

Review on Austin's failed disclosure ends

By **MATTHEW ADAMS**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has completed its internal review of Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's failure to notify the president and other U.S. officials about his prostate cancer and subsequent hospitalization for complications from surgery.

"The review has been submitted to Secretary Austin and he is in the process of reviewing it," Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon's top spokesman, told reporters Thursday. "Much of the report is classified since it relates to continuity of operations. However, as the secretary has said, we remain committed to being as transparent as possible about the review and we'll have more information once the secretary's review is complete."

Ryder provided no other details, including whether the 30-day review includes any recommendations for disciplinary actions.

Austin will make his first trip since his hospitalization this week with Air Force Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They will travel to Brussels for an in-person meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group on Wednesday, the day that Austin was to appear before the House Armed Services Committee to testify about why his recent hospital stay was kept secret from lawmakers and other top officials.

The House hearing has since been rescheduled to Feb. 29 and Austin will testify, Ryder said Thursday.

Austin apologized for failing to disclose his prostate cancer diagnosis, the surgery that followed, and complications that led to an extended hospital stay.

"I want to be crystal clear, we did not handle this right. I did not handle this right," he told reporters at the Pentagon. "I should have told the president about my cancer diagnosis. I should have told my team and

the American people, and I take full responsibility."

Austin returned to the Pentagon on Jan. 29 after being absent for nearly a month because of his cancer and complications from the surgery.

The secretary was released from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., on Jan. 15 after spending two weeks there following the surgery, which was conducted Dec. 22. Austin has come under scrutiny after he failed to notify President Joe Biden and other government officials about his illness and hospitalization.

During a regular health screening in early December, Austin's cancer was detected. He was admitted to the hospital about three weeks later for surgery, which required general anesthesia. He left the hospital the following morning.

On Jan. 1, Austin returned to Walter Reed after experiencing pain in his abdomen, hip and leg. He was later found to have

a urinary tract infection, and Austin spent days in the intensive care unit before he was moved to a private section of the hospital.

But during Austin's medical treatments, no one at the Defense Department notified the White House, Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks, Congress or the public for several days.

On Jan. 2, Austin transferred some of his more pressing responsibilities to Hicks. Austin said this month that he was experiencing fever, chills and shallow breathing on that day and doctors decided to move him to the intensive care unit for several days of close monitoring.

Yet Biden did not learn of Austin's prostate cancer until Jan. 9. That same day, the White House ordered that all Cabinet members or secretaries must immediately notify the administration if at any time they cannot perform their duties.

Army to replace \$2B helicopter program with drones

By **JOHN VANDIVER**
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Army is giving up on a scout helicopter development program after spending \$2 billion on it, opting instead to pursue more affordable drone alternatives.

The decision on the Future Attack and Reconnaissance Aircraft program was prompted by "a sober assessment of the modern battlefield," according to an Army statement.

"We are learning from the battlefield, especially in Ukraine, that aerial reconnais-

sance has fundamentally changed," Army Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George said.

The Army is turning its attention to unmanned aircraft, which have proved to be effective on the battlefield in Ukraine and can be developed more cheaply.

"Sensors and weapons mounted on a variety of unmanned systems and in space are more ubiquitous, further-reaching and more inexpensive than ever before," George said.

The Army will accelerate procurement and fielding of

such systems, including the Future Tactical Unmanned Aircraft System, Launched Effects and small commercial drones, George said.

The service also will continue to fund the manned Future Long Range Assault Aircraft, which would eventually succeed the UH-60 Black Hawk.

Numerous other changes are happening as well. The Army will introduce new spending on the Black Hawk and CH-47F Block II Chinook helicopters.

But the plan for the Black Hawk calls for an end to produc-

tion of the UH-60V version while extending the service life of existing airframes by 10 years.

That will free up resources to commit to a new multi-year contract to procure the upgraded UH-60M version of the Black Hawk, the Army said.

On the chopping block are the Shadow and Raven unmanned aircraft systems. The Raven is susceptible to jamming, according to prior reports. Both will be phased out because they lack survivability on today's battlefield, the Army said.

Marines killed in helo crash ID'd, mourned

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Three pilots and two crew chiefs were aboard the helicopter that crashed during a training exercise in the mountains outside San Diego, the service said Friday. All five Marines were killed.

Cpts. Benjamin Moulton, Jack Casey and Miguel Nava, Lance Cpl. Donovan Davis and Sgt. Alec Langen were the Marines aboard the CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter that was traveling Tuesday from Creech Air Force Base in Nevada to Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in California, the service said. They were assigned to Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 361, Marine Aircraft Group 16 of the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

“We have been confronted with a tragedy that is every service family’s worst fear,” said Lt. Col. Nicholas Harvey, commanding officer of Squadron 361. “Our top priority now is supporting the families of our fallen heroes, and we ask for your re-

spect and understanding as they grieve.”

Moulton, 27, was a CH-53E helicopter pilot from Emmett, Idaho. He was commissioned in March 2019 and promoted to captain last August, according to the Marines. His decorations include the National Defense Service Medal.

Casey, 26, was a CH-53E helicopter pilot from Dover, N.H. He was commissioned in May 2019 and promoted to captain last September, according to the service. His decorations include the National Defense Service Medal.

