. He then got on the city’s light rail before walking to the vacant home where he said he kept his animals.

Acting on a tip from the public, police found the monkeys named

Bella and Finn on Jan. 31, the day after they were discovered missing, at the empty home in Lancaster, about 15 miles south of the zoo. Multiple cats and pigeons were also in the home, in addition to dead feeder fish and fish food that had disappeared from a staff-only area of the zoo earlier in January but wasn’t reported stolen at the time, affidavits said.

Irvin has been charged in two of the odd events over a span of several weeks at the zoo and is linked to another, police said. In the taking of the monkeys, Irvin faces one count of burglary and six counts of animal cruelty — three for each monkey. He also faces a burglary charge in relation to the escape of a clouded leopard named Nova, who was discovered missing Jan. 13.

A cut was found in her enclosure. She was found later that day near her habitat.

Irvin told investigators that he’d wanted to take Nova but that he was only able to pet her before she got on top of her enclosure, an affidavit said.

Police said they’ve linked Irvin to the cutting of an enclosure for langur monkeys, but he hasn’t been charged in that. None of the langur monkeys escaped.

**AMERICAN ROUNDUP**

**Deputies kill man armed with spiked bat**

**CA** MORENO VALLEY — Riverside California sheriff’s deputies shot and killed a man diagnosed with schizophrenia Monday after he came toward them with a spike-tipped baseball bat, authorities said.

Deputies were called to a home in Moreno Valley just after 12:30 p.m. by a woman who reported that her son, Jesus Antonio Rodriguez, 33, who was diagnosed with schizophrenia, “was under the influence of an unknown substance and being aggressive towards her,” a Sheriff’s Department statement said.

“When deputies arrived, Rodriguez ran to his bedroom and started yelling at them from the doorway,” the statement said.

Deputies tried to deescalate the situation but Rodriguez grabbed a baseball bat tipped with sharp metal spikes, authorities said.

Deputies fired twice with a stun gun, without effect, and Rodriguez was shot when he advanced toward them with the bat, the Sheriff’s Department said.

**Delayed homeless shelter pods to open this week**

**VT** BURLINGTON — A shelter pod community for homeless residents in Vermont’s largest city is opening this week after several delays, Burlington officials announced Monday.

The emergency housing includes 23 prefabricated single-occupancy pods, and five double-occupancy pods, as well as a

community center where residents will have access to food, services and programs. Two more single units are expected to arrive soon and officials expect to have all of the pods occupied by the end of the month. Eighty people applied for the 35 beds, officials said.

“The need for this project to open is so acute,” said Samantha Dunn, the city’s assistant director for community works.

The shelter pod community was expected to open in late November, but the schedule was delayed, by supply chain, labor and other issues, an official said.

**Convicted gynecologist jailed before sentencing**

**NY** NEW YORK — An ex-gynecologist convicted of sexually abusing hundreds of patients was ordered to spend the next two months in jail as he awaits sentencing, a federal judge in New York City ruled Wednesday.

After hearing statements from some of the victims during the bail hearing, U.S. District Court Judge Richard Berman tersely shot down defense attorneys seeking to allow the doctor, Robert Hadden, to remain free while awaiting an April sentencing hearing.

Hadden, 64, of Englewood, N.J., was convicted last week after less than a day of deliberations at a two-week trial, in which nine former patients described how he sexually abused them during examinations, when they were most vulnerable.

Hadden’s conviction in federal court on four counts of enticing victims to cross state

lines so he could sexually abuse them carries a potential penalty of decades in prison.

**Mom sent to prison for role in teen son’s death**

**WI** WAUPACA — A Wisconsin woman was sentenced to 15 years in prison Monday for her role in the fatal shooting of her 18-year-old son during a dispute with a man over stolen reptiles.

Tiffany Powell was also ordered to discuss the incident with authorities on each anniversary of Ryelee Manete-Powell’s death, WLUK-TV reported.

