

## US shoots down Iranian-made drone in Syria

By J.P. LAWRENCE  
*Stars and Stripes*

American forces in Syria shot down an Iranian-made drone that was watching over a patrol base, U.S. Central Command said Wednesday.

The drone flew over Mission Support Site Conoco in the northeastern part of the country, and was shot down at 2:30 p.m. Tuesday, CENTCOM said on Twitter.

The drone appeared to be a short-range surveillance aircraft hand-launched by forces nearby, said Jeremy Binnie, an analyst at the defense intelligence firm Janes.

CENTCOM said the drone

was manufactured in Iran, but did not say who was operating the aircraft.

The accusation comes as Iran and the United States have traded claims that the other is destabilizing the Middle East, which analysts have said is locked in a shadow war between Tehran's partners and Washington's.

The U.S. Navy in recent months has seized thousands of rifles and rockets at sea that it said were en route from Iran to militant proxies. The U.S. has also accused Iranian companies of involvement in the delivery of aerial drones to Russia, which Moscow has used in at-

tacks against civilian infrastructure in Ukraine.

Politicians in Tehran, meanwhile, have blamed the spread of popular protests across Iran over the last year on the U.S.

The shootdown comes about three weeks after an aerial drone attack on another base used by U.S. forces in Syria.

That attack, on Jan. 20 at al-Tanf garrison, involved three aircraft described as one-way attack drones, CENTCOM said at the time in a statement, adding that no U.S. troops were injured.

Roughly 900 U.S. service members are based in Syria to support operations against the

Islamic State and train partner forces.

Mission Support Site Conoco also came under attack from two rockets on Jan. 4. The attack left no injuries or damage to the base, CENTCOM said at the time.

More than 300 anti-ISIS operations were conducted in Iraq and Syria in 2022, CENTCOM said in December. The U.S. has been fighting ISIS since the militant group conquered about a third of Syria and 40% of Iraq in 2014.

ISIS lost its last territorial enclave in 2019, but U.S. defense officials have said militants in both countries are still a threat.

## US tracked China's spy balloon along unusual path

*The Washington Post*

By the time a Chinese spy balloon crossed into American airspace late last month, U.S. military and intelligence agencies had been tracking it for nearly a week, watching as it lifted off from its home base near China's south coast, an earlier sighting of the balloon than has been previously known.

U.S. monitors watched as the balloon settled into a flight path that would appear to have taken it over the U.S. territory of Guam. But somewhere along that easterly route, the craft took an unexpected northern turn, according to several U.S. officials, who said analysts are now examining the possibility that China didn't intend to penetrate the American heartland with their airborne surveillance device.

The balloon floated over Alaska's Aleutian Islands thousands of miles away from Guam, then drifted over Canada, where it encountered strong winds that appear to have pushed the balloon south into the continental United States, the officials said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to describe sensitive intelligence. A U.S. fighter jet shot the balloon down off the coast of South Carolina on Feb. 4, a week after it crossed over Alaska.

This new account suggests the ensuing international crisis that has ratcheted up tensions between Washington and Beijing may have been at least partly the result of a mistake.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) had sent spy balloons over Guam before, as well as Hawaii, to monitor U.S. military installations, officials have said. But the days-long flyover of the continental U.S. was novel, and it sparked confusion inside the Chinese government as diplomats scrambled to disseminate a cover story that the balloon had been blown off course while it was collecting innocuous meteorological data, U.S. officials said.

The furor caught Beijing on its back foot. Initially it expressed "regrets" over what it insisted was a wayward weather balloon. Then it shifted to criticizing Washington for what it said was overreacting, and this week it accused the U.S. of sending 10 spy balloons over China. The White House has strongly denied the claim as false. "We are not flying surveillance balloons over China. I'm not aware of any other craft that we're flying over — into Chinese airspace," National Security Council strategic communications coordinator John Kirby said Monday.

U.S. intelligence and military agencies tracked the balloon as it launched from Hainan Island. Intelligence analysts are unsure if the apparent deviation was intentional or accidental, but are confident it was intended for surveillance, likely over U.S. military installations in the Pacific. Either way, the incursion into U.S. airspace was a major misstep by the PLA, prompting political and diplomatic furor and deeper scrutiny by the U.S. and its allies of Beijing's aerial espionage capabilities.

Its crossing into U.S. airspace was a violation of sovereignty and its hovering over sensitive nuclear sites in Montana was no accident, officials said, raising the possibility that even if the balloon were inadvertently blown over the U.S. mainland, Beijing apparently decided to seize the opportunity to try to gather intelligence.

U.S. officials stressed that they took steps to defeat any efforts by China to gather sensitive information from military sites. Any such information or communications were encrypted, Kirby has said.

"The name of the game of spying is always new capability, new mitigation," said the second official.

# NATO urges members to boost spending

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

Defense spending is back on the agenda at NATO, where allies are expected to ratchet up the pressure on fellow member countries that routinely miss an expenditures target agreed to by the alliance nine years ago.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Wednesday after high-level talks in Brussels that NATO country heads of state are poised to agree on a new investment pledge.

