

Drone hits Syrian base with US troops

Associated Press

BEIRUT — A drone attack on a base housing U.S. troops in eastern Syria killed six allied Kurdish fighters late Sunday, in the first significant attack in Syria or Iraq since the U.S. launched retaliatory strikes over the weekend against Iran-backed militias that have been targeting its forces in the region.

The U.S.-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces said Monday the attack hit a training ground at al-Omar base in Syria's eastern province of Deir el-Zour, where the forces' commando units are trained. No casualties were reported among U.S. troops.

An umbrella group of Iran-backed Iraqi militias, dubbed the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, released a video claiming re-

sponsibility for the attack and showing them launching a drone from an unspecified location.

In late January, a drone attack by the same group killed three U.S. troops and wounded dozens more at a desert base in Jordan.

The U.S. military launched dozens of retaliatory strikes targeting Iran-backed militant groups in western Iraq and eastern Syria and also struck the Houthis in Yemen.

The SDF initially accused "Syrian regime-backed mercenaries" of carrying out Sunday's attack but in a second statement blamed "Iran-backed militias" after investigating the attack.

The umbrella group has launched dozens of drone attacks on U.S. military bases and

troops in Iraq and Syria, and has called for the withdrawal of American soldiers from both countries.

The attack comes as tensions flare across the Middle East amid the Israel-Hamas war, which was sparked by Hamas' rampage in southern Israel on Oct. 7.

Meanwhile, Britain-based opposition war monitor Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least seven SDF fighters were killed in the attack on Sunday and at least 18 others wounded, some in critical condition.

The attack late Sunday came two days after the U.S. military carried out strikes against militant targets linked to Iran in Syria and Iraq.

The SDF said it has the right

to respond to the attack.

The U.S. military said it struck four anti-ship missiles on Sunday that were prepared to be fired at vessels in the Red Sea from Houthi rebel-controlled areas in Yemen.

In a statement early Monday, the U.S. Central Command said the strikes were in self-defense and came after forces determined the missiles "presented an imminent threat to U.S. Navy ships and merchant vessels in the region."

Sunday's strikes came a day after the U.S. and Britain launched a second wave of strikes against the Houthis, meant to degrade the Iranian-backed group's capabilities to attack vessels in the Red Sea. The U.S. and Britain said they hit 36 Houthi targets.

Floods, outages in Calif. as 2nd atmospheric river strikes

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A storm of historic proportions unleashed record levels of rain over parts of Los Angeles on Monday, endangering the city's large homeless population, sending mud and boulders down hillsides dotted with multimillion-dollar homes and knocking out power for more than a million people in California.

The storm was the second one fueled by an atmospheric river to hit the state over the span of days.

About 1.4 million people in the Los Angeles area, including the Hollywood Hills and Beverly Hills, were under a flash flood warning Monday morning. Up to 9 inches of rain had already fallen in the area, with more expected, according to the Nation-

al Weather Service, which called the flash flooding and threat of mudslides "a particularly dangerous situation."

Already crews were rescuing people from swift-moving water in various parts of Southern California.

Gushing rivers carried mud, rocks and objects from people's multimillion-dollar homes, including coolers, ladders and plastic crates, in Studio City, an area named after a movie studio lot, on the backside of the Hollywood Hills. Several homes were damaged, including one with a crumpled garage door from the debris slide.

A text late Sunday alerted Ke-ki Mingus that a neighbor's house at the top of a hill was in trouble.

"Mud, rocks and water came

rushing down through their house and another neighbor's house and into our street," Mingus said as water continued to rush down the road around dawn on Monday. "I can't believe it. It looks like a river that's been here for years. I've never seen anything like it."

A record 4.1 inches of rain fell Sunday in downtown Los Angeles, blowing past the previous record of 2.55 inches set in 1927, the National Weather Service said.

That didn't stop the Grammy Awards on Sunday night from continuing as planned at downtown's Crypto.com Arena.

The weather service forecast up to 8 inches of rainfall across Southern California's coastal and valley areas, with 14 inches possible in the foothills and

mountains over the next two days.

More than 474,061 homes, businesses or other locations were without electricity statewide on Monday morning, according to poweroutage.us. Commuters stepped through several inches of floodwater as they rushed to catch trains at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles.

The havoc on Monday in Southern California came after the storm over the weekend inundated streets and brought down trees and electrical lines throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, where winds topped 60 mph in some areas.

The weather service issued a rare "hurricane force wind warning" for the Central Coast, with wind gusts of up to 92 mph.

Senators release border, Ukraine deal

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senators on Sunday released a highly anticipated \$118 billion package that pairs border enforcement policy with wartime aid for Ukraine, Israel and other U.S. allies, but it quickly ran into a wall of opposition from top House Republicans, including Speaker Mike Johnson.

The proposal could be the best chance for President Joe Biden to resupply Ukraine with wartime aid — a major foreign policy goal that is shared with both the Senate's top Democrat, Sen. Chuck Schumer, and top Republican, Sen. Mitch McConnell.

The Senate was expected this week to hold a key test vote on the legislation, but within hours of the text being released Johnson said on social media that it would be “dead on arrival” if it reaches the House.