Manete-Powell was fatally shot in Waupaca, 65 miles west of Green Bay, in October 2020 when confronted with the theft of several reptiles worth nearly \$30,000.

A first-degree homicide case is pending against Bill Zelenski, who owned the reptiles. Police said Powell handled a shotgun at one point and was present when her son was killed.

Powell was convicted of first-degree recklessly endangering safety and illegally possessing a firearm.

**Man gets prison term in Planned Parenthood fire**

**MI** KALAMAZOO — A man who was inspired by a church sermon to set fires at a Planned Parenthood clinic in southwestern Michigan was sentenced Monday to five years in prison.

Joshua Brereton, 25, had pleaded guilty to committing arson at the Kalamazoo clinic last July. The clinic was not open at the time.

Planned Parenthood offers abortion services. Brereton has made videos calling abortion a “genocide of babies.”

U.S. District Judge Paul Maloney ordered a five-year prison term, the mandatory minimum under federal law.

Clinic repairs and lost income due to the arson totaled about \$33,000, said prosecutors, who noted that Brereton set three separate fires on the outside of the building.

**House pushes blueberry and opal as state symbols**

**MS** JACKSON — The Mississippi House has voted to recognize two new symbols — the blueberry as the state fruit and the opal as the state gemstone.

Both bills passed Monday, and they will move to the Senate for more work.

Republican Rep. Jill Ford, of Madison, said a fourth-grade civics class in Madison County proposed the blueberry legislation after they did research and learned that blueberries are the most-produced fruit in the state.

The blueberry proposal, House Bill 1027, passed the House 110-1. House Speaker Philip Gunn noted that Democratic Rep. Chris Bell, of Jackson, who said during the debate he doesn’t like blueberries, cast the “one sour nay” vote.

The opal proposal is House Bill 772. It passed 115-0.

“In Mississippi, we don’t have diamonds, we don’t have rubies ... but we do have vast supplies of the opal,” said Republican Rep. Becky Currie, of Brookhaven.

— From wire reports



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# LeBron takes over NBA scoring lead

Associated Press

LeBron James got the first official statistic of his NBA career on a rebound. His next entry on the stat sheet was an assist.

Even then, points weren't the priority. They never were.

Somehow, he became the most prolific scorer in NBA history anyway. It finally happened Tuesday night, the kid from Akron, Ohio, connecting on a stepback jumper to push his career total to 38,388 points and break the record that Kareem Abdul-Jabbar held for nearly 39 years.

James outstretched his arms after his 36th point of the night for the Los Angeles Lakers, threw both hands in the air, then smiled. Abdul-Jabbar rose from his seat and clapped. The game was stopped as members of James' family, including his mother, his wife and their three children, took the floor for a cer-

emony recognizing the moment.

"It's never gotten my juices flowing," James told The Associated Press, when asked what the scoring record means to him. "I'm there now because I never, ever thought about it. The only thing I ever thought about was winning championships, maybe a couple MVPs, maybe defensive player of the year. But scoring championships and records, I'm telling you, that was never on my mind."

Abdul-Jabbar — a longtime Laker and one of many celebrities and sports stars who made sure they were there to see history — became the league's all-time leading scorer on April 5, 1984, and wound up retiring in 1989 with 38,387 points. It was a record that some thought would last forever, with very few even coming close. Karl Malone retired 1,459 points behind Abdul-

Jabbar, Kobe Bryant was 4,744 points shy, and Michael Jordan was 6,095 points away.

James passed them all, then caught Abdul-Jabbar, too. The 38-year-old — who finished with 38 points in the Lakers' 133-130 loss — did it in his 20th season. Abdul-Jabbar also played 20 NBA seasons.

"You've got to give him credit for just the way that he planned to last and to dominate," Abdul-Jabbar told TNT.

And now, King James — a moniker he's had since high school, when he was just a kid from Akron — is the NBA's scoring king, with 38,390 points and counting.

