

## Trump-Zelenskyy meeting turns contentious

*The Washington Post*

President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy engaged in a heated dispute in the Oval Office on Friday as the Ukrainian leader sought to prevent Washington from abandoning Kyiv in Russia's war on his country but was met with vocal anger from the American president.

The remarkable encounter — which was cordial at times, heated at others — came as Trump has pressed for a swift end to the war, saying that the time has come both to stop the bloodshed and to halt what he has described as an unacceptable drain on U.S. resources.

Kyiv's fate rides on Zelenskyy's ability to persuade Trump to seek a peace deal that is robust enough to deter Russian President Vladimir Putin from rearming and reinvading.

But Trump has been skeptical of his Ukrainian counterpart, calling him a "dictator" last week and blaming Ukraine for the war even though it began with an unprovoked invasion

by Moscow.

"You're in no position to dictate what we're going to feel," Trump said at one point in the Oval Office. "You don't have the cards right now."

Vice President JD Vance also chimed in, saying that it was "disrespectful for Zelenskyy to come into the Oval Office, litigating in front of the American media."

"Have you said thank you once?" Vance asked.

Before reporters were escorted out of the room, Trump also raised his voice, saying, "You're not really in good position right now" and told him, "You're gambling with World War III."

Trump pointed to the number of soldiers being killed, and remarked to Zelenskyy, "Then you're telling us you don't want a ceasefire."

The animosity occurred after Zelenskyy pressed for security guarantees and said "we will never accept just ceasefire."

Trump has declared his faith that Putin, too, wants to end the

war and will abide by any peace agreement that is struck. He has held back from criticism of the Russian leader even as he has hit Zelenskyy, and this week sided with Moscow and Pyongyang against Ukraine in a vote marking the war's anniversary at the United Nations.

But Trump has often taken pains to be polite with other leaders when he has met them in person and has had positive face-to-face conversations with Zelenskyy in the past, something the Ukrainian leader was banking on when he rushed to Washington this week for the encounter.

Trump several times cast himself as a mediator between the two countries, saying he wanted to open up communications with Russia in a way that Biden's administration would not, while also aligning himself with Ukraine by hosting Zelenskyy at the White House.

While the meeting grew heated as it went on, it began with niceties typical of such encounters.

Trump reaffirmed that there would continue to be military assistance for Ukraine — "Hopefully we won't have to send much because I'm looking forward to getting it done quickly" — and he said the U.S. was still committed to NATO and to protecting Poland.

"I hope I'll be known and recognized as a peacemaker," Trump said several times in the Oval Office, as the two leaders met and took questions. He expressed optimism that a deal would bring the war to an end and that aid to Ukraine could be used for rebuilding rather than for fighting.

"I give tremendous gratitude, generals and your soldiers and yourself, in a sense, that been very hard fighting, very tough fighting, great fighters, and we have to be very proud of them," he said. "But now we want to get it over. It's enough. We want to get it over with. So it's an honor to have you here."

Zelenskyy told Trump that he hoped that he would have a "strong position to stop Putin."

## Ex-defense chiefs denounce Trump's Pentagon firings

*The Washington Post*

Five former defense secretaries on Thursday denounced President Donald Trump's firing last week of the Joint Chiefs chairman and several other senior military officials, urging Congress to hold hearings and declaring they have concluded the officers were "fired for purely partisan reasons."

The extraordinary public appeal was signed by Lloyd Austin, Jim Mattis, Chuck Hagel, Leon Panetta and William Per-

ry — who served in Republican and Democratic administrations dating back to the 1990s — after Trump's Friday night firings caused an uproar on Capitol Hill and among many military veterans.

"We are deeply alarmed by President Trump's recent dismissals of several senior U.S. military leaders," the letter opens. "We write to urge the U.S. Congress to hold Mr. Trump to account for these reckless actions and to exercise fully its Constitutional

oversight responsibilities."

Among those ousted on Friday were Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., the Pentagon's top officer; Adm. Lisa Franchetti, the head of the Navy; Gen. James Slife, the Air Force's vice chief of staff; and the top military lawyers for the Army, Navy and Air Force.

Trump's defense secretary, former Fox News personality Pete Hegseth, also removed his senior military assistant, Air Force Lt. Gen. Jennifer Short.

The head of the Coast Guard,

Adm. Linda Fagan, was fired the day after Trump's inauguration.

The Trump administration has sought to downplay the dismissals, noting that previous presidents also have fired prominent generals. Those dismissals, however, typically had a proximate cause.

"The President offered no justification for his actions, even though he had nominated these officers for previous positions and the Senate had approved them," the letter says.

# Judge: Firings of probationary federal workers likely unlawful

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A federal judge on Thursday found that the mass firings of probationary employees were likely unlawful, granting temporary relief to a coalition of labor unions and organizations that has sued to stop the Trump administration's massive dismantling of the federal workforce.

U.S. District Judge William Alsup in San Francisco ordered the Office of Personnel Management to inform certain federal agencies that it had no authority to order the firings of probationary employees, including at the Department of Defense.

