

## Senate confirms Austin to lead DOD

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Retired Army Gen. Lloyd Austin was confirmed Friday by the Senate to be the 28th defense secretary and the first Black man to hold the position.

The Senate voted 93 to 2 to approve Austin's nomination to the job. Sens. Mike Lee, R-Utah, and Josh Hawley, R-Mo., voted against him.

Austin's confirmation process started Tuesday with his Senate nomination hearing. On Thursday, the House and Senate voted to approve a waiver that Austin needed to override a law that mandates ex-military officers spend seven years out of uniform before leading the Pentagon.

Austin retired as a four-star general in 2016.

Austin is the third person to be granted the waiver of the 1947 law, which was intended to ensure civilian control of the military. George Marshall, a former five-star Army general, was the first. He received it in 1950 to serve as defense secretary for

former President Harry Truman during the Korean War. The second was for former President Donald Trump's first defense secretary, retired Marine Gen. Jim Mattis, in 2017.

Some lawmakers, including Democrats, were concerned about approving another waiver, which is seen as a rare exemption, so quickly after granting one to Mattis. Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., said Thursday that while he believes Austin is qualified to be the defense secretary and supports his confirmation, he had to vote against the waiver.

"In order to maintain civilian control of our military, U.S. law requires a cooling-off period prior to allowing a recently retired officer to serve as the secretary of defense. I have long supported this cooling-off period, and have voted previously to uphold it," he said in a statement.

A 1975 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., Austin commanded infantry units from platoons up and led soldiers in combat in Iraq and Af-

ghanistan. He was the first Black commander of an Army division and corps in combat. He retired after leading U.S. Central Command in war efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

Austin takes over the Pentagon while it faces numerous challenges. He told senators Tuesday that his primary concerns included ensuring the military provided a robust deterrent to China, as the United States works to check its growing power in east Asia and ambitions worldwide.

He also vowed to increase military support to the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, telling senators that he believed there was more that the Pentagon could do to support efforts to stop the spread and distribute vaccines.

Austin on Tuesday committed to ensuring civilian experts were thoroughly involved in crafting Pentagon policy.

He told lawmakers that he did not believe two additional years outside of uniform would change the way he thought about military and national security issues.

## Biden inheriting stalled Afghan peace process

By J.P. LAWRENCE

*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — President Joe Biden faces a choice in the opening days of his administration that will one day help shape his legacy: whether to soon withdraw all U.S. troops from Afghanistan or pursue a longer mission.

The former risks undercutting the Kabul government's leverage as it continues to fight both the Taliban and the local Islamic State affiliate, analysts and Afghan officials say; the latter may stabilize the government and protect U.S. interests, but recharge hostilities between the Taliban and coalition troops.

Peace negotiations between the Afghan government and Taliban insurgents have made little progress recently because both sides are gauging how the new administration will approach the war, analysts say.

Biden's Defense and State Department nominees have both said they want to re-

view the deal signed by the Trump administration and the Taliban in February in Doha, Qatar.

The U.S. officially had 8,400 troops in Afghanistan when former President Donald Trump took office in January 2017. His administration raised that number to 14,000 in its first year, before reducing it to 2,500 since the Doha agreement.

Under the accord, Washington agreed to withdraw its troops in return for Taliban concessions. But peace talks and prisoner exchanges between Kabul and the insurgents required by the deal were met with months of delays.

"We have to look carefully at what has actually been negotiated," Antony Blinken, nominee for secretary of state, said Tuesday at his Senate confirmation hearing.

Lloyd Austin, who was confirmed Friday to head the Pentagon, echoed concerns by senior military leaders about a surge of violence across the country and whether the

Taliban have kept their promises.

"If confirmed, I intend to consult with interagency stakeholders to review the Taliban's actions relative to all its commitments," Austin said in a written statement during his confirmation hearing Tuesday.

The Biden administration is expected to reemphasize the need for a "responsible" withdrawal, but it's hard to imagine all American troops withdrawing by May, a report released last week by International Crisis Group said.

A full withdrawal in May could fracture an already splintered Afghan government and lead to renewed violence, said Andrew Watkins, senior Afghanistan analyst for the Brussels-based think tank and an author of the report.

The Taliban, however, would consider any deviation from the May troop withdrawal deadline a breach of the agreement, said analysts who have spoken to the group's leaders..

# Army orders border wall work to stop

By ROSE L. THAYER  
*Stars and Stripes*

AUSTIN, Texas — The Army Corps of Engineers has directed contractors building the U.S.-Mexico border wall to stop work following an executive order by President Joe Biden to end construction and review how money allocated for the project could be diverted.

The order was one of 17 signed by Biden on Wednesday during his first day as president and halts a key piece of former President Donald Trump's immigration policy. Estimated to cost about \$15 billion, the border wall's construction was under management of contracts awarded through the Army Corps of Engineers and used funds pulled from Defense Department accounts

associated with countering drugs and military construction, as well as from other government agencies.

