

Navy: PCS requires vouchers, travel cards

By KELLY AGEE
Stars and Stripes

Starting with the new year, the Navy is requiring senior enlisted sailors and some officers to use a government travel charge card to pay for a permanent change of station.

A PCS can cost thousands of dollars for travel, lodging and vehicle rentals, along with an untold cost in stress. Paying those expenses with a government card is designed to reduce the burden on sailors and improve government accounting, according to a Navy financial specialist.

"It will help sailors to have a better PCS experience, providing a reliable and interest-free means of financial support to all sailors," Yeoman 2nd Class Paulino Gonzales Ramirez of American Forces Network Pacific in Tokyo told Stars and Stripes in an email Thursday. "Especially when it comes to submitting travel claims, which they can use MyPCS Travel Voucher."

Since Jan. 1, enlisted sailors in paygrades E-9 and above and officers O-6 and above

have been required to pay their PCS and other travel claims using a government travel charge card, or GTCC, and submit travel claim vouchers via MyPCS, according to a Navy administrative message. Sailors in all paygrades will be subject to the same requirement starting July 1.

Gonzales Ramirez said a government travel card provides sailors with an easier, burden-free financial alternative to paying out-of-pocket expenses associated with PCS travel.

MyPCS also allows sailors to submit their travel vouchers in a fully automated format on personal and government mobile devices, tablets, laptops and desktop computers.

This new requirement will make the administrative workload easier when sailors arrive at their next command, Gonzales Ramirez said. But that depends on how the sailor prepares for the PCS move.

"The more that the sailor prepares and plans out their move and keeps up with re-

ceipts and travel vouchers, the faster the process of reimbursement will be," he said. "That is why sailors need to understand how they can use their GTCC."

Also, submitting a MyPCS travel voucher ensures that sailors have everything they need to fill out and submit their travel claims, he said.

Service members are expected to understand the rules for using a government travel card and submitting a travel voucher, which the government relies upon to pay the travel claims. For example, a sailor making a PCS may be authorized a rental car on one trip but not on the next trip.

"At the end of the day, the responsibility is on the sailor to pay off any balance on their GTCC account," Gonzales Ramirez said. Failure to ensure the balance is paid within 60 days of the end of a PCS or Mission Critical status may result in a delinquency, he said, "and may adversely impact the sailors' assignability, security clearance and credit history."

US resistant to Russian demands at Geneva talks

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The U.S. is ready to discuss arms control measures, missile placement and more transparency on military exercises in Europe, but limits on NATO's expansion are off the table, a top U.S. diplomat said Monday after talks with Russia aimed at averting a new military invasion in Ukraine.

"We were firm however in pushing back on security proposals that are simply nonstarters for the United States. We will not allow anyone to slam closed NATO's open-door policy that has always been central to the NATO alliance," Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said after eight hours of deliberations with Russian officials in Geneva.

Sherman said she also told her Russian counterparts that consequences of a new Russian incursion will result in sanctions that go "well beyond" those imposed on Moscow after its initial military intervention in Ukraine in 2014. The U.S. also is ready to step up military support for Kyiv, she said.

For Moscow to deescalate the situation on Ukraine's border, Russia needs to send the thousands of troops massed on Ukraine's border "back to their barracks," Sherman said. Any agreement on issues such as more transparency on exercises would have to be reciprocal, she said.

For Russia, top priorities coming into the meeting centered on getting allies to end military cooperation with Ukraine along

with winning a pledge from the U.S. to end NATO's expansion and pull American troops back from Eastern Europe.

As expected, all such demands were rejected in Geneva by the U.S., Sherman said, while the issue of U.S. troop levels in Europe did not emerge during talks.

Sherman said the U.S. and Russia plan to hold further sessions soon after the Geneva meeting. Meanwhile, NATO later in the week will hold similar talks with Russia at alliance headquarters in Brussels. It will be the first meeting of the NATO-Russia Council in more than two years, but overall prospects for progress appear dim.

Ahead of talks, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken offered a bleak assessment about the prospects of a swift agreement with

Russia.

"I don't think we're going to see any breakthroughs in the coming week," Blinken said during an appearance on CNN.

Meanwhile, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said allies are united in their commitment to maintaining an open door policy to prospective members. He added that the alliance should be ready for the Ukraine situation to worsen.

"We need to be prepared for that the talks break down and that diplomacy will fail," Stoltenberg said on Friday.

From Moscow's vantage point, much of the ongoing dispute about revolves around Russian President Vladimir Putin's angst over NATO's expansion eastward after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Marine under investigation for web of lies

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

A Marine is under investigation for sending an unwanted photo of his genitals as part of a pattern of misrepresenting himself to exploit vulnerable women, according to several people familiar with the events.