The aim is “to ensure that the alliance has the resources to carry out these new plans,” Austin said, in reference to updated territorial defense plans that haven’t yet been disclosed in detail.

The agreement will be finalized at a NATO summit this summer in Lithuania and is likely to up the ante for the 30 alliance members.

Austin didn’t speculate on what the new figure might be. But the topic has reemerged as allies grapple with the issue of

replenishing weapons stockpiles depleted during the Russia-Ukraine war.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday that the 2% of gross domestic product benchmark set in 2014 may no longer be sufficient.

“What is obvious is that if it was right to commit to spend 2% in 2014, it is even more right now because we live in a more dangerous world,” Stoltenberg told reporters in Brussels.

The broader security implications of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and challenges posed by China are among the reasons Stoltenberg cited for more military investments.

One option could be to set 2% as the bare minimum for members rather than regarding it as a ceiling, the NATO chief said.

It remains an open question whether that minimum could be pushed beyond 2%, which some allies, such as Poland, have supported.

Defense spending has long been a contentious issue in NATO and several Amer-

ican presidents have pointed out the spending shortfall among some allies.

President Donald Trump was known for excoriating those member countries, notably Germany, that repeatedly spent small percentages of GDP on defense. He regarded such countries as free-riders that took advantage of American security guarantees.

Still, allies steadily have been boosting their investments, a trend that began even before Trump took office in 2017.

But most NATO countries still fall short of the current mark, which they are supposed to achieve by next year.

The U.S., Great Britain, Greece, Poland, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia meet the 2% threshold. That is roughly one-fourth of the alliance, although the total is up from just three countries in 2014.

Nonetheless, the alliance collectively has now increased defense spending for eight straight years, and Stoltenberg said that trend is expected to continue this year.

“But more needs to be done,” he added.

# Russia claims war progress, Kyiv readies offensive

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian forces claimed some battlefield success Wednesday as Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine labored to gain momentum almost a year after it began, while Ukraine said it needs another few months to stage its own offensive.

The Russian Defense Ministry said its troops broke through two Ukrainian defensive lines in the eastern Luhansk region and pushed back Ukrainian troops some two miles, forcing them to leave behind equipment and the bodies of those killed.

It was not possible to independently verify Moscow’s claim. Ukrainian officials made no immediate comment.

Russian artillery, drones and missiles have been relentlessly pounding Ukrainian-held eastern areas for months, indiscriminately hitting civilian targets and wreaking destruction, as the war largely slowed to a grinding stalemate in the winter. Moscow is hungry for some progress after months of setbacks.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said his country’s forces would need “a few months” to learn how to

use new Western weapons before they can try and push the Russians out of Ukraine.

The Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which together make up the industrial Donbas region bordering Russia, continue to bear the brunt of Russia’s bombardments as Moscow reportedly moves more troops into the area.

In Luhansk, the number of Russian ground and air attacks is “growing every day,” Gov. Serhii Haidai said on Ukrainian TV.

“The Russians were able to transfer new forces for the offensive and now they are trying to overwhelm us with sheer human mass,” Haidai said.

Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said Wednesday that one town had come under “nonstop” fire from multiple rocket launchers for over three hours the previous day, damaging at least 12 residential buildings.

At least 12 civilians were wounded when Russian forces struck a five-story apartment block in the city of Pokrovsk, Kyrylenko said.

At least two others remained under the rubble.

With the one-year anniversary of Russia’s

war approaching, followed by improved spring weather, Western officials and analysts say the fighting could be nearing a critical phase when both sides look to launch offensives.

The Kremlin is striving to secure eastern areas it illegally annexed last September — the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia regions — and where it claims its rule is welcomed. Pro-Moscow separatists have controlled part of Donetsk and neighboring Luhansk province since 2014.

“The enemy, trying to take full control of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, continues to focus his main efforts on conducting offensive operations in the Kupiansk, Lyman, Bakhmut, Avdiivka and Shakhtarsk areas,” the Ukrainian military reported, referencing towns in the two provinces as well as on the eastern edge of the neighboring Kharkiv region.

Kyiv’s continued defense of Bakhmut, a mining town that for months has been a key target of Russia’s campaign in the east, has been “strategically sound” because it sapped Moscow’s momentum, a U.S. think tank said.

# Sales up as Americans defy prices

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — America's consumers rebounded last month from a weak holiday shopping season by boosting their spending at stores and restaurants at the fastest pace in nearly two years, underscoring the economy's resilience in the face of higher prices and multiple interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve.

The government said Wednesday that retail sales jumped 3% in January, after having sunk the previous two months. It was the largest one-month increase since March 2021.

Driving the gain was a jump in car sales, along with healthy spending at restaurants, electronics stores and furniture outlets. Some of the supply shortages that had slowed auto production have eased, and more cars are gradually moving onto dealer lots. The enlarged inventories have enabled dealers to meet more of the nation's pent-up demand for vehicles.

Wednesday's robust retail sales figures, along with a strong January job report, suggest that the economy remains durable, perhaps even strengthening, and at little risk of succumbing to a recession anytime soon. Earlier this week, economists at Goldman Sachs reduced the likelihood of a recession this year from 35% to just 25%.

