

In Poland, Biden says 'Kyiv stands strong'

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — President Joe Biden, returning on Tuesday to the Polish castle where he spoke shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine last year, said the war had hardened Western resolve to defend democracy around the globe.

He warned that there were “hard and bitter days ahead,” but pledged that the United States and its allies would “have Ukraine’s back” as the war enters its second year.

“Democracies of the world will stand guard over freedom today, tomorrow and forever,” he said at the Royal Castle, a landmark in Warsaw, before a cheering crowd of Polish citizens and Ukrainian refugees.

Biden’s speech came one day after his daring, unannounced trip to Kyiv, where he met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

“Kyiv stands strong,” Biden declared. “Kyiv stands proud.”

Before his speech, Biden met with Polish President Andrzej Duda as he began a series of consultations with allies to prepare for an even more complicated stage of Rus-

sia’s invasion.

“We have to have security in Europe,” Biden said at the presidential palace in Warsaw. “It’s that basic, that simple, that consequential.”

He described NATO as “maybe the most consequential alliance in history,” and he said it’s “stronger than it’s ever been” despite Russian President Vladimir Putin’s hopes that it would fracture over the war in Ukraine.

Duda, in his meeting with Biden, praised the president’s unannounced visit to Kyiv as “spectacular,” saying it “boosted morale of Ukraine’s defenders.”

He said the visit was “a sign that the free world, and its biggest leader, the president of the United States, stands by them.”

On Wednesday, Biden plans to meet again with Duda along with other leaders of the Bucharest Nine, a group of the easternmost members of NATO military alliance.

The conflict in Ukraine — the most significant war in Europe since World War II — has already left tens of thousands of people dead, devastated Ukraine’s infrastructure

system and damaged the global economy.

While Biden is looking to use his whirlwind trip to Europe as a moment of affirmation for Ukraine and allies, the White House has also emphasized that there is no clear endgame to the war in the near term, and the situation on the ground has become increasingly complex.

The administration on Sunday revealed it has new intelligence suggesting that China, which has remained on the sidelines of the conflict, is now considering sending Moscow lethal aid. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said it could become a “serious problem” if Beijing follows through.

Biden and Zelenskyy discussed capabilities that Ukraine needs “to be able to succeed on the battlefield” in the months ahead, Sullivan said. Zelenskyy has been pushing the U.S. and European allies to provide fighter jets and long-range missile systems known as ATACMS — which Biden has declined to provide so far. Sullivan declined to comment on whether there was any movement on the matter during the leaders’ talk.

Putin raises tensions, halts START nuclear treaty

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russian President Vladimir Putin declared Tuesday that Moscow was suspending its participation in the New START treaty — the last remaining nuclear arms control pact with the United States — sharply upping the ante amid tensions with Washington over the fighting in Ukraine.

Speaking in his state-of-the-nation address, Putin also said that Russia should stand ready to resume nuclear weapons tests if the U.S. does so, a move that would end a global ban on nuclear weapons tests in place since the end of the Cold War.

Explaining his decision to suspend Russia’s obligations under the 2010 New START treaty, Putin accused the U.S. and its NATO allies of openly declaring the goal of Russia’s defeat in Ukraine.

“They want to inflict a ‘strategic defeat’ on us and try to get to our nuclear facilities at the same time,” he said, declaring his decision to suspend Russia’s participation in the treaty.

He later sent a draft bill on the pact’s suspension to the Kremlin-controlled lower house, which is expected to quickly rubber-stamp it Wednesday.

Putin emphasized, however, that Russia was not withdrawing from the pact altogether. Hours after his address, the Russian Foreign Ministry said the country would respect the caps on nuclear weapons set under the treaty.

Russia also will continue to exchange information about test launches of ballistic missiles per earlier agreements with the United States, the ministry said.

Noting that the decision to suspend Russia’s participation in New START could be reversed, the Foreign Ministry urged the U.S. to deescalate tensions and create a proper environment for the treaty’s implementation.

The New START treaty envisages caps on the number of nuclear weapons and broad inspections of nuclear sites. Putin said such inspections don’t make sense after the U.S. and

its allies declared the goal of dealing Russia a military defeat in Ukraine and helped the Ukrainian military mount strikes on Russian nuclear facilities.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken deplored Putin’s move as “deeply unfortunate and irresponsible,” noting that “we’ll be watching carefully to see what Russia actually does.”

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg also voiced regret about Putin’s move, saying that “with today’s decision on New START, full arms control architecture has been dismantled.”

“I strongly encourage Russia to reconsider its decision and respect existing agreements,” he told reporters.

Putin argued that while the U.S. has pushed for the resumption of inspections of Russian nuclear facilities under the treaty, NATO allies had helped Ukraine mount drone attacks on Russian air bases hosting nuclear-capable strategic bombers.

5th Fleet head: Iran has everyone's attention

Associated Press

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates — Iranian attacks in the waterways of the Middle East and elsewhere in the region “have the attention of everyone” as tensions rise over Tehran’s advancing nuclear program, the head of the U.S. Navy’s 5th Fleet said Tuesday.