"Only construction activity that is necessary to safely prepare each site for a suspension of work will occur over the next few days," Lt. Col. Chris Mitchell, a Pentagon spokesman, said Thursday. "As we pause this program, we will work closely with the Department of Defense and Department of the Army to ensure public safety and a responsible use of taxpayer dollars."

Biden's order states while America has the right to secure its borders, "building a massive wall that spans the entire southern border is not a serious policy solution. It is a waste of money that diverts attention from genuine threats to our homeland security."

Biden also rescinded the national emergency that Trump declared at the border in February 2019 and recertified in his final five days as president.

But Biden's executive order does not impact the deployment of about 3,600 troops serving at the border to assist the Department of Homeland Security, Mitchell said. Up to 4,000 troops are authorized to stay at the border through the end of September under an order signed in June by former Defense Secretary Mark Esper.

It is unclear Thursday what will happen to the money redirected from the Pentagon to build the border wall. Biden's action calls for "a careful review of all resources appropriated or redirected to construct a southern border wall."

## USAF OKs longer braids and ponytails

By ROSE L. THAYER  
*Stars and Stripes*

Women in the Air Force can wear a ponytail or up to two braids with their uniform under an update to grooming regulations spurred by feedback that showed women experienced hair loss and migraines from the current standards.

The changes take effect next month and are part of the Air Force's efforts to address diversity and inclusion in the ranks, according to an Air Force news release sent Thursday.

"As I outlined in 'Action Order A: Airmen,' this decision is a commitment to sup-

porting the airmen we need and sustaining the culture and environment of excellence that will continue to make the Air Force an attractive career choice for airmen and families," Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Brown, said in a statement. "I'm thankful for the feedback and research conducted from a number of women leaders, the Women's Initiative Team, the Air Force uniform board, and our joint teammates."

He approved the policy after considering feedback from the force, a uniform board recommendation, and the professional image and standards of the Air Force and military, according to the release.

The change allows women to wear up to two braids or a single ponytail so long as the width does not exceed beyond their head and the length does not extend below the top of each sleeve inseam, according to the release. In addition, women's bangs may now touch their eyebrows, but not cover their eyes.

These new changes will be effective upon publication of the new standards in Air Force Instruction 36-2903 in February and will also apply to women in Space Force.

Under previous guidance, if a woman's hair or ponytail was longer than her collar, it had to be secured with no loose ends.

## Tenn. naval center commander fired after inquiry

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The commander of a Tennessee-based naval center was fired Wednesday after a command investigation into a complaint, the Navy said.

Capt. Scott Moss, the commanding officer of Navy Operational Support Center in Knoxville, was relieved "due to a loss of confidence" in his ability to command, according to a Navy statement Wednesday. He was fired by Capt. Dale Maxey, commander of Navy Region Southeast Reserve Compo-

nent Command Jacksonville in Florida.

The firing came after a command investigation was conducted following an inspector general complaint, Cmdr. Ben Tisdale, a spokesman for Navy Reserve Force, wrote Thursday in an email. While the investigation is complete, Tisdale stated he could not provide more details about it due to privacy concerns.

Moss had been in command since September, according to Tisdale. The support centers are responsible for the readiness of Reserve sailors and Marines.

He has been temporarily reassigned to the reserve component command in Jacksonville, and Cmdr. Timothy Trimble is assuming his duties until a permanent replacement is found.

Moss graduated from Maryville College with a degree in Biology and then in 1998 joined the Navy to be a pilot, earning his wings in 2000, according to a Sept. 20 story in The Daily Times newspaper in Maryville, Tenn.

Moss told The Daily Times newspaper that he plans to retire in the fall of 2023.

# Biden to order stopgap aid; talks begin for \$1.9T plan

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — President Joe Biden planned to take executive action Friday to provide a stopgap measure of financial relief to millions of Americans while Congress begins to consider his much larger \$1.9 trillion package to help those affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

The two executive orders that Biden was to sign would increase food aid, protect job seekers on unemployment and clear a path for federal workers and contractors to get a \$15 hourly minimum wage.

"The American people cannot afford to wait," said Brian Deese, director of the White House National Economic Council. "So many are hanging by a thread. They need help, and we're committed to doing everything we can to provide that help as quickly as possible."

Deese emphasized that the orders are not substitutes for the additional stimulus that Biden says is needed beyond the \$4 trillion in aid that has already been approved, including \$900 billion this past December. Several Republican lawmakers have voiced opposition to provisions in Bi-

den's plan for direct payments to individuals, state and local government aid and a \$15 hourly minimum wage nationwide.

Most economists believe the United States can rebound with strength once people are vaccinated from the coronavirus, but the situation is still dire as the disease has closed businesses and schools. Nearly 10 million jobs have been lost since last February, and nearly 30 million households lack secure access to food.

One of Biden's orders asks the Agriculture Department to consider adjusting the rules for food assistance, so that the government could be obligated to provide more money to the hungry.