"OPM does not have any authority whatsoever, under any statute in the history of the universe," to hire or fire any employees but its own, Alsup said.

The complaint filed by labor unions and nonprofit organizations is among several lawsuits fighting the administration's efforts to shrink a workforce that Trump has called bloated and sloppy. Thousands of probationary employees have been fired, and his administration is now aiming at career officials with civil service protection.

Lawyers for the government

agree that the office has no authority to hire or fire employees in other agencies.

But they said OPM asked agencies to review and determine whether employees on probation were fit for continued employment. They also said that probationary employees are not guaranteed employment and that only the highest performing and mission-critical employees should be hired.

"I think plaintiffs are conflating a request by OPM with an order by OPM," said Kelsey Helland, an assistant U.S. attorney in court Thursday.

Attorneys for the coalition cheered the order, although it does not mean that fired employees will automatically be rehired or that future firings will not occur.

"What it means in practical effects is the agencies of the federal government should hear the court's warning that that order was unlawful," said Danielle Leonard, an attorney for the coalition, after the hearing.

"This ruling by Judge Alsup is an important initial victory for patriotic Americans across this country who were illegally

fired from their jobs by an agency that had no authority to do so," said Everett Kelley, national president of the American Federation of Government Employees.

"These are rank-and-file workers who joined the federal government to make a difference in their communities, only to be suddenly terminated due to this administration's disdain for federal employees and desire to privatize their work."

An email seeking comment from OPM was not immediately returned Thursday. Michelle Lo, an assistant U.S. attorney with the Department of Justice, declined to comment.

Alsup ordered the personnel office to inform a limited number of federal agencies represented by the five nonprofits that are plaintiffs in the lawsuit, which include veterans, parks, small businesses and defense. He seemed particularly troubled by firings expected at the Department of Defense.

He also ordered the acting head of the personnel office, Charles Ezell, to testify in court about the nature of a Feb. 13 phone call in which agency heads were told to fire probationary employees.

## Hundreds of weather forecasters lose jobs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Hundreds of weather forecasters and other federal National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration employees on probationary status were fired Thursday, lawmakers and weather experts said.

Federal workers who were not let go said the afternoon layoffs included meteorologists who do crucial local forecasts in National Weather Service offices across the country.

Cuts at NOAA appeared to be happening in two rounds, one of 500 and one of 800, said Craig McLean, a former NOAA chief scientist who said he got the information from someone with firsthand knowledge. That's about 10% of NOAA's workforce.

The first round of cuts were probationary employees, McLean said. There are about 375 probationary employees in the National Weather Service — where day-to-day forecasting and hazard warning is done.

The firings come amid efforts by Elon Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency to shrink a federal workforce that President Donald Trump has called bloated and sloppy. Thousands of probationary employees across the government have already been fired.

Rep. Grace Meng, D-N.Y., released a statement saying: "Today, hundreds of employees at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), including weather forecasters at the National Weather Service (NWS), were given termination notices for no good reason. This is unconscionable."

## English to be official language of US

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is expected to sign an executive order on Friday designating English as the official language of the United States, according to the White House.

The order will allow government agencies and orga-

nizations that receive federal funding to choose whether to continue to offer documents and services in languages other than English, according to a fact sheet about the impending order.

The executive order will rescind a mandate from former President Bill Clinton that required the government

and organizations that received federal funding to provide language assistance to non-English speakers.

Designating English as the national language "promotes unity, establishes efficiency in government operations, and creates a pathway for civic engagement," according to the White House.

# British prime minister urges Trump not to abandon Ukraine

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer used a visit to Washington on Thursday to press President Donald Trump not to abandon Ukraine as he looks to find a quick endgame to Russia's bloody invasion of its neighbor.

With a mix of flattery and frank talk, the center-left Starmer made the case to the Republican president to remain cautious as he goes about ending the biggest conflict in Europe since World War II.

The British premier started the visit by delivering an invitation from King Charles III to come to Scotland for a "historic" state visit — noting it was an "unprecedented" honor since Trump already had been given the royal treatment by Queen Elizabeth II during his first term.

"You've created a moment of tremendous opportunity to

reach a historic peace deal — a deal that I think would be celebrated in Ukraine and around the world," Starmer told Trump. "That is the prize. But we have to get it right."

Trump said that talks to end the grinding war are "very well advanced" but also cautioned that there is only a narrow window to get a deal done.

"If it doesn't happen quickly, it may not happen at all," Trump warned.

Starmer's visit came after French President Emmanuel Macron was in Washington earlier this week to make a similar case to Trump, and a day before Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is scheduled to visit the White House. The British leader leaned into the idea that Trump was the glue to maintaining the peace in Ukraine should the three-year war end.

The press by Starmer and

Macron this week reflects the mounting concern felt by much of Europe that Trump's aggressive push to find an end to the war signals his willingness to concede too much to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Some of Trump's comments during Starmer's visit may only add to Europe's anxiety. The American leader expressed confidence that Putin won't press to restart the war if a truce can be reached.