Vice Adm. Brad Cooper also told The Associated Press that he’s seen a rise in what he described as Iran’s “malign activities” in the region over his two years leading the Bahrain-based 5th Fleet.

While Cooper pointed to re-

cent seizures of weapons by American and allied forces in the region as a success, he acknowledged that Iran has been able to carry out drone attacks targeting shipping in the Mideast and other assaults in the region.

“We’re focused on expanding our partnerships,” Cooper said on the sidelines of Abu Dhabi’s International Defense Exhibition and Conference. “The short answer is the Iranian actions have the attention of everyone.”

The 5th Fleet patrols the crucial Strait of Hormuz, the nar-

row mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of all oil transits. Its region also stretches as far as the Red Sea up to the Suez Canal, the waterway in Egypt linking the Mideast to the Mediterranean Sea, and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait off Yemen.

Under Cooper’s command, which will end with the upcoming arrival of Rear Adm. George Wikoff in Bahrain, likely later this year, the 5th Fleet vastly expanded its use of drones and artificial intelligence to patrol those waterways.

Cooper said the Navy has reached the halfway mark of his goal to have 100 unmanned drones, both sailing and submersible, operating in the region with America’s allies. The Navy also conducted a drill Monday with the United Arab Emirates with the systems, he added.

But concerns about Iran have only grown in recent months as Tehran has enriched uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels and has enough fissile material for several nuclear bombs if it chooses to build them.

US urges UN to condemn N. Korea missile launches

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — The United States and its allies urged the U.N. Security Council on Monday to condemn North Korea’s unlawful ballistic missile launches, but China and Russia blamed the U.S. for escalating tensions with stepped-up military exercises targeting Pyongyang.

At the emergency meeting, U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told the council the U.S. will propose a presidential statement, saying at a minimum all 15 members should be agreeable to condemning the North’s unprecedented missile launches, to urging Pyongyang to comply with U.N. Security Council sanctions resolutions, and “to engage in meaningful dialogue.”

A presidential statement from the Security Council requires the support of all its members, including North Korea’s closest allies, China and Russia.

Thomas-Greenfield said the

U.S. condemns North Korea’s firing of two short-range ballistic missiles Monday following the launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile Saturday “in the strongest terms” as “flagrant violations” of the council’s ban on the country’s ballistic missile launches.

The launches and North Korea’s threatening rhetoric are undermining international peace and security, Thomas-Greenfield said.

And she warned the council that its silence and failure to condemn the North’s missile activities “leads to irrelevance.”

But Pyongyang’s allies China and Russia countered that what’s needed now is dialogue between North Korea and the Biden administration, a de-escalation of military exercises, an easing of sanctions on North Korea and approval of a resolution they circulated in November 2021 aimed at resolving the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

Unmanned Navy vessels, UAE aquatic drone pair in exercise

By J.P. LAWRENCE

Stars and Stripes

A United Arab Emirates drone boat’s participation in drills earlier this month with four U.S. counterparts from an experimental task force is the latest step toward the Navy’s goal of having a 100-vessel robotic fleet in the Middle East.

The five unmanned surface vessels surveilled ships sailing through the Persian Gulf as part of a weeklong exercise in mid-February, Task Force 59’s first bilateral exercise with the kingdom, a U.S. 5th Fleet statement Monday said.

The Navy aims to have an unmanned surface fleet of 100 in the waters of the Middle East by the end of the summer, with 80 of the vessels belonging to regional allies such as the UAE, Navy officials have said.

Previous unmanned systems exercises in the Middle East included one in September between the U.S. and Israel in the Gulf of Aqaba.

The 5th Fleet seeks to bene-

fit from the unmanned vessels by having them patrol the Middle East’s waterways, through which much of the world’s trade transits.

Unmanned systems can operate for long stretches on their own as they gather information on passing ships. The Navy created Task Force 59 in 2021 to focus on testing drones and artificial intelligence.

In 2022, Task Force 59 operated unmanned surface ships in the Middle East for more than 25,000 hours, a Naval Forces Central Command statement in December said.

Iran seized drones from Task Force 59 on separate occasions in August and September of that year and then released them when U.S. warships neared, the Navy said.

Iran and the U.S. 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.

Crime, politics won't stop Mardi Gras

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — New Orleans' annual Carnival season entered its ebullient crescendo Tuesday with thousands of revelers expected to pack the French Quarter and line miles of parade routes in a citywide Mardi Gras celebration underpinned this year by violent crime concerns and political turmoil.

Gunfire that broke out during a parade Sunday night left a teenager dead and four others injured, including a 4-year-old girl. Police quickly arrested Mansour Mbodj, 21, for illegally carrying a weapon, then upgraded the charge to second-degree murder.

Officials stressed Monday that the shooting was an isolated event.