With Congress stalled on approving \$60 billion in Ukraine aid, the U.S. has halted shipments of ammunition and missiles to Kyiv, leaving Ukrainian soldiers outgunned as they try to beat back Russia's invasion.

Senators have been working for months on the carefully negotiated compromise intended to overcome opposition from conservatives who have tired of funding Ukraine's fight. But the

coming days will be a crucial test of whether congressional leaders can once again muscle their members to support a package designed to assert American strength — and commitment — around the world.

They will also be weighing whether to continue pressing on one of the most fraught issues in American politics — border and immigration legislation.

Biden said in a statement that the Senate proposal “allows the United States to continue our vital work, together with partners all around the world, to stand up for Ukraine's freedom and support its ability to defend itself against Russia's aggression.”

And on the border, Biden said that the immigration system has been broken for too long, and it's time to fix it.

The proposal would overhaul the asylum system with faster and tougher enforcement, as well as give presidents new powers to immediately expel migrants if authorities become overwhelmed with the number of people applying for asylum. The new bill would also invest in U.S. defense manufacturing, send \$14 billion in military aid to Israel, steer nearly \$5 billion to allies in the Asia-Pacific, and provide humanitarian assistance to civilians caught in conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza.

Blinken back in Middle East to push for hostage deal

Associated Press

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Saudi Arabia's crown prince Monday at the start of his fifth visit to the Middle East since the outbreak of the war in Gaza, hoping to press ahead with a potential cease-fire deal and postwar planning while tamping down regional tensions.

But on all three fronts he faces major challenges: Hamas and Israel are publicly at odds over key

elements of a potential truce. Israel has dismissed U.S. calls for a path to a Palestinian state, and Iran's militant allies in the region have shown little sign of being deterred by U.S. strikes.

In Gaza, meanwhile, Hamas has begun to re-emerge in some of the most devastated areas after Israeli forces pulled back, an indication that Israel's central goal of crushing the group remains elusive. Video footage from the same areas shows vast

destruction, with nearly every building damaged or destroyed.

Blinken met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman shortly after arriving in the Saudi capital, Riyadh. Saudi officials have said the kingdom is still interested in normalizing relations with Israel in a potentially historic deal, but only if there is a credible plan to create a Palestinian state.

But any such grand bargain appears a long way off as the war

still rages in Gaza, where 113 bodies were brought to hospitals in the last 24 hours alone, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory. It says another 205 people were wounded.

The fatalities bring the overall Palestinian death toll from nearly four months of war to 27,478. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count but says most of the dead were women and children.

Pro-Palestinian US porn actress visits Iranian capital

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — An American porn actress who has advocated for Palestinians online during Israel's war on Hamas traveled to Iran and visited the former U.S. Embassy in Tehran, which was abandoned after the 1979 hostage crisis.

The visit by Whitney Wright as Iran imprisons Nobel Peace Prize laureate and women's rights activist Narges Moham-

madi sparked heated criticism of the country's crackdown on women since the 2022 death in police custody of Mahsa Amini and the nationwide protests it sparked.

Wright filmed herself throughout Tehran despite her work in pornography exposing her in theory to criminal charges that carry the death penalty.

Wright did not respond to re-

quests for comment from The Associated Press. But in remarks on social media, she described the U.S. Embassy as a place she “HAD to visit.” Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard now runs it as a museum.

Iranian students backing Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini overran the compound after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Embassy staff members taken hostage were held for 444 days. A di-

rect line can be drawn between that crisis and the tensions between Iran and the U.S. today.

“I'm sharing exhibits from a museum that are never seen,” Wright wrote on Instagram. “It's not an endorsement of the government.”

Wright has previously shared pro-Palestinian information online, including material supporting armed militancy against Israel.

Biden: It will be a 'nightmare' future if Trump wins election

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — President Joe Biden on Sunday ticked through a list of reasons he says a second Donald Trump presidency would be a “nightmare” for the country as he urged Nevada Democrats to vote for him in the state’s presidential primary this week and for his party at large in November.

Biden opened a campaign swing with a fundraiser where he focused on Trump’s ample history of provocative statements — his description of Jan. 6 rioters as “hostages,” his musings about a former top military officer deserving execution, his branding of fallen soldiers as “suckers” and “losers,” his wish to be a Day One “dictator,” his vow to supporters that “I am your retribution,” and more.

Then it was on to a community center in a predominantly Black section of Las Vegas, where he told his crowd that “you’re the reason we’ll make Donald Trump a loser again.”

Biden said the stakes were

huge when he took on Trump in 2020 — “what made America America, I thought, was at risk” — and they are even larger now as a likely rematch looms.

He told donors at the private home in Henderson, Nev., that if they came to Washington, he’d show them the White House dining room table where Trump, according to ex-aides, sat transfixed for hours in front of the TV as the rioters he’d fired up with his rhetoric stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

“We have to keep the White House,” he said., “We must keep the Senate” and win back the House.

Accomplish that, he said, and “we can say we saved American democracy.”