The order also tries to make it easier for people to claim direct payments from prior aid packages and other benefits. In addition, it would create a guarantee that workers could still collect unemployment benefits if they refuse to take a job that could jeopardize their health.

Biden's second executive order would restore union bargaining rights revoked by the Trump administration, protect the civil service system and promote a \$15 hourly minimum wage for all federal workers.

# Experts blame vaccine scarcity on rapid growth

Associated Press

Public health experts Thursday blamed COVID-19 vaccine shortages around the U.S. in part on the Trump administration's push to get states to vastly expand their vaccination drives to reach the nation's estimated 54 million people age 65 and over.

The push that began over a week ago has not been accompanied by enough doses to meet demand, according to state and local officials, leading to frustration and confusion and limiting states' ability to attack the outbreak that has killed over 400,000 Americans.

Over the past few days, authorities in California, Ohio, West Virginia, Florida and Hawaii warned that their supplies were running out. New York City began canceling or postponing shots or stopped making new appointments because of the shortages, which President Joe Biden has vowed to turn around. Florida's top health official said the state would deal with the scarcity by restricting vaccines to state residents.

The vaccine rollout so far has been "a major disappointment," said Dr. Eric Topol, head of the Scripps Research Translational Institute.

Problems started with the Trump administration's "fatal mistake" of not ordering enough vaccine, which was then snapped up by other countries, Topol said. Then, opening the line to seniors set people up for disappointment because there wasn't enough vaccine, he said. The Trump administration also left crucial planning to the states and didn't provide the necessary funding.

"It doesn't happen by fairy dust," Topol said. "You need to put funds into that."

Last week, before Biden took over as president, the U.S. Health and Human Services Department suggested that the frustration was the result of unrealistic expectations among the states as to how much vaccine was on the way.

But some public health experts said states have not been getting reliable information on deliveries and the amounts they have been sent have been unpredictable. That, in turn, has made it difficult for them to plan how to inoculate people.

State health secretaries have asked the Biden administration for earlier and more reliable predictions on vaccine deliveries, said Washington state Health Secretary Dr. Umair Shah.

# Pentagon announces deaths of 2 service members from coronavirus

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Two more service members have died from the coronavirus, bringing the number of deaths to 17 as military cases surpass 130,000, according to the Pentagon.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Abdigafar Salad Warsame, 52, was a Navy Reserve logistics specialist assigned to Navy Operational Support Center in Columbus, Ohio, when he died Jan. 8 at a local hospital due to complications associated with the coronavirus, Cmdr. Ben Tisdale, a Navy Reserve Force spokesman, said in a statement Thursday.

The other service member who died from the virus was a member of the New York Air National Guard, according to the Pentagon. Due to the wishes of the airman's family, the Guard will not release any information about the service member,

said Eric Durr, a spokesman with the New York National Guard.

As of Wednesday, six National Guard members have died from the virus, two Navy reservists and six Army reservists. Three active-duty service members have also died of the virus since the pandemic began in March, according to the Pentagon.

Warsame was born in Somalia and then lived in Georgia until he enlisted in the Navy in March of 2002, according to his service record and his Facebook page. He was assigned to the Naval Reserve Defense Innovation Unit in Atlanta from 2005 to 2010. He then worked at the Naval Reserve Fleet Logistics Center Bahrain Headquarters in Kearny, N.J., from 2010 to 2019. He was most recently assigned to the Naval Reserve Defense Logistics Agency logistics assistance team in Columbus, Ohio.



# McConnell seeks to push impeachment trial

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell is proposing to push back the start of Donald Trump's impeachment trial to February to give the former president time to prepare and review his case.

House Democrats who voted to impeach Trump last week for inciting the deadly Jan. 6 Capitol riot have signaled they want to move quickly to trial as President Joe Biden begins his term, saying a full reckoning is necessary before the country — and Congress — can move on.

But McConnell in a statement Thursday evening suggested a more expansive timeline that would see the House transmit the article of impeachment next week, on Jan.

28, launching the trial's first phase. After that, the Senate would give the president's defense team and House prosecutors two weeks to file briefs. Arguments in the trial would likely begin in mid-February.

"Senate Republicans are strongly united behind the principle that the institution of the Senate, the office of the presidency, and former President Trump himself all deserve a full and fair process that respects his rights and the serious factual, legal, and constitutional questions at stake," especially given the unprecedented speed of the House process, McConnell said.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., is reviewing the plan and will discuss it with McConnell, a spokesperson said. The two leaders are also negotiating

how the new 50-50 Senate will work and how they will balance other priorities.

A trial delay could appeal to some Democrats, as it would give the Senate more time to confirm Biden's Cabinet nominees and debate a new round of coronavirus relief. Democratic Sen. Chris Coons of Delaware, a key ally of the president's, told CNN that Democrats would consider a delay "if we are making progress on confirming the very talented, seasoned and diverse team that President Joe Biden has nominated."