Nava, 28, was a CH-53E helicopter pilot from Traverse City, Mich. He was the longest tenured of the five fallen Marines. He was commissioned in May 2017 and promoted to captain in November 2021. His decorations include the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal and Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, according to the service.

Davis, 21, was a CH-53E helicopter crew chief from Olathe,

Kan. He enlisted in the Marines in September 2019 and was promoted to lance corporal last month, the service said. His decorations include the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal and a Sea Service Deployment Ribbon.

Langen, 23, was a CH-53E helicopter crew chief from Chandler, Ariz. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in September 2017 and was promoted to sergeant in October 2022, the service said. His decorations include the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal and two Sea Service Deployment Ribbons.

The helicopter was found Wednesday at about 9 a.m. local time in Pine Valley, Calif., according to the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. The service announced Thursday morning that all five Marines were confirmed dead.

Citing hazardous terrain and

weather at the crash site, Col. James C. Ford, operations officer with 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, said the ground recovery efforts will take place over coming weeks as an investigation into the crash is conducted.

The 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, which is headquartered at the Miramar base, has been coordinating search and rescue efforts with federal, state and local agencies such as the San Diego County Sheriff’s Department and the Civil Air Patrol. An investigation into the crash is underway.

The last known contact with the helicopter was at about 11:30 p.m. Tuesday, when waves of downpours and snow were hitting the region, Mike Cornette of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection told CBS 8 news.

The area is in the Cuyamaca Mountains at an elevation of about 3,700 feet and saw as much as 8 inches of accumulating snow within hours Tuesday night and early Wednesday. More snow fell Wednesday night.

Pacific feels like ‘home’ for new commander of PACAF

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — An Air Force fighter pilot who has spent a third of his 36-year career in the Indo-Pacific took command of Pacific Air Forces during a ceremony Friday in a hangar beside Hickam Airfield, Hawaii.

Gen. Kevin “Gumby” Schneider, who received his fourth star the same day, took the reins from Gen. Ken Wilsbach, who now heads to Langley Air Force Base, Va., to head Air

Combat Command.

“Having spent a third of my career and over a third of my life in the Indo-Pacific, this feels like coming home — because it is,” Schneider told the audience. “PACAF is where I learned to be a mission ready fighter pilot, developing the warfighting skills and deep appreciation for tactical teamwork that carried me throughout my career.”

Schneider’s previous Indo-Pacific assignments include chief of staff at U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and chief of staff at PACAF.

US, Australia and Japan train in South China Sea

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

A flotilla of U.S., Australian and Japanese warships recently trained together for two days in the South China Sea, an operation that coincided with several large-scale exercises underway in the region.

The guided-missile destroyer USS John Finn and littoral combat ship USS Gabrielle Giffords joined the Japanese destroyer JS Sazanami and the Australian frigate HMAS Warramunga for drills Wednesday and Thursday, U.S. 7th Fleet spokeswo-

man Lt. Kristina Wiedemann said by email Friday.

The short exercise allowed the ships to operate together “over a sustained period of time across a large area to sustain and improve” their ability to work together, according to Wiedemann who did not identify where the drills took place.

The South China Sea is the stage for sometimes aggressive moves by China to assert its claim of maritime sovereignty there against other claimants, including the Philippines, another U.S. ally, and Vietnam.

Docs report puts Biden on defensive

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Special Counsel Robert Hur on Thursday released his long-awaited report on President Joe Biden's handling of classified documents, and it's not great news for the president on multiple fronts. The report concludes that no criminal charges against Biden are warranted, a key difference from former President Donald Trump's situation. But it also says there was evidence that Biden "willfully" retained and disclosed highly classified materials when he was a private citizen. And it highlights his confusion and "significantly limited" recall of events related to the documents.

Some takeaways from the 345-page report:

It's bad news for Biden's anti-chaos argument

Biden can breathe easier knowing he won't face criminal charges for his handling of the documents. But the Hur report nonetheless does damage to Biden's case that he brings normalcy to the presidency after the chaos of Trump's tenure.

Images of federal agents finding a classified Biden memo on Afghanistan from his time as vice president stashed in his Delaware garage work against the Democratic president's argument that he's a more competent chief executive and a more careful steward of the nation's secrets than Trump.

Trump is under criminal indictment for knowingly hanging on to classified records at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida and resisting turning them over, perhaps the most damning — and stickiest — of the four criminal cases against him. Biden, for his part, faces no charges.

Weeks after the FBI searched Trump's private residence and turned up classified documents, Biden slammed his predecessor as "totally irresponsible."

Biden's hazy memory raises new questions about age

The 81-year-old Biden was already dogged by questions about whether he's too old to serve a second term. The special counsel report will hardly be helpful to Biden on that count.

Hur noted that "Mr. Biden's memory was significantly limited" in interviews with the special counsel's office as well as with a ghostwriter that Biden worked with.

In his interview with the special counsel's office, Hur writes, Biden twice appeared confused about when his term as vice president ended. The report notes that Biden, who speaks frequently about his son Beau's death, could not remember "even within several years" when he died.

"And his memory appeared hazy when describing the Afghanistan debate that was once so important to him," the report said. "Among other things, he mistakenly said he 'had a real difference' of opinion with General Karl Eikenberry, when, in fact, Eikenberry was an ally whom Mr. Biden cited approvingly in his Thanksgiving memo to President Obama."