Brisk consumer spending, though, can also intensify upward pressure on inflation. The latest measure of consumer inflation showed it declined slightly on a year-over-year basis in January but rose sharply from December to January.

The combination of solid spending and hiring will also likely raise pressure on the Federal Reserve to raise its benchmark interest rate even further.

The Fed has already signaled that it expects to carry out two more quarter-point hikes, to a range of 5% to 5.25%, which would be the highest level in 15 years. On Tuesday, Deutsche Bank said it expected

the Fed to add two additional hikes on top of that this year, to a range of 5.5% to 5.75%.

Wednesday's retail sales figures showed that spending at restaurants soared 7.2% in January, an increase that, in part, might have reflected warmer-than-usual weather. In the past year, restaurant spending has leapt more than 25%.

The retail sales report isn't adjusted for inflation, so some of that increase reflects higher prices. According to the government's inflation report, restaurant prices have increased 8% in the past year.

Whether America's shoppers can continue to spend briskly will help determine how the economy fares. The eight interest rate hikes the Fed has carried out in the past year have raised the costs of mortgages and auto loans as well as credit card interest rates.

Inflation has also eroded workers' paychecks, thereby limiting their ability to spend freely.

## Feinstein says she won't run again when term ends

*Associated Press*

LOS ANGELES — Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein, whose groundbreaking political career shattered gender barriers from San Francisco's City Hall to the corridors of Capitol Hill, said Tuesday she won't seek reelection in 2024.

The senator, who turns 90 in June, is the oldest member of Congress and has faced questions in recent years about her cognitive health and memory, though she has defended her effectiveness representing a state that is home to nearly 40 million people.

The announcement came after several prominent California Democrats, including U.S. Reps. Katie Porter and Adam Schiff, already had declared Senate campaigns. With Feinstein a now 30-year veteran of the Senate, there hasn't been a wide open competition for her seat in decades.

Feinstein plans to remain in

Congress through the end of her current term. Speaking to reporters in Washington on Tuesday, she said "there's times for all things under the sun."

"I think that will be the right time, towards the end of next year," she said.

Feinstein is one of the Senate's few remaining veterans of the so-called Year of the Woman, referring to several women who were elected to the male-dominated chamber during the 1992 election. But even before she moved to Washington, Feinstein was one of the most prominent women in American politics.

She was the first woman to serve as president of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in the 1970s and the first female mayor of San Francisco.

In the Senate, she was the first woman to head the Senate Intelligence Committee and the first woman to serve as the Judiciary Committee's top Democrat.

## Security in cars updated after TikTok challenge

*Associated Press*

Hyundai and Kia are rolling out software updates to stem a raft of auto thefts related to a TikTok challenge that authorities believe has led to at least 14 reported crashes and eight fatalities.

The updates are free for millions of vehicles that are missing a key anti-theft device, an issue that was exploited on social media and led to rampant theft of the cars.

The software being released updates the theft alarm software logic to extend the length of the alarm sound from 30 seconds to one minute and requires the key to be in the ignition switch to turn the vehicle on.

About 3.8 million Hyundais and 4.5 million Kias are eligible for the software update, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said Tuesday.

Hyundai said updates begin Tuesday for nearly 4 million vehicles beginning with a mil-

lion model year 2017-20 Elantra, 2015-19 Sonata and 2020-21 Venue vehicles. The software upgrade is scheduled to be available for the remaining eligible vehicles by June.

"We have prioritized the upgrade's availability for owners and lessees of our highest selling vehicles and those most targeted by thieves in order for dealers to service them first," said Randy Parker, CEO of Hyundai Motor America.

Kia said it had already begun to update the software for some vehicles.

In September the Highway Loss Data Institute, a unit of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, found that Hyundais and Kias without immobilizers had a vehicle theft claim rate of 2.18 per 1,000 insured vehicle years. The rest of the industry combined had a rate of 1.21. An insured vehicle year is equal to one vehicle insured for one year.



# Removal of Diego Garcia's population labeled a crime

*Associated Press*

LONDON — Britain and the United States committed crimes against humanity when they forced the people of the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean to leave their homes five decades ago to make way for a U.S. Navy base, a rights group charged Wednesday, calling on the two governments to let the Chagossians return.

Human Rights Watch also said Britain and the U.S. should pay compensation to the Chagossians and apologize for their treatment of the islanders.

"The forced displacement of the Chagossians and ongoing abuses amount to crimes against humanity committed by a colonial power against an indigenous people," the rights group said. "U.K. colonial rule in the Chagos Archipelago, unlike in most of its other colonies in Africa, did not end in the 1960s, and it has continued at extraordinary cost to the people of Chagos."

The Chagos Islands are the heart of the British Indian Ocean Territory, some 6,000 miles southeast of London and home to the U.S. Navy base at Diego Garcia. The base was built in the 1970s and provides what American authorities have described as "an all but indispensable platform" for security operations in the Middle East, South Asia and East Africa.

But Diego Garcia has been the source of controversy for decades because the islands were home to about 1,500 people when discussions about the base began in the 1960s.