He was equally blunt in talking up his record at his subsequent rally where he implored voters to “imagine the nightmare of Donald Trump.”

Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Cheung responded in kind, saying Biden “has been

a nightmare for this country in just three short years in the White House, and no amount of gaslighting will make Americans forget about all the misery and destruction he has brought.”

In Tuesday’s Nevada Democratic presidential primary, Biden faces only token opposition from author Marianne Williamson and a few relatively unknown challengers. He won Nevada in November 2020 by fewer than 3 percentage points. But he came to Nevada to rouse voters for the fall campaign as well.

The state known largely for its casino and hospitality industries is synonymous with split-ticket, hard-to-predict results. It has a transient, working-class population and large Latino, Filipino and Chinese American and Black communities.

Nevada has a stark rural-urban divide, with more than 88% of active registered voters in the two most populous counties, which include the Las Vegas and Reno metro areas.

Haley pokes fun at Trump on ‘SNL’

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley poked fun at herself over a campaign misstep, but her primary target during a “Saturday Night Live” appearance was Donald Trump, joining in a skit that mocked a stand-in for the former president over his refusal to debate her and questioned his mental fitness.

“Had a blast tonight on SNL! Know it was past Donald’s bedtime so looking forward to the stream of unhinged tweets in the a.m.,” Haley posted on X.

The segment is a faux CNN town hall with Trump in Columbia, S.C., which holds the next nominating contest on Feb. 24. “SNL’s” Kenan Thompson and Punkie Johnson play hosts Charles Barkley and Gayle King, respectively, and James Austin Johnson is Trump.

Haley, a former South Carolina governor, is an audience member who is introduced as “someone who describes herself as a concerned South Carolina voter” when she is called upon to question the candidate.

“My question is why won’t you debate Nikki Haley?” she asks.

“Oh my God, it’s her, the woman who was in charge of security on Jan. 6. It’s Nancy Pelosi,” the actor responds.

After the town hall moderators correct the stand-in Trump, Haley asks, “Are you doing OK Donald? You might need a mental competency test.”

Trump has boasted that he has “aced” cognitive tests in the past, and Johnson’s Trump told Haley: “You know what I did. I took the test and I aced it, OK? Perfect score. They said I’m 100% mental.”

Michigan city ramps up security after op-ed labels it ‘America’s jihad capital’

Associated Press

DEARBORN, Mich. — Dearborn, Mich., is ramping up its police presence in response to fallout from an opinion piece that described the city, which has the nation’s highest Muslim population per capita, as “America’s jihad capital.”

Dearborn Mayor Abdullah Hammoud on Friday tweeted that city police increased security at places of worship and major infrastructure points as a “direct result” of a Wall Street Journal opinion piece titled, “Welcome to Dearborn, America’s Jihad Capital.”

Hammoud posted on X that the item published Friday “led to an alarming increase in bigoted and Islamophobic rhetoric online targeting the city of Dearborn.”

Steven Stalinsky, executive director of the Middle East Media Research Institute, who authored the opinion piece in the Wall Street Journal, said in an interview with The Associated Press that he wanted to draw attention to protests in Michigan and elsewhere across the U.S. in which people have expressed support for Hamas since the start of the war with Is-

rael.

“Nothing in my article was written to instigate any sort of hate,” Stalinsky said. “This is a moment for counterterrorism officials to be concerned.”

The Wall Street Journal did not immediately respond Sunday to requests for comment left by The Associated Press via email and voicemail. An email sent to a Dearborn spokeswoman also was not immediately returned Sunday.

In a tweet referencing Dearborn on Saturday, President Joe Biden condemned “hate in all forms.”

GOP governors in Texas to pressure Biden

Associated Press

EAGLE PASS, Texas — As more than a dozen Republican governors gathered Sunday on the Texas border, Kyle Willis was across the river in Mexico considering his next move to enter the U.S.

The 23-year-old Jamaican, who said he left his country after facing attacks and discrimination due to his sexuality, had followed the path of a historic number of migrants over the past two years and tried crossing the Rio Grande at the border city of Eagle Pass. But he waded back across the river after spending hours, in soaking clothes, failing to persuade Texas National Guard soldiers behind a razor wire fence to let him through.

“It’s not just something they’re saying to deter persons from coming in. It’s actually real,” said Willis, who for now is staying at a shelter in Piedras Negras.

His experience would be considered a victory for Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, who returned to Eagle Pass on Sunday surrounded by GOP governors who have cheered on his extraordinary showdown with President Joe Biden’s administration over immigration enforcement. But declines in crossings are part of a complex mix of developments along the U.S. border, including heightened enforcement in Mexico. Meanwhile, migrants are moving further down the river and crossing elsewhere.

The issue was also at the forefront in Washington, where senators on Sunday raced to release a highly-anticipated bill that pairs border enforcement policy with wartime aid for Ukraine.

Abbott said he would continue expanding operations along the Texas border but did not provide details.

For nearly a month, Texas has restricted U.S. Border Patrol’s

access to an area along the river known as Shelby Park, accusing the Biden administration of not being tough enough on crossings.