Polls have shown that Americans, including Democrats, have concerns about Biden's age. He would be 86 at the end of his second term if reelected.

Trump gets ammo to play down his own documents case

Biden was absolved of criminal behavior, but it's Trump who may benefit.

The Republican former president, who is on a glidepath to his party's nomination this year, has been charged with dozens of felony counts related to his handling of classified materials stored at his Florida estate after leaving the White House. Trump has been crying foul on the campaign trail for much of the last year, noting that Biden had also stored classified materials in his garage.

Thursday's report will have little bearing on Trump's legal case, but it makes his political argument stronger.

There are, of course, stark differences between how Trump and Biden navigated their classified document cases. Biden cooperated with authorities. Trump fought them to the point that the investigators had to get a court order to search his home in Florida after he repeatedly rebuffed requests for the documents.

19 with unfavorable ratings had access to IRS systems

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A new IRS inspector general report said the nation's tax collection agency continued to give 19 contractors access to sensitive systems despite having background reports that were returned as "not favorable."

Despite having the unfavorable rating returned as recently as July 13, 2023, "These contractors still retained their access to one or more sensitive systems because the IRS did not take action to suspend or disable the contractors from the IRS's systems, as required," according to a report issued last week by the Treasury Department's inspector general for tax

administration.

IRS Commissioner Daniel Werfel — who took over the agency last April — told The Associated Press that four of the contractors have since been terminated and the others have re-submitted their paperwork and received favorable background checks, adding that "there's no implicit implication of any kind," he said, "that these 19 contractors compromised taxpayer information in any way."

An IRS spokesperson said due to privacy issues they could not provide specific dates for when the issues were flagged, but said they were "promptly resolved" when identified by TIGTA.

The report comes as access to sensitive taxpayer information has sparked calls for investigations — and calls for reform on taxes for the wealthy.

Earlier this month, former IRS contractor Charles Edward Littlejohn of Washington, D.C., was sentenced to five years in prison after pleading guilty to leaking tax information about former President Donald Trump and thousands of the country's wealthiest people to news outlets.

Littlejohn, 38, gave data to The New York Times and ProPublica between 2018 and 2020 in leaks that appeared to be "unparalleled in the IRS's history," prosecutors said.

Littlejohn had applied to work as a contractor to get Trump's tax returns and carefully figured out how to search and extract tax data to avoid triggering suspicions internally, prosecutors said in court documents.

In February 2023, Rep. Jason Smith, the Republican chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, sent a letter to TIGTA asking for a review of the leak.

Smith's office did not immediately respond to an Associated Press request for comment on the report.

Werfel is set to testify in front of the House Ways and Means Committee on Thursday.

Egypt threatens to suspend key peace treaty

Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip — Egypt is threatening to suspend its peace treaty with Israel if Israeli troops are sent into the densely populated Gaza border town of Rafah, where it has said fighting could force the closure of the besieged territory's main aid supply route, two Egyptian officials and a Western diplomat said Sunday.

The threat to suspend the Camp David Accords, a cornerstone of regional stability for nearly a half-century, came after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said sending troops into Rafah was neces-

sary to win the four-month war against the Palestinian militant group Hamas.

Over half of Gaza's population of 2.3 million have fled to Rafah to escape fighting in other areas, and they are packed into sprawling tent camps and U.N.-run shelters near the border. Egypt fears a mass influx of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees who may never be allowed to return.

The standoff between Israel and Egypt, two close U.S. allies, took shape as aid groups warned that an offensive in Rafah would worsen the already catastrophic humanitarian sit-

uation in Gaza, where around 80% of residents have fled their homes and where the United Nations has said a quarter of the population faces starvation.

Hamas' Al-Aqsa television station quoted an unnamed Hamas official as saying that any invasion of Rafah would "blow up" talks mediated by the United States, Egypt and Qatar aimed at achieving a cease-fire and the release of Israeli hostages.

Netanyahu, in an interview on ABC News' "This Week with George Stephanopoulos," suggested civilians in Rafah

could flee north, saying there are "plenty of areas" that have been cleared by the army. He said Israel is developing a "detailed plan" to relocate them. But Israel's offensive has caused widespread destruction, particularly in northern Gaza, and heavy fighting is still taking place in central Gaza and the southern city of Khan Younis. In Gaza City on Sunday, the remaining residents covered decomposing bodies in the streets or carried bodies to graves. Some streets were piled high with sand from bombings. Smoke billowed from destroyed buildings.

Ukraine faces drones amid Cabinet reshuffle

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian forces launched 45 drones over Ukraine on Sunday in a five-and-a-half-hour barrage, officials said, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy continued the reshuffle of his war Cabinet as the war enters its third year.

In a statement, the Ukrainian air force said it shot down 40 of the Iranian-made Shahed drones over nine different regions, including on the outskirts of the country's capital, Kyiv.

The five-and-a-half-hour attack targeted agricultural facilities and coastal infrastructure, officials for Ukraine's southern defense forces wrote on Telegram. They said a strike in the Mykolaiv region had injured one person, sparking a fire and damaging nearby residential buildings.

Another person was injured in Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region when a blaze broke out due to falling debris from a destroyed drone, said the head of the region's military administration, Serhiy Lysak.