The ultimate power over timing rests with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who can trigger the start of the trial at any point by sending to the Senate the charge of incitement of an insurrection. The California Democrat has not yet said when she will do that.

## Dems ask ethics panel to investigate Cruz, Hawley

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Seven Democratic senators on Thursday asked the Senate Ethics Committee to investigate the actions of Republican Sens. Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley "to fully understand their role" in the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol by supporters of former President Donald Trump.

Thousands had gathered that day as Congress voted to formally certify President Joe Biden's victory over Trump in November. Hawley and Cruz led objections in the Senate to Biden's victory, despite the widespread recognition that the effort would fail.

In the end, Congress certified Biden's Electoral College victory, but not before thousands marched to the Capitol at Trump's urging, overwhelmed security and interrupted the proceedings. In the end, the violence led to five deaths, injured dozens of police officers and caused extensive dam-

age to the Capitol.

The Democratic senators said the question for the Senate to determine is not whether Cruz and Hawley had the right to object, but whether the senators failed to put loyalty "to the highest moral principles and to country above loyalty to persons, party, or Government department." They also said the investigation should determine whether Cruz, of Texas, and Hawley, of Missouri, engaged in "improper conduct reflecting on the Senate."

"Until then, a cloud of uncertainty will hang over them and over this body," the Democratic senators wrote in a letter to the leaders of the Senate Ethics Committee.

The Democratic senators said Cruz and Hawley announced their intentions to object even though they knew that claims of election fraud were baseless and had led to threats of violence.

"Their actions lend credence to the insurrectionists' cause and set the stage for future violence. And both senators used their objections for political fundraising," the Democratic senators said in their letter.

Cruz and Hawley have condemned the violence on Jan. 6. Cruz called it a "despicable act of terrorism." Hawley said those who attacked police and broke the law must be prosecuted.

Cruz helped force a vote on Biden's victory in Arizona, while Hawley helped force one on Biden's victory in Pennsylvania.

"Joe Biden and the Democrats talk about unity but are brazenly trying to silence dissent," Hawley said in a prepared statement. "This latest effort is a flagrant abuse of the Senate ethics process and a flagrant attempt to exact partisan revenge."

## Russia welcomes proposed nuclear treaty extension

Associated Press

MOSCOW — The Kremlin on Friday welcomed U.S. President Joe Biden's proposal to extend the last remaining nuclear arms control treaty between the two countries, which is set to expire in less than two weeks.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said that Russia stands for extending the pact and is waiting to see the details of the U.S. proposal.

The White House said Thursday that Bi-

den has proposed to Russia a five-year extension of the New START treaty.

"We can only welcome political will to extend the document," Peskov said in a conference call with reporters. "But all will depend on the details of the proposal."

The treaty, signed in 2010 by President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bom-

bers, and envisages sweeping on-site inspections to verify compliance. It expires on Feb. 5.

Russia has long proposed to prolong the pact without any conditions or changes, but President Donald Trump's administration waited until last year to start talks and made the extension contingent on a set of demands.

The talks stalled, and months of bargaining have failed to narrow differences.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### FBI locates stolen armored military vehicle

**CA** LOS ANGELES — A military Humvee stolen from a National Guard facility in a Los Angeles suburb was found Wednesday morning, the FBI said.

A search continues for the person or persons who stole the armored vehicle Jan. 15 from the National Guard Armory in the city of Bell, the bureau said.

The four-door vehicle painted a green camouflage is worth about \$120,000. Officials did not say where or how it was located.

A theft from a military facility carries a statutory maximum sentence of 10 years in federal prison, the FBI said.

### Officials say javelina was unlawfully killed

**AZ** TUCSON — The Arizona Game and Fish Department is offering a \$1,500 reward for information leading to an arrest in the unlawful killing of a javelina in Tucson.

The javelina was found suspended by its hind legs with a rope tied to a tree branch on Tucson's east side last Sunday.

Game and Fish officials said the javelina died after being shot multiple times.

They said the killing may have occurred on either Jan. 13 or 14.

Regional Supervisor Raul Vega of the Game and Fish Department in Tucson said the killing "was the act of a criminal" and the javelina's multiple injuries suggest the death was intentional.

Javelinas are usually found in central and southern Arizona, according to authorities.

### Train tanker flash fire involving a cooking oil product injures 2

**TN** MEMPHIS — Two workers at a Memphis company who were attempting to remove the top cover of a train tanker car that contained a cooking oil product were injured in a flash fire and taken to the hospital, officials said.

One worker at Runyon Industries suffered second-degree burns on his hands and

back and a fractured leg, a statement from the Memphis Fire Department said. Another worker suffered second-degree burns to his hands.

The cause of Tuesday's fire is under investigation, the statement said.

Runyon Industries provides services that include cleaning and repairing railcars and producing vegetable-based oil, according to its website.

