

Quake survivors try to stay warm, nourished

Associated Press

ANTAKYA, Turkey — Tens of thousands of people who lost their homes in a catastrophic earthquake huddled around campfires in the bitter cold and clamored for food and water Thursday, three days after the temblor hit Turkey and Syria and killed more than 20,000.

Emergency crews used pick axes, shovels and jackhammers to dig through twisted metal and concrete — and occasionally still pulled out survivors. But in some places, their focus shifted to demolishing unsteady buildings.

While stories of miraculous rescues briefly buoyed spirits, the grim reality of the hardship facing survivors cast a pall over devastated communities. The number of deaths surpassed the toll of a 2011 earthquake off Fukushima, Japan, that triggered

a tsunami, killing more than 18,400 people.

In northwest Syria, the first U.N. aid trucks to enter the rebel-controlled area from Turkey since the quake arrived, underscoring the difficulty of getting help to people in the country riven by civil war. In the Turkish city of Antakya, dozens scrambled for aid in front of a truck distributing children's coats and other supplies.

One survivor, Ahmet Tokgoz, called for the government to evacuate people from the region. Many of those who have lost their homes found shelter in tents, stadiums and other temporary accommodations, but others have slept outdoors.

"Especially in this cold, it is not possible to live here," he said. "If people haven't died from being stuck under the rubble, they'll die from the cold."

Winter weather and damage to roads and airports have hampered the response in both Turkey and Syria. Some in Turkey have complained the response was too slow — a perception that could hurt President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at a time when he faces a tough battle for reelection in May.

In the Turkish town of Elbistan, rescuers stood atop the rubble from a collapsed home and pulled out an elderly woman.

Teams urged quiet in the hopes of hearing stifled pleas for help, and the Syrian paramedic group known as the White Helmets noted that "every second could mean saving a life."

But more and more often, the teams pulled out dead bodies. In Antakya, over 100 bodies were awaiting identification in

a makeshift morgue outside a hospital.

Across the border in Syria, assistance trickled in. The United Nations is authorized to deliver aid through only one border crossing, and road damage has prevented that thus far. U.N. officials pleaded for humanitarian concerns to take precedence over wartime politics.

The scale of loss and suffering remained massive. Turkish authorities said Thursday that the death toll had risen to more than 17,100 in the country, with more than 70,000 injured. In Syria, which includes government-held and rebel-held areas, more than 3,100 have been reported dead and more than 5,000 injured.

It was not clear how many people were still unaccounted for in both countries.

N. Korean parade shows off record number of ICBMs

BY DAVID CHOI

Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un presided over a military parade Wednesday evening that showcased the country's largest-ever display of long-range missiles, according to images published by the state-run Korean Central News Agency.

North Korea held the event marking the 75th anniversary of its army's founding at the main parade grounds in Pyongyang, where it showcased roughly 15 intercontinental ballistic missiles, the communist regime's largest-ever ICBM display during a parade, defense analysts said.

At least 11 liquid-fuel Hwasong-17s were seen in photos, roughly twice the number shown at previous parades, Yang Uk, an associate research fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul, said Thursday.

An analysis of the missiles is still ongoing, Yang said, adding that video footage yet to be released by North Korea was necessary to fully analyze the weapons.

Ankit Panda, a Stanton senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, D.C., said on Twitter that the photos indicated "this is cumulatively more ICBM launchers than we've ever seen before at a North Korean parade."

North Korea claimed it last launched the Hwasong-17 in a test on Nov. 18. That missile flew eastward from North Korea's western coast before landing in the East Sea, or Sea of Japan. Japanese officials at the time estimated that the missile had a range of 9,320 miles, within range of the continental United States.

Roughly four transporter erector launchers that appeared to carry solid-fuel canisters were also spotted in the photos, Yang said. He noted the launchers were longer

than previous versions and had also undergone structural improvements that indicated North Korea was still developing its solid-fuel technology.

Solid-fuel ICBMs can be launched faster and are easier to maintain than their liquid-fuel counterparts, according to 38 North, a North Korea-monitoring organization based in Washington, D.C. Pyongyang last tested a solid-fuel engine in December as part of a "new type of strategic weapon system," according to KCNA.

Kim was seen in photos waving as the procession of missiles rolled by on Wednesday. No mention of a speech had been relayed by KCNA as of Thursday afternoon.

The North Korean leader's message through the photos was that the regime's "own strategic deterrence exists," Yang said. "That's what Kim wants to portray to the U.S."

US: China's balloon can collect signals

Bloomberg News

The alleged Chinese spy balloon that flew over the United States was capable of collecting communications signals and was part of a broader People's Liberation Army intelligence-gathering effort that spanned more than 40 countries, a State Department official said Thursday.

High-resolution imagery provided by U-2 spy planes that flew past the balloon revealed an array of surveillance equipment inconsistent with Beijing's claim that the balloon was a weather device blown off course, the official said in a statement provided on condition of anonymity.