The violence appeared to have little effect on Monday night crowds. St. Charles Ave-

nue, including the area where gunfire broke out, was again lined with people dancing, drinking and eating in a football tailgate atmosphere as they awaited the evening's parades. The French Quarter was packed with partiers wandering among bars, restaurants and strip clubs.

Revelers shrugged off crime at an afternoon riverside park event celebrating this year's king and queen of the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club.

"I think whatever it was, it was a private dispute that happened in a public place," said Chris Flug of New Orleans, referencing the Sunday night shooting. "It's always sad when gun violence takes a life, but it shouldn't taint the city or the event. You can't predict people's behavior."

Crime has contributed to dissatisfaction with Mayor LaToya

Cantrell. She won re-election in 2021, but has suffered myriad political problems since, including criticism about crime, the slow pace of major street repairs and questions over her personal use of a city-owned French Quarter apartment.

A recall petition launched last year is nearing a Wednesday deadline. One of the organizers, Eileen Carter, said she believes the movement has enough signatures, but will make a last-minute push.

"We're going to have people canvassing the parade routes," Carter said. "That's been really helpful to us."

Fueling the political tumult: Cantrell was captured in a social media video gesturing with her middle-finger as a parade passed by a city reviewing stand over the weekend.

What sparked the gesture was unclear.

The mayor's press office did not respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press. A statement given to The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate shed little light.

"Mardi Gras is a time where satire and jest are on full display," spokesperson Gregory Joseph said in a prepared statement. "The city has been enjoying a safe and healthy Carnival," the statement said, adding that the mayor was looking forward to continuing the celebration. Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday, is the culmination of Carnival season, which officially begins each year on Jan. 6, the 12th day after Christmas, and closes with the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday.

New Orleans' raucous celebration is the nation's most well-known, but the holiday is also celebrated throughout much of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast.

Man arrested in bishop killing worked at his home

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A man arrested Monday in the weekend killing of a Catholic bishop that shocked Los Angeles religious and immigrant communities is the husband of the victim's housekeeper and had done work at his home, authorities said.

Auxiliary Bishop David O'Connell, 69, was fatally shot Saturday in the bedroom of his home in Hacienda Heights, an unincorporated community about 20 miles east of downtown Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna said.

A SWAT team arrested Carlos Medina, the husband of O'Connell's housekeeper, at their home in Torrance, about 35 miles southwest of Hacienda Heights, Luna said.

The sheriff said detectives

first linked Medina to the crime after finding surveillance video that showed his SUV in the driveway of O'Connell's home at the time of the killing.

A caller told authorities that Medina, 65, was acting irrationally and had made comments about O'Connell "owing him money," Luna said, adding that a motive in the killing remains under investigation.

He said detectives found no evidence of forced entry at the archdiocese-owned home and that Medina's wife was cooperating with detectives.

Detectives recovered weapons at Medina's home and ballistic tests are pending, Luna said.

It was not immediately known if Medina has an attorney who can speak on his behalf.

Calif. city weighs balloon ban to help protect coast

Associated Press

Environmental advocates are celebrating in Laguna Beach — but it won't be with balloons.

The hilly seaside city known for stunning ocean views and rolling bluffs is weighing a plan to ban the sale and public use of balloons to curtail the risk of devastating wildfires and eliminate a major source of trash floating near the community's scenic shores.

The Laguna Beach City Council is expected to vote Tuesday on the proposal to ban in public the popular mainstay of birthday and graduation parties, whether inflated with helium or not. The move in the community of 23,000 people 50 miles southeast of Los Angeles comes as several California beach cities have limited balloons and the state enacted a law to regulate

the types made of foil.

Environmental advocates are taking aim at balloons, arguing they're a preventable cause of coastal pollution that threatens animals and seabirds.

Balloon debris can tangle wildlife or be ingested by animals that mistake it for food, and more than 3,000 pieces of balloon litter were picked up on ocean beaches by volunteers in Virginia over a five-year period, according to the NOAA Office of Response and Restoration.

In California, fire officials have warned against foil balloons that can tangle with power lines, causing a power outage and potential fire hazard.

Southern California Edison, one of the state's major utilities, reported more than 1,000 foil balloon-related power outages in 2017.

Blinken welcomes pause on Greece-Turkey tensions

Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday urged NATO allies Greece and Turkey to calm rhetoric as both countries head to national elections, in an effort to bolster unity in the trans-Atlantic alliance as Russia's invasion of Ukraine nears its anniversary.

Blinken met with officials in Athens after a stop in Turkey, where he also visited regions hit hardest by devastating recent earthquakes.

Greek and Turkish officials said they are willing to take a time out from long-standing disputes over sea boundaries in the eastern Mediterranean in the aftermath of the earthquakes that have killed about 45,000 people in Turkey and Syria.

Blinken said he hoped the pause would provide an opportunity to return to diplomacy.

"It's profoundly in our interest and I believe in the interest of both Greece and Turkey to find ways to resolve long-standing differences," he told reporters in Athens on Tuesday.