"A record that has stood for nearly 40 years, which many people thought would never be broken," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said.

Abdul-Jabbar held the ball aloft, then handed it to James,

the ceremonial passing of the torch. They posed for photos with Silver, then with one another. James wiped away tears from his eyes, then addressed the crowd.

"I just want to say, thank you to the Laker faithful. You guys are one of a kind," James said. "To be able to be in the presence of such a legend as great as Kareem, it's very humbling. Please give a standing ovation to the Captain, please."

James then thanked his family and those who have supported him, including Silver and the late NBA Commissioner David Stern.

"I thank you guys so much for allowing me to be a part of something I've always dreamed about," James said.

James is the only member of the NBA's triple-quintuple club: at least 10,000 points, 10,000 rebounds and 10,000 assists.

## Phoenix gets Booker back, holds off Nets, Thomas

Associated Press

NEW YORK — These aren't the Phoenix Suns that fell apart after Devin Booker was hurt.

The team he came back to is surging and doesn't expect that to change.

"We're going to have this thing rolling now," Deandre Ayton said. "Suns basketball on the way for sure."

Ayton matched his career high with 35 points, Booker scored 19 in his first game since Christmas and the Suns held off Cam Thomas and the Brooklyn Nets 116-112 on Tuesday night.

Booker missed 21 games with a left groin strain. The Suns had a stretch of nine losses in 10 games early in his absence but have won nine of 11.

"Now we're back and we have our guy back, so he knows we're locked and loaded," Ayton said.

The 21-year-old Thomas led a

late charge and finished with 43 points, becoming the youngest player in NBA history with three straight 40-point games. He had 44 and a career-high 47 points in his previous two games, but the Nets are 1-2 during Thomas' run.

**Nuggets 146, Timberwolves 112:** Nikola Jokic posted his 19th triple-double of the season by halftime and host Denver rode a 49-point first quarter to a rout of Minnesota.

Jokic finished with 20 points, 16 assists and 12 rebounds. It was the second time in his career the big man has notched a triple-double by halftime. Jokic took a seat late in the third quarter.

Denver led 49-19 after the first quarter as the Nuggets shot 79.2% from the floor. Michael Porter Jr. led the way by scoring 19 of his 30 points in the opening period.

Aaron Gordon added 24 for the Nuggets, who set season highs in points and assists (44).

Anthony Edwards and Luka Garza both had 19 points for Minnesota.

**Knicks 102, Magic 98:** Jalen Brunson scored 25 points and made the go-ahead basket with 1:13 left, Julius Randle had 22 points and 14 rebounds, and visiting New York beat Orlando.

Brunson's running bank shot put the Knicks up for good at 94-93. He then fed Jericho Sims for a dunk and a three-point lead.

The teams combined to shoot 10 free-throw attempts in the final 7.7 seconds. The only miss was by Orlando's Paolo Banchero, who intentionally tried to set up a tying basket with 2.3 seconds left.

Markelle Fultz led the Magic with 21 points.

**Pelicans 116, Hawks 107:**

Brandon Ingram scored 30 points, CJ McCollum added 21 and host New Orleans beat Atlanta for its third straight victory.

The Pelicans led 111-95 when Trey Murphy III hit his fourth three-pointer with 3:24 to go. Atlanta responded with a 7-0 run, but New Orleans held on.

Bogdan Bogdanovic scored 22 points for Atlanta and Trae Young had 16 points and 16 assists.

**Grizzlies 104, Bulls 89:** Ja Morant scored 34 points, Jaren Jackson Jr. added 24 points and five blocks, and host Memphis rallied in the fourth quarter to beat Chicago.

Nikola Vucevic had 28 points and 17 rebounds for the Bulls, whose three-game winning streak ended. Chicago played without leading scorer DeMar DeRozan because of right hip soreness.

# Hurts went from mystery to cornerstone

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Brandon Graham laughed as he recalled all the doubters who rushed him during the offseason and blurted out the same question — the main concern, really — about the state of the Philadelphia Eagles quarterback.