The statement, released before State and Defense Department officials were set to testify in hearings and briefings to Congress on Thursday, marks the fullest accounting yet for the Biden administration's insis-

tence over the course of a week-long drama that the balloon was meant to spy on the U.S.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in an interview with CBS News that the Pentagon acted to limit what the balloon could learn about U.S. nuclear capabilities. Austin said Chinese balloons flew over parts of the U.S. in previous years, passing over Texas and Florida.

"Certainly all of our strategic assets, we made sure were buttoned down and movement was limited and communications were limited so that we didn't expose any capability unnecessarily," Austin said.

The U.S. is now trying to expose and counter broader Chinese spying efforts alongside allies, the official said. It's also looking at taking action against Chinese entities linked to the intelligence-gathering effort in U.S. airspace after identifying a Chi-

nese balloon manufacturer that sells products to the Chinese military.

The new details released on Thursday, including that this device was part of a broader military-directed fleet, will add to the strain on U.S.-China relations.

The disclosure of the balloon last week led to the postponement of Secretary of State Antony Blinken's long-planned trip to China as part of an effort to normalize ties between the world's two largest economies. The balloon was shot down by an F-22 fighter off the coast of South Carolina on Saturday.

"The United States was not the only target of this broader program, which has violated the sovereignty of countries across five continents," Blinken said at a briefing alongside NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg on Wednesday.

Report: US must balance Europe, China threats

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon will need a basing strategy that thickens defenses in central and Eastern Europe without overextending them, given the larger long-term threat posed by China, according to a new policy analysis.

The Washington-based Brookings Institution, in a series of reports released Wednesday, looked at approaches for U.S. basing worldwide and analyzed how military outposts factor into competing with Russia and China.

In Europe, the Russia-Ukraine war has disrupted the post-Cold War arrangement that allowed the U.S. military to sharply cut forces from a high of about 400,000 to roughly 65,000 permanently based troops today.

Those numbers have bumped up to around 100,000 since Russia launched a full-

scale invasion of Ukraine a year ago, but the increases are in rotational units.

For Washington, the trick will be doing enough to reassure NATO allies and being prepared to respond to threats on the Continent without doing more than is required, according to the report covering Europe.

More forces in the Baltics also are needed, but Washington should make sure that allies join to ensure fair burden sharing, the report said.

Meanwhile, prospective NATO members Sweden and Finland should be counted on to beef up NATO's position in the Baltic Sea, the Gulf of Finland and the Arctic, Brookings said.

"The China challenge ensures that the United States will not expand its troop presence to the level seen during the Cold War," according to Brookings. "The Biden administration must walk a fine line."

Two deported Army vets win US citizenship

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — After fighting in Afghanistan, former U.S. Army soldier Mauricio Hernandez Mata returned home with post-traumatic stress, which he says eventually led to getting in trouble with the law and being deported to Mexico — a country he had not lived in since he was a boy.

On Wednesday, he and another deported veteran were sworn in as U.S. citizens at a special naturalization ceremony in San Diego.

The two veterans were among 65 who have been allowed back into the United States over the past year as part of a growing effort by the Biden administration called the Immigrant Military Members and Veterans Initiative to make amends with immigrants who served in the U.S. military only to wind up deported.

Hundreds of U.S. military veterans, including some who

were charged with crimes such as drunken driving or theft, have been deported in what immigration advocates and others have called an unfair punishment to those who took up arms in the name of the U.S.

Many are still struggling to find legal help to return, according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

"After my deportation, yeah, I never thought this day would come," said Hernandez, 41, dressed in a black suit and tie after being presented his U.S. citizenship certificate. "It's definitely been a long road. I'm glad that we were given a second chance as anybody that is either American-born or fought for America should have."

Leonel Contreras, 63, who joined the U.S. Army at age 17 and served for a year in 1976, also was sworn in at the ceremony.

"I feel very blessed," said Contreras.

Zelenskyy makes appeal for EU membership

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Thursday that “a Ukraine that is winning” its war with Russia should be a member of the European Union, arguing the bloc wouldn’t be complete without it.

Zelenskyy made his appeal during an emotional day at EU headquarters in Brussels as he wrapped up a rare, two-day trip outside Ukraine to seek new weaponry from the West to repel the full-scale invasion that Moscow has been waging for nearly a year. As he spoke, a new offensive by Russia in eastern Ukraine was underway.

Zelenskyy, who also visited the U.K. and France, received rapturous applause and cheers from the European Parliament and a summit of the 27 EU leaders, insisting in his speech that the fight with Russia was one for the freedom of all of Europe.

“A Ukraine that is winning is going to be member of the European Union,” Zelenskyy said, building his appeal around the common destiny that Ukraine and the bloc face in confronting

Russia.

“Europe will always be, and remain Europe as long as we ... take care of the European way of life,” he said.

He added that membership talks should start later this year, an ambitious request, considering the huge task ahead. Such a move would help motivate Ukrainian soldiers in their defense of the country.

“There is no rigid timeline,” warned EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

He held up an EU flag after his address and the entire legislature stood in somber silence as the Ukrainian national anthem and the European anthem “Ode to Joy” were played in succession.