“We are here to send a loud and clear message that we are banding together to fight to ensure that we will be able to maintain our constitutional guarantee that states will be able to defend against any type of imminent danger,” Abbott said.

The record number of border crossings is a political liability for Biden and an issue that Republicans are eager to put front and center to voters in an election year.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis last week committed to send more National Guard troops to Texas and other governors are also weighing new deployments.

Although DeSantis wasn’t present Sunday in Eagle Pass, Abbott was joined by Gov. Sarah

Huckabee Sanders of Arkansas and Gov. Bill Lee of Tennessee, among other Republicans.

Eagle Pass is where Texas has been locked in a power struggle with the Biden administration for the past month after the state began denying access to U.S. Border Patrol agents at Shelby Park.

Crossings in recent weeks are down overall along the entire U.S. border, including areas without such a heavy security presence.

Biden, now sounding increasingly like former President Donald Trump, is pressing Congress for asylum restrictions that would have been unthinkable when he took office. Immigration remains a major worry for voters in the 2024 election: An AP-NORC poll earlier this month found that voters voicing concerns about immigration climbed to 35% from 27% last year.

Tribe bans SD governor from reservation over border talk

AP/Report for America

A South Dakota tribe has banned Republican Gov. Kristi Noem from the Pine Ridge Reservation after she spoke last week about wanting to send razor wire and security personnel to Texas to help deter immigration at the U.S.-Mexico border and also said cartels are infiltrating the state’s reservations.

“Due to the safety of the Oyate, effective immediately, you are hereby Banished from the homelands of the Oglala Sioux Tribe!” Tribe President Frank Star Comes Out said in a Friday statement addressed to Noem. “Oyate” means people or nation.

Star Comes Out accused Noem of trying to use the border issue to help get former President Donald Trump re-elected and boost her chances of joining his ticket.

Star Comes Out also addressed Noem’s remarks in the speech to

lawmakers Wednesday in which she said a gang calling itself the Ghost Dancers is murdering people on the Pine Ridge Reservation and is affiliated with border-crossing cartels that use South Dakota reservations to spread drugs throughout the Midwest.

Star Comes Out said he took deep offense at her reference, saying the Ghost Dance is one of the Oglala Sioux’s “most sacred ceremonies,” “was used with blatant disrespect and is insulting to our Oyate.”

Noem responded Saturday in a statement, saying, “It is unfortunate that President (Star) Comes Out chose to bring politics into a discussion regarding the effects of our federal government’s failure to enforce federal laws at the southern border and on tribal lands. My focus continues to be on working together to solve those problems.”

Boeing flags batch of 737s for issue with fuselages

Associated Press

Boeing reported another problem with fuselages on its 737 jets that might delay deliveries of about 50 aircraft in the latest quality gaffe to plague the manufacturer.

Boeing Commercial Airplanes CEO Stan Deal said in a letter to Boeing staff seen Monday that a worker at its supplier discovered misdrilled holes in fuselages. Spirit AeroSystems, based in Wichita, Kan., makes a large part of the fuselages on Boeing Max jets.

“While this potential condition is not an immediate safety issue and all 737s can continue operating safely, we currently believe we will have to perform rework on about 50 undelivered planes,” Deal said in the letter to employees shared with the media.

The problem was discovered

by an employee of the supplier of the fuselages who notified his manager that two holes might have not been drilled according to specifications, Deal said.

Both Boeing and Spirit AeroSystems are facing intense scrutiny over the quality of their work after an Alaska Airlines 737 Max 9 had to make an emergency landing on Jan. 5 when a panel called a door plug blew out of the side of the plane shortly after takeoff from Portland, Ore. The NTSB is investigating the accident, while the Federal Aviation Administration investigates whether Boeing and its suppliers followed quality-control procedures.

The FAA grounded all Max 9s in the U.S. the day after the blowout. Two weeks later, the agency approved the inspection and maintenance process to return the planes to flying.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man sentenced for scam, posing as NBA player

NY CENTRAL ISLIP — A medical biller has been sentenced to 12 years in federal prison after being convicted in a massive insurance fraud scheme that involved posing as an NBA player and other patients to harangue the companies for payments that weren't actually due, prosecutors said.

U.S. District Judge Joanna Seybert called Matthew James' actions "inexcusable" as she sentenced him in Central Islip, Newsday reported.

James, 54, was convicted in July 2022 of fraud and identity theft charges.

James ran medical billing companies. Prosecutors said he got some doctors to schedule elective surgeries via emergency rooms — a tactic that boosted insurance reimbursement rates — and billed for procedures that were different from the ones actually performed.

One of the people he impersonated was NBA point guard Marcus Smart, who got hand surgery after hitting a picture frame in 2018, according to court papers filed by James' lawyers.

Lawmaker shows gun to kids backing gun control

IN INDIANAPOLIS — A video taken by a high school student shows an Indiana lawmaker flash a gun to students who were visiting the statehouse to talk to legislators about gun control.

A student from Burriss Laboratory School in Muncie told The Associated Press that she

and four other students were at the state Capitol to participate in a day of advocacy with Students Demand Action, an arm of Everytown for Gun safety. Alana Trissel, 17, said state Rep. Jim Lucas asked the students what brought them to the Capitol and began to defend gun rights.