The Marine Corps launched an inquiry last week after social media posts about the unsolicited photo grabbed the attention of a two-star deputy commanding general at the Army's Cyber Center of Excellence.

Maj. Gen. Johanna Clyborne, who is also adjutant general of the Minnesota National Guard, asked for information publicly on Twitter so the noncommissioned officer could be reported.

But in addition to that uproar, dozens of women have accused him of lying and manipulating them for months to get pity, emotional gratification, nude photos and, in some cases, sex.

"He's literally lying about his whole life," said the woman who received the unsolicited photo, a government employee who said she had a security clearance and asked not to be named to protect her privacy and career.

The service is withholding the accused Marine's name and other details to protect his privacy and the integrity of the investigation.

"We take all allegations of sexual harassment seriously and do not condone the alleged online behavior," Marine Corps spokesman Maj. Jim Stenger said in an email.

The Marine under investigation, who was identified online, did not respond to inquiries on Twitter, and a phone number at which others had reached him was disconnected.

One of at least two Twitter accounts believed to be the Marine's, @USEmCee, was deleted. But not before he admitted there that he was wrong to send pic-

tures and sexual comments without explicit consent.

He told the women he was in special operations battlefield personnel recovery or was the "Marine Corps version of James Bond," some said online and in interviews. But in reality, he's a musician, they say.

His targets said he maintained the public Twitter account @USEmCee, which, before the scandal, had gained some popularity for tweets about leadership but also featured many of what he called "horny" posts.

He contacted many of the women through that account, with its profile photo showing staff sergeant rank insignia.

While he often publicly spoke of taking care of lower-ranking Marines, he was privately making passes at junior personnel, the women say. He often made sexual comments to a much younger ROTC cadet, in what some said was a shocking abuse of rank.

It was only after the photo incident that some felt comfortable coming forward with more accusations.

"It took one person being brave enough to post about it," said Madison Korn, a 23-year-old civilian who met him through a military friend online and joined a chat group in which members exchanged nude photos.

Now, approximately 35 women have begun sharing their stories of him in a group chat of their own. Some have also done so in public forums online.

"He helped a lot of people, and he made people think it was genuine," the government employee said. "I think he did that just to lure women in."

Between posts about leadership, @USEmCee often discussed his masturbation habits in public posts.

With some women, he initiated private conversations that were sexual at the outset, but with oth-

ers, he at first offered help as they struggled with personal difficulties. Online and in interviews, the women said he lied to build trust. For example, one tweet said he told a woman dealing with the death of a loved one that he worked in mortuary affairs.

"We're all convinced that he had like a spreadsheet (of the lies)," Korn said. "I just don't know how he kept any of this straight."

Korn opened up to him about having been sexually assaulted in college, and he shared purported details about himself, telling her he was adopted and had one lung, she said.

"Now I'm questioning everything he's ever said," Korn said.

He frequently played on sympathy, claiming to be a 30-something virgin or long celibate after being repeatedly rejected by women, they say. He told some he'd never dated. It now seems he was married the whole time, the women said. Stars and Stripes could not independently confirm his marital status.

Though few of the women have met him in person, he has likely "amassed an impressive collection of nude photographs" of them, said a former Marine who is in the private group chat. She's one of at least two who said they had sexual relationships with him. But she wouldn't have if she had suspected he was married, she said.

To obscure his relationship status, he told some women that he had a female roommate who was carrying a dying friend's child and that he planned to adopt the child when the friend died, she said.

"To me, this is like true psychopath, narcissist behavior," said the former Marine, who spoke on condition of anonymity to protect her privacy.

She stressed that those he charmed are not stupid. They just

didn't think to compare notes online — until now.

"We're still unraveling lies that he's told," said the former Marine.

The government employee's friendship with @USEmCee began after she complained online about discrimination she said she faced from a Navy corpsman while getting medical care.

The Marine messaged to advise her how to file a formal complaint, she said. Soon after, their chats turned sexual, and at some point they exchanged intimate photos.

But after about a month, in October, he went too far by suggesting they meet up to get blackout drunk and have sex.

After that, he continued "love bombing" her with messages, she said, but she largely ignored them until she awoke Dec. 30 to the unrequested and unwanted Snapchat image of his private parts.

She tweeted her disgust without naming him. He responded privately that he thought that she'd liked that type of photo before, according to screenshots she provided.

Still, she was reluctant to publicly out him until she found out that he was doing "damage control" by suggesting to others that she'd led him to believe such images were welcome. So she released the screenshot of his admission.