### City votes to return Tribe's sacred prayer rock

**KS** LAWRENCE — The Lawrence City Council has unanimously approved a measure to return a Native American tribe's prayer rock that was transformed more than 90 years ago into a monument honoring Kansas settlers.

The council voted 5-0 Tuesday to return the rock to the Kaw Nation, the Lawrence Journal-World reported. The move came after the tribe sent a letter to the city last month requesting the rock's return.

Before the Kaw people were forcibly moved from Kansas to what is now Oklahoma in 1873, they held ceremonies and gatherings before the 23-ton boulder known as the "Big Red Rock." But the boulder was moved from its site at the confluence of the Kansas River and Creek to a city park as part of Lawrence's 75th anniversary celebration in 1929. It was fitted with a plaque listing the names of the abolitionist settlers who founded the city.

### Parks offer virtual field trips to elementary school students

**SC** COLUMBIA — South Carolina state parks are offering virtual field trips to students who can't travel in person.

There are videos and other supplemental activities to teach science and history to elementary school students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

The Discover Carolina program started with in-person field trips. Lessons offered online now include learning about the plants and animals at Jones Gap State Park in the

mountains, Sesquicentennial State Park in Columbia and Myrtle Beach State Park.

There is also a program about the hardships of plantation life before the Civil War at Redcliffe Plantation State Historic Site in Beech Island.

The state Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism said it plans to offer more virtual field trips soon.

### County takes step to ban new liquor stores and pawn shops

**GA** MACON — Middle Georgia's largest county is banning new pawn shops for six months, and is enacting limits on liquor stores that will ban new liquor stores indefinitely.

Local news outlets reported that the Bibb County Commission voted unanimously to approve the moratoriums on Tuesday. Commissioners must vote again next week on the rules, which would begin Feb. 22.

Macon-Bibb County Mayor Lester Miller proposed the bans when he took office recently.

"Certain liquor stores open up in certain parts of the county that are already poverty stricken, crime stricken. I think it adds to the situation," Miller said. "I think it depreciates the values of certain properties, certain stores do."

Miller has similar concerns about pawn shops.

"If I get off on an exit somewhere and I'm driving through, out of town, and I see a bunch of that, I know I'm in a bad area. I say bad area loosely. Nothing against the people that live there, but I know it's an area a lot of focus has not been put on for good businesses," Miller said.

County rules previously limited liquor stores to about 60 countywide. The new rules aim to reduce the number of liquor stores to 28, with no more than three per commission district.

Current holders of liquor licenses are grandfathered in and can continue to renew their licenses, as long as there is no change in ownership of the business and all legal conditions are met.

— From wire reports

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# Baseball icon Hank Aaron dead at 86

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Hank Aaron, who endured racist threats with stoic dignity during his pursuit of Babe Ruth's home run record and gracefully left his mark as one of baseball's greatest all-around players, died Friday. He was 86.

The Atlanta Braves, Aaron's longtime team, said he died peacefully in his sleep. No cause was given.

Aaron made his last public appearance just 2 ½ weeks ago, when he received the COVID-19 vaccine. He said he wanted to help spread the message to Black Americans that the vaccine was safe.

"Hammerin' Hank" set a wide array of career hitting records during a 23-year career spent mostly with the Milwaukee and Atlanta Braves, including RBIs, extra-base hits and total bases.

But the Hall of Famer will be remembered for one swing above all others, the one that made him baseball's home-run king.

It was a title he held for more than 33 years, a period in which the Hammer slowly but surely claimed his rightful place as one of America's most iconic sporting figures, a true national treasure worthy of mention in the same breath with Ruth or Ali or Jordan.

Before a sellout crowd at Atlanta Stadium and a national television audience, Aaron broke Ruth's home run record with No. 715 off Al Downing of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

The Hall of Famer finished his career with 755, a total surpassed by Barry Bonds in 2007 — though many continued to call the Hammer the true home run king because of allegations that Bonds used performance-

enhancing drugs.

Bonds finished his tarnished career with 762, though Aaron never begrudged someone eclipsing his mark.

His common refrain: More than three decades as the king was long enough. It was time for someone else to hold the record.

No one could take away his legacy.

"I just tried to play the game the way it was supposed to be played," Aaron said, summing it up better than anyone.

Aaron's journey to 755 was hardly pleasant. He was the target of extensive hate mail as he closed in on Ruth's cherished record of 714, much of it sparked by the fact Ruth was white and Aaron was black.

"If I was white, all America would be proud of me," Aaron said almost a year before he passed Ruth. "But I am black."

Aaron was shadowed constantly by bodyguards and forced to distance himself from teammates. He kept all those hateful letters, a bitter reminder of the abuse he endured and never forgot.

"It's very offensive," he once said. "They call me 'nigger' and every other bad word you can come up with. You can't ignore them. They are here. But this is just the way things are for black people in America. It's something you battle all of your life."