In discussing places where firearms are banned, Lucas said people aren't "truly free" unless they can defend themselves. A student off camera asked Lucas if he means carrying a firearm. In the video, Lucas said, "I'm carrying right now," and holds open his suit jacket exposing a holstered gun.

State considers major expansion of gambling

VA RICHMOND — Dueling legislative proposals in Virginia backed by different gambling companies would open the door for an expansion of slot-like betting machines in businesses such as truck stops, restaurants and convenience stores.

At the center of the debate are "gray machines," arcade-style games that look similar to slot machines but involve an element of skill, manufacturers said.

For years, the machines have proliferated as policymakers grapple with how to regulate them amid a big-money lobbying fight featuring stiff casino industry opposition to the devices, also known as skill games.

Now, a well-organized coalition, including one of the state's most powerful legislators and retail owners who host the machines and share in their profits, is backing one of this year's pro-

posals to legalize and tax the devices.

Cooling system vibrations mean reactor delay again

GA ATLANTA — Georgia Power Co. said vibrations found in a cooling system of its second new nuclear reactor will delay when the unit begins generating power.

Plant Vogtle's Unit 4 now will not start commercial operation until sometime in the second quarter of 2024, or between April 1 and June 30, the largest subsidiary of Atlanta-based Southern Co. announced.

The utility said in a filing to investors that the vibrations "were similar in nature" to those experienced during startup testing for Unit 3, which began commercial operations last summer, joining two older reactors that have stood on the site near Augusta for decades.

In that case, the utility found that a pipe vibrated during testing because construction workers hadn't installed enough bracing. Georgia Power said the Unit 4 problem has already been fixed but too much testing remains to be done to make the deadline.

State House votes to loosen child labor laws

FL TALLAHASSEE — A year after Florida enacted a new law making it more difficult for employers to hire immigrants in the country illegally, the House passed a bill to let 16- and 17-year-olds work longer and later hours.

Supporters said teenagers and their parents know how to best manage their time and activities and lifting employment

restrictions will help them build careers and earn money, especially with the current labor shortage. Opponents said the changes would make it easier for employers to exploit children and longer hours could negatively affect schoolwork.

The bill would remove restrictions prohibiting 16- and 17-year-olds from working more than eight hours when they have classes the next day and from working more than 30 hours a week when school is in session.

After suit, health system erases or refunds bills

WA SEATTLE — Providence health care system is refunding nearly \$21 million in medical bills paid by low-income residents of Washington — and it's erasing \$137 million more in outstanding debt for tens of thousands of others — to settle the state's allegations that it overcharged those patients and then used aggressive collection tactics when they failed to pay.

The announcement came just weeks before Attorney General Bob Ferguson's case was set for trial against Providence Health and Services, which operates 14 hospitals in Washington under the Providence, Swedish and Kadlec names.

The state argued that the medical system's practices violated Washington's charity care law, which is considered one of the strongest in the country. It requires hospitals to notify patients about the availability of financial aid and to screen them to see if they're eligible for discounts before trying to collect payment.

— From wire reports

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Chiefs become new 'America's Team'

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The polarizing moniker is still applied to the Dallas Cowboys these days, regardless of whether it rings as true as it did during their 1990s heyday, when Troy Aikman, Michael Irvin and Emmitt Smith led them to three Super Bowl titles in a four-year span.

"America's Team."

The team that much of America loved, and perhaps just as much loved to hate.

In truth, there have been plenty of "America's Teams" over the years. It was the Steelers with Terry Bradshaw, Lynn Swann and Joe Greene in the 1970s. In the '80s, it became the 49ers with Joe Montana, Roger Craig and Jerry Rice. The 2000s, of course, belonged to the Patriots and Tom Brady, Troy Brown and Rob Gronkowski.

The title these days has fallen on the Kansas City Chiefs, who play the San Francisco 49ers this weekend in their fourth Super Bowl in five years. Patrick

Mahomes has become the face of the league, a record-breaking crossover star at the game's most important position. Andy Reid has evolved into their mustachioed father figure, and a shoo-in for the Hall of Fame as he climbs the coaching career wins list. And then there's Travis Kelce, who happens to be dating pop icon Taylor Swift.

Just like those teams before them, the Chiefs have merged zeitgeist and success to create a rapidly expanding fan base that stretches from the heartland all the way to Hollywood. And abroad, for that matter, as evidenced by the overwhelming support they have received for games in London, Mexico City and Frankfurt, Germany.

"I think you feel it a little bit," acknowledged Mahomes, who has become ubiquitous on TV even when he's not slinging passes on Sundays. He might be stealing some nuggies from Reid on a spot for State Farm, or manicuring his iconic 'do in an ad for Head & Shoulders or

teaming up with Kelce to take on the Warriors' Steph Curry and Klay Thompson in a made-for-TV golf match played at Wynn Golf Club, not far from Allegiant Stadium, where the Chiefs will play the 49ers on Sunday.

"The commercials probably help out a lot," Mahomes continued, "and the run that we've been on. I think until I actually go around the world and see the different types of stuff, I don't think I'll realize it enough, the impact that we've had."