Some military-affiliated Twitter users said the incident highlights issues with sexual misconduct in the military. Others see it as a timeless tale of a man lying to impress women. Some questioned whether it warranted a general's attention.

Clyborne has no doubts. To ignore it would be shirking her duties and tolerating unacceptable behavior, she told Stars and Stripes.

"The behavior we accept is the standard we set," she said in an emailed statement.

Japan-based troops isolating for 2 weeks

BY JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — The U.S. military population in Japan is getting reacquainted with Netflix queues and phrases like “essential services” after a pandemic stay-at-home order took effect at bases across the country on Monday.

U.S. Forces Japan and the Japanese government agreed over the weekend to reduce nonessential, off-installation travel by American service members, Defense Department employees and their families for two weeks to curb the spread of COVID-19. USFJ also imposed a separate but related 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew.

“We’ve had significant worsening of our COVID conditions here over the past few weeks,” Brig. Gen. James Wellons, USFJ deputy commander, said Monday on American Forces Network radio. “We believe that this is directly related to the omicron variant, which we are all reading about in the news every day.”

The limits were imposed following a surge in coronavirus cases across the country that Japanese politicians attributed to Americans arriving in the country since December. U.S. bases are reporting record numbers of COVID-19 cases, but no hospitalizations.

Most travel is off the table until Jan. 24 for Americans who fall under the status of forces agreement, according to a statement from USFJ on Sunday. SOFA outlines the rights and responsibilities of those associated with the U.S. military in Japan. More than 50,000 uniformed serviced members are stationed in the country.

At Yokota Air Base in Tokyo, for example, trips to Yokohama’s Chinatown, to winter illuminations and a sumo tournament in the coming weekend are canceled; a skiing excursion to Nagano prefecture is likewise off the schedule.

International travel from Ja-

pan is possible with an exception to policy. A hardship leave program, Funded Environmental Morale Leave, is still available through the Patriot Express, Wellons said.

For two weeks, however, no one may leave their installation for anything but essential services like doctor visits, grocery shopping and takeout meals.

SOFA members who live off base may only travel to and from their installation, although public transportation is also permitted. They are also limited to essential services, but they may run or bike for exercise in their communities.

Restrictions ramped up for troops in S. Korea

BY DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The latest surge of COVID-19 cases in South Korea has prompted the U.S. military to elevate its health-risk level and enact additional restrictions, including a ban on nonessential travel to Seoul.

U.S. Forces Korea, which is responsible for about 28,500 troops on the peninsula, moved to condition Bravo-plus on Saturday, signaling an “elevated” risk of the coronavirus respiratory disease spreading in the community.

The move means a host of off-base activities are no longer authorized. These include dining in at restaurants, along with visits to shopping malls, bars, clubs, gyms, movie theaters, amusement parks and festivals. Off-installation overnight stays are also prohibited.

The restrictions will last “until further notice,” USFK said in an announcement posted on its website.

Personnel on the peninsula are, however, clear to travel between installations. They can al-

so go off base for things like grocery shopping, takeout food, medical care, child care, religious services, auto repair and for exercise.

USFK counted 682 new COVID-19 cases between Dec. 28 and Jan. 3, up from its previous high of 467 cases the prior week. All but one of the new infections were community generated, according to the command.

Gyeonggi Province reported higher infection numbers than any other area of the country Sunday with 1,014 new cases, according to the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency. The province is home to Camp Humphreys, the largest U.S. military base overseas, and Osan Air Base, home of the 7th Air Force.

Eighth Army’s commander, Lt. Gen. Willard Burleson, met Friday with Pyeongtaek City Mayor Jung Jang-seon to discuss the military’s pandemic response.

“All members of the Eighth Army are aware of the critical situation and are operating [within] strengthened quarantine guidelines,” Burleson said at the meeting.

Pope Francis: Getting virus vaccine is ‘moral obligation’

Associated Press

ROME — Pope Francis suggested Monday that getting vaccinated against the coronavirus was a “moral obligation” and denounced how people had been swayed by “baseless information” to refuse one of the most effective measures to save lives.

Francis used some of his strongest words yet calling for people to get vaccinated in a speech to ambassadors accredited to the Holy See, an annual event in which he takes stock of the world and sets out the Vatican’s foreign policy goals for the year.

Francis, 85, has generally shied away from speaking about vaccination as a “moral obligation,” though his COVID-19 advisory body has referred to it as a “moral responsibility.” Rather, Francis has termed vaccination as “an act of love” and that refusing to get inoculated was “suicidal.”

He went a step further Monday, saying that individuals had a responsibility to care for themselves “and this translates into respect for the health of those around us. Health care is a moral obligation,” he asserted.