"And to do it through dialogue through diplomacy, to do it peacefully and in the meantime to not take any unilateral actions or use any charged rhetoric that would only make things more difficult."

Greece is expected to hold a parliamentary election in April, while Turkey will hold a general election in June.

"Both countries are heading to an election. That certainly creates, sometimes, incentives to engage in rhetoric that can create more problems," Blinken said.

In Athens, he met with Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis as well as Greece's ministers of foreign affairs and defense, continuing discussions to deepen bilateral military cooperation that has significantly expanded in recent years.

"We're all heartbroken over the humanitarian catastrophe that has struck our neighbors," Mitsotakis told Blinken late Monday. "I think this horrible catastrophe has proven that there is a deep connection between our two peoples. We may have big, significant political differences, but the bonds between our peoples are there."

Delegation meeting Taiwan leader reaffirms US military commitment

Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan — A delegation of U.S. lawmakers on Tuesday met with Taiwan's president, who promised to deepen military cooperation between the two sides despite objections from China, which claims the island as its own territory.

The group was one of many U.S. delegations President Tsai Ing-wen has welcomed in recent years even as Beijing has stepped up diplomatic and military harassment of Taiwan.

China responded to foreign visits by holding large-scale military exercises seen by some as a rehearsal for a blockade or invasion. Beijing has not ruled out use of force to reunite Taiwan with mainland China, although the sides have been separated since a civil war in 1949, and most Taiwanese prefer to keep the status quo of de-facto independence.

Tsai thanked the lawmakers for coming, saying it was a chance to deepen ongoing

cooperation in semiconductor chip design and manufacturing, renewable energy and next-generation 5G mobile network.

"Taiwan and the U.S. [will] continue to bolster military exchanges. Going forward, Taiwan will cooperate even more actively with the U.S. and other democratic partners to confront such bold challenges as authoritarian expansionism and climate change," Tsai said.

"We are here to affirm the shared values between the U.S. and Taiwan — a commitment to democracy, a commitment to freedom," California Rep. Ro Khanna said. "The U.S. under President [Joe] Biden's leadership seeks peace in the region."

He is accompanied by Reps. Tony Gonzales of Texas, Jake Auchincloss of Massachusetts and Jonathan Jackson of Illinois. The group met with their legislative counterparts Monday, as well as Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. founder Morris Chang.

New earthquake brings new deaths to Turkey, Syria

Associated Press

ISTANBUL — Survivors of the earthquake that jolted Turkey and Syria 15 days ago, killing tens of thousands of people and leaving hundreds of thousands of others homeless, dealt with more trauma and loss Tuesday after another strong quake and aftershocks rocked the region.

The 6.4 magnitude earthquake that struck Monday evening had its epicenter in the Defne district of Turkey's Hatay province, which was of the area's most affected by the Feb. 6 magnitude 7.8 quake that killed nearly 46,000 people in the two countries.

Turkey's disaster management authority, AFAD, said the new quake killed six people and injured 294 others, including 18 in critical condition. In Syria, a woman and a girl died as a result of panic during the earthquake in the provinces of Hama and Tartus, pro-government media outlets said.

Monday's quake was felt in Jordan, Cyprus, Israel, Lebanon and Egypt. A magnitude 5.8 quake followed, along with dozens of aftershocks. The White Helmets, northwest Syria's civil defense organization, said about 190 people suffered injuries in rebel-held areas and that several flimsy buildings collapsed but there were no reports of anyone stuck under the debris.

In Turkey, teacher Zuher Capar, 42, said he was mourning the loss of relatives in the original earthquake and having a meal with his aunt and uncle near the Hatay town of Samandag when they felt Monday's temblor.

"We had barely overcome the sadness [from the first earthquake]," he said.

While his large family's home withstood the quake earlier in the month, it was damaged on Monday. Capar said they are too frightened to sleep there and plan to stay in a large tent and cars.

"We are trying to stay strong but it is a terrifying process. The cities we knew, the memories we had, have been destroyed," he said. "When we go in the streets, there is only rubble and heavy machinery. It's like a horror movie scene."

Turkish officials warned residents not to go into the remains of their homes, but people have done so to retrieve what they can. Three of the people killed Monday were inside a damaged four-story building when the new quake hit.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

3rd person pleads guilty in romance scam

RI PROVIDENCE — A third person who played a role in an internet romance scam that cheated multiple victims across the country out of about \$3.2 million has pleaded guilty, federal prosecutors said.

Sadae Mills, 28, of Houston, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Providence to conspiracy to commit money laundering.

Mills' role in the scheme was to receive payments that she knew had been fraudulently obtained through internet and app-based romance scams, according to the U.S. attorney's office in Rhode Island.

Over a three-month period in 2018, she took the payments and deposited them into her bank account. She then withdrew or transferred the money when directed to do so by one of her accomplices, prosecutors said.

City manager fired over widespread outages

TX AUSTIN — Austin's city manager was fired in the wake of outrage over a slow and fumbled response to a winter storm power outage that left thousands of people without electricity for a week or longer in the Texas capital.