Reid already has witnessed it. He took a vacation to Italy a couple of years ago and when he walked out of his hotel the first morning, Reid was recognized almost instantly by a group of kids.

"They loved Pat," he said with a smile. "They knew all our guys."

Their impact on the NFL has certainly been astounding.

The league was responsible for 24 of the 25 most-watched TV broadcasts during 2023, headlined by more than 115 mil-

lion viewers when the Chiefs beat the Eagles in last year's Super Bowl. Next on the list was the AFC title game, when more than 53 million tuned in to watch the Chiefs beat the Bengals at Arrowhead Stadium.

In fact, according to Nielsen, the Chiefs were involved in 16 of the 100 most-watched TV broadcasts overall last year.

With huge viewership numbers comes massive merchandise sales, far outstripping what reasonably could be expected of a team that plays in one of the NFL's smallest markets. The sale of Chiefs gear increased by 20% last season to rank fourth among all franchises, according to Fanatics, which takes into account its own website along with the NFL Shop and other outlets, and shipments were made to more than 80 countries around the world.

Mahomes has the fourth-fastest selling jersey in the league, Fanatics said. Kelce is No. 8 with sales up 100% over last season.

Kansas City's Jones gamble on himself has paid off

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — It seems fitting that Chris Jones will chase a third Super Bowl ring in Las Vegas on Sunday.

The Kansas City Chiefs defensive tackle made some bold bets on himself this season.

Jones went bust on the first one, holding out through the offseason, training camp and into the regular season in the hopes of landing a lucrative contract extension. Jones missed a Week 1 loss to Detroit before he finally agreed to a reworked one-year deal that in some ways was worse than the contract he was supposed to have played under this season.

But the new deal included a number of provisions — gambles, if you will — that Jones

has been able to cash in.

Along with a \$19.5 million base value, Jones' contract called for an extra \$1 million for playing 35% of snaps, another \$1 million for hitting 50%, and yet another \$1.25 million when he hit 10 sacks. He celebrated the last of those in an otherwise meaningless regular-season finale against the Chargers with a wild sideline celebration with his teammates.

"I was happy for him," Chiefs defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo said with a smile. "We all were."

Then came the longest of longshot parlays, one that seemed outlandish at first and downright ridiculous midway through the season, when the Chiefs had lost five of eight

games and looked nothing like a championship team: Jones would earn another \$1 million if he was voted an All-Pro and managed to help the Chiefs reach their fourth Super Bowl in five seasons.

Check. And check.

With their win over the Ravens last weekend, which sent the Chiefs to Las Vegas to face the San Francisco 49ers on Feb. 11 at Allegiant Stadium, the gregarious Jones added yet another bonus to his rapidly swelling bank account.

"You've got to take a second and look back at everything you had to go through," said Jones, who had an important defensive deflection in the game in Baltimore. "I never think it's about the destination but the journey to get to the

destination. When you look at the journey we had to take, it's a huge appreciation for that."

Jones has been a game-wrecker since the moment the Chiefs chose him in the second round of the 2016 draft, a year before Patrick Mahomes arrived and truly altered the trajectory of the franchise. Jones started 11 games as a rookie, had 6½ sacks the next year, then broke through with 15½ during the 2018 season while earning second-team All-Pro recognition.

The following year, Jones helped the Chiefs beat the 49ers — coincidentally — for their first Super Bowl title in 50 years. And he had another 15½ sacks last year, when the Chiefs beat the Eagles for another Lombardi Trophy.

Suns rout Wizards in Beal's return to DC

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Bradley Beal scored a season-high 43 points in his return to Washington and the Phoenix Suns routed the Wizards 140-112 on Sunday.

Beal played 11 seasons in Washington before being dealt to Phoenix last offseason. He received a video tribute and standing ovation during player introductions before the game. Then he scored 26 points in the first half.

"I guess I know this gym a little bit," Beal said.

He had 41 after three quarters and then exited for good with 8:44 to play.

Kevin Durant and Jusuf Nurkic scored 18 points apiece for Phoenix, and Devin Booker had 14. The Suns went 4-3 on a seven-game trip.

Deni Avdija had 24 points for the Wizards. They were without Kyle Kuzma because of left shoulder soreness.

Beal scored 14 of Phoenix's 42 first-quarter points, but the Wizards kept it competitive for a little while. They trailed by 11 in the second before an 11-2 run by the Suns made it 74-54.

"We took a little bit of a step back today, and that starts with me," Wizards interim coach Brian Keefe said. "We didn't

have the right mindset."

It was 79-58 at halftime, with the Suns having shot 69% from the field. They finished the game at 61.4%, with Beal going 16 of 21.

Beal's layup early in the third quarter prompted a quick timeout by Washington, just 54 seconds into the half. The lead reached 32 early in the fourth.

Clippers 109, Heat 95: Kawhi Leonard had 25 points and 11 rebounds, James Harden scored 16 of his 21 points in the second half and visiting Los Angeles beat Miami.