Before his speech, European Parliament President Roberta Metsola said allies should consider “quickly, as a next step, providing long-range systems” and fighter jets to Ukraine. The response to Russian President Vladimir Putin’s war against Ukraine “must be proportional to the threat, and the threat is existential,” she said.

Metsola also told Zelenskyy

that “we have your back. We were with you then, we are with you now, we will be with you for as long as it takes.”

A draft of the summit’s conclusions seen by The Associated Press said “the European Union will stand by Ukraine with steadfast support for as long as it takes.”

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said the bloc will send Zelenskyy “this signal of unity and solidarity, and can show that we will continue our support for Ukraine in defending its independence and integrity.”

Military analysts say Putin is hoping that Europe’s support for Ukraine will wane as Russia is believed to be preparing a new offensive.

The Kremlin’s forces “have regained the initiative in Ukraine and have begun their next major offensive” in the eastern Luhansk region, most of which is occupied by Russia, the Institute for the Study of War said in its latest assessment. “Russian forces are gradually beginning an offensive, but its success is not inherent or predetermined.”

Zelenskyy used the dais of the European Parliament hoping to match Wednesday’s speech to Britain’s legislature when he thanked the nation for its unremitting support. That same support has come from the EU. The bloc and its member states have already backed Kyiv with about 50 billion euros (\$53.6 billion) in aid, provided military hardware and imposed nine packages of sanctions on the Kremlin.

The EU is in the midst of brokering a new sanctions package worth about 10 billion euros (\$10.7 billion) before the war’s anniversary. And there is still plenty of scope for exporting more military hardware to Ukraine as a Russian spring offensive is expected.

Russia is also watching Zelenskyy’s movements closely. On Wednesday, Russian state television showed the flight path of a British air force plane that Zelenskyy used to travel to London taken from a flight monitoring site. The anchor noted that the plane flew from the Polish air base in Rzeszow that serves as a hub for Western arms deliveries to Ukraine.

Officer never explained stop as he pulled Nichols from car

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — The officer who pulled Tyre Nichols from his car before police fatally beat him never explained why he was being stopped, newly released documents show, and emerging reports from Memphis residents suggest that was common.

The Memphis Police Department blasted Demetrius Haley and four other officers as “blatantly unprofessional” and asked that they be stripped of the ability to work as police for their role in the Jan. 7 beating, according to documents released Tuesday by the Tennessee Peace Officers Standards and Training Commission.

They also include revelations that Haley took photographs of

Nichols as he lay propped against a police car, then sent the photos to other officers and a female acquaintance.

Nichols died three days later — the latest police killing to prompt nationwide protests and an intense public conversation about how police treat Black residents.

Yet what led to it all remains a mystery. The five officers — Haley, Desmond Mills Jr., Tadarrius Bean, Justin Smith and Emmitt Martin III — have been fired and charged with second-degree murder. The new documents offer the most detailed account to date of those officers’ actions. Their attorneys have not commented to The Associated Press about the documents.

Another officer also has been

fired and a seventh suspended of duty. Six others may be disciplined, officials disclosed, without providing any details. That would bring the total involved to 13.

Erica Williams, a spokeswoman for the top prosecutor in Memphis, said more charges could still be filed.

Meanwhile, other residents are coming forward about interactions with Memphis police.

A federal lawsuit filed Tuesday accuses the same officers now charged with murder in the death of Nichols, 29, with also violating the rights of another man from the same neighborhood as Nichols during a similarly violent arrest three days before Nichols’ arrest.

According to the lawsuit, Mon-

terrious Harris, 22, was visiting a cousin at an apartment on the evening of Jan. 4 when his car was “suddenly swarmed by a large group of assailants wearing black ski-masks, dressed in black clothing, brandishing guns, other weapons, hurling expletives and making threats to end his life if he did not exit his car.”

Harris thought the men were trying to rob him, the lawsuit says, and he tried to back up his car before hitting something. He then reluctantly exited with his hands raised and was “grabbed, punched, kicked and assaulted” for up to two minutes, the complaint states. The beating stopped only after people came out of their apartments to see what was happening, the lawsuit alleges.

Air near Ohio derailment deemed safe to return

Associated Press

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — Evacuated residents can return to the Ohio village where crews burned toxic chemicals after a train derailed five days ago near the Pennsylvania state line now that monitors show no dangerous levels in the air, authorities said Wednesday.

Around-the-clock testing inside and outside the evacuation zone around the village of East Palestine and a sliver of Pennsylvania showed the air had returned to normal levels that would have been seen before the derailment, said James Justice of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

“Hundreds and hundreds of data points we’ve collected over the time show the air quality is safe,” he said.

Residents were ordered to evacuate when authorities decided on Monday to release and burn five tankers filled with vinyl chloride, sending hydrogen chloride and the toxic gas phosgene into the air.

Monitors did detect toxins in the air during the controlled burn at the derailment site, but other samples outside that area did not, Justice said.