The strikes come as Zelen-

sky has continued his shakeup of military commanders in a bid to maintain momentum against attacking Russian forces.

Kyiv announced Sunday that former Deputy Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Alexander Pavlyuk would become the new commander of Ukraine's ground forces. The post was previously held by Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, who was named Thursday as the replacement for Ukraine's outgoing military chief, Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi.

New presidential decrees also named Yurii Sodol, the former head of Ukraine's marine corps, as the new commander of Ukraine's combined forces; Brig. Gen. Ihor Skibiuk as commander of Ukraine's air assault forces; and Maj. Gen. Ihor Plahuta as commander of Ukraine's territorial defense forces.

Incoming commander in chief Syrskyi has signaled that his immediate goals include improving troop rotation at the front lines and harnessing the power of new technology at a time when Kyiv's forces are largely on the defensive.

NATO leader: Trump's Russia remarks put US allies at risk

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg warned Sunday that Donald Trump was putting the safety of U.S. troops and their allies at risk after the Republican presidential front-runner said Russia should be able to do "whatever the hell they want" to alliance members who don't meet their defense spending targets.

Trump's remarks caused deep concern in Poland, a country in central Europe that has been under Russian control more often than not since the end of the 18th century. Defense Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz said "no election campaign is an excuse for playing with the security of the alliance."

Speaking Saturday at a rally in Conway, S.C., Trump recalled how as president, he told an unidentified NATO member that he would "encourage" Russia to do as it wishes in cases of NATO allies who are "delinquent."

"You didn't pay? You're delinquent?" Trump recounted saying. "No I would not protect you. In fact, I would encourage

them to do whatever the hell they want. You gotta pay. You gotta pay your bills."

Stoltenberg said the 31 allies are committed to defending each other.

"NATO remains ready and able to defend all allies. Any attack on NATO will be met with a united and forceful response," Stoltenberg said. "Any suggestion that allies will not defend each other undermines all of our security, including that of the U.S., and puts American and European soldiers at increased risk."

Stoltenberg added in his statement that he expects that, "regardless of who wins the presidential election, the U.S. will remain a strong and committed NATO ally."

German daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung wrote in an editorial that "if Trump will become U.S. president again, such statements will increase the risk of [Russian President Vladimir] Putin expanding his war. Europeans can only do one thing to counter this: finally invest in their military security in line with the seriousness of the situation."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Judge who texted during murder trial resigns

OK OKLAHOMA CITY — An Oklahoma judge who sent more than 500 texts to her bailiff during a murder trial will resign, according to a court filing.

In a proposed settlement agreement filed Thursday with the Oklahoma Court on the Judiciary, District Judge Traci Soderstrom agreed to resign on Friday and never again seek a judicial office in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma Supreme Court Chief Justice John Kane IV recommended Soderstrom be removed following an investigation that found she mocked prosecutors, laughed at the bailiff's comment about a prosecutor's genitals, praised the defense attorney and called the prosecutor's key witness a liar during the murder trial of Khristian Tyler Martzall.

Couple accused of taking cremations payments

CO DENVER — Two Colorado funeral home owners accused of abandoning nearly 200 bodies took payments from families that were meant for cremations and burials and instead bought vehicles, cryptocurrency, a \$1,500 dinner in Las Vegas and other personal items, prosecutors and an FBI agent said Thursday.

In a courtroom packed with families of the deceased, FBI Agent Andrew Cohen detailed that Jon and Carrie Hallford used payments from the families to buy two vehicles — a GMC Yukon and an Infiniti — for more than \$120,000, enough

to cover cremation costs twice over for all of the bodies found in their business' storage facility in Penrose, Colo., last October.

The couple were arrested in November in Oklahoma. Neither one of them has entered a plea yet. Investigators have been gathering evidence since the bodies were found.

Some of the bodies had been in the maggot-infested building for years before they were discovered following reports of a foul odor permeating the small mountain town.

Machete-wielding man killed inside supermarket

CA LANCASTER — A man armed with two machetes was fatally shot inside a Southern California supermarket last week after he charged at sheriff's deputies, authorities said.

The shooting took place at about 9:30 a.m. at an Albertsons supermarket in Lancaster, a high desert community north of Los Angeles. The man reportedly had confronted people in the store when Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies arrived. They tried to subdue him using stun guns and other methods before he charged them and was shot, according to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

Man drugged wife's drinks to induce abortion

TX HOUSTON — A Texas man who drugged his wife's drinks in an attempt to induce an abortion was sentenced to 180 days in jail and 10 years on probation.

Mason Herring, a 39-year-old Houston attorney, pleaded

guilty Wednesday to injury to a child and assault of a pregnant person. He had initially been charged with felony assault to induce abortion.

Catherine Herring, who has filed for divorce, told the court the jail sentence was not long enough. She said their 1-year-old daughter, their third child, was born about 10 weeks premature, has developmental delays and attends therapy eight times a week.

Catherine Herring told authorities her husband in March 2022 began lecturing her on hydration and offering water. She said she became severely ill after drinking from the first cup that appeared cloudy, which her husband explained was perhaps the result of the cup or water pipes being dirty.