In addition, the islands historically had been administered as a dependency of Mauritius, a U.K. territory that was then moving toward independence.

Those facts were a problem because the U.S. wanted the freedom to build the base on Diego Garcia without facing opposition.

As a result, Britain decided to separate the archipelago from Mauritius before it became independent and removed the Chagossians from the islands between 1967 and 1973.

There are now about 10,000 Chagossians who live primarily in Britain, Mauritius and the Seychelles. The consulting firm KPMG said in 2014 that everyone who took part in consultation meetings wanted to return to the islands permanently.

The government in 2016 refused to allow the Chagossians to return, citing "feasibility, defense and security interests, and cost to the British taxpayer."

But it also acknowledged that the original removal of the islanders was wrong, granted them citizenship and set aside \$49 million to improve the lives of Chagossians around the world.

# Ohio town seeks answers on toxic exposure

*The Washington Post*

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — Officials told residents who live near the site where a train derailed and spilled toxic chemicals on Feb. 3 to drink bottled water until officials receive more test results of the municipal drinking water supply.

State environmental and health officials said the air quality remains safe.

The train, which derailed along the Ohio-Pennsylvania border Feb. 3, was carrying a broader array of toxic chemicals than was first publicly detailed, the Environmental Protection Agency has disclosed, though the agency has said it is not detecting any hazardous levels of toxins in the area.

The disclosure has further elevated concern among residents of East Palestine, many of whom are still seeking answers about the amount of potential exposure to toxic fumes — both immediately after the crash and now — and whether it is safe for evacuated residents to return to their homes. Even some who weren't ordered to evacuate are wondering whether they should consider leaving the area.

"We should have been evacuated. It stunk for 48 hours," said Jackie Moore, 34, of Darlington, Pa., roughly eight miles away. From her home, the flames smelled like nail polish, she said.

The odor is still present in East Palestine, and it's unnerving residents. After more than a week of questions about what the train was carrying, the EPA on Sunday published a list from Norfolk Southern that confirmed which chemicals had spilled and showed which rail cars had been breached. There were 20 train cars carrying hazardous materials, 10 of which derailed, the National Transportation Safety Board reported Tuesday.

It is unclear whether chemicals continue to be released from the site of the derailment. In addition to still smelling odors, nearby residents have experienced headaches, burning eyes and other symptoms.

When the train derailed, federal investigators and chemical safety experts immediately homed in on a toxic and highly flammable gas being transported in five of the cars: vinyl chloride. Afraid the train cars would explode, sending shrapnel into neighborhoods, authorities decided to release and burn the vinyl chloride — a move that sent dangerous gases, hydrogen chloride and phosgene, into the air.

# Biden to award Medal of Honor to Vietnam-era Army officer

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — One of the first Black officers to lead a Special Forces team in combat will receive the nation's highest award for bravery in battle nearly 60 years after his commanding officer first recommended him for the prestigious Medal of Honor.

President Joe Biden called retired U.S. Army Col. Paris Davis on Monday "to inform him that he will receive the Medal of Honor for his remarkable heroism during the Vietnam War."

In a statement, Davis, 83, said the call had "prompted a wave of memories of the men and women I served with in Vietnam." He thanked his family, friends in the military and volunteers leaders.

"I think often of those fateful 19 hours on June 18, 1965, and what our team did to make sure we left no man behind on that battlefield," said Davis, who is from Cleveland and now lives in Virginia.

Davis, then a captain, was recommended for the Medal of Honor by his commanding officer for distinguishing himself on that June morning during a pre-dawn raid on a North Vietnamese army camp in Bong Son. Every American there was wounded during a major enemy counterattack.

Davis repeatedly sprinted into an open rice paddy to rescue each member of his team, using his pinkie finger to fire his rifle after his hand was shattered by an enemy grenade, according to the Army Times. His entire team survived.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Governor wants parents to OK kids' social media

**OH** COLUMBUS — Ohio's governor wants the state to require parental consent for kids under 16 to get new accounts on TikTok, Snapchat and other social media platforms.

Republican Gov. Mike DeWine's two-year budget proposal would create a law that social media companies must obtain a parent's permission for children to sign up for social media and gaming apps. The proposal also names YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, but the proposal would apply broadly, to "any online web site, online service, online product or online feature that requires consumer consent to register, sign up or otherwise create a unique username."

Lt. Gov. Jon Husted, who is driving the initiative, said it would not apply to "e-commerce" or "online shopping."

"Social media companies produce a product that is intentionally addictive to our children and has been proven harmful to kids," Husted said. "Parents should know about it before it happens and social media companies should be held accountable."

## 3 fishermen die after falling through ice

**VT** SOUTH HERO — After three men fell through the ice and died this past week while fishing on Lake Champlain, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department warned people Saturday to stay off the frozen lake due to unsafe conditions.

The 43rd annual Islands Ice Fishing Derby, planned for this

past weekend, was canceled on Saturday as well, according to a post on the derby's Facebook page. It said the Grand Isle County Sheriff's Department requested the cancellation due to the ice conditions.