The village’s mayor expressed relief that the evacuation had been lifted.

“We know everybody’s frustrated. Everybody wants to be in their homes. We did the best we can,” said Mayor Trent Conaway. “The number one goal is public safety, and we accomplished that. Nobody was injured, nobody died.”

He credited the village’s part-time firefighters and their quick response to the de-

railment for saving the town.

Some residents have said they were worried about returning even if authorities say it’s OK to go home despite reassurances from officials.

It’s unlikely though, Justice said, that there be would any dangerous levels of toxins inside any homes or businesses based on readings from air monitors around the community.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine said some residents may want to wait until their homes are checked. Rail operator Norfolk Southern Railway said it would provide testing and continue to operate its family assistance center “for the foreseeable future.”

“It’s very understandable you may want that testing done before you go back in your house,” DeWine said.

The governor said the railroad will have to pay for the cleanup and make sure something like this doesn’t happen again. “The burden is upon them is to assure the public that what they do every day is safe,” DeWine said.

Testing on rivers, streams and drinking water wells will continue throughout the area and in the nearby Ohio River.

Kurt Kollar, a representative from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, said contaminants from the derailed tanker cars spilled into some waterways and were toxic to fish, but he added that data so far indicates the drinking water was protected.

The fire from the chemical release is no longer burning, and crews have started removing some of the wreckage.

Texas gunman pleads guilty in Walmart attack

Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas — A Texas man pleaded guilty Wednesday to federal hate crime and weapons charges in the racist attack at an El Paso Walmart in 2019, which prosecutors say was preceded by the gunman posting an online screed that warned of a “Hispanic invasion.”

Patrick Crusius, 24, showed little emotion while shackled in an El Paso courtroom just a few miles from the store where he was accused of killing 23 people, including citizens of Mexico, in what remains one of the worst mass shootings in U.S. history.

Sentencing is not scheduled until later this year, but the U.S. government had previously announced it wouldn’t seek the death penalty. Crusius waived most of his rights to appeal on a total of 90 federal charges, which U.S. District Judge David Guaderrama said would each carry a life sentence.

“I plead guilty,” he said.

Crusius had originally pleaded not guilty before federal prosecutors took the death penalty off the table. He could still receive the death penalty, however, under separate state capital murder charges in Texas, although it remains unclear when that case might go to trial.

Albert Hernandez, whose sister and brother-in-law were killed in the attack, was one of about 40 people with close ties to the victims in the court gallery. He called Crusius a coward who was trying to “save his own skin” by pleading guilty in federal court.

“This guy knew what he was doing. It was premeditated,” Hernandez said of the shooting. “He came here to take care of business.”

Crusius surrendered to police after the massacre, saying, “I’m the shooter,” and that he was targeting Mexicans, according to court records. Prosecutors have said he drove more than 10 hours from his hometown near Dallas to the largely Latino border city and published a document online shortly before the shooting that said it was “in response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas.”

After the hearing, defense attorney Joe Spencer said Crusius wanted to accept responsibility. “There are no winners in this case,” he said.

More Americans apply for jobless benefits, though layoffs still low

Associated Press

More Americans filed for jobless benefits last week, but layoffs remain historically low despite attempts by the Federal Reserve to cool the economy, and hiring, to bring down inflation.

Applications for jobless aid in the U.S. for the week ending Feb. 4 rose by 13,000 last week to 196,000, from 183,000 the previous week, the Labor Department reported Thursday. It’s the fourth straight week claims were under 200,000.

Jobless claims generally serve as a proxy for layoffs, which have been relatively low since the pandemic wiped out millions of jobs in the spring of 2020.

The four-week moving average of claims, which flattens out some of the week-to-week volatility, fell by 2,500 to 189,250. It’s the third straight week that the four-week moving average has been below 200,000.

About 1.66 million people were receiving jobless aid the week that ended Jan. 28, an increase of 38,000 from the week before.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

2 ex-city officials admit to embezzling \$647,000

MO ST. LOUIS — Two former officials in a small St. Louis County town pleaded guilty this week to federal charges of embezzling about \$647,000 from the town, which has an annual budget of \$450,000.

The former clerk in Flordell Hill, Maureen Woodson, 68, pleaded guilty on Monday to mail fraud and wire fraud after admitting that she stole \$487,673 from the town, which has about 1,200 residents. The former assistant city clerk, Donna Thompson, 76, pleaded guilty to the same charges Tuesday. She admitted embezzling \$159,903. The embezzlement occurred between February 2016 and April 2022, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

Both women will be required to pay back the money.

Woodson and Thompson, who lived together, wrote about 614 checks to themselves and forged the signature of either the mayor or the treasurer on the checks, according to a plea agreement.

Lawmakers alter wording to 'adult' performances

AR LITTLE ROCK — The Arkansas House voted Monday to restrict "adult-oriented" performances, re-vamping a measure that previously targeted drag shows following discrimination complaints from the LGBTQ community.