"I think he'll keep his word," Trump said of Putin. "I've spoken to him, I've known him for a long time now; we had to go through the Russian hoax together."

The mention of "Russia hoax" is a reference to the FBI and Justice Department special counsel investigation that examined whether Trump's 2016 presidential campaign illegally coordinated with Russia to sway the outcome of the U.S. election.

## Government workers will get new email

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Federal employees should expect another email on Saturday requiring them to explain their recent accomplishments, a renewed attempt by President Donald Trump and billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk to demand answers from the government workforce.

The plan was disclosed by a person with knowledge of the situation who requested anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss it publicly.

The first email, which was distributed a week ago, asked employees "what did you do last week?" and prompted them to list five tasks that they completed. Musk, who empowered by Trump is aiming to downsize agencies and eliminate thousands of federal jobs, said anyone who didn't respond would be fired. Many agencies, meanwhile, told their workforces not to respond or issued conflicting guidance.

The second email will be delivered in a different way, potentially making it easier to discipline employees for noncompliance. Instead of being sent by the Office of Personnel Management, which doesn't have the power to hire or fire, the email will come from individual agencies that have direct oversight of career officials.

It's unclear how national security agencies will handle the second email. After the first one, they directed employees not to write back because much of the agencies' work is sensitive or classified. Less than half of federal workers responded, according to the White House.

The Office of Personnel Management ultimately told agency leaders shortly before the Monday deadline for responses that the request was optional, although it left the door open for similar demands going forward.

## Florida increases penalties for crimes committed by immigrants in US illegally

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — For most people in Florida, misdemeanor theft can result in up to a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine. For an immigrant illegally in Florida, that same crime now carries a felony punishment of up to five years behind bars and a \$5,000 fine.

The new laws in Florida come as President Donald Trump cracks down on illegal immigration. They impose harsher penalties for offenses committed by people illegally in the U.S. than for everyone else. The consequences are particularly stiff for first-degree murder, which now carries an automatic death sentence for anyone who is in

the U.S. illegally.

While Florida is more aggressive than most, there are other states considering similar measures to enhance penalties based on immigration status.

Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis says "Florida will be safer and securer," and a model for other states, because of its sweeping immigration laws.

The stiffer penalties are meant to be a deterrent, Republican state Rep. Lawrence McClure said.

"Don't come to the state of Florida illegally," he said. "That's the premise."

Some civil rights advocates and legal experts are raising alarm.

The laws are "leading into a head-on collision with the constitutional guarantee of equal protection to everyone who is in the United States," said César Cuauhtémoc García Hernández, a law professor at Ohio State University who specializes in immigration and criminal law.

On his first day in office, Trump ordered a renewed emphasis on the death penalty. His executive order highlighted two particular grounds for it: murdering a law enforcement officer or committing any capital offense while in the U.S. illegally. But jurors and federal judges would still decide whether to impose the death sentence.



# Iowa OKs removal of gender protections

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Iowa lawmakers became the first in the nation to approve legislation removing gender identity protections from the state's civil rights code Thursday.

The measure raced through the legislative process after first being introduced last week. The state Senate was first to approve the bill on Thursday, on party lines, followed by the House less than an hour later. Five House Republicans joined all Democrats in voting against it.

Opponents say the action could expose transgender people to discrimination in numerous areas of life.

Hundreds of LGBTQ+ advocates streamed into the Capitol rotunda on Thursday waving signs reading "Trans rights are human rights" and chanting slogans including "No hate in our

state!" There was a heavy police presence, with state troopers stationed around the rotunda. Of the 167 people who signed up to testify at a 90-minute public hearing before a House committee, all but 24 were opposed to the bill.

The bill would remove gender identity as a protected class from the state's civil rights law and explicitly define female and male, as well as gender, which would be considered a synonym for sex and "shall not be considered a synonym or shorthand expression for gender identity, experienced gender, gender expression, or gender role."

The measure would be the first legislative action in the U.S. to remove nondiscrimination protections based on gender identity, said Logan Casey, director of policy research at the Movement Advancement Pro-

ject, an LGBTQ+ rights think tank.

The bill now goes to Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds, who signed earlier policies banning sports participation and public bathroom access for transgender students.

A spokesperson for Reynolds declined to comment on whether she would sign the bill. If she does, it will go into effect on July 1.

Protesters who watched the vote from the House gallery loudly booed and shouted "Shame!" as the chamber adjourned.

Many admonished Iowa state Rep. Steven Holt, who floor managed the bill and delivered a fierce defense of it before it passed.

Supporters of the change say the current law incorrectly codified the idea that people can

transition to another gender and granted transgender women access to spaces such as bathrooms, locker rooms and sports teams that should be protected for people who were assigned female at birth.

Holt said the inclusion of gender identity in the civil rights codes threatens recent "commonsense" laws to ban transgender participation in sports and access to bathrooms.

"The legislature of Iowa for the future of our children and our culture has a vested interest and solemn responsibility to stand up for immutable truth," Holt said.