The 10-1 vote by the Austin City Council to remove Spencer Cronk, the city's top executive, came in the face of growing calls for accountability after an ice storm this month knocked out power to more than 170,000 customers. Frustration in the nation's 11th-largest city boiled as Austin officials publicly offered

little information and gave residents no estimates on how long repairs would take.

State senators move to curb vaping in new law

GA ATLANTA — Georgia senators are moving to restrict vaping in public spaces.

The state Senate voted 51-3 to pass Senate Bill 47, which would regulate vaping in the same way the state already regulates smoking. The measure moves to the House for more debate.

Georgia's 2005 Smoke-Free Air Act said that people can't smoke indoors in many public places, although it excludes some places including tobacco stores, bars that only admit patrons older than 18, and privately owned convention rooms

A person who violates the law commits a misdemeanor and can be fined \$100 to \$500.

Tesla workers fired after union effort

NY BUFFALO — Several employees at a Tesla factory in New York have been fired a day after launching union organizing efforts, according to Tesla Workers United, but the company said they're not related.

The workers at the Buffalo plant received an email updating them on a new policy that prohibits them from recording workplace meetings without all participants' permission, Tesla Workers United said. The group, which is behind the union movement, said that such restrictions violate federal labor law and flouts New York's

one-party consent law to record conversations.

"We're angry. This won't slow us down. This won't stop us," Sara Costantino, a current Tesla employee and organizing committee member, said in a prepared statement. "They want us to be scared, but I think they just started a stampede. We can do this. But I believe we will do this."

In a statement, Tesla said the terminations were the result of poor ratings on performance reviews that were conducted before the union campaign was announced. The list of employees being dismissed was finalized Feb. 3, and Tesla became aware of organizing activities Feb. 13, the company said.

State court overturns gun sanctuary measure

OR PORTLAND — Local governments in Oregon can't declare themselves Second Amendment sanctuaries and ban police from enforcing certain gun laws, a state appeals court decided, in the first court case filed over a concept that hundreds of U.S. counties have adopted in recent years.

The measure in question, which was approved in Columbia County, forbids local officials from enforcing most federal and state gun laws and would impose thousands of dollars in fines on those who try.

The state Court of Appeals ruled that it violates a law giving the state the power to regulate firearms.

The ordinance would effectively, it found, "create a 'patchwork quilt' of firearms laws in Oregon, where firearms regula-

tions that applied in some counties would not apply in Columbia County," something lawmakers specifically wanted to avoid.

Opponents included the legal arm of the group Everytown for Gun Safety, which had argued that the ordinance violated the U.S. Constitution. Eric Tirschwell, executive director of Everytown Law, called the court's decision "a win for public safety and the rule of law."

Airport, 50K people lose power due to fire

CA OAKLAND — A power substation fire temporarily caused outages at the Oakland International Airport and left 50,000 customers around the east San Francisco Bay Area without electricity, Oakland fire officials said.

The Oakland Fire Department responded to a fire on Pacific Gas & Electric property and found a transformer on fire, an unidentified spokesman for the Oakland Fire Department said in a video posted on Twitter. The fire has been extinguished.

The Oakland International Airport, which serves about 170 flights a day, lost power for nearly two hours, spokesman Robert Bernardo told the San Francisco Chronicle.

A few security lines remained open for screening, KNTV reported. Social media posts showed large crowds of people gathered at airport baggage claim.

The power outage also halted some public transportation to the airport and snarled traffic on other roadways.

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No easy answers to NBA's rest problem

Associated Press

Golden State coach Steve Kerr wants a shorter NBA season. Milwaukee All-Star Giannis Antetokounmpo does not. NBA Commissioner Adam Silver isn't sure what the right answer is.

Such is the conundrum with the NBA's ongoing battle with load management — often the fancy way of saying resting — and finding ways to optimize player health, performance and availability. While there is a consensus that the league has problems, there is no consensus on how to solve those problems.

Over the last week, The Associated Press asked a cross section of 48 players, coaches, owners and executives if the NBA should abandon its 82-game, 170-day blueprint of a regular season for something with ei-

ther fewer games or more days in the season to allow for more rest.

The results were as muddled as the issue itself: 40% said they would simply go along with whatever the league decides is best, 35% said they don't want the current format changed, and the remaining 25% want changes.

How fans will be affected is one concern. Money is another.

"I think if you want to get the best player availability, shortening the season may be in the best interest of everybody involved," Denver coach Michael Malone said. "But that's also a lot of money being lost — TV games, money. Let's not forget: This is a business."

With the All-Star Weekend in the books and regular-season play resuming Thursday, there

are still 19 players with a chance to play in 82 games this season. There were only five who did it last season, 11 who played every game in a 72-game 2020-21 season and 14 who played all possible games in the COVID-19-interrupted 2019-20 season.