The bill approved by the majority-Republican House on a 78-15 vote no longer explicitly adds drag shows to the list of businesses considered "adult-

oriented," easing some of the concerns of LGBTQ advocates and other opponents. The bill now heads back to the majority-Republican Senate, which approved an earlier version of the restriction.

"This bill is not about whether drag is acceptable," Republican Rep. Mary Bentley, the bill's sponsor, told House members before the vote. "It's about whether we should be exposing our children to sexually explicit behavior."

City 1st in state to phase out gas use in new homes

OR EUGENE — The city of Eugene, Ore., will join other local governments throughout the country in phasing out gas appliances in some types of new construction in an effort to cut climate pollution.

The Eugene City Council passed the measure by a 5-3 vote Monday night. The ordinance, believed to be the first of its kind in the state, bans natural gas hookups in the new construction of residences that are three stories or less.

Existing buildings are not affected by the new requirements.

Council members in favor said the move would reduce carbon emissions and eliminate the air quality hazards of gas stoves, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported.

Council member Mike Clark said the change will discourage developers.

State could lower jury standard for executions

FL TALLAHASSEE — Gov. Ron DeSantis and Florida lawmakers pro-

posed legislation making it easier to send convicts to death row by eliminating a unanimous jury requirement in capital punishment sentencing — a response to anger from victims' families following a verdict sparing a school shooter from execution.

The proposal comes after a divided 9-3 jury spared Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooter Nikolas Cruz in November from capital punishment for killing 17 at the school in 2018. The Parkland school shooter instead received a life sentence.

Republican legislators, at the governor's urging, introduced legislation to allow the jury to choose the death penalty with only eight of the 12 jurors in favor, which would make Florida the only state to use that standard. Only three states out of the 27 that impose the death penalty do not require unanimity. Alabama allows a 10-2 decision and Missouri and Indiana let a judge decide when there is a divided jury.

New Year's Eve attack suspect in US custody

NY NEW YORK — A man charged with attacking police with a machete near New York's Times Square on New Year's Eve was transferred to U.S. custody and made his initial federal court appearance on Monday to face terrorism charges.

Trevor Thomas Bickford, handcuffed and shackled at the ankles, slowly shuffled into a Manhattan federal courtroom for an initial appearance. Charges in a federal complaint allege he tried to murder officers and employees of the U.S. government. A U.S. magistrate

judge gave prosecutors two weeks to seek an indictment.

Bickford, of Wells, Maine, was 19 when authorities said he attacked three police officers with a machete about two hours before midnight on Dec. 31. He also faces charges in state court, where prosecutors said he shouted "Allahu akbar" in the New Year's Eve attack before striking one officer in the head and trying to grab another officer's gun. He was shot in the shoulder by police and was taken to a hospital to recover from his injuries.

Bill would raise pay for incarcerated workers

WA OLYMPIA — A Washington state lawmaker who has spent time in prison wants the state to pay incarcerated workers minimum wage for doing their jobs.

State Rep. Tarra Simmons, D-Bremerton, is sponsoring House Bill 1024, called the "Real Labor, Real Wages Act," to raise the wages to the state minimum of \$15.74 per hour, The Seattle Times reported.

Simmons, who served 30 months in prison for low-level drug and theft crimes about a decade ago, said that when she was in prison she was forced to work graveyard shifts for less than 42 cents an hour.

Colorado is the only state that pays state minimum wage for incarcerated labor. Similar legislation has been introduced this year in New York and has failed previously in Arizona, California, Maryland, Mississippi, Nevada, Texas and Virginia.

If passed, the bill would cost \$97.5 million annually.

— From wire reports

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Reid building on Hall of Fame résumé

Associated Press

Andy Reid was an unknown assistant in Green Bay when Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie took a chance on hiring Brett Favre's position coach to revive a struggling franchise in Philadelphia.

A newspaper headline greeted Reid's arrival with a headline that said: "Andy Who?"

Everybody knows his name now.

Reid won more games (130) than any coach in franchise history during his 14 seasons with the Eagles. He led Philadelphia to nine playoff appearances, six division titles and five NFC championship games. But Reid couldn't deliver a Super Bowl victory, losing to the New England Patriots after the 2004 season. For that reason, he was underappreciated by many fans and reporters in Philly.

Reid eventually lost his job after only his third losing season in 2012, and immediately landed in Kansas City. He finally hoisted that elusive Vince Lombardi Trophy with Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs three years ago.

By that time, the Eagles had

won their first Super Bowl under then-coach Doug Pederson, one of Reid's prized pupils.

Now, Reid and the Eagles are going head-to-head aiming for that second title. The Chiefs (16-3) vs. the Eagles (16-3) is one of the most-anticipated Super Bowl matchups in recent years.

Just don't expect the stoic Reid to get emotional about it.

"When you really cut to the chase on it, they're a really good football team and so, I think that's where the energy goes because really when it's kickoff, you're playing that team," Reid said Monday.

"It's the players that you're going against and the coaches and so the uniform (and) all, that's not where your mind's at. Your mind's at making sure you have a solid game plan and that you come out and you can perform to the best of our ability.