Aaron spent 21 of his 23 seasons with the Braves, first in Milwaukee, then in Atlanta after the franchise moved to the Deep South in 1966. He finished his career back in Milwaukee, traded to the Brewers after the 1974 season when he refused to take a front-office job that required a big pay cut.

While knocking the ball over the fence be-

came his signature accomplishment, the Hammer was hardly a one-dimensional star. In fact, he never hit more than 47 homers in a season (though he did have eight years with at least 40 dingers).

But it can be argued that no one was so good, for so long, at so many facets of the national pastime.

The long ball was only part of his arsenal.

Aaron was a true five-tool star.

He posted 14 seasons with a .300 average — the last of them at age 39 — and claimed two National League batting titles. He finished with a career average of .305.

Aaron also was a gifted outfielder with a powerful arm, something often overlooked because of a smooth, effortless stride that his critics — with undoubtedly racist overtones — mistook for nonchalance. He was a three-time Gold Glove winner.

Then there was his work on the base paths. Aaron posted seven seasons with more than 20 stolen bases, including a career-best of 31 in 1963 when he became only the third member of the 30-30 club — players who have totaled at least 30 homers and 30 steals in a season.

To that point, the feat had only been accomplished by Ken Williams (1922) and Willie Mays (1956 and '57).

Aaron still has more RBIs (2,297), extra-base hits (1,477) and total bases (6,856) than anyone in history. He's second in at-bats (12,354), third in games played (3,298) and hits (3,771), fourth in runs scored (tied with Ruth at 2,174) and 13th in doubles (624).

"I feel like that home run I hit is just part of what my story is all about," Aaron said.

## Bills receiver Diggs among elite company

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — With his name plastered on election campaign-style lawns signs — "Allen-Diggs 2020" — popping up across Buffalo, receiver Stefon Diggs requires no further introduction.

And yet, cornerback Tre'Davious White playfully decided one was necessary upon ending his Zoom call with reporters, and Diggs waiting in the wings.

"The next person that is coming, y'all know who it is," White began on Wednesday. "Rolls' Royce-driving, private jet-flying, All-Pro first team. The most

receptions, the most yards in Buffalo Bills history. The first receiver to go first-team All-Pro in the organization's history: Stefon Diggs."

The receiver could be heard off camera laughing and jokingly saying, "Get out of my seat."

In his first season in Buffalo, Diggs has indeed arrived.

Acquired for a first-round draft pick in a trade in March, Diggs has become the main focus of a dynamically productive Josh Allen-led offense that had Buffalo setting team records in yards passing, points and touchdowns, while winning its first

AFC East title in 25 years.

On Sunday, the Bills (15-3) make their first AFC championship game appearance since 1994 in traveling to face the top-seeded Kansas City Chiefs (15-2).

"His stats, his film, his confidence, his swag, he's just one of the best," Bills safety Micah Hyde said, in comparing Diggs with Hyde's former Green Bay Packers teammate Davante Adams. "These guys, when they have confidence and they know they're good, nobody is stopping them."

It's perhaps no coincidence

Diggs and Adams aren't the only All-Pros competing this weekend. They're joined by the Chiefs tandem of receiver Tyreek Hill and tight end Travis Kelce. Meantime, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers feature an established tandem in Mike Evans and Chris Godwin.

A common thread to each receiver's success is playing on teams with elite quarterbacks in Tampa Bay's Tom Brady, Green Bay's Aaron Rodgers and Kansas City's Patrick Mahomes, with the third-year Allen the only non-Super Bowl winner of the bunch.



# Barrett, Knicks win 3rd straight game

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — RJ Barrett had a career-high 28 points and the New York Knicks matched their longest winning streak of the season at three games by beating the Golden State Warriors 119-104 on Thursday night.

"We come into every game feeling like we should win the game or give ourselves a chance to win the game," Knicks forward Julius Randle said. "We're a good team and we're playing a good team basketball game."

Stephen Curry scored 30 points with five three-pointers but shot just 9-for-19 as Golden State lacked the same energy it had in a lopsided win against the Spurs a night earlier. It certainly didn't help that Draymond Green got ejected late in the first half on a disputed technical when he appeared to be yelling at teammate James Wiseman.

"At halftime Ben Taylor came out and told me that it was a mistake, that John Butler didn't realize Draymond was yelling at his teammate. He thought he was yelling at him," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said of his conversation with the officials. "Obviously, Draymond is one of our best and most impactful

players so it hurt us, but we were playing very poorly to that point anyway. So I'm not going to talk about the officiating, I'm going to talk about our poor play."

Randle added 16 points, 17 rebounds and nine assists to help New York build some much-needed momentum during this successful stretch to reach .500 (8-8) following a five-game losing streak.

Randle had chances at a triple-double but fell just short.

"You always want to try to get one if you can. I'm just happy we got the win," he said. "I'll take this any day."