The Iowa lawmakers' actions came as the Georgia House backed away from removing gender protections from the state's hate crimes law, which was passed in 2020 after the death of Ahmaud Arbery.

## Consumers drastically cut spending in January

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. consumers cut back sharply on spending last month, the most since February 2021, even as inflation declined, though stiff tariffs threatened by the White House could disrupt that progress.

Americans cut their spending by 0.2% in January from the previous month, the Commerce Department said Friday, likely in part because of unseasonably cold weather.

Yet the retreat may be hinting at more caution by consumers amid rising economic uncertainty.

Inflation declined to 2.5% in January compared with a year earlier, down from 2.6% in December, the government said. Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core prices dropped to 2.6%, the lowest since June, from 2.9%.

One other bright spot in the report was that incomes jumped 0.9% in January from December, fueled in part by a large annual cost of living adjustment for Social Security beneficiaries.

Inflation spiked in 2022 to its highest level in four decades, propelling President Donald Trump to the White House and causing the Federal Reserve to rapidly raise interest rates to tame prices. It has since fallen from a peak of 7.2%.

Last month's decline could reassure Fed officials that inflation is still slowly cooling.

The Fed prefers Friday's measure to the more widely-known consumer price index, which rose for the fourth straight month in January to 3%. Friday's gauge calculates inflation slightly differently: For example, it puts less weight on the costs of housing and used cars.

## Cops: Hackman, wife, dog were dead for days, weeks

Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. — Authorities investigating the deaths of Oscar-winner Gene Hackman and his wife are waiting for the results of the autopsies, and carbon monoxide and toxicology testing to determine how they died.

Hackman and his wife, Betsy Arakawa, apparently had been dead for days or even a couple of weeks when investigators found their bodies while searching the couple's Santa Fe home on Wednesday.

Investigators are trying to figure out the last time anyone saw or spoke to them, Santa Fe County Sheriff Adan Mendoza told NBC's "Today" show on Friday.

"That is a challenge because they were very private individuals," the sheriff said, noting that the autopsy results could take months.

Hackman, 95, was found Wednesday in an entryway of the home and Arakawa, 65, was found lying on her side in the bathroom. A dead German shepherd was found in a kennel near Arakawa, Mendoza said Thursday.

There was no indication of foul play, according to the sheriff's office. Detectives wrote in a search warrant affidavit that investigators thought the deaths were "suspicious enough in nature to require a thorough search and investigation."

No gas leaks were discovered in and around the home, but a detective noted in the affidavit that people exposed to gas leaks or carbon monoxide might not show signs of poisoning.

A space heater was next to Arakawa and may have fallen when she abruptly fell to the floor, according to the affidavit.

# Mourners bury hostages while talks start for ceasefire future

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Mourners in Israel on Friday were burying the remains of one of the last hostages released in the first phase of the ceasefire between Hamas militants and Israel, as negotiators discussed a second phase of the deal that could end the war in Gaza and see the remaining live hostages returning home.

The funeral procession for Tsachi Idan, an avid soccer fan who was 49 when he was abducted by Hamas militants, began from a football stadium in Tel Aviv toward the cemetery where he was to be buried in a private ceremony.

The office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Idan, who was taken from Kibbutz Nahal Oz during the Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023, attack that sparked the war in Gaza, was killed in captivity. His body was one of four released

by Hamas overnight Wednesday to Thursday, in exchange for more than 600 Palestinian prisoners, the last planned swap of the ceasefire's first phase, which began in January.

Under the terms of the truce Israel and Hamas agreed to, Phase 2 of the ceasefire is meant to involve negotiations on ending the war that has devastated the Gaza Strip. That includes the return of all remaining living hostages and the withdrawal of all Israeli troops from the Palestinian territory. The return of the bodies of the remaining deceased hostages would occur in Phase 3.

Hamas said in a statement released Friday that it "reaffirms its full commitment to implementing all terms of the agreement in all its stages and details." It called on the international community to pressure Israel to "immediately proceed to the second phase without any

delay or evasion."

Officials from Israel, Qatar and the United States have started "intensive discussions" on the ceasefire's second phase in Cairo, Egypt's state information service said Thursday. Netanyahu's office confirmed he had sent a delegation to Cairo.

"The mediators are also discussing ways to enhance the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, as part of efforts to alleviate the suffering of the population and support stability in the region," its statement said.

The first phase of the ceasefire saw 33 hostages, including eight bodies, released in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. Netanyahu has vowed to return all the hostages and destroy the military and governing capabilities of Hamas, which remains in control of Gaza. The Trump administration has endorsed both goals.

## Mexico sends drug lord, 28 others to US

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — Mexico has sent 29 drug cartel figures, including drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero, who was behind the killing of a U.S. DEA agent in 1985, to the United States as the Trump administration turns up the pressure on drug trafficking organizations.

The unprecedented show of security cooperation comes as Mexican officials are in Washington trying to head off the Trump administration's threat to impose 25% tariffs on Mexican imports starting Tuesday.