"That's, I think, where the major focus goes, and you try to — it doesn't matter who you're playing — you try to blank out all the hype that goes with the game. It's a pretty big game for everybody. ... It's a big, big deal.

It's the Super Bowl. But you try to blank that out and make sure that you're getting the game plan — what really matters — together."

Nearly a quarter century since he walked into an interview with the Eagles armed with a 6-inch binder containing notes on how to build a winning team, Reid has amassed Hall of Fame credentials. He's led the Chiefs to nine playoff appearances, including seven consecutive division titles in 10 winning seasons. He's been to five straight AFC title games, winning three.

"It's a real testament to the job that general manager Brett Veach and Coach Reid have done over the last several years," Chiefs chairman Clark Hunt said after the team clinched the division last month.

"We obviously have a bunch of young players and we've got some new players, and Andy and his staff have done a tremendous job of incorporating them into the team. That's just part of the National Football

League. They've really done a fantastic job, and I couldn't be more proud of them."

Reid is a no-nonsense, old-school coach who is respected and loved by his players. He rarely throws anyone under the bus. Part of the criticism he received from reporters in Philly was for his unwillingness to call anyone out and to always shoulder all the blame after losses and poor performances. "I gotta do a better job" became a punch line.

He came across as robotic in news conferences, always opening with injuries before turning it over to reporters for questions by saying: "Time's yours."

At 64, Reid has become more of a lovable grandpa in Kansas City. He's known for wearing floral shirts and cracking jokes about his weight. Ask Reid how he plans to celebrate a victory and he'll say with a cheeseburger.

"I'm gonna go get the biggest cheeseburger you've ever seen!" Reid said after the Chiefs beat the 49ers in the Super Bowl on Feb. 2, 2020.

Eagles counting on pass rush to harass Mahomes

Associated Press

PHOENIX — The defensive philosophy that has carried the Philadelphia Eagles to the Super Bowl is relatively simple.

A deep rotation of defensive linemen provides constant pressure that makes opposing quarterbacks uncomfortable and often leads to them ending on the ground.

"It's always a race to the quarterback," defensive tackle Fletcher Cox said. "We all look at it every week that we have to earn the right to rush the quarterback and guys buy into that."

Few teams have gotten to the quarterback more frequently this season than the Eagles, who are closing in on the NFL's most pro-

lific season ever when it comes to sacks.

That will be the formula the Eagles (16-3) will hope to replicate on Sunday against Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs (16-3).

"Any time you play these great quarterbacks, you got to affect them because you can't have them out here playing 7 on 7," defensive end Brandon Graham said. "The line definitely has to affect anything that goes on with the play. I know that we've got a great D-line, but we got to prove it each and every week. I'm excited because we do got a task we got to achieve going against Mahomes."

That won't be easy even with Mahomes on a gimpy ankle. He

was the best quarterback in the league this season at avoiding sacks, with only 10.2% of pressures turning into sacks, according to Pro Football Focus.

Mahomes was sacked three times in his previous Super Bowl appearance two years ago against Tampa Bay when he was constantly on the run behind a banged-up line.

Kansas City has bolstered the line since then, but Mahomes knows it will be difficult against the Eagles.

"They're on like a historic sack rate and the way they're able to get to the quarterback," Mahomes said. "So everybody knows that everything starts up front. It'll be a great challenge for

our offensive line to try to do what they can."

Philadelphia followed up a regular season with 70 sacks — tied for the third-most ever — with eight more so far in the playoffs. The 78 sacks combined in the regular season and playoffs have been topped only by the Chicago's Monsters of the Midway with 82 sacks in 1984 and 80 the next season.

While the Eagles benefited from a 17th regular-season game, their rate of sacks is also quite impressive. They have sacked the quarterback on 11.5% of dropbacks this season for the highest rate in a season since 1989, when the Vikings did it on 12.2% of dropbacks.

Jones set sack standard for KC defense

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Chris Jones claims to have very little memory of a relatively benign game in 2017, when the Kansas City Chiefs welcomed the Philadelphia Eagles to Arrowhead Stadium for the second game of the regular season.

Jason Kelce remembers it quite well.

The veteran Philadelphia center spent the afternoon lining up alongside Isaac Seumalo, who Jones proceeded to whip from start to finish. Then a relatively unknown second-year defensive tackle, Jones piled up three sacks that day.

“(Seumalo) played a guy early on that nobody knew about then that was, you know, the best defensive tackle in the NFL,” Kelce recalled. “I mean, I sure remember going into that game and we didn’t really talk much about Chris, to be honest with you. We didn’t have much of a plan for him because we thought it wasn’t going to be much of a big deal.

“And man,” Kelce said, “Isaac had a hard outing.”

You can bet the Eagles will

have a better plan for dealing with Jones in the Super Bowl on Sunday.