“What’s Jalen going to do?” said Graham, the strip-sacking defensive end.

Yes, it’s hard to remember now, but Jalen Hurts was a bit of a mystery headed into his second full season as the starting QB. His solid 2021 season was marred by a poor playoff performance against Tampa Bay (that included two crushing interceptions) and reports of a rough go at organized team activities.

So the question raised around Philly really was, what’s Jalen going to do?

“I don’t know how many times I got that from fans, even some media people,” Graham said. “I don’t know, the X-factor is Jalen. We don’t know what Ja-

len is going to do.”

How about take the Eagles to the brink of their second Super Bowl championship?

Hurts launched the Eagles from preseason 30-1 odds to win the Super Bowl to staking them as 1½-point favorites against Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs in the Super Bowl.

As the seconds ticked down in the NFC championship victory over San Francisco, Graham and Fletcher Cox embraced Hurts on the sideline. As a couple of defensive stalwarts, they wanted to thank the quarterback that made it all happen.

“I was just telling him, I appreciate him because of all the things that he had to overcome this year,” Graham said. “You didn’t see him get rattled not one time. Man, I’m going to fight for a guy like that every time.”

The only true setback this season was a sprained right shoulder that cost Hurts two games. He is still playing through it; Hurts was a modest 15-for-25 passing for 121 yards

and ran for 39 yards and a touchdown against the 49ers. The 24-year-old Hurts has downplayed the severity of the injury from the beginning. He simply said Thursday, “I’m getting there.”

The AFC champion Chiefs are prepared for Hurts at full speed.

“This is the Jalen Hurts Show at the end of the day,” defensive end Frank Clark said. “If you can stop what he’s doing, you can possibly slow them down. But he’s playing some great football.”

Hurts is appreciative of the magnitude of the moment. Mahomes and Hurts are both Texas natives. They are both NFL MVP finalists.

Hurts said he tried to live up to the trail blazed in Philadelphia by fellow Black quarterbacks such as Donovan McNabb, Michael Vick and Randall Cunningham.

Hurts was honored to match up with Mahomes.

“I think it’s history. I think it’s something that’s worthy of be-

ing noted,” Hurts said.

The Chiefs beat the Eagles in October 2021 when Hurts threw for 387 yards and two touchdowns. Mahomes? Well, he threw for five. But the game was one of the earliest signs that Hurts would grow into the man in Philly.

“He had a great game this day,” Eagles coach Nick Sirianni said, “but he continues to get better.”

The Eagles stunned their fans when they drafted Hurts out of Oklahoma in the second round in 2020. They seemingly had Carson Wentz entrenched at QB and had more pressing needs. Hurts was expected to serve as insurance for Wentz. Instead, he supplanted him.

“When we drafted him, it was the upside we were banking on,” Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie said. “We thought he had a huge upside. It takes a couple years. And somebody so dedicated as Jalen and such a great teammate, inevitably he is going to maximize everything he has and that’s what he’s done.”

## No. 8 Virginia clamps down on surging NC State

Associated Press

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — Jayden Gardner scored 18 points and Reece Beekman added 15 and No. 8 Virginia cooled off red-hot No. 22 North Carolina State 63-50 on Tuesday night.

The Cavaliers (18-4, 10-3 Atlantic Coast Conference) handed the Wolfpack (19-6, 9-5) their second loss in 10 games and moved into a share of first place in the conference with Clemson and Pittsburgh.

The Wolfpack arrived leading the ACC with an average of 79.6 points and were 19-2 when scoring at least 70, but became the 38th consecutive league opponent held to less than 70 points at John Paul Jones Arena.

Terquavion Smith led N.C.

State with 19 points. Casey Morsell, who spent his first two seasons at Virginia and was jeered nearly every time he touched the ball in his first game back, had 18 points before fouling out in the final minute.