Those sent to the U.S. Thursday were brought from prisons across Mexico to board planes at an airport north of Mexico City that took them to eight U.S. cities, according to the Mexican government.

Among them were members of five of the six Mexican organized crime groups designated earlier this month by U.S. President Donald Trump's administration as "foreign terrorist organizations."

Besides Caro Quintero were cartel leaders, security chiefs from both factions of the Sinaloa cartel, cartel finance operatives and a man wanted in connection with the killing of a North Carolina sheriff's deputy in 2022.

Vicente Carrillo Fuentes, a former leader of the Juarez drug cartel, based in the border city of Ciudad Juarez, across from El Paso, Texas, and brother of drug lord Amado Carrillo Fuentes, known as "The Lord of The Skies," who died from botched plastic surgery in 1997, was among those turned over to the U.S.

## American porn actress visits Afghanistan

Associated Press

A US porn actress has traveled to Afghanistan in a trip unacknowledged by the Taliban, who have restricted the rights of women and girls and imposed strict morality laws since seizing power in 2021.

Whitney Wright, who caused uproar with a visit to Iran last year as authorities there cracked down on women, posted images of her trip to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan on her Instagram account.

They show a plane from national carrier Ariana on a runway, a tiled ceiling from the Western city of Herat, supermarket items and vehicles. Wright does not appear in the images.

She did not respond to messages on Friday. Nobody from the Taliban was immediately available for comment.

The Taliban are keen to attract tourists and promote a different side of the country. Foreigners are visiting, encouraged

by the drop in violence.

As a U.S. citizen born in Oklahoma City, Wright would need a visa to enter Afghanistan but there are no operational Afghan embassies or consulates in the U.S. The Taliban have control of some 40 diplomatic missions around the world.

The State Department says U.S. citizens should not travel to Afghanistan for any reason due to civil unrest, crime, terrorism, kidnapping and limited health facilities.

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# Heisman winner Hunter wants to play on both sides of ball

*The Denver Post*

INDIANAPOLIS — There are no two ways about it. Travis Hunter wants to play offense and defense.

But as he stepped up to the podium for his news conference Thursday before the largest throng for any player at the NFL combine, Hunter acknowledged that it will no longer be his choice.

"I hope they let me go out and learn the other position, but it's up to them, not me," Hunter said. "I want to be 100 percent (on both sides), but it's up the organization."

Hunter won the Heisman Trophy at CU by becoming a unicorn. He played 1,483 snaps last season (714 on offense, 748 on defense), working as a starter at cornerback and receiver, something only coach Deion Sanders envisioned for him coming out of high school. He is

listed as a top-three prospect entering the draft because most talent evaluators believe he ranks in the top five to top 10 at both positions.

But how would he manage the position meetings and the workload at the next level? Hunter explained that he could follow his college blueprint of studying on his own and meeting with coaches when everyone had gone home. He typically spent more time practicing with the defense.

Still, it is a longer season with much better players. Hunter remains convinced he could pull it off despite his 6-foot-1, 185-pound frame.

"Nobody has done it. But I feel like I put my body through a lot. I do a lot of treatment. People don't see that part on what I do for my body to make sure I am 100 percent for each game. It doesn't happen much where I

get (exhausted) because of the way I get ready," Hunter said.

"I know I can do it because I did it at the college level and we rarely get breaks and there is a lot more breaks in the league. ... I am a diehard for football. I love to compete. I would like to play both. If they give me the opportunity I am going to play both sides of the ball."

Headlines followed last week when he was listed as a defensive back for the combine. Hunter said he is listed as both. He said he has had good conversations with teams, but declined to reveal who he has met with.

Hunter continues to dream big, seeing himself as a two-way player and the first overall pick currently held by the Tennessee Titans.

"It's super important," Hunter said. "It's one of my dreams to go No. 1 and be the best I can be."

## Buccaneers reinstating Gruden into ring of honor

*Associated Press*

TAMPA, Fla. — The Tampa Bay Buccaneers say they're reinstating former coach Jon Gruden into the team's ring of honor less than four years after removing him over his use of racist, homophobic and misogynistic language in emails he wrote to an NFL executive.

"Jon Gruden was initially inducted into the Buccaneers Ring of Honor based on his many accomplishments during his seven seasons as our head coach and he remains a significant figure in the history of our franchise," the team said in a statement Thursday. "Upon further reflection, we have decided to reinstate him into the Buccaneers Ring of Honor."

Gruden was inducted into the Bucs' ring of honor in 2017 and was removed four years later amid the email scandal, which also led to his resignation as the Las Vegas Raiders head coach five games into the 2021 season.

Gruden's comments were in emails written from 2011-18 to then-Washington club executive Bruce Allen. Gruden was not in the NFL during those years, when he was an analyst for ESPN. His emails were collected by independent investigators during an investigation of sexual harassment allegations and other workplace conditions at what was at the time known as the Washington Football Team.