Harden flirted with a triple-double, finishing with 11 assists and eight rebounds. Norman Powell scored 16 points and Paul George added 11 for the Clippers.

Los Angeles is 25-5 since the beginning of December — by far the best record in the NBA in that span. The Clippers improved to 5-1 in their seven-game, 11-day trip.

Celtics 131, Grizzlies 91: Jayson Tatum scored 34 points before sitting out the final quarter and NBA-leading Boston cruised past injury-depleted Memphis.

Coming off a disappointing loss Thursday night against a Los Angeles Lakers team missing LeBron James and Antho-

ny Davis, the host Celtics faced a squad with only eight available players because 13 were on the injury report.

Timberwolves 111, Rockets 90: Anthony Edwards scored 22 of his 32 points in the third quarter, Rudy Gobert had 17 points and 13 rebounds and host Minnesota beat Houston.

The Timberwolves have won five of seven and the victory earned coach Chris Finch the nod to coach the Western Conference in the All-Star Game.

Thunder 135, Raptors 127 (2OT): Josh Giddey scored 24 points, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 23 and host Oklahoma City overcame a 23-point deficit to beat Toronto in double-overtime.

Chet Holmgren and Lu Dort each added 22 points and Aaron Wiggins had 20 to help Oklahoma City improve to 35-15. The Thunder tied a team record with 23 3-pointers on 63 attempts.

Nuggets 112, Trail Blazers 103: Nikola Jokic scored 29 points, Jamal Murray added 21 points and 10 assists and host Denver rallied past short-handed Portland for their second victory over the Trail Blazers in 48 hours.

The Nuggets didn't trail by more than a basket in their 120-

108 win over Portland on Friday night, also at Ball Arena, but didn't lead this one until the final seconds of the third quarter when Jokic's finger-roll layup broke an 84-84 tie.

Jazz 123, Bucks 108: Lauri Markkanen scored 21 points and host Utah overcame a 19-point deficit to beat Milwaukee.

Keyonte George had 19 points and 10 rebounds and Collin Sexton also scored 19 points to help the Jazz snap a three-game losing streak.

Pacers 115, Hornets 99: Pascal Siakam had 25 points, nine assists and eight rebounds and visiting Indiana overcame a career-high 35 points from Hornets rookie Brandon Miller to beat Charlotte and snap a three-game skid.

Aaron Nesmith added 22 points and Myles Turner had 16 points and 10 rebounds for the Pacers. Tyrese Haliburton had 17 points in 20 minutes while remaining on a minutes restriction due to a lingering hamstring injury.

Magic 111, Pistons 99: Franz Wagner scored 27 of his 38 points in the second half and visiting Orlando beat Detroit for its third straight victory.

Paolo Banchero added 20 points for Orlando.

Embiid to undergo knee procedure, will miss significant time

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Joel Embiid can forget about winning a second NBA MVP award this season.

The 76ers can only hope Embiid makes some sort of recovery and returns this season from the procedure he's set to undergo this week to correct an injury to the lateral meniscus in his left knee.

Philadelphia did not say Sunday night how much time Embiid was expected to miss. The 76ers should have a clear idea on his recovery timetable after the surgery.

But there is no doubt, given the nature of the injury, that Embiid should be expected to miss a significant amount of time.

Embiid was named an Eastern Conference starter for the NBA All-Star Game

later this month, the seventh time in his career he made the team. Philadelphia has a three-game homestand this week that opened Monday against Dallas, only the start of an extended absence for a team that has slumped without him — the 76ers are 4-10 without Embiid this season.

Winner of two straight NBA scoring titles, Embiid hurt his left knee Tuesday night in a loss to the Golden State Warriors. He had already been hampered by knee injuries this season that cost him considerable time. He has missed 14 games this season, all but ending his chances of being eligible for a second straight MVP award. The new collective bargaining agreement requires players, in most instances, to play in 65 regular-season games to be eligible for

awards such as MVP or the All-NBA teams.

When healthy, Embiid has continued to perform at an MVP level. He is the NBA's leading scorer at 35.3 points per game and is averaging 11.3 rebounds and 5.7 assists. He scored a franchise-record 70 points to go along with 18 rebounds on Jan. 22 in a 133-124 victory over San Antonio.

"We had some shaky performances," Philadelphia coach Nick Nurse said last week. "Then we kind of got in a groove and had some good ones. We got a bunch of good road wins without him. We kind of knew, we've got to be able to survive without him."

The 76ers are 30-18 and in fifth place in the Eastern Conference with two games left before Thursday's NBA trade deadline.

Edey, No. 2 Purdue handle Wisconsin

Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — Purdue's inside-outside combination of Zach Edey and Braden Smith is a tough matchup for the Boiler-makers' opponents.

Even the strongest ones.

Smith scored 19 points and Edey joined another exclusive club as the second-ranked Boiler-makers beat No. 6 Wisconsin 75-69 on Sunday for their seventh consecutive victory. Purdue is 6-0 this season against teams that were ranked 11th or higher at the time of the game.

"We have an elite point guard and we have an elite center," coach Matt Painter said. "So when you go into a team, you've got to be able to game plan for Zach Edey. It's obvious, right? But then, you've also got to game plan for Braden Smith and his ability to pass, because they both make other people better."