It used to not be so uncommon for players to play every game, or at least almost every game. A decade ago, in 2012-23, there were 28 players making 82 appearances. A decade before that, it was 46. John Stockton played in 82 games 16 times for Utah and missed 22 games in 19 seasons; A.C. Green played 82 games 14 times in his career. Among players currently active, nobody has logged more than five 82-game seasons.

Antetokounmpo doesn't want change: "I think 82 games is

perfect," he said.

Minnesota guard Anthony Edwards said seeing players sometimes take a game to rest is the thing he dislikes most about the league. His rationale: Somebody might have bought a ticket to just that one game, and feelings can be hurt if the player they want to see most takes the night off.

"Just play, man. If you're 80%, you've got to play," said Edwards, 21, a first-time All-Star. "I don't like all the sitting, missing games and stuff. These people might have enough money to come to one game. And that might be the game they come to and you're sitting out. I take pride in trying to play every game because I don't know, it might be one fan that has never seen me play, and I'm trying to play."

Report: Westbrook waived, expected to join Clippers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Russell Westbrook was waived by the Utah Jazz on Monday and the nine-time All-Star is expected to sign with the Los Angeles Clippers, according to a published report.

The 34-year-old guard was acquired by the Jazz from the Los Angeles Lakers on Feb. 10. He averaged 15.9 points, 7.4 rebounds and 7.1 assists in 28.7 minutes per game in a rocky tenure with the Lakers.

ESPN reported that Westbrook's agent, Jeff Schwartz of Excel Sports, told the outlet he will sign with the Clippers after completing a contract buyout on the remaining \$47 million he's owed on his expiring deal.

Schwartz did not immediately respond to messages from The Associated Press. The Clippers had no comment.

The move would reunite Westbrook with Paul George, his former teammate in Okla-

homa City. It also allows Westbrook to stay in Los Angeles. He is from the area and starred at UCLA.

The Lakers traded Westbrook and a 2027 first-round draft pick to the Jazz as part of a three-team deal.

Love signs with Heat after clearing waivers

Kevin Love wasted no time. He's officially a member of the Miami Heat.

The five-time All-Star and 15-year NBA veteran cleared waivers on Monday afternoon, then signed a contract to join the Heat for the remainder of the season not long afterward. The now-former Cleveland forward was in Miami for the signing, with plans to start working out at his new team facility right away.

Love's first official practice with Miami is scheduled for Thursday when the team returns from its All-Star break, and he could make his Heat

debut as early as Friday at Milwaukee.

Love is an NBA champion, an Olympic champion and a FIBA World Cup champion. He's 42nd on the NBA's three-pointers made list with 1,536, which ranks 19th among players currently in the league.

Source: Leonard gets shot to resume career

MIAMI — Meyers Leonard is getting another chance at the NBA, nearly two years after he used an anti-Semitic slur while playing a video game that was being livestreamed.

A person with knowledge of the negotiations said Leonard and the Milwaukee Bucks have agreed on a 10-day contract, opening the door for the 7-foot center to play in an NBA game for the first time since January 2021. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the deal

had not been announced.

ESPN first reported the agreement between Leonard and the Bucks.

Leonard's career was jeopardized and his reputation was seriously damaged on March 8, 2021 when it was discovered that he used a slur while playing an online game as others watched on a livestream. The Heat told him to stay away from the team indefinitely, NBA Commissioner Adam Silver fined him \$50,000 and Miami eventually traded him to Oklahoma City.

Leonard said then that he knew he'd used a bad term, but was unaware of the term's meaning. In an apology, he said "my ignorance about its history and how offensive it is to the Jewish community is absolutely not an excuse and I was just wrong." He immediately began scheduling meetings with Holocaust survivors, rabbis in South Florida and other community leaders.

No. 3 Kansas tops TCU for 5th straight

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Big 12 scoring leader Jalen Wilson was struggling with his shot for third-ranked Kansas, and stand-out freshman Gradey Dick didn't score again after reaching 19 points only two minutes into the second half.

The Jayhawks, in pursuit of their 21st Big 12 regular-season title, still never trailed after halftime and extended the league's longest active winning streak to five in a row, beating 24th-ranked TCU 63-58 on Monday night.

"I've said all along, we've got five guys that can all go out there and play and take over the game. And that's the beauty of our team," said Wilson, who had 13 rebounds while making only 3 of 11 shots for seven points, more than 13 below his average. "We're all going to have some type of effort to win. ... That's part of a championship team."

Damion Baugh missed a potential tying three-pointer with five seconds left for TCU (18-10, 7-8 Big 12). Shahada Wells missed a follow-up layup before Kevin McCullar, who finished with 15 points, was fouled and made two free throws to seal it for the Jayhawks (23-5, 11-4).

Kansas began the night tied with idle eighth-ranked Texas for the conference lead. Coach Bill Self's reigning national champions have won seven of eight games since a three-game losing streak that included a 23-point home loss to the Horned Frogs.

"We haven't accomplished jack, but we've put ourselves in a favorable position to maybe do something," Self said. "Everybody talked about our sky's falling when we lost three in a row. In this league, that can happen easily. But we've recovered pretty good since then."