\$130M awarded to 5 over bad bottled water

NV LAS VEGAS — A Nevada jury has awarded about \$130 million in damages in a lawsuit filed by five people who suffered liver damage after drinking bottled water marketed by a Las Vegas-based company before the product was recalled from store shelves in 2021.

The Clark County District Court jury awarded more than \$30 million in compensatory damages to the plaintiffs including Myles Hunwardsen, a Henderson man who underwent a liver transplant at age 29. The jury levied another \$100 million in punitive damages.

The verdict reached last week was the second large-sum award in a negligence and product liability case involving AfinityLifestyles.com Inc. and its

Real Water brand, which was sold in distinctive boxy blue bottles as premium treated "alkalized" drinking water with healthy detoxifying properties.

Wayward kangaroo caught at apartment pool

FL TAMPA — A kangaroo was corralled safely by sheriff's deputies Thursday after it was spotted hopping around the pool area of a Florida apartment complex.

The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office released video and still photos of the kangaroo, including some footage shot from a helicopter.

Deputies were able to figure out the animal's owner and reunite them after checking for its proper registration, the agency said in a Facebook post. No injuries to the kangaroo or any people were reported.

First tornado to hit state in February spotted

WI MADISON — The first-ever February tornado for the state of Wisconsin was spotted Thursday just south of Madison, the National Weather Service confirmed.

Rock County officials, in the area where the tornado was reported, initially received reports of about 25 buildings, power lines or other structures damaged.

There were no immediate reports of injuries though, Mark Elland, a shift supervisor at the Rock County 911 center, told the Wisconsin State Journal. Minor injuries were reported.

— From wire reports



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Rutgers overpowers No. 11 Wisconsin

Associated Press

PISCATAWAY, N.J. — Jeremiah Williams scored 18 points in his first home game of the season and Rutgers used a stifling defense to lead the entire game and hand No. 11 Wisconsin its fourth straight loss 78-56 on Saturday.

Noah Fernandes contributed 17 points and Clifford Omoruyi added 13 points and 13 rebounds for the Scarlet Knights (13-10, 5-7 Big Ten), who won a third straight game.

The 22-point victory was the largest margin of victory for Rutgers over a ranked opponent in program history.

Connor Essegian and AJ Storr scored 15 and 14 points, respectively, for Wisconsin (16-8, 8-5). The Badgers never got within single digits in the second half.

Williams had not played a college basketball game in nearly two years prior to being activated before Rutgers' game at Michigan on Feb. 3. The Iowa State transfer endured a season-ending Achilles injury last year and then had to sit out 20 games this season for violating the NCAA's gambling policy.

No. 1 UConn 89, Georgetown 64: The Huskies were never challenged on the way to their 12th consecutive victory, leading by as many as 26 in the first half while beating the host Hoyas behind Alex Karaban's 25 points.

Defending national champion UConn (22-2, 12-1 Big East) was dominant at both ends of the court, putting together runs of 9-0 and 11-0 before the game was 10 minutes old.

No. 2 Purdue 79, Indiana 59: Zach Edey had 26 points and 13 rebounds and Braden Smith scored 19 points to lead the host Boilermakers past the Hoosiers.

The 7-foot-4 Edey also had four assists, two blocks and his first career 3-pointer for Purdue (22-2, 11-2 Big Ten). Smith grabbed nine rebounds in Purdue's eighth consecutive win.

No. 3 North Carolina 75, Mia-

mi 72: RJ Davis scored 25 points and the visiting Tar Heels held off the Hurricanes.

Armando Bacot had 10 points and 15 rebounds for North Carolina (19-5, 11-2 Atlantic Coast Conference) in its first game since an 80-76 home loss to Clemson on Tuesday. Elliot Cadeau scored 19 points, and Harrison Ingram finished with 13.

Miami (15-9, 6-7) closed to 73-71 on Wooga Poplar's layup with 1:10 left. Harrison Ingram and Cormac Ryan each made a foul shot to increase North Carolina's lead to 75-71.

No. 4 Kansas 64, No. 13 Baylor 61: Hunter Dickinson scored 15 points to lead a balanced attack as the host Jayhawks extended their home winning streak to 18 games with a victory over the Bears.

Baylor got the ball with 14.2 seconds left and a chance to tie it, but Jayden Nunn's 3-point try from the corner was short. After Nicolas Timberlake missed the front end of a one-and-one, Ja'Kobe Walter's 3-point attempt caromed off the rim.

Kansas (19-5, 7-4 Big 12) got 14 points from Dajuan Harris, 13 from KJ Adams and 11 from Johnny Furphy.

No. 5 Houston 67, Cincinnati 62: J'Wan Roberts scored 20 points, including a game-sealing dunk with six seconds left, as the visiting Cougars outlasted the Bearcats.

Jamal Shead added 16 points on 6-for-25 shooting for Houston (21-3, 8-3 Big 12), which won its 10th straight game against its longtime foe.

Texas A&M 85, No. 6 Tennessee 69: Tyrece Radford had 27 points and Wade Taylor IV added 25 as the host Aggies never trailed in a win over the Volunteers.

The victory is the third straight and fifth in the past six games for Texas A&M (15-8, 6-4 Southeastern Conference).

Dalton Knecht had 22 points to lead Tennessee, his ninth

straight game with at least 16 points.