Lance Jones scored 20 points for Purdue (21-2, 10-2), which took the lead for good midway through the first half and ex-

tended its Big Ten lead to 1½ games.

Wisconsin (16-6, 8-3) lost its second straight as it prepares for a two-game trip to Michigan and Rutgers.

Edey had 18 points, 13 rebounds and three blocked shots. The 7-foot-4 center has 201 career blocks, joining Patrick Ewing and David Robinson as the only players in NCAA history to combine for 2,000 points, 1,000 rebounds and 200 blocks while shooting at least 60% from the field.

"Those are elite, elite basketball players, Hall of Famers," Edey said. "Being mentioned in the same air as them is great, obviously. I kind of want to keep working. I'm not satisfied with just, 'Oh, I can tell my grandkids I did this.' I want to keep going. I want to keep becoming a better basketball player every year."

Edey has scored at least 10 points in an NCAA-leading 74 straight games. Edey broke Rick Mount's 54-year-old

school record for consecutive double-figure scoring games on Wednesday by going for 30 points in a 105-96 overtime victory over Northwestern.

Tyler Wahl led Wisconsin with a season-high 20 points to go along with seven rebounds and five assists.

This marked the sixth consecutive Purdue-Wisconsin game to be decided by six points or fewer. The teams meet again March 10 at Purdue.

No. 11 Arizona 82, Stanford 71: Oumar Ballo had 18 points and 13 rebounds, and the host Wildcats shut down the Cardinal in the second half.

Arizona (17-5, 8-3 Pac-12) let Stanford have its way offensively for the second straight game, falling into an 11-point halftime hole as the Cardinal (11-10, 6-5) hit nine 3-pointers.

The Wildcats turned the game around with its defense, however, holding Stanford to 9-for-32 shooting while forcing 11 second-half turnovers.

Caleb Love scored 18 points

for Arizona, and Pelle Larsson had 17.

Maxime Raynaud scored 29 points and Michael Jones had 21 for the Cardinal, who played without leading scorer Kanaan Carlyle due to an upper-body injury.

No. 14 Illinois 87, Nebraska 84 (OT): Marcus Domask and Justin Harmon each made two free throws and Terrance Shannon Jr. had a steal in the final 25 seconds of overtime to help the host Fighting Illini top the Cornhuskers.

Illinois led 72-62 with 3:29 left in regulation, but Nebraska went in front on Rienk Mast's jumper with 9 seconds left. Domask then split a pair of free throws with 3 seconds remaining, tying it at 73.

Coleman Hawkins led the Illini (17-5, 8-3 Big Ten) with 20 points. Domask had 19, and Ty Rodgers finished with eight points and 14 rebounds.

Keisei Tominaga scored 31 points for the Cornhuskers (16-7, 6-6). Mast had 19 points.

Clark wins at Pebble; weather wipes out final round

Associated Press

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. — Wyndham Clark was declared the winner of the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am on Sunday evening when the PGA Tour canceled the final round because of wicked weather conditions that were going to linger into the next day and cause safety concerns.

Clark's final stroke was a two-putt birdie from 25 feet on Saturday, giving him a course record 12-under 60 and a one-shot lead over Ludvig Aberg, who missed a long eagle putt on the par-5 18th hole.

Clark never hit another shot.

"It's maybe not the way you dream of winning," Clark said in a conference call Sunday night. "With that said, a lot of us

yesterday had ... not that we knew, but we definitely had this outside shot and thinking that maybe this is our last round."

Clark was six shots behind going into Saturday and said he was aiming for a top 10.

Overnight rain saturated Pebble Beach, and raging wind that followed led the PGA Tour to postpone the final round with hopes of playing on Monday.

The storm, known as an "atmospheric river" that pounded California for the second time, was to linger into Monday morning. While conditions were expected to improve, Monterey County emergency officials had urged residents to stay at home.

"Out of an abundance of caution for the safety of all constituents, there will be no play on

Monday," the PGA Tour said in declaring the tournament 54 holes and Clark the winner.

Clark picked up his third win in the past nine months, all of them big with a \$3.6 million payoff. He also won the Wells Fargo Championship and his first major at the U.S. Open last year at Los Angeles Country Club.

He didn't get to pose with the trophy on the 18th green. He didn't feel cheated out of appreciation, either, not the way the gallery responded to his close call at 59.

"Everyone was celebrating and congratulating me," Clark said. "I even said to myself, 'This feels like I just won the tournament,' and yet we had another round to play. Today, wak-

ing up and they cancel the day, you're trying not to go too far in the future. I get a call that we're going to cancel and you're the winner.

"It's pretty surreal right now."

Nearly an inch of rain overnight saturated Pebble Beach, which had received overnight rain going into Thursday and Friday. The rain cleared on Sunday, pushed by gusts that approached 60 mph and topped portable toilets and fences and ripped tarps away from TV towers. Also felled was a camera used for the ShotLink data collection.

Under PGA Tour guidelines, the final round could not have started on Monday if there was no chance of finishing it.