Gruden coached the Buccaneers from 2002-2008, leading them to their first Super Bowl triumph in his first season in Tampa. He was 60-57 altogether in seven seasons with the Buccaneers, including 3-2 in the playoffs.

He was 62-60 with the Raiders, whom he coached from 1998-2001 and again from 2018-21.

## Kelce returning for 13th season with Chiefs

*The Washington Post*

Tight end Travis Kelce will play on with the Kansas City Chiefs, opting to return for a 13th season rather than retiring on the heels of a lopsided Super Bowl loss to the Philadelphia Eagles.

Kelce, 35, confirmed Thursday on a social media account for his "New Heights" podcast with his brother, former Eagles center Jason Kelce, that he will keep playing. General Manager Brett Veach said earlier this week that the Chiefs expected Kelce to return.

A three-time Super Bowl champion, he has played his entire 12-year NFL career with the Chiefs, being selected to 10 Pro Bowls and chosen to four all-pro teams. Kelce has 1,004 catches for 12,151 yards and 77 touch-

downs in his career.

He had 97 catches for 823 yards and three touchdowns last season. The Chiefs reached their fifth Super Bowl in the past six seasons. But they failed in their bid to become the first team ever to win three straight Super Bowl titles. Kelce was limited to four catches for 39 yards and mostly was a nonfactor as the Chiefs were overwhelmed by the Eagles, 40-22.

Kelce said during Super Bowl week that he intended to keep playing. But it was reported before the game that was not certain. But Veach said Tuesday at the NFL scouting combine in Indianapolis that he was planning for Kelce to return.

"How we left it at the end of the season is that he was fired up," Veach said. "He has one

more year under contract. I still think he has that fire and desire to play. As far as I'm concerned, there is no deadline. I think we left it as he'd be back. And we're excited to get him back and get him going."

Coach Andy Reid said that day that he was awaiting word from Kelce.

"That's up to Travis," Reid said. "At this point, get out of town and relax. That's kind of my motto for these guys. They've played a lot of games for a consistent amount of seasons here. And so you get to the end of the thing, you've exhausted yourself mentally and physically. Step back and take care of that. Then we'll talk. But for right now, I think that's what he's doing. And he and I will get together."



# Antetokounmpo powers Bucks over Nuggets

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 28 points, pulled down a season-high 19 rebounds and dished out seven assists as the Milwaukee Bucks beat the Denver Nuggets 121-112 on Thursday night.

The two-time MVP helped Milwaukee offset another brilliant performance from Nikola Jokic, who shot 13 of 16 and had 32 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists. Jokic has 27 triple-doubles in the 53 games the three-time MVP has played this season.

This was the first matchup of the season between these two multiple-MVP winners.

Brook Lopez added 22 points, Damian Lillard 19, Kyle Kuzma 16 and Gary Trent Jr. 15 for the Bucks, who have won five of their past six.

Jamal Murray scored 20 points for the Nuggets.

**Warriors 121, Magic 115:** Stephen Curry scored a season-high 56 points, making 12 3-pointers and outscoring Orlando by himself in the third quarter of another astounding performance, leading Golden State to a victory.

Curry was 12 for 19 behind the arc in his NBA-record 26th career game with 10 or more 3-

pointers. He was 16 of 25 overall and made all 12 of his free throws in Golden State's fifth straight victory.

Paolo Banchero scored 41 points for the Magic and Franz Wagner added 27.

Curry had 22 points in the third quarter, in which Golden State turned a 14-point deficit into a five-point lead. Orlando managed 21 points in the period.

Quinten Post came off the Golden State bench with 18 points and five rebounds, including 10 straight Warrior points in the second period. Draymond Green had 12 points and 10 rebounds.

**Mavericks 103, Hornets 96:** Kyrie Irving scored 18 of his 25 points in the second half and grabbed nine rebounds to lead Dallas to a victory over Charlotte.

Moses Brown, in his penultimate game on a 10-day contract, added 20 points and 11 rebounds in 31 minutes of his first start for the Mavericks.

Mark Williams had 26 points and 16 rebounds for the Hornets, who have lost five consecutive games and 16 of their past 19. Miles Bridges had 20 points and 12 rebounds.

P.J. Washington Jr. again

joined Anthony Davis, Daniel Gafford and Dereck Lively II among Dallas big men unavailable because of injury. Washington left the Mavericks' Feb. 8 game with a sprained right ankle and has missed four of seven games since.

**Pelicans 124, Suns 116:** Zion Williamson had his first career triple-double with 27 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists and New Orleans beat Phoenix for their third straight victory.

CJ McCollum added 19 points in the opener of a two-game set in Phoenix to help New Orleans match its longest winning streak of the season.

Phoenix climbed out of an 18-point hole in the first half and had a 91-88 lead after three quarters. But the Pelicans dominated most of the fourth and Williamson made two tough buckets in the paint down the stretch to seal the win.

New Orleans improved to 5-24 on the road this season. All five starters scored in double figures, including Trey Murphy III, who had 18 points and made five 3-pointers. Yves Missi added 11 points and 10 rebounds.