Vermont brothers John Fleury, 71, of Williamstown, and Wayne Fleury, 88, of East Montpelier, fell through the ice in Keeler Bay in South Hero on Saturday while riding in an enclosed side-by-side utility terrain vehicle, according to the Vermont State Police.

## Police say drug lab found after house explosion

**CA** SAN FRANCISCO — Investigators found an illegal drug lab in the wreckage of a San Francisco house that exploded last week, killing a woman and damaging neighboring homes, police said.

Darron Price, 53, was arrested Friday afternoon and was booked into the San Francisco County jail for investigation of involuntary manslaughter, manufacturing narcotics and two counts of child endangerment, police said in a statement.

A seriously injured person was hospitalized and after it was safe to enter the structure, investigators found the woman's body in the rubble.

Investigators also "determined that an active illegal narcotics manufacturing lab was in the residence," police said.

## State may seek veto power over fuel storage

**NM** SANTA FE — The New Mexico Senate on Monday approved a proposed ban on the local disposal of spent nuclear fuel, unless the state pro-

vides its consent first.

The bill from Democratic state Sen. Jeff Steinborn, of Las Cruces, could impact a proposed multibillion-dollar facility in southeastern New Mexico that is expected to temporarily store spent nuclear fuel from commercial power plants across the nation. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission may announce a decision as soon as March on whether to grant a license to that project from Holtec International.

The Senate endorsed the bill on a 21-13 vote with Republicans and two Albuquerque-based Democrats in opposition to the proposed ban. The bill moves next to the state House for consideration, amid backing from Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham.

Steinborn said New Mexico residents should be wary of becoming "guinea pigs" for temporary storage projects before the federal government decides on a permanent storage site.

## State closer to banning trans youth health care

**TN** NASHVILLE — Tennessee's Republican-led Senate approved a measure Monday that would ban gender-affirming care for transgender minors, spurring civil rights groups to promise an immediate lawsuit if and when it becomes law.

The Senate's 26-6 vote keeps the bill on a fast track to passage even though there's more work to be done on the House side. GOP legislative leaders and Republican Gov. Bill Lee spoke favorably about the ban even before a bill was filed.

The American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU of Tennessee, and Lambda Legal on Monday

promised they were prepping a lawsuit.

The push in Tennessee comes as state lawmakers across the United States are advancing attacks on gender-affirming medical care for young people. Similar bills are being advanced in Nebraska, Oklahoma and South Dakota. In Utah, the Republican governor recently signed a ban into law, and judges have temporarily blocked similar laws in Arkansas and Alabama.

## Death exposes hole in city's homeless care

**AK** ANCHORAGE — The case of a homeless man who froze to death in Alaska's second-largest city of Fairbanks has exposed a hole in the safety net of care provided to a vulnerable population in one of the coldest places in the country.

The city has no low-barrier shelter to provide help and a warm place to stay on an unconditional basis.

The body of Charles Ahkiviana, 55, was discovered frozen in a snowbank near a busy department store, the Anchorage Daily News reported. The day his body was found, two days before Christmas, it was minus 32 degrees Fahrenheit and at one point, the wind chill was minus 54 degrees Fahrenheit. Ahkiviana died of hypothermia, Alaska State Troopers said.

The city lacks a low-barrier emergency shelter, a place that consistently and unconditionally offers an open door and a warm cot. That leaves those who are homeless to walk the streets at night, crowd into motel rooms and sleep in abandoned houses, cars or even dig snow caves.

— From wire reports

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# Woods returns, says he's in it to win it

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Tiger Woods feels good enough to play at Riviera, his first tournament with a cut and without a cart since the British Open last July. He already is looking ahead to the Masters. And yes, he thinks he can win.

"I would not have put myself out here if I didn't think I could beat these guys," Woods said Tuesday ahead of the Genesis Invitational, which has attracted 19 of the top 20 players in the world.

He also is well aware that he has not won since October 2019, and that at age 47 and with more surgeries than major titles (15), time is running out. He knows that. He's just not quite ready to accept it.

He marvels at how long Tom Brady lasted. He remembers when John Elway retired from the Denver Broncos because his body could no longer recover the way it once did. Golf is not a contact sport, but it has become a young man's game. Only two of the top 10 players in golf are in

their 30s. The oldest is Rory McIlroy at 33.

Woods can play. The question is whether he can compete, whether he can win. He remains at 82 career PGA Tour titles, a record he shares with Sam Snead, who was 67 when he made the cut at a PGA Championship.

Part of Woods was annoyed that he was celebrated for making the cut in the Masters last year, his first competition since a February 2021 car crash outside Los Angeles shattered bones in his right leg and ankle.

"I'm there to get a W, OK? So I don't understand that making the cut is a great thing," Woods said. "If I entered the event, it's always to get a W. There will come a point in time when my body will not allow me to do that anymore, and it's probably sooner rather than later. But wrapping my head around that transition and being the ambassador role and just trying to be out here with the guys, no, that's not in my DNA."

He played that ambassador

role last year at the Genesis Invitational as the tournament host. He also is leading the private player meetings geared toward building a new PGA Tour model of elite tournaments as a response to Saudi-funded LIV Golf.