Not even an appearance from

Heisman Trophy runner-up Max Duggan could get the Frogs over the hump. They were within 56-53 with 6:07 left when the four-year starting quarterback, still in his tuxedo after receiving the Davey O'Brien Award in a ceremony about four miles from campus, waved the crowd into a frenzy while going to a courtside seat.

"He looked good tonight with the tux on," Self said. "I'm just glad he didn't get here any earlier."

Neither team made a field goal in the final 4:19. TCU missed its last six shots in that span, while the Jayhawks were 0-for-4 in the final 4:45.

The Frogs tied the game at 48 with 10:13 left when Jakobe Coles made a tough leaner while being fouled, but missed the free throw.

Mike Miles Jr. had 13 points for TCU, which has lost five of its last six games. The first four of those losses came when the guard was out with a hyperextended right

knee. Coles added 12 points and Baugh had 11.

It was only the second game Miles and big man Eddie Lampkin played together for the Frogs since their 83-60 win at Allen Fieldhouse on Jan. 21. That was the second-worst home loss for Kansas in Self's 20 seasons.

With both of them starting again, TCU beat Oklahoma State 100-75 at home Saturday to end a four-game losing streak while hitting the century mark in a Big 12 game for the first time. Lampkin, who missed four of six games after a high left ankle sprain in the first meeting against the Jayhawks, had two points and eight rebounds in the rematch.

"It's disappointing how we played and how we executed and how we handled the situation," TCU coach Jamie Dixon said. "Obviously played good in our last game, excited about having our guys back. But we just didn't carry it over."

MLB teams certain to search for edge within new rules

Associated Press

PHOENIX — It's a brand new day in the major leagues — potentially an even brighter one for base-stealers like Trea Turner and Ronald Acuña Jr., and most definitely a change of pace for veteran aces like Gerrit Cole or Yu Darvish.

The bases are bigger, and the pickoff rules are different. The pitch clock has arrived, and infield shifts are gone.

Sorry, Shohei Ohtani, you took too long to throw that pitch. Bryce Harper, get back in the batter's box. Xander Bogaerts, can't stand there when Mookie Betts is hitting.

Only one thing is certain to stay the same: Everyone will try to find an edge, aiming to take advantage of baseball's dramatic alterations.

"I think the one thing we know about our industry is to the ex-

tent there's an advantage to be gained, every team is going to be doing everything possible to try to exploit that advantage to the best of its ability," said Chris Antonetti, president of baseball operations for the Cleveland Guardians.

Those are the conversations that are dominating spring training this year after Major League Baseball approved a series of changes in September in an effort to make the sport more appealing to a younger generation turned off by its lack of action and leisurely tempo.

The size of the bases has been increased to 18-inch squares from 15. The new pitch clock is 15 seconds with no runners on base and 20 seconds with runners. The increasingly frequent infield shift has been eliminated, and there is a limit of two of what MLB calls disengagements —

pickoff attempts or steps off the rubber — per plate appearance.

"I think the pitch clock will be the most impactful for sure," Milwaukee Brewers manager Craig Counsell said. "I mean I'm hoping that's the one that's most impactful. I hope fans notice a real improvement in the pace of the game."

A catcher is required to be in the catcher's box with nine seconds left on the clock and a hitter in the batter's box and focused on the pitcher with eight seconds remaining.

Penalties for violations will be a ball called against a pitcher and a strike called against a batter. And there almost assuredly will be some violations through the start of the season as players get used to the clock.

"I'm not worried about it," Chicago White Sox pitcher Lance Lynn said. "The hitters

are going to hate it."

Under the new rules on defensive positioning, two infielders will be required to be on either side of second and all infielders to be within the outer boundary of the infield when the pitcher is on the rubber.

With the elimination of the shift, teams could get more creative with their outfielders. It's not hard to imagine a scenario where a corner outfielder could move into a spot that a shifted infielder used to fill.

The bigger bases are intended to help reduce injuries and increase stolen bases — due to their size, the bases are closer together by a few inches. There were 3,297 steal attempts in the majors last year, according to Sportradar.

All those bang-bang plays on the bases just got a little more interesting.

Bruins top Senators for 4th straight victory

Associated Press

BOSTON — David Pastrnak had already scored twice, and with the Senators' net empty, a third was within reach.

The Bruins forward passed up the chance at a hat trick — and the league lead in goals — and fed the puck to teammate David Krejci, whose family was at the game for a celebration honoring his 1,000th career NHL game.

"That was my only goal," said Pastrnak, who scored twice to lead Boston to a 3-1 victory over the Ottawa Senators on Monday. "I was looking for him all game."

Linus Ullmark stopped 30 shots in the Bruins' fourth straight victory. Jake DeBrusk also scored for Boston — the second straight time he has opened the scoring in two games since returning from an injury.

Pastrnak broke a second-period tie to pass the 40-goal plat-

eau for the third time in his career, and added another goal in the third for No. 41. Edmonton's Connor McDavid leads the league with 42 goals.