No. 7 Marquette 86, St. John's 75: Tyler Kolek scored 22 of his 27 points in the second half and also had 13 assists as the host Golden Eagles rallied to beat the Red Storm for their seventh consecutive victory.

Stevie Mitchell added 14 points, David Joplin had 12 points and Kam Jones had 10 to help Marquette (18-5, 9-3 Big East) erase a 15-point deficit and beat St. John's for a sixth straight time.

No. 8 Arizona 99, Colorado 79: Caleb Love scored 19 points, Pelle Larson had 18 and the Wildcats pulled away in the second half to hand the Buffaloes their first home loss of the season.

Oumar Ballo added 16 points and 13 rebounds for Arizona (19-5, 10-3 Pac 12) in its fifth straight win.

No. 9 Duke 80, Boston College 65: Mark Mitchell scored 17 points, Kyle Filipowski and Jeremy Roach each added 16 and the host Blue Devils beat the Eagles.

Jared McCain provided 11 points and 10 rebounds and Tyrese Proctor had 10 points for Duke (18-5, 9-3 Atlantic Coast Conference).

Michigan State 88, No. 10 Illinois 80: A.J. Hoggard had 23 points to help the host Spartans rallied from an eight-point deficit in the last six-plus minutes.

Terrance Shannon Jr. had 28 points for Illinois (17-6, 8-4).

Florida 81, No. 12 Auburn 65: Riley Kugel scored 22 points, Walter Clayton Jr. added 20 points and the host Gators beat the Tigers to put themselves in position to make the NCAA Tournament for the first time in three years.

Florida (16-7, 6-4 Southeastern Conference) extended its home winning streak to 15 and picked up its second Quad 1 victory in two weeks.

Florida dominated Auburn (19-5, 8-3), leading by as many as

29 points in the second half.

No. 14 Iowa State 71, TCU 59: Tre King scored 15 points and Keshon Gilbert had 13 points and seven assists, helping the host Cyclones beat the Horned Frogs.

No. 15 South Carolina 75, Vanderbilt 60: Collin Murray-Boyles scored a career-high 31 points and the host Gamecocks earned their 21st win of the season a year after losing 21 games.

No. 16 Alabama 109, LSU 92: Mark Sears scored 23 points and the visiting Crimson Tide made a handful of deep shots to break open a tight game in the final nine minutes against the Tigers.

Gonzaga 89, No. 17 Kentucky 85: Anton Watson scored 17 points, including a go-ahead three-point play with 3:49 remaining before adding two key layups in the final 91 seconds, and the visiting Bulldogs survived a second-half rally to beat the Wildcats.

Reed Sheppard had 21 points for Kentucky.

No. 19 Creighton 78, Xavier 71: Ryan Kalkbrenner scored 28 points to lead the visiting Bluejays over the Musketeers.

No. 21 BYU 72, Kansas State 66: Fousseyni Traore scored 14 points and had eight rebounds to lead the host Cougars to a victory over the Wildcats.

No. 22 Utah State 80, Boise State 61: Mason Falslev scored a season-high 25 points and the host Aggies blew out the Broncos to grab sole possession of first place in the rugged Mountain West Conference.

No. 23 Texas Tech 66, UCF 59: Darrion Williams had 13 points and 13 rebounds, Kerwin Walton scored 12 points on four 3-pointers before halftime and the host Red Raiders never trailed.

UNLV 80, No. 25 New Mexico 77: Dedan Thomas Jr. scored a career-high 25 points to help the Runnin' Rebels hand the Lobos their second consecutive home loss.

Mavs rout Thunder; stretch streak to 4

Associated Press

DALLAS — Luka Doncic scored 32 points, and the Dallas Mavericks matched their longest winning streak of the season at four games in a 146-111 rout of the Oklahoma City Thunder on Saturday.

Kyrie Irving scored 25 points and Daniel Gafford had 19 points and nine rebounds in his Dallas debut alongside P.J. Washington after both were acquired in trades before Thursday's deadline.

Gafford wasted no time bringing energy off the bench as he will be expected to do when rookie Dereck Lively II returns from a broken nose. He was acquired from the Washington Wizards.

Washington, who scored 14 points, came from Charlotte, and both newcomers had alley-oop dunks on assists from Doncic within minutes of entering the game in the first quarter.

Doncic, who sat the fourth quarter, had nine assists and eight rebounds as Dallas improved to 4-0 with Doncic and Irving in the lineup since Irving's return from a sprained thumb.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander

scored 25 points for the Thunder, who got Gordon Hayward from the Hornets at the deadline but aren't expected to play the 2017 All-Star before next week's All-Star break.

Warriors 113, Suns 112: Stephen Curry made a 3-pointer with 0.7 seconds left and host Golden State beat Phoenix for its sixth victory in seven games.

Devin Booker led Phoenix with 32 points, and Kevin Durant had 24. The Suns had two chances after Curry's 3-pointer, but Durant couldn't get a shot off on the second.

Clippers 112, Pistons 106: Paul George scored 33 points and Kawhi Leonard added 24 as host Los Angeles rallied in the fourth quarter and denied Detroit its first three-game win streak of the season.

Jaden Ivey scored 23 points to lead the Pistons, who dropped their 10th in a row to Los Angeles.