His announcement Friday that he was playing led to a scramble for media credentials. The back of the press room in the Riviera clubhouse was lined with some two dozen photographers waiting for him to show up for his news conference.

Justin Rose watched in December as Woods played with his son at the PNC Championship, riding in a cart. Woods has been saying he can hit all the shots, that it's walking to them that makes it difficult.

"In terms of the important part of can you hit a golf ball, can you get a ball in the hole, all of that seemed to be really in order," Rose said. "But we know that's definitely not the thing he struggles with, right? It's obviously the physical side of putting together four rounds of golf.

(It's) a really good sign to see him in the field and feeling willing and able to get out here."

Woods had planned to play in his Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas the first week of December, but in accelerating his practice he developed plantar fasciitis that kept him from walking. He said he still copes with plantar fasciitis, only it has become manageable. The ankle is what gives him problems.

He prepared for Riviera — and the Masters, and whatever else can follow — with a more graduated practice of hitting golf balls, walking the course until he became tired, and then walking a little more until he could get in 18 holes.

What to expect? Not even Woods knows.

Expectations have run the gamut during his incomparable career. He once went two whole months in 2001 without winning, and the cover of a golf magazine said, "What's wrong with Tiger?" He went on to win his next three starts, including the Masters.

## Shiffrin splits with coach at world championships

Associated Press

MERIBEL, France — American skiing standout Mikaela Shiffrin had an unexpected parting with her longtime coach, Mike Day, during the middle of the world championships after informing him that she planned to take a new direction with her staff at the end of the season.

"Mikaela wants to do something different going forward. She wants a new challenge. And she informed Mike and Mike decided to go home," U.S. Alpine director Patrick Riml told The Associated Press on Wednesday. "It's a shock for me that he took off."

Day was with Shiffrin when she won the silver medal in super-G last week and then ac-

companied the skier for a few days of off-site training in Orcieres before returning to Meribel with her this week.

"He left yesterday," Riml said. "He's on the plane probably now."

Shiffrin was due to race again in her favored events of giant slalom on Thursday and slalom on Saturday.

"After working with Mike Day for seven seasons, I've decided to move forward with new leadership on my team for the next phase of my career," Shiffrin said in a statement released by the U.S. ski team. "I want to thank Mike and acknowledge all of his work and dedication over the last several years."

Day led Shiffrin's individual team within the U.S. squad.

Shiffrin's team is also led by her mother, Eileen, who has coached the skier her entire life.

Shiffrin's personal team also includes new assistant coach Mark Mitter, who remains with her, Riml said.

Paul Kristofic is the head coach of the overall U.S. women's team.

"We've got plenty of people here to support Mikaela and provide the training and the information she needs on race day to do her job," Riml said. "She's got great support. ... We'll decide together what makes the most sense moving forward."

Day did not immediately respond to a request for comment from the AP.

Shiffrin is also in the middle of a record-breaking season on

the World Cup circuit, having eclipsed Lindsey Vonn's record of 82 World Cup wins among women and moved within one victory of Ingemar Stenmark's overall mark of 86 wins.

The silver in super-G ended a troublesome run for Shiffrin in major championship races after she straddled a gate during the slalom run of the combined event in her opening race at worlds and didn't win a medal in any of her six races at last year's Beijing Olympics.

"Mikaela Shiffrin will be moving forward with new coaching, and will continue to be supported closely by the Stifel U.S. Alpine Ski Team coaches for the remainder of the season and in the future," the team said in a statement.



# Bucks top Celtics for 11th straight win

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Jrue Holiday demonstrated just why he's heading to the All-Star Game for the first time in a decade.

Holiday matched a career high with 40 points and made a go-ahead three-pointer with 25.2 seconds left in overtime as the Milwaukee Bucks edged the short-handed Boston Celtics 131-125 on Tuesday for their 11th consecutive victory.

The 32-year-old Holiday shot 8-for-12 from beyond the arc — including one from behind mid-court that beat the third-quarter buzzer — to set a career high for three-pointers.

"I don't really, I guess, care for how I'm playing as long as we're winning," said Holiday, who also had seven assists. "For me, as long as we get the win, I'm OK. The only stat I look at is

turnovers. That's kind of how I determine if I had a good or bad game. Tonight, what did I have, five turnovers? To me, that hurts my soul."

Holiday will join Bucks teammate Giannis Antetokounmpo at Sunday's All-Star Game in Salt Lake City. It's the first time Holiday has been selected since he was playing for Philadelphia in 2013, which marks the longest gap between All-Star appearances in league history.

Antetokounmpo added 36 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists as the Bucks (40-17) moved within a half-game of the Celtics (41-17) in the Eastern Conference standings.

Boston was playing without both of its All-Stars — Jayson Tatum (non-COVID illness) and Jaylen Brown (facial fracture) — as well as Marcus Smart

(sprained right ankle) and Al Horford (swelling in right knee).

**Suns 120, Kings 109:** Devin Booker scored 32 points, Deandre Ayton had 29 points and 11 rebounds, and host Phoenix beat Sacramento with superstar acquisition Kevin Durant watching from the bench.