Jarkel Joiner, the Wolfpack’s No. 2 scorer at 16.2 points per game, missed 12 of his 14 shots and scored five points. D.J. Burns Jr. (eight points) was the only other Wolfpack player to score.

**No. 21 UConn 87, No. 10 Marquette 72:** Jordan Hawkins scored 20 points and Tristen Newton recorded his second triple-double of the season for the host Huskies.

Newton had 12 points, 12 assists and 10 rebounds for UConn

(19-6, 8-6 Big East), which won its third straight game after losing six of eight.

Adama Sanogo added 18 points, while Alex Karaban and Nahiem Alleyne each chipped in with 13 for Connecticut, which never trailed.

Tyler Kolek had 17 points to lead Marquette (19-6, 11-3), which had its five-game winning streak snapped.

**No. 12 Kansas State 82, No. 17 TCU 61:** Markquis Nowell scored 18 points and the host Wildcats finished strong, snapping a two-game skid.

Kansas State outscored TCU 17-2 to end the game.

The Wildcats (19-5, 7-4 Big 12), who lost to TCU earlier this season, moved within a game of

first-place Texas in a crowded conference race.

TCU (17-7, 6-5) was led by Damion Baugh with 14 points.

**No. 18 Indiana 66, No. 24 Rutgers 60:** Trayce Jackson-Davis scored 20 points and had 18 rebounds while reaching yet another major milestone for the host Hoosiers.

The fourth-year forward became the sixth player in school history with 2,000 career points and the first among them who also had 1,000 rebounds.

Jackson-Davis has 2,004 points, 1,035 rebounds and a school-record 242 blocks. He’s hit all three milestones during a stretch in which Indiana (17-7, 8-5 Big Ten) has won seven of eight.

# Meier's OT goal puts Sharks over Lightning

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Timo Meier scored his second goal of the game and 30th this season 2:19 into overtime, and the San Jose Sharks rallied from a two-goal deficit to beat the Tampa Bay Lightning 4-3 on Tuesday night.

The loss ended Tampa Bay's 12-game winning streak at home, a franchise record. The Lightning dropped to 20-1-0 when leading after the first period and 20-5-1 at home overall.

Meier scored the winner from in close off a pass from All-Star defenseman Erik Karlsson. It is Meier's third 30-goal season.

"I felt we did a good job changing and kind of holding onto the pucks," Meier said. "(Karlsson) did what he does best, finding guys backdoor, and I just had to tap it in."

San Jose also got goals from Karlsson and Jonah Gadjovich. Kaapo Kahkonen stopped 34 shots.

Karlsson's two assists gave him 52 this season to go with 17 goals.

The Sharks improved to 4-11 in overtime and shootouts.

Brayden Point had two goals and Ross Colton also scored for the Lightning, who lost 7-1 at Florida on Monday night. Brian Elliott made 18 saves.

Tampa Bay took 81 shots — 37

on goal, 27 that were blocked and 17 that missed the net. San Jose totaled 40 shot attempts.

"When you're kind of having your way in the game for the first half of it, and all of sudden you're letting the other team hang around, this is the National Hockey League, man, the other team is trying, too," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "Even though they might be outside the playoff spot, they're all fighting for jobs and they're trying to win, too."

**Islanders 4, Kraken 0:** Bo Horvat scored in his home debut with host New York, leading his new team to victory.

Ilya Sorokin made 31 saves in his fifth shutout this season and No. 15 for his career. Samuel Bolduc, Simon Holmstrom and Zach Parise also scored in New York's fourth straight win, and Jean-Gabriel Pageau added two assists.

The Islanders acquired Horvat in a blockbuster trade with Vancouver on Jan. 30. The All-Star center then agreed to a \$68 million, eight-year contract on Sunday.

Martin Jones had 23 saves for the Pacific Division-leading Kraken, but Seattle dropped the opener of a five-game trip to begin the second half of the season.