Alec Burks returned from a 12-game absence with a sprained left ankle to finish with 11 points and six rebounds for the Knicks. Burks spent 48 games with Golden State last season before a trade to the 76ers. When he entered at the 4:49 mark of the first quarter, Warriors public-address announcer Matt Pitman offered, "Welcome back to the Bay, Alec Burks!"

Andrew Wiggins had 17 points and nine rebounds, and rookie Wiseman contributed 15 points and eight boards for the cold-shooting Warriors, who

made just 38.8% of their shots and went 9-for-38 on three-pointers.

"We're not the team we were yesterday. We didn't come with the same focus, so next game we've just got to bring it," Wiggins said.

New York shot 7-for-11 from the floor to start the game, making four of its initial five threes to build a quick 20-12 lead.

The game featured a combined 55 personal fouls.

"Draymond, we caught a break when he got thrown out," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said.

**Lakers 113, Bucks 106:** LeBron James scored a season-high 34 points to help visiting Los Angeles open a seven-game trip with a victory over Milwaukee.

Los Angeles (12-4) bounced back after blowing a double-digit lead in the fourth quarter of a 115-113 loss to Golden State on Monday night. The Bucks (9-6) dropped their second straight.

The Lakers shot 19-for-37 from three-point range, with James going 6-for-10 and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope finishing 7-for-10. Caldwell-Pope scored 23 points.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had

25 points and 12 rebounds for Milwaukee, but also committed nine turnovers. Jrue Holiday scored 22 points, and Khriston Middleton added 20.

This game pitted the reigning NBA champion Lakers against a Bucks team that has had the league's best regular-season record each of the last two years.

It also featured the top two vote-getters in the 2019-20 MVP balloting. Antetokounmpo won the award for a second straight season. James, a four-time MVP, finished a distant second.

**Jazz 129, Pelicans 118:** Donovan Mitchell scored a season-high 36 points and host Utah rallied to beat New Orleans for its seventh straight win.

Mitchell went 6-for-8 from three-point range in another efficient performance. Utah shot 50% from the field after making 50.6% of its shots during a 118-102 victory over the Pelicans on Tuesday night.

Mike Conley added 20 points and Jordan Clarkson had 19 for the Jazz, who have the longest active winning streak in the NBA.

Zion Williamson scored 27 points and Brandon Ingram had 23 but the Pelicans couldn't sustain their early momentum.

## Indiana uses defense to knock off No. 4 Iowa

Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa — Perhaps, coach Fran McCaffery said, his Iowa team got too comfortable.

The fourth-ranked Hawkeyes came into Thursday night's game against Indiana on a five-game winning streak and tied for the Big Ten lead.

But the Hoosiers' defense shut them down in an 81-69 comeback win.

It's a lesson McCaffery hopes his team learned.

"I think we have to understand a little bit better what this

league is and the quality of the teams that are coming in here and that we're going to face on the road," McCaffery said. "I thought up until now we did a pretty good job of that."

It was a season low in points for the Hawkeyes (12-3, 6-2), who entered second in the nation in scoring at 92.2 points per game.

Iowa led by nine in the second half, then went 11 minutes without a field goal as Indiana won on a 23-3 run.

"I thought they were tougher than we were tonight," McCaffery

said. "And that's disappointing. Our execution wasn't sharp."

"The offense was stagnant," said center Luka Garza, who led the Hawkeyes with 28 points. "We're better than that."

The Hoosiers (9-6, 4-4) trailed 53-44 with 12 minutes to play before they went on their run. The Hawkeyes didn't have a field goal in that stretch, a drought that lasted until Joe Toussaint's layup with 59 seconds left.

**No. 24 UCLA 61, California**

**57:** Cody Riley scored 13 points, Jules Bernard made a clutch three-pointer with 2 minutes remaining and the visiting Bruins beat the Golden Bears.

UCLA (12-2, 8-0 Pac-12) committed 14 turnovers and was sloppy offensively but ended the game on a 7-2 run.

Bernard finished with 11 points to help the Bruins to their eighth consecutive win over California.

Anticevich scored 21 points and made five threes for the Golden Bears (7-9, 2-7).

# Point lifts Lightning over Jackets in OT

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Brayden Point scored 1:56 into overtime and the Tampa Bay Lightning beat the Columbus Blue Jackets 3-2 on Thursday night for their third straight victory to begin the season.

Tampa Bay's Andrei Vasilevski and Columbus' Joonas Korpisalo traded great saves in extra time before Point tapped in a pass from Victor Hedman.

Blake Coleman and Mathieu Joseph also scored for the Stanley Cup champions, and Vasilevski had 23 saves.

Nick Foligno tied it for the Blue Jackets 47 seconds into the third period. Oliver Bjorkstrand also scored and Korpisalo stopped 34 shots as the Blue Jackets slipped to 1-2-2.

**Bruins 5, Flyers 4 (SO):** Jake DeBrusk scored the lone goal in a shootout and Boston opened its home schedule with a victory over Philadelphia.