It was the first home game for the Suns since they completed a trade with Brooklyn for Durant, who is recovering from a right knee injury and hasn't played since Jan. 12.

Booker was 13-for-20 from the field. Chris Paul had a season-high 19 assists and scored 17 points for Phoenix, which has won 11 of its last 14.

**Clippers 134, Warriors 124:** Kawhi Leonard scored 33 points, tying his career high with seven three-pointers, and

host Los Angeles beat Golden State to snap a two-game skid.

Norman Powell added 24 points and Paul George had 20 points and eight assists for the Clippers.

**Wizards 126, Trail Blazers 101:** Kyle Kuzma returned from an ankle sprain and scored 33 points, making six three-pointers, to lead visiting Washington over Portland.

Kristaps Porzingis added 28 points and 12 rebounds for the Wizards, who have won three of their last four games.

**Raptors 123, Magic 113:** Jakob Poeltl scored 30 points, Pascal Siakam had 26 and host Toronto beat Orlando for its fifth win in six games.

Scottie Barnes scored 17 points, Fred VanVleet had 10 points and a season-high 15 assists for the Raptors.

## Providence tops Creighton, tightens Big East race

Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Devin Carter had a career-high 25 points and No. 24 Providence outlasted No. 18 Creighton 94-86 in double overtime Tuesday night.

Bryce Hopkins and Noah Locke each scored 20 for the Friars (19-7, 11-4 Big East), who ended an eight-game winning streak for the Bluejays that began with a Jan. 14 victory over Providence at home.

"It was a great college basketball game if you didn't care who won. It had to be a lot of fun to watch," Creighton coach Greg McDermott said.

With the victory, the Friars tied the Bluejays (17-9, 11-4) for third place in the Big East. Both teams are a half-game behind Xavier and a game back of first-place Marquette in a crowded race for the regular-season title.

Providence, the defending regular-season champion, improved to 14-0 at home this sea-

son and 9-1 in its past 10 games that went to overtime — including a pair of double-OT wins on its own court this season.

Ryan Nembhard led Creighton with 21 points and 10 rebounds.

The game featured 20 lead changes and 17 ties. Providence finally pulled away in the second overtime, scoring the first five points and holding Creighton to just two late free throws after the Friars built a 92-84 lead.

"Obviously, we weren't as efficient in the second overtime as we were in the first," McDermott said. "Defensively, we haven't had a team do that to us in a long time."

Carter also had eight rebounds and two blocks. The sophomore guard helped the Friars get off on the right foot in the second OT, converting a three-point play to snap an 84-all deadlock.

"Devin affects the game in a number of different ways," Providence coach Ed Cooley

said. "You hear about all these different players around the country defensively. I wouldn't take one player in America defensively — not one. We put him on everyone. We may put him on Julius Erving if he comes out of retirement. This man here is a stud defensively."

**No. 5 Kansas 87, Oklahoma State 76:** Gradey Dick scored 17 of his season-high 26 points in the second half and the visiting Jayhawks defeated the Cowboys.

The freshman guard made 10 of 17 field-goal attempts, shooting 4-for-9 on three-pointers.

Kansas shot 66% from the field in the second half to pull away from the Cowboys. Oklahoma State leads the Big 12 in field-goal percentage defense.

Kansas (21-5, 9-4 Big 12) has won three straight. The Jayhawks are tied with Texas and Baylor atop the conference standings.

Kalib Boone scored a career-high 27 points for Oklahoma

State (16-10, 7-6), which had won five straight.

**Oklahoma 79, No. 12 Kansas State 65:** Grant Sherfield scored 22 points and the host Sooners went on a 12-0 run early in the second half against the Wildcats.

The win snapped a seven-game conference losing streak for Oklahoma (13-13, 3-10 Big 12) and prevented Kansas State (19-7, 7-6) and first-year coach Jerome Tang from earning their 20th win of the season.

Nae'quan Tomlin had 17 points and 10 rebounds to pace Kansas State.

**Syracuse 75, No. 23 NC State 72:** Judah Mintz scored 20 points and the host Orange knocked off the Wolfpack.

A three-point play by Jesse Edwards gave Syracuse a 73-70 lead with two minutes left. Edwards finished with 18 points.

D.J. Burns Jr. and Jarkel Joiner each scored 15 points for the Wolfpack (20-7, 10-6).

# With Ovechkin out, Hurricanes beat Capitals

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Brent Burns scored his 11th goal of the season, Frederik Andersen made 34 saves and the Carolina Hurricanes beat the depleted Washington Capitals 3-2 on Tuesday night.

Burns had one of three Hurricanes goals scored thanks to a point shot from a defenseman. The 2017 Norris Trophy winner scored through traffic, Calvin de Haan's shot went in off Paul Stastny, and Brady Skjei's shot was redirected in by Stefan Noesen on the power play.

Those hard-earned goals and Andersen's solid performance helped Carolina get back on track after losing 6-2 at home to the New York Rangers over the weekend. The Hurricanes have won 10 of their past 12 to pad their lead atop the Metropolitan Division.