Nets 123, Spurs 103: Dennis Schroder had 15 points and 12 assists in his Brooklyn debut and Cam Thomas scored 25 points as the host Nets spoiled Victor Wembanyama's return to the arena where he was the

No. 1 pick in the NBA draft.

Wembanyama scored 21 points, but the 7-foot-3 Frenchman grabbed just four rebounds after managing only one in a loss at Orlando in his last game.

Hornets 115, Grizzlies 106: Miles Bridges scored 25 points, newcomer Vasilije Micic added 18 points and nine assists, and new-look Charlotte snapped a 10-game losing streak.

Jaren Jackson Jr. had 29 points for the Grizzlies, who have lost eight straight and played without seven injured players.

Magic 114, Bulls 108 (OT): Franz Wagner scored 36 points, Cole Anthony had 14 points and 11 rebounds off the bench, and host Orlando turned back Chicago.

DeMar DeRozan led Chicago with 28 points.

76ers 119, Wizards 113: Tyrese Maxey scored 28 points, Buddy Hield added 23 and visiting Philadelphia snapped a four-game losing streak.

Tyus Jones scored a season-high 25 points and hit a career-best six 3-pointers for the Wizards.

Cavaliers 119, Raptors 95:

Jarrett Allen had 18 points and 15 rebounds, Evan Mobley added 17 points and 11 rebounds, and visiting Cleveland extended its winning streak to a season-high nine games.

Caris LeVert and Georges Niang each scored 13 points for Cleveland.

Pacers 125, Knicks 111: Myles Turner scored 23 points and Tyrese Haliburton added 22 as visiting Indiana sent New York to its third loss in four games.

Precious Achiuwa scored 15 points and Donte DiVincenzo 14 for the Knicks.

Hawks 122, Rockets 113: Dejounte Murray had 34 points and host Atlanta overcame a sluggish start to beat Houston for its sixth win in eight games.

Jalen Green had 26 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists for the Rockets, who lost all four games on their road trip.

Pelicans 93, Trail Blazers 84: Trey Murphy III scored 24 points and visiting New Orleans won for the fifth time in six games.

Jerami Grant led Portland with 24 points, and Deandre Ayton had 18 points and 17 rebounds.

Peppers headlines defensive-focused Hall of Fame class

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The Pro Football Hall of Fame now has a roster featuring every NFL franchise.

Julius Peppers became the first player drafted by Carolina to make it to the Hall and Andre Johnson became the first for Houston as part of the 2024 class announced Thursday night at NFL Honors.

The Panthers and Texans had been the last two franchises who hadn't had a player they drafted get voted into the Hall.

"Any time you can be the first player to do something, it's an amazing feeling," Johnson said.

"It just adds more to your legacy. You'll always be remembered."

The class had a distinctive defensive feel with Johnson being the only offensive player to make it. Peppers was joined by another elite pass rusher in Dwight Freeney and do-everything linebacker Patrick Willis in the modern era category.

Dynamic returner Devin Hester also got voted into the Hall from the group of 15 finalists as the first player to get in primarily as a returner.

"I'm just happy to show people special teams does matter," Hester said. "That's my No. 1

pride to get into the Hall of Fame. Now you can't overlook special teams."

Two more defensive players got in on the senior category, with linebacker Randy Gradishar and defensive tackle Steve McMichael getting the needed 80% support from the panel.

"I love defense obviously," Freeney said. "We understand the game. I know how the game is sold. I understand the other side of it. But I will take a defensive player all day."

Former AFL receiver Art Powell and coach Buddy Parker fell short of the threshold and missed out.

Peppers was one of the league's most dominant linemen after being picked second overall by Carolina in 2002 and got the honor in his first year of eligibility.

"It's a surreal moment," he said. "It's kind of still unbelievable."

Peppers had 12 sacks as a rookie and never really slowed down in a 17-year career that included stops in Chicago and Green Bay before ending with the Panthers. He was an All-Pro in 2004, 2006 and 2010.

Peppers finished his career with 159½ sacks and had 10 seasons with double-digit sacks.

Bobrovsky, Panthers shut out Avalanche

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Sergei Bobrovsky made 35 saves in his third shutout of the season, and the Florida Panthers beat the Colorado Avalanche 4-0 on Saturday night.

Carter Verhaeghe, Sam Reinhart, Eetu Luostarinen and Aleksander Barkov scored for the Panthers, who won for the sixth time in seven games. Matthew Tkachuk had two assists.

Bobrovsky was showered with chants of “Bobby! Bobby!” by the Amerant Bank Arena crowd toward the end of the game.

Colorado star Nathan MacKinnon departed after landing headfirst on the ice with 11:18 to go. He was held off the scoresheet for the third straight game after going pointless in just one game since Nov. 18.

Coach Jared Bednar did not provide an update on MacKinnon’s status following the game.

Alexandar Georgiev made 39 saves for the Avalanche in their fourth straight loss.

Red Wings 4, Canucks 3 (OT): Jake Walman converted a penalty shot 23 seconds into overtime, lifting host Detroit to

the victory.

Filip Hronek and Elias Pettersson each had a goal and two assists for Vancouver. Nils Hoglander also scored, and Casey DeSmith made 24 stops.