DeBrusk flipped a shot over goalie Carter Hart just under the crossbar for the winner. Tu-

ukka Rask made a glove stop on Claude Giroux to end the shootout.

Brandon Carlo scored Boston's fourth goal of the third, beating Hart on a shot from the point with 4:42 left to give the Bruins their first lead, but the Flyers tied it on James van Riemsdyk's second goal of the game 1:10 later on a power play.

Nick Ritchi, Jack Studnicka and Charlie Coyle added goals for Boston. Giroux and Travis Sanheim also scored for Philadelphia.

**Canadiens 7, Canucks 3:** Tyler Toffoli had two more goals and an assist and Montreal beat Vancouver to become the first NHL team in 46 years to open a season with at least a point in five straight road games.

A night after scoring a hat trick in a shootout loss to the Canucks, Toffoli helped the Canadiens improve to 3-0-2. The Los Angeles Kings also accomplished the five-game road feat to start the 1974-75 season.

The Canadiens and Canucks will complete the three-game series Saturday, ending Montreal's season-opening trip.

Joel Armia had two goals and two assists, and Josh Anderson, Jake Evans and Ben Chiarot also scored for the Canadiens. Jake Allen made 14 saves for his 150th NHL victory.

Bo Horvat scored twice for Vancouver, and Brandon Sutter had a goal.

**Islanders 4, Devils 1:** Jordan Eberle scored twice, Mathew Barzal had a goal and two assists and Semyon Varlamov made 30 saves in host New York's victory over New Jersey.

The Islanders improved to 3-1-0, while the Devils lost for the first time in regulation, falling to 2-1-1.

Nathan Bastian ended Varlamov's season-opening shutout streak at 142 minutes, 10 seconds, the eighth-longest in NHL history to begin a season.

Brock Nelson also scored for New York.

**Kings 4, Avalanche 2:** Adrian

Kempe broke a tie with 3:50 left and host Los Angeles overcame a two-goal deficit to beat Colorado for its first victory of season.

The Kings added another when Blake Lizotte scored his second of the season into an empty net with 42 seconds remaining. Drew Doughty and Gabriel Vilardi also scored for Los Angeles, and Jonathan Quick stopped 24 shots.

Mikko Rantanen and Nathan MacKinnon each had a goal and an assist for Colorado. Hunter Miska made 23 saves in his first NHL start.

**Jets 4, Senators 1:** Connor Hellebuyck made 28 saves and Nikolaj Ehlers, Mark Scheifele, Adam Lowry and Blake Wheeler scored to help visiting Winnipeg beat Ottawa.

Winnipeg opened the three-game series Tuesday night with a 4-3 overtime victory in Ottawa. They will meet again Saturday night in Winnipeg.

Chris Tierney ended Hellebuyck's shutout bid with 2:57 left.

## IOC head pushes back on Tokyo Games being canceled

Associated Press

TOKYO — IOC President Thomas Bach and local organizers are pushing back against reports that the postponed Tokyo Olympics will be canceled.

Now set to open July 23, the Tokyo Games were postponed 10 months ago at the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, and now the event appears threatened again.

The Times of London, citing unidentified government sources, reported that the games will have to be canceled. It quoted an unidentified senior member of the ruling government coalition.

"No one wants to be the first to say so but the consensus is that it's too difficult," the person said. "Personally, I don't think it's going to happen."

In a statement Friday, the local

organizing committee did not address directly The Times story, but said the Olympics were going forward and had the support of Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga.

"All our delivery partners including the national government, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee, the IOC and the IPC (International Paralympic Committee) are fully focused on hosting the games this summer," the statement said.

"We hope that daily life can return to normal as soon as possible, and we will continue to make every effort to prepare for a safe and secure games."

The IOC released a brief statement saying it is "fully concentrated on and committed to the successful delivery of the Olympic and Paralympic Games To-

kyo 2020 this year."

The IPC added that its goal of having the games this year has not changed.

"There is no doubt the Tokyo 2020 Games will be very different to any previous games and that this summer's event looks a long way off right now. However, we believe that with the robust measures and plans we have in place, the games can and will go ahead safely," the IPC said.

Managu Sakai, the deputy chief cabinet secretary and an ally of the prime minister, also shot down the story.

"There is no such fact and we clearly deny (the report)," he said.

Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike told her regular news conference on Friday that she has "never heard such a thing." She even suggested

action against the British newspaper.

"Perhaps we should file a protest," she said.

The Times of London said Japan hoped to land the 2032 Olympics. The IOC has already awarded the 2024 Olympics to Paris and the 2028 version to Los Angeles.

The idea of Tokyo waiting a decade seems unlikely, given the cost of maintaining venues, negotiating new leases, and so forth. Tokyo has already spent about \$25 billion to organize these Olympics, most of which is public money.

Several reports of a cancellation began to surface this month when the Japanese government put Tokyo and other prefectures under a state of emergency order to counter a surge of rising COVID-19 cases.