**Oilers 5, Red Wings 2:** Ryan McLeod and Warren Foegele had goals 36 seconds apart early in the second period, and visiting Edmonton earned its eighth win in nine games.

Foegele scored again midway through the period to give the Oilers a 3-1 lead. Ryan Nugent-Hopkins restored their two-goal lead late in the third period and Evander Kane added an empty net goal. Edmonton's Jack Campbell stopped 30 shots, including some key ones in the third to keep a one-goal lead.

Ville Husso made 22 saves for the Red Wings, who had won two of their previous three games.

Detroit's Tyler Bertuzzi broke a scoreless tie midway through the first period and Joe Veleno scored with just nine seconds left in the second to pull the home team within a goal before Edmonton put the game away.

**Penguins 2, Avalanche 1 (OT):** Kris Letang scored 3:36 into overtime to cap a frantic rally as host Pittsburgh stunned Colorado.

The Avalanche controlled long stretches of regulation before Bryan Rust tied it with 3:38 remaining in the third period. The Penguins killed a penalty in overtime before Letang won it

with a shot from the left circle.

Casey DeSmith made 41 saves for Pittsburgh, single-handedly keeping his team in it for the first two periods as Colorado dominated.

Nathan MacKinnon scored his 14th goal of the season for the Avalanche. Colorado goaltender Pavel Francouz stopped 36 shots but couldn't get a handle on Letang's laser that handed Colorado just its second loss in its last nine games.

**Ducks 3, Blackhawks 2 (OT):** Frank Vatrano scored 2:15 into overtime, and visiting Anaheim beat Chicago in a matchup of two of the NHL's worst teams.

It was Anaheim's first win against Chicago since Dec. 5, 2018, stopping an eight-game slide.

Brett Leason and Jayson Megna each had a goal and an assist for Anaheim. John Klingberg had two assists, and Anthony Stolarz made 27 saves.

**Golden Knights 5, Predators 1:** Phil Kessel, William Carrier and Chandler Stephenson each had a goal and an assist, and visiting Las Vegas snapped a four-game losing streak.

Michael Amadio and Alex Pietrangolo also scored for the Golden Knights, and Adin Hill made 16 saves in the team's first game since Jan. 28.

# Italy's Bassino beats Shiffrin to gold in super-G at worlds

Associated Press

MERIBEL, France — Marta Bassino beat Mikaela Shiffrin to win the women's super-G on Wednesday and give Italy its second gold medal at the Alpine skiing world championships, with her American rival settling for silver.

Shiffrin, who won super-G gold in 2019 and bronze two years ago, led Bassino by three-tenths of a second at the second split but couldn't match the Italian's pace in the last part of the Roc de Fer course and finished second, 0.11 seconds behind.

Cornelia Huettner of Austria and Kajsia Vickhoff Lie of Norway both came 0.33 behind to share the bronze medal.

"I'm so happy with my run, and emotional, because I don't really feel like I should be winning a medal in super-G right now. There are so many women so strong and so fast," said Shiffrin. "There was one moment where I thought I lost everything but then I could keep it rolling until the finish."

The silver is Shiffrin's 12th medal in 15 career world championship races and came two days after the American was heading for a possible medal in the combined event before straddling the third-to-last gate in the slalom portion. Federica Brignone won that race.

"I felt like I learned from the combined that I have to be much more aggressive with my skiing and with my tactics," said Shiffrin, who

was sixth in Monday's super-G run.

Bassino earned her second gold after sharing victory with Austria's Katharina Liensberger in the parallel event at her home worlds two years ago. She became the second Italian skier to win the women's super-G world title, after Isolde Kostner won back-to-back golds in the mid-1990s.

"I'm speechless. It's my first win in super-G, and here at the world championships, it is something I have to realize," Bassino said. "Today I just did a great last part because I lost a lot of time in the first part. I was really suffering watching all the other girls coming down. I'm really happy and confident in myself. It's really a great result for me."