Senators 5, Maple Leafs 3: Shane Pinto had a goal and two assists, and host Ottawa won a game that ended with Toronto defenseman Morgan Reilly cross-checking Ridly Greig for firing a slap shot into an empty net.

Auston Matthews scored his NHL-leading 42nd goal for Toronto. Matthew Knies and Max Domi also scored and Martin Jones stopped 27 shots.

Capitals 3, Bruins 0: T.J. Oshie scored his 299th career goal, Charlie Lindgren stopped 18 shots and visiting Washington snapped a six-game losing streak.

Alex Ovechkin scored his 57th career empty-net goal with 27 seconds remaining, passing Wayne Gretzky for the most in NHL history.

Predators 5, Coyotes 4 (OT): Ryan McDonagh scored 1:36 into overtime, and host Nashville snapped a three-game losing streak.

Dylan Guenther, Travis Dermott, Nick Schmaltz and Juuso Valimaki scored for Arizona in its fifth consecutive loss.

Kings 4, Oilers 0: David Rittich stopped 27 shots for his first shutout in nearly three years, Quinton Byfield had two goals and an assist, and host Los Angeles gave Jim Hiller a victory in his first game as an NHL head coach.

Hiller was named interim coach for the rest of the season after Todd McLellan was fired on Feb. 2. The Kings had only three wins in their last 17 games going into the All-Star break.

Jets 2, Penguins 1: Connor Hellebuyck made 35 saves, and host Winnipeg stopped a five-game losing streak.

Bryan Rust scored for Pittsburgh, and Tristan Jarry made 29 saves. Sidney Crosby’s nine-game point streak ended.

Hurricanes 1, Devils 0 (OT): Sebastian Aho scored 3:40 into overtime to give host Carolina the win.

Vanecek finished with 31 saves, and Carolina’s Pyotr Kochetkov made 34 stops.

Flyers 3, Kraken 2: Sean Couturier scored the go-ahead

goal for host Philadelphia early in the third period.

Tomas Tatar and Jared McCann scored for the Kraken.

Lightning 4, Blue Jackets 2: Brandon Hagel had a goal and two assists, and visiting Tampa Bay stopped a two-game slide.

Nicholas Paul had a goal and an assist for Tampa Bay, and Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 33 shots.

Blues 3, Sabres 1: Joel Hofer stopped 33 shots, Jake Neighbours scored twice and St. Louis got the win on the road.

Jordan Kyrou also scored for St. Louis in its first game since a 1-0 loss to Columbus on Jan. 30.

Stars 3, Canadiens 2: Tyler Seguin scored twice and Matt Duchene had two assists, lifting visiting Dallas to the win.

Thomas Harley also scored as the Stars improved to 8-2-1 in their last 11 games.

Flames 5, Islanders 2: MacKenzie Weegar recorded his first career hat trick, and visiting Calgary extended its season-high winning streak to four games.

Jonathan Huberdeau and Blake Coleman also scored for the Flames.

Johnson wins LIV tournament in Vegas by one stroke

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Dustin Johnson won LIV Golf Las Vegas on Saturday in windy and chilly conditions for his third victory on the Saudi-funded tour, pulling ahead with a birdie on No. 17 and closing with a par to edge Peter Uihlein and Talor Gooch by a stroke.

Johnson shot a 1-under 69 to finish at 12-under 198 at Las Vegas Country Club, breaking out of a late six-way tie on another day with the temperature barely climbing into the 50s in the shadow of the Super Bowl.

Johnson opened with a birdie on the par-5 first, then dropped back with bogeys on Nos. 6, 9 and 11.

“Tough day. Got off to a little bit of a rocky start,” Johnson said. “I was hitting really good shots, they were just ending up in poor spots. I was hitting the shots I wanted to, I just was not playing the wind right.”

The two-time major champion rallied with birdies on Nos. 13, 15 and 17 — holing a 12-footer on the par-4 17th — and made the par save on the par-4 18th for the victory, hitting to 12 feet from the rough and two-putting.

“I was struggling with the putter a lot and then this year the first two events I’ve putted quite nicely, just making all the putts I need to make,” Johnson said. “Like the one on 17, obviously, was a clutch putt that I needed to make there if I wanted to take a one-shot lead.”

Gooch shot a 67, and Uihlein finished with a 68.

Gooch lost three strokes in two holes with a bogey on No. 9 and a double bogey on No. 10, then birdied Nos. 14, 16, 17 and 1.

“I actually didn’t hit it that great today, but I made a few putts out there, so the put-

ter got hot at the right time,” Gooch said.

Uihlein bogeyed 16 and birdied 17.

“I hit it all over the shop,” Uihlein said. “It was hard. It was a grind. Putter bailed me out a lot. Short game bailed me out.”

The 39-year-old Johnson has won in each of LIV’s first three seasons, taking playoffs in Boston in September 2022 and Tulsa, Okla., last May. He won 24 times on the PGA Tour.

“The game is feeling in really good form for this early in the year, and so I’m excited for the rest of the year,” Johnson said. “Obviously, got a big stretch coming up with Saudi, Hong Kong, come back, Doral and then the Masters.”

Matthew Wolff was 10 under after a 69. Graeme McDowell (65), Paul Casey (68) and Jason Kokrak (69) were 9 under, and Jon Rahm (71) was eighth at 8 under.