In five-plus years since that game in Kansas City, the affable pass rusher has grown to rival the Rams’ Aaron Donald as just what Kelce said: the NFL’s best defensive tackle. He’s gone to the past four Pro Bowls, was voted second-team All-Pro three times and, this year, earned first-team honors along with being a finalist for AP Defensive Player of the Year.

He learned whether he took home that hardware at the NFL Honors on Thursday night.

“He’s so good, man. He makes it so hard on you,” said Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow, who was sacked twice by Jones in the AFC title game. “He’s so big and strong. Physical. He really understands what you’re trying to do to him up front.”

In truth, nobody has quite figured out what to do with him.

Jones had 15½ sacks this season, despite facing constant double teams, matching 2018 as the best year of his career. He trailed only the 49ers’ Nick Bo-

sa, the Browns’ Myles Garrett and the Eagles’ Haason Reddick for the NFL lead.

Jones also was a big reason why the Chiefs, one of the league’s worst at rushing the passer last season, suddenly became one of the best. They had 55 sacks in the regular season to trail only their Super Bowl opponent for the league lead.

“He opens up a lot of opportunities for a lot of those guys inside, especially when he’s causing so much attention to come his way,” said Chiefs defensive end Frank Clark, who has 2½ sacks in this postseason. “We speak on it and harp on it a lot with the interior guys, you know, like, ‘Is Chris getting double-teamed?’”

That’s usually the best approach; Jones seems to end up near the quarterback anyway.

“He’s a game-wrecking-type force up front,” Bengals offensive coordinator Brian Callahan said. “You have to be aware of where he lines up. He lines up at end, up the shade and the three (technique). He’s an extremely disruptive player, so you do everything you can to minimize

him, but he’s going to have one at some point.”

The task for the Eagles — and what the Bengals failed to do — is limit Jones to just one big play.

“He’s a fantastic player,” Callahan said, “and he’s not fun to have to get ready for.”

He’s fun to have in the locker room, though. Jones is among the most lighthearted Chiefs, constantly trying to get guys to smile. He once showed up at practice shortly before Christmas in an ugly sweater with a stitched picture of Jesus carrying the label “Birthday Boy.” His own smile seems to stretch from one end of the room to the other.

On the field, though, that good-natured goof suddenly becomes a colossus.

All of that explains why the Chiefs lavished on the 28-year-old Jones an \$80 million, four-year deal a couple of years ago, which included a \$1.25 million bonus when Jones hit 10 sacks this season. His salary cap hit is tops among defensive tackles, edging Donald and DeForest Buckner.

Chiefs QB Mahomes says his ankle will be ready

Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Patrick Mahomes said he’s “definitely in a better spot” when it comes to his ailing right ankle than he was for the AFC championship game, and the All-Pro quarterback doesn’t expect to be limited by it when he leads the Kansas City Chiefs against the Philadelphia Eagles in the Super Bowl.

Mahomes said before Wednesday’s practice at Arizona State’s facility that he has continued to get treatment on the ankle, which he hurt in the divisional round against Jacksonville, and that it will probably continue up until Sunday’s kickoff.

“You won’t know exactly how it is until you get to game day,” he said. “I mean, I definitely move around better than I was moving last week or two weeks ago. So it’s just trying to continue to get the treatment and the rehab and get it as close to 100% and then rely on some adrenaline to let me do a little bit extra when I’m on the field.”

Mahomes hurt the ankle when a Jaguars pass rusher landed on it late in the first quarter. X-rays taken during the game came back negative, and he returned in the second half to lead Kansas City to the 27-20 victory.

Mahomes spent the next week getting treatment on the

ankle, and he credited trainers Rick Burkholder and Julie Frymyer with getting him in shape to play for the AFC title. And while he was clearly hobbled by the high ankle sprain, and several times limped away from hits, Mahomes was available against Cincinnati when the Chiefs needed him at the end.

It was Mahomes who sprinted on his sore ankle in the closing seconds, then took a big late hit along the sideline, getting Kansas City within range of Harrison Butker’s 45-yard field goal that punched its ticket back to the Super Bowl.

“He’s been doing really well with his ankle,” Chiefs coach Andy Reid said Wednesday.

“We had a fast practice a couple days ago and he moved well. He can really do just about everything — at least everything in the game plan we asked him to do.”

The Chiefs had everyone available as they ramped up with a more intense practice Wednesday.

That included JuJu Smith-Schuster, who missed practice last week with swelling in his knee, and fellow wide receiver Kadarius Toney, who likewise skipped all the workouts in Kansas City with a sprained ankle. It also included cornerback L’Jarius Sneed, who cleared the concussion protocol this week and returned to practice.

Reports: Suns get Durant from Nets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Kevin Durant's time in Brooklyn ended early Thursday when the Nets agreed to trade him to the Phoenix Suns, a person with knowledge of the details said.

The Suns will send Cam Johnson, Mikal Bridges, Jae Crowder, four first-round picks and additional draft compensation to the Nets for the 13-time All-Star.

The Suns also receive forward T.J. Warren in the deal,

the person told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the trade is not yet official.

ESPN first reported the deal.