The fading Suns have lost seven of their last eight. Devin

Booker had 36 points, seven rebounds and nine assists. Kevin Durant scored 28 points.

**Lakers 111, Timberwolves 102:** LeBron James had 33 points and 17 rebounds and Los Angeles won their fourth straight game, holding off Minnesota.

Austin Reeves added 23 points and Luka Dončić had 21 points and 13 rebounds to help the Lakers improve to 14-3 since Jan. 21.

Terrence Shannon Jr. led Minnesota with a career-high 25 points. The Timberwolves have dropped three of four and five of seven.

The Timberwolves were able to rally back despite All-Star guard Anthony Edwards being ejected with 5:27 remaining in the third quarter after picking up his second technical foul.

Edwards threw the ball into the stands after being ejected. If both fouls are upheld, he will be suspended one game for picking up 16 technicals this season.

Edwards, who is fourth in the league in scoring at 27.3 points per game, had 18 points.

Minnesota was down 92-77 less than three minutes into the fourth quarter before making a 13-1 run.

## Burnett's buzzer-beater gives No. 15 Michigan win

Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Nima-ri Burnett made a long 3-pointer at the buzzer, lifting No. 15 Michigan to an 84-82 win over Rutgers on Thursday night and into a first-place tie in the Big Ten with rival Michigan State.

The Wolverines (22-6, 14-3 Big Ten) rallied after trailing by 12 in the second half.

The Scarlet Knights (14-15, 7-11) went ahead with 12.2 seconds left when Tyson Acuff made two free throws after being fouled on a 3-pointer, but they couldn't make one last stop.

Rutgers was ahead 74-62 mid-

way through the second.

Michigan went on a 14-2 run to tie it with 4:33 left and made enough shots and stops to win.

Vladislav Goldin had 22 points and 11 rebounds, Burnett finished with 20 points, Will Tschetter scored 16 and Danny Wolf added 10 points and eight rebounds for the Wolverines.

Rutgers freshman Lathan Sommerville scored 10 of his season-high 17 points in the second half when the highly touted players in his class, Dylan Harper and Ace Bailey, cooled off. Harper finished with 17 points and Bailey had 13 after both

scored 11 in the first half, helping their team score 57 points in 20 minutes.

**No. 23 Saint Mary's 58, Loyola Marymount 55:** Paulius Murauskas scored 18 points, including a pivotal 3-pointer with 30 seconds left, and grabbed 12 rebounds to lead No. 23 Saint Mary's past Loyola Marymount for its sixth straight victory.

The Gaels, making their first appearance in the AP Top 25 this season, took the lead for good on a putback by Murauskas with 6:08 to play in the first half amid a 16-2 run that made it 24-17 when Mikey Lewis hit a 3

about five minutes later.

Saint Mary's (26-4, 16-1 West Coast Conference) clinched its second consecutive outright regular-season conference title with a 74-67 win at Gonzaga last time out.

Caleb Stone-Carrawell led Loyola Marymount (16-14, 8-10) with 17 points, and Will Johnston scored 12.

Mitchell Saxen played his program-record 151st career game for the Gaels, breaking the mark set by Alex Ducas (2019-24). Saxen fouled out with about five minutes left and finished with seven rebounds.

# Panthers beat Oilers, take 1st in division

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Nate Schmidt and Carter Verhaeghe had third-period goals, Anton Lundell had a goal and two assists and the Florida Panthers topped the Edmonton Oilers 4-3 on Thursday night.

Uvis Balinskis also scored for Florida, which jumped Toronto for first in the Atlantic Division.

Leon Draisaitl scored his 44th goal for the Oilers, who also got goals from Brett Kulak and Zach Hyman.

**Blues 5, Capitals 2:** Philip Broberg scored twice to help St. Louis beat Washington, inching closer to the final playoff spot in the Western Conference and handing the top team in the East a rare second loss in a row.

Dylan Holloway and Colton Parayko also scored and Jake Neighbours had an empty-net goal for the Blues, who have won three straight to stay in contention with the March 7 NHL trade deadline fast approaching.

**Hurricanes 5, Sabres 2:** Mikko Rantanen had a goal and an assist and Carolina beat Buffalo.

Jordan Staal, Sebastian Aho, Taylor Hall and Seth Jarvis also scored for Carolina. Pyotr Kochetkov made 14 saves.

Alex Tuch and JJ Peterka scored for Buffalo but it was a quick night for goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, who gave up two goals in the first eight minutes and was replaced by backup James Reimer, who finished with 26 saves.

**Lightning 3, Flames 0:** Andrei Vasilevskiy made 27 saves for his fourth shutout of the season and the 38th of his career in Tampa Bay's victory over Calgary.

Nikita Kucherov, Erik Cernak and Brandon Hagel scored to help Tampa Bay win its seventh consecutive game. The streak is the Lightning's longest since a 10-game run Jan. 29 to Feb. 17, 2020. Tampa Bay is 8-0-1 in the past nine games.