With the Bruins in the Ottawa zone and no goalie in net in the final minute, Pastrnak was looking for Krecji.

"It just says a lot about the character that (Pastrnak) has as a human being, and understanding it was a big night for Krech," said DeBrusk, who returned Saturday after missing 17 games with a broken leg. "He's in position to get a hat trick and he still dishes it to Krech. It's pretty cool."

Flyers 4, Flames 3: Wade Allison scored the game-winner and fellow rookie Samuel Ersson made 32 saves to maintain his perfect record as visiting Philadelphia beat Calgary.

Travis Konecny and Tony DeAngelo each had a goal and an assist for Philadelphia. Ni-

colas Deslauriers also scored as the Flyers snapped a four-game losing streak. Ersson, 23, is the eighth goaltender in NHL history to start his career 6-0-0.

Mikael Backlund and Andrew Mangiapane had a goal an assist each for Calgary while Tyler Toffoli notched his team-leading 23rd.

Islanders 4, Penguins 2: Bo Horvat and Anders Lee scored less than 2 minutes apart in the third period to spark visiting New York over Pittsburgh — the Islanders' second late comeback over the Penguins in three days.

Horvat beat Tristan Jarry to the short side with 11:26 remaining to tie it, then Jarry turned it over behind the Pittsburgh net to kickstart a sequence that ended with Lee's goal. Brock Nelson's second goal of the game, an empty-netter with 25 seconds left, sealed it for the Islanders.

Ilya Sorokin made 45 saves

for New York. Jarry finished with 28 saves.

Panthers 4, Ducks 3 (OT): Carter Verhaeghe scored 1:42 into overtime to lead host Florida past Anaheim.

Florida has won six of its past nine games. Anaheim has lost its last five.

The Panthers also got goals from Eric and Marc Staal as well as Ryan Lomberg. Sergei Bobrovsky had 29 saves.

Jets 4, Rangers 1: Mark Scheifele scored twice and Connor Hellebuyck made 50 saves for visiting Winnipeg in its win over New York.

Kyle Connor and Pierre-Luc Dubois also scored for the Jets, who are 6-3-0 in their past nine visits to Madison Square Garden.

Vincent Trocheck scored for the Rangers, who lost in regulation for the first time since Jan. 19 when they fell 3-1 at home to Boston. Igor Shesterkin finished with 17 saves.

Duggan prepping for future, not reflecting on TCU career

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Max Duggan really hasn't had time to reflect on his career at TCU, where the four-year starting quarterback's final snap came in the national championship game. The Heisman Trophy runner-up hasn't even stopped throwing while getting ready for the NFL combine and draft.

The beloved TCU quarterback, who has been in Southern California training since a few days after the national title game loss, was back in Fort Worth on Monday night for the presentation of the Davey O'Brien Award — whose namesake is the school's only Heisman Trophy winner, when leading the Horned Frogs to an undefeated season and their only AP national title in 1938.

"It means so much to our program, for TCU, because we obviously understand what Davey O'Brien did for TCU, what he did for just college football," said Duggan, the first TCU player to win the award given annually to a top quarterback. "There's so much pride for what he did for our program, and building it up and setting a milestone for TCU programs to strive for."

While Duggan and the Horned Frogs lost a lopsided national championship game to Georgia, they tied a school record with 13 wins by beating Michigan in the College Football Playoff semifinal Fiesta Bowl.

"I probably haven't even done a whole time of reflecting on what happened this season," he said. "Obviously we're disappointed what happened in the national championship game.... But that doesn't take away from the special season that we had as a program, to be able to share that with players, coaching staff, our fans, the city of Fort Worth and TCU. People are going to remember this season for a long time."

Even though he still had another season of eligibility available after starting 43 games for TCU, Duggan decided after extended conversations with his family and coach Sonny Dykes that it was the right time to make himself available for the NFL Draft. He graduated from TCU's business school in December.

Duggan was at the Senior Bowl and is now among several draft prospects working in California with former NFL quarterback

Jordan Palmer. The NFL combine starts next week, before TCU's pro day at the end of March and the draft in late April.

Most draft projections have Duggan being a late-round pick on the third and final day. That doesn't bother him.

"You've just got to have one team that, you know, falls in love with you, that likes your game, likes you as a person, what you do on and off the field. And I think that's what really matters in my eyes," he said. "I understand I'm not one of the top guys."

Four former Big 12 quarterbacks started games in the NFL playoffs this season, including both Super Bowl starters: MVP Patrick Mahomes of the champion Kansas City Chiefs, and Heisman Trophy runner-up Jalen Hurts for the NFC champion Philadelphia Eagles. The others were seventh-round draft picks last year.

Former Kansas State quarterback Skylar Thompson started a playoff game for Miami. Former Iowa State quarterback Brock Purdy, the very last player selected in the draft, was the starter for San Francisco as the 49ers made it to the NFC title game.