"Any time you lose, I think we've done a good job just kind of turning the page," Stastny said. "For us, it's just kind of finding our legs, finding our groove after that break. I think we were playing pretty well going into the

break and now we're just slowly finding it more and more the past couple games, and I think we'll be able to get back to where we were before."

The Capitals could get top winger Tom Wilson back for the Stadium Series game, but they'll still be without captain Alex Ovechkin, No. 1 defenseman John Carlson and likely fourth-line center Nic Dowd.

Ovechkin left the team Tuesday to attend to a family health matter, and coach Peter Laviolette expects the Russian winger to be out at least the rest of the week and away "for the foreseeable future." Carlson has been out since Dec. 23 after taking a slapshot to the head, while Dowd has missed 10 consecutive games because of injury.

"I thought we played hard against a real good team," Laviolette said. "I didn't like the outcome. We didn't win the hockey game. Did a lot of good things, but in the end we came up short."

**Bruins 3, Stars 2 (OT):** David Pastrnak scored with 1:16 remaining in overtime, and visiting Boston rallied over Dallas in

a matchup of the top team in each conference.

Taylor Hall opened the scoring for Boston, and Pavel Zacha scored the tying goal in the third period for the NHL-leading Bruins. It was Jim Montgomery's first game as a head coach in Dallas since the Stars fired him in 2019 for what he later admitted was a drinking problem. Linus Ullmark stopped 29.

**Devils 3, Blue Jackets 2:** Ryan Graves scored off a feed from Michael LeDuc in front of the net with 1.4 seconds left, and visiting New Jersey beat Columbus for its fourth win in five games.

Yegor Sharangovich and Jesper Bratt had the other goals for the Devils, and Graves also had an assist. Vitek Vanecsek stopped 31 shots for New Jersey, which remains three points behind first-place Carolina and moved five ahead of the New York Rangers in the Metropolitan Division.

**Lightning 4, Avalanche 3 (SO):** Steven Stamkos scored in the shootout and visiting Tampa Bay rallied from a two-goal def-

icit to beat a banged-up Colorado team.

The first to go, Stamkos sent a shot past Alexandar Georgiev to set the tone for the shootout. Andrei Vasilevskiy took it from there.

**Jets 3, Kraken 2 (SO):** Mark Scheifele and Pierre-Luc Dubois scored in the shootout to give host Winnipeg a come-from-behind victory.

The Jets were the only NHL team that hadn't played in the shot contest. They're now 8-1 past regulation.

**Penguins 3, Sharks 1:** Casey DeSmith made 38 saves and visiting Pittsburgh beat San Jose.

**Senators 3, Islanders 2 (SO):** Tim Stutzle and Drake Batherson each scored in the shootout and visiting Ottawa won its sixth game in seven outings.

**Blues 6, Panthers 2:** Brayden Schenn scored twice and Jordan Binnington made 34 saves to lead host St. Louis over Florida.

**Canadiens 4, Blackhawks 0:** Host Montreal scored three goals in the third period to win its third straight.

## QB Carr released by Raiders, hits open market

Associated Press

HENDERSON, Nev. — Quarterback Derek Carr was released by the Las Vegas Raiders on Tuesday as the club evaluates its future at the position.

The move was expected after Carr was benched with two games remaining this season because the Raiders would have owed him \$40.4 million in guaranteed money over the next two years if he remained on the roster beyond Tuesday. By releasing Carr, the Raiders' salary dead cap hit will be \$5.6 million next season.

"We have a lot of respect for Derek Carr and what he has meant to the Raiders organization for the last nine years," Raiders coach Josh McDaniels and general manager Dave Ziegler said in a statement. "Derek has done great things in this league and we're thankful to have been able to work with him this past year. He is a true professional and we appreciate his hard work in

striving to produce the results we all desire."

Carr's agent, Tim Younger, posted on Twitter that they wish the Raiders "the best of luck."

"This is the tough part of this business," Younger wrote. "That's the point; it's just business. Time now to reset for both sides. Derek chooses to hold on to many good memories and friendships, without any ill will. That's who he is. Onward and upward."

Las Vegas tried to work out a trade with the New Orleans Saints, and Carr visited the team last week. He exercised his no-trade clause and turned down the deal Sunday because Carr didn't want to take a pay reduction, a person with knowledge of the situation said at the time.

Now Carr, who turns 32 on March 28, will see what he's worth on the open market, and there is little doubt there will be interest in the nine-year veteran given how many

teams need to upgrade at quarterback.

Carr might still be able to work out a deal with the Saints, but New Orleans is nearly \$60 million over the salary cap, according to overthecap.com. The Saints would need Carr to restructure his contract, but he already turned down that option last weekend.

Other teams Carr could consider include the Carolina Panthers, Indianapolis Colts, New York Jets, Tampa Bay Buccaneers or Washington Commanders. Another team also could jump into the mix.

Over nine seasons with the Raiders, Carr became the team's career leader in passing yards (35,222) and touchdown passes (217).

The knock on Carr was that he led the Raiders to just two playoff appearances and still is looking for his first postseason victory. How much of that was on Carr and how much on the Raiders is debatable, but Carr will have the opportunity to show elsewhere he wasn't the problem.