The 34-year-old Durant is still playing at an elite level, averaging nearly 30 points per game this season. He asked for a trade last summer and the Suns were interested, and finally got him before Thursday's 3 p.m. EST trade deadline.

He is recovering from a sprained knee ligament, and

when he returns it will be to a Phoenix lineup that could suddenly be one of the best in the Western Conference.

Durant was moved just days after the Nets traded Kyrie Irving from Dallas, a stunningly fast end to the superstar era in Brooklyn. James Harden was traded at last year's deadline, leaving the Nets with little to show for the brief time they had the Big Three together.

Now it's the Suns with a top collection of talent, with Durant

joining Devin Booker, Chris Paul and Deandre Ayton.

The trade comes just hours after new Suns majority owner Mat Ishbia was introduced in Phoenix. The self-described basketball nut, who was a walk-on at Michigan State under Tom Izzo, didn't waste any time shaking up the NBA.

The Suns made the NBA Finals two seasons ago, but lost to the Milwaukee Bucks in six games. They also played in the finals in 1976 and 1993.

Source: Lakers trade Westbrook to Jazz in 3-team swap

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles Lakers are trading Russell Westbrook to Utah and reacquiring guard D'Angelo Russell from Minnesota in a three-team, eight-player deal, a person with knowledge of the trade told The Associated Press on Wednesday night.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the teams hadn't announced the major deal made ahead of the NBA's trade deadline Thursday.

Los Angeles is also getting guard Malik Beasley and forward Jarred Vanderbilt from the Jazz, bolstering its core around LeBron James in a bid to jump-start its sputtering season. The Lakers fell to 25-30 on Tuesday while James set the NBA's career scoring record, and they sit in 13th place in the 15-team Western Conference.

The Lakers are sending Juan Toscano-Anderson, Damian Jones and their first-round pick in 2027 to Utah with Westbrook.

ESPN and The Athletic first reported the trade. Those outlets also said Minnesota is getting Mike Conley and Nickeil Alexander-Walker from Utah, along with three second-round picks.

Minnesota won 143-118 at Utah on Wednesday night, and all five players involved in the trade weren't in uniform. Most players and coaches couldn't speak directly about a trade that hadn't been announced, but Minnesota coach Chris Finch acknowledged the challenge of playing short-handed amid roster upheaval.

"We just talked briefly about things before taking the floor," Finch said. "It's unfortunate timing. You don't ever get to pick your

timing."

Westbrook's tenure with his hometown team lasted just 130 tumultuous games. The 2017 NBA MVP never thrived with James and Anthony Davis for any significant stretch of time, struggling to mold his possession-heavy game into a more complementary role.

A move to the bench last fall led to minor improvements over a dismal 2021-22 season, but Westbrook still appeared profoundly uncomfortable with the Lakers. Westbrook averaged 17.4 points, 7.2 assists, 6.9 rebounds and 3.7 turnovers per game during his time in Los Angeles, where fans grumbled regularly about his poor shooting and turnovers.

The 34-year-old Westbrook is making about \$47 million in the final year of his contract. Several months after the Lakers infuriated a large portion of their fan base by not trading Westbrook in the summer, they swapped him for Russell, who played his first two NBA seasons with the Lakers after they chose him with the second overall pick in the 2015 draft.

Russell was a rookie during Kobe Bryant's final season, and the point guard was the most consistently entertaining part of two poor Lakers teams before Magic Johnson traded him to Brooklyn in 2017. Russell is now being traded for the fourth time in his eight NBA seasons.

Russell is averaging 17.9 points, 6.2 assists and 3.1 rebounds while hitting a career-best 46.5% of his shots with Minnesota in the final year of a contract paying him more than \$31 million this season. His style on both ends of the court could also complement James and

Davis better than Westbrook, although the Lakers will have little time to figure it out.

The Timberwolves courted Russell hard when he was on the market in July 2019. The Wolves eventually acquired Russell at the deadline in Feb. 2020 and teamed him with his draft-class pal, Karl-Anthony Towns.

The Russell-Towns pairing never really took off, in part because of injuries for each player that often kept them from being on the court at the same time. The Wolves drafted Anthony Edwards with the first overall pick in 2020, integrating another high-impact offensive player into the lineup whose value is minimized without frequent touches.

The Wolves made the playoffs in 2022, but only recently have Russell and Edwards truly clicked after coach Chris Finch made Edwards the primary ball-handler and moved Russell into an off-ball position to better maximize his shooting ability.

Russell is shooting a career-best 39.1% from three-point range, having made five or more shots from deep in six of his last 17 games.

Conley is more of a pure distribute-first point guard than Russell, who has never been a tenacious perimeter defender, either. The 35-year-old Conley is averaging 10.7 points and 7.7 assists in his fourth season with Utah.

Utah's Jordan Clarkson said it was "super-hard to say goodbye" to Conley after four years together.

"That guy was like Yoda, honestly," Clarkson said. "He had so many stories, and he had such an enlightenment about him. You just listened to him. ... He can communicate with anyone."