He lamented that, increasing-

ly, ideological divides were discouraging people from getting vaccinated.

“Frequently people let themselves be influenced by the ideology of the moment, often bolstered by baseless information or poorly documented facts,” he said, calling for the adoption of a “reality therapy” to correct this distortion of human reason.

“Vaccines are not a magical means of healing, yet surely they represent, in addition to other treatments that need to be developed, the most reasonable solution for the prevention of the disease,” he added.

Some Catholics, including some conservative U.S. bishops and cardinals, have claimed vaccines based on research that used cells derived from aborted fetuses were immoral, and have refused to get the jabs.

The Vatican’s doctrine office, however, has said it is “morally acceptable” for Catholics to receive COVID-19 vaccines based on research that used cells derived from aborted fetuses. Francis and Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI have been fully vaccinated with Pfizer-BioNTech shots.

17 people killed in NYC apartment fire

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Doctors worked Monday to save the lives of multiple people gravely injured when smoke from a fire knocked them out or trapped them in their apartments in a New York City high-rise building. Seventeen people, including eight children, died in the blaze.

Dozens of people were hospitalized, and Mayor Eric Adams said Monday morning that several people were in critical condition after Sunday's fire in the Bronx, already the city's deadliest in three decades. A somber mayor told CNN that the death toll could rise.

"We pray to God that they'll be able to pull through," he said.

Investigators determined that a malfunctioning electric space heater, plugged in to give extra heat on a cold morning, started the fire in the 19-story building.

The flames damaged only a small part of the building, but smoke escaped through the apartment's open door and turned stairwells — the only method of flight in a building too tall for fire escapes — into dark, ash-choked horrors.

Some people could not escape because of the volume of smoke, said Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro. Others became incapacitated as they tried to get out. Firefighters found victims on every floor, many in cardiac and respiratory arrest, said Nigro.

Limp children were seen being given oxygen after they were carried out. Some who fled had faces covered in soot.

Firefighters continued making rescues even after their air supplies ran out, Adams said.

"Their oxygen tanks were empty and they still pushed through the smoke," Adams said.

Nigro said an investigation was underway to determine how

the fire spread and whether anything could have been done to prevent or contain the blaze.

Adams said it appears the smoke spread due to a door that was supposed to automatically close being open.

"There may have been a maintenance issue with this door. And that is going to be part of the .. ongoing investigation," Adams said on "Good Morning America."

Large, new apartment buildings in the city are required to have sprinkler systems and interior doors that swing shut automatically to contain smoke and deprive fires of oxygen, but those rules don't apply to thousands of the city's older buildings.

The building is equipped with smoke alarms, but several residents said they initially ignored them because alarms were so common in the 120-unit building.

Hassane Badr told The New York Times that two of his siblings, both children, were killed and that a 25-year-old cousin remained unaccounted for. Badr, 28, waited at Jacobi Medical Center for news about his 12-year-old brother, who was suffering from serious smoke inhalation. A 5-year-old sister was at another hospital.

"I'm thinking like I'm dreaming, this is not true. You hear people crying, my goodness," Badr told the newspaper. "To be honest, I'm not believing it right now."

Mahamadou Toure struggled to put his grief into words outside the hospital emergency room where his 5-year-old daughter and the girl's teenage brother died, according to the Daily News.

"Right now my heart is very ...," Toure trailed off while speaking to the New York Daily News. "It's OK. I give it to God."

Dems use Jan. 6 to aid in fight for voting legislation

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democrats are mounting an impassioned bid to overhaul Senate rules that stand in the way of their sweeping voting legislation, arguing dark forces unleashed by Donald Trump's falsehoods about the 2020 election demand an extraordinary response.

In fiery speeches and interviews, President Joe Biden and top congressional Democrats have seized on the one-year anniversary of the Jan. 6 insurrection as a reason to advance their long-stalled voting, ethics and elections package. Senate Republicans, who have repeatedly blocked the legislation, have denounced the measures as a "partisan power grab" and warned that any rule changes will haunt Democrats someday under a GOP majority.

Trump's false claims of a stolen election not only incited the mob that stormed the Capitol, Democrats have said, his unrelenting campaign of disinformation also sparked a GOP effort to pass new state laws that have made it more difficult to

vote, while in some cases rendering the administration of elections more susceptible to political influence.

Democrats' voting legislation would usher in the biggest overhaul of U.S. elections in a generation, striking down hurdles to voting enacted in the name of election security, reducing the influence of big money in politics and limiting partisan influence over the drawing of congressional districts. The package would create national election standards that would trump the state-level GOP laws. It would also restore the ability of the Justice Department to police election laws in states with a history of discrimination.