Dustin Wolf made 20 saves

for Calgary. The Flames were shut out for the third time this season.

Kucherov opened the scoring on a power play with 45 seconds left in the first period. His attempted pass through the slot deflected off the skate of Calgary defenseman MacKenzie Weegar.

Cernak made it 2-0 at 3:51 of the third period, and Hagel added an empty-net goal with 2:50 left.

**Islanders 2, Bruins 1:** Ilya Sorokin stopped 38 shots and Alexander Romanov and Kyle Palmieri scored to lead New York to a win over Boston.

Boston's lone goal came from David Pastrnak, who made it a one-goal game with 9:56 remaining. The Bruins pulled goalie Jeremy Swayman with 90 seconds remaining, but couldn't force overtime.

The win snapped a four-game losing streak for the Islanders.

Swayman made 18 saves for Boston, which has dropped five straight including with the last three coming since the NHL season resumed following the 4-Nations Face-off.

**Blue Jackets 5, Red Wings 2:** James van Riemsdyk scored twice and Columbus beat Detroit in a matchup of playoff contenders.

Sean Kuraly, Kent Johnson and Kirill Marchenko also scored for the Blue Jackets, who moved into a tie with Detroit at 66 points for the two Eastern Conference wild cards. Columbus captain Boone Jenner had three assists.

Alex DeBrincat and J.T. Compher scored for the Red Wings.

DeBrincat opened the scoring 27 seconds into the second period, beating Blue Jackets goalie Daniil Tarasov from the edge of his crease.

Van Riemsdyk pulled Columbus even, redirecting Jake Christiansen's point shot past netminder Cam Talbot.

Kuraly gave Columbus the

lead, jamming a puck past Talbot from close range.

**Canadiens 4, Sharks 3, OT:** Cole Caufield scored at 3:21 of overtime and Montreal beat San Jose for their third straight victory since the 4 Nations Face-Off break.

Caufield put the puck between his legs to get around Macklin Celebrini, then beat Alexandar Georgiev with a shot over his right pad. Caufield leads the Canadiens with 28 goals.

Montreal captain Nick Suzuki scored two first-period goals, and Alex Newhook had his first goal since Feb. 4. Samuel Montembeault stopped 22 shots for his third win in a row.

Fabian Zetterlund, Nico Sturm and Will Smith scored for San Jose. Last in the NHL, the Sharks have lost seven straight and 13 of 14.

**Penguins 5, Flyers 4, OT:** Evgeni Malkin scored his second goal at 1:03 of overtime and Pittsburgh rallied to beat Philadelphia.

Malkin scored the tying goal in the third period and added two assists for Pittsburgh. Malkin has the 13th-most assists with one NHL franchise.

Erik Karlsson had two goals and Philip Tomasino also scored for Pittsburgh, which trailed 3-0 in the second period. Sidney Crosby also added an assist. Pittsburgh is 400-92-49 when Crosby and Malkin record a point.

Pittsburgh's Michael Bunting missed the game and is out indefinitely after undergoing surgery to remove his appendix.

Alex Nedeljkovic allowed three goals on 15 shots and was pulled for the second time in three starts. Joel Blomqvist made 21 saves in relief.

**Predators 2, Jets 1:** Juuse Saros made 23 saves and the Nashville Predators ended NHL-leading Winnipeg's franchise-record winning streak at 11 games.

Filip Forsberg and Tommy

Novak scored to help Nashville snap a two-game losing streak.

Neal Pionk scored and backup goalie Eric Comrie made 28 saves for the Jets, coming off a 4-1 victory over Ottawa on Wednesday night.

**Utah 6, Wild 1:** Clayton Keller had a career-high five points — scoring his 22nd goal and assisting on four others — and Utah beat Minnesota for its fourth straight home victory.

Nick Schmaltz had a goal and two assists, Barrett Hayton and Logan Cooley each had a goal and an assist, and Dylan Guenther and Sean Durzi also scored. Karel Vejmelka made 15 saves.

Frederick Gaudreau scored for Minnesota, and Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 25 shots.

**Ducks 5, Canucks 2:** Frank Vatrano, Cutter Gauthier and Ryan Strome scored in the second period and surging Anaheim beat Vancouver for their fifth consecutive home victory.

Jackson LaCombe got a 4-on-4 goal late in the third period for Anaheim, and Troy Terry added an empty-net goal to wrap up the Ducks' eighth win in 11 games.

Terry and Strome finished with a goal and two assists apiece.

Tyler Myers and Pius Suter scored in the first period for the Canucks, who then allowed five unanswered goals to fall to 1-3-0 on their five-game road trip.

**Golden Knights 7, Blackhawks 5:** Ivan Barbashev had two goals and two assists, Vegas scored five times in the first period and they held off Chicago for a win.

The Golden Knights increased their Pacific Division lead to four points over Edmonton. They have won four of their past five games.

Chicago has lost four consecutive games, but the Blackhawks got within a goal midway through the third period after trailing 5-1 through one.