Many Democrats have said the moment has come to act decisively in what they view as the civil rights fight of the era. Changing Senate rules early in 2022 offers perhaps the last best chance to counteract Republicans' state-level push before the midterm elections, when Democrats' House majority and slim hold in the 50-50 Senate could be wiped out.

Nearly 8,000 detained in Kazakhstan amid unrest

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Authorities in Kazakhstan said Monday that nearly 8,000 people were detained by police during protests that descended into violence last week and marked the worst unrest the former Soviet nation has faced since gaining independence 30 years ago.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Monday described the events of last week as a "terrorist aggression" against the country and dismissed reports of the authorities fighting peaceful demonstrators as "disinformation."

Kazakhstan's Interior Ministry reported that a total of 7,939 people have been detained across the country. The National Security Committee, Kazakhstan's counterintelligence and anti-terrorism agency, said Monday that the situation in the country has "stabilized and is under control."

The authorities have declared Monday a day of mourning for dozens of victims of the unprecedentedly violent unrest. The country's Health Ministry said Sunday that 164 people, including three children, were killed in the unrest.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

27 people rescued from floating ice chunk in bay

WI GREEN BAY — Authorities rescued 27 people from a floating chunk of ice that broke away from shore in the bay of Green Bay in eastern Wisconsin, the sheriff's office said Sunday.

No injuries were reported in the incident that happened Saturday morning north of Green Bay, in the arm that's part of Lake Michigan, the Brown County Sheriff's Office reported. Many of the 27 people rescued were ice fishing at the time of the incident.

The chunk of ice floated about three-quarters of a mile during the rescue and was about a mile from the shoreline by the time everyone was brought to solid ground. Authorities said the stranded people were on the separated ice for about 90 minutes.

A barge traveling through the bay may have caused the ice chunk to break off the shoreline, the sheriff's office said. Shane Nelson, who was making his first ice fishing excursion, said the noise sounded like somebody had fired a gun.

Low visibility leads to 40-car highway crash

ID ISLAND PARK — Idaho State Police said roughly 40 vehicles were involved in a crash on an eastern Idaho highway after severe winter weather caused white-out conditions, but only minor injuries were reported.

The Idaho State Police said in a prepared statement that the crash occurred at about 3 p.m. Friday just north of Island Park on U.S. Highway 20. Low visibility had cloaked the road when a

semi-truck collided with a passenger car that was stopped in the eastbound lane. Several more crashes occurred behind the semi-truck, ultimately involving about 40 vehicles.

Eight different agencies from Idaho and Montana responded to the crash, and several tow companies helped with removing the vehicles.

Both U.S. Highway 20 and Idaho State Highway 87 were closed from Island Park to the Montana state line for several hours, but the roads had reopened by Saturday morning.

Police: Lawyer tried to smuggle drugs into jail

FL WEST PALM BEACH — A Florida attorney was arrested after the sheriff's office said he tried to smuggle fake legal papers soaked in cocaine into a local jail.

The Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office said defense attorney David Casals' arrest came after "an extensive investigation, testing, interviews and search warrants."

Casals was charged Friday with trafficking in cocaine, delivery of cocaine and introduction of contraband into a county facility.

He turned himself in and was released on \$58,000 bond, the Palm Beach Post reported.

Librarians help people pay overdue water bills

MI KINGSLEY — Librarians in a small northern Michigan town are helping with more than books.

More than \$500 in overdue water bills in Kingsley were paid off by librarians, the Traverse City Record-Eagle reported in a year-

end series about local good Samaritans.

Village Manager Dan Hawkins said he matched librarians with people who needed help while keeping all identities private. Four librarians and three retired librarians participated this year.

Library manager Amy Barritt said staff will accept donations from the public for water bills or the library.

Man dies in BASE jump accident in remote area

UT GRAND COUNTY — Utah officials said a 51-year-old man died in a BASE jumping accident in a remote part of Grand County.

Grand County Chief Deputy Sheriff Darrel Mecham told KUTV 2News that the man crashed around noon Friday while attempting a 1,100-foot jump.

BASE jumping stands for building, antenna, span and earth, and participants of the extreme sport launch their decent from tall objects using wingsuits or parachutes.

Mecham said the man was with a group of other BASE jumpers who hiked approximately six miles to the jump point. Search and rescue crews found the man, who was pronounced dead at the scene. It took several hours to retrieve his body using a helicopter.

Ex-VA employee gets year for property theft

MS GULFPORT — A Mississippi man has been sentenced to a year in prison for stealing government property, U.S. Attorney Darren J. LaMarca said Friday.

Chad Jacobs, 55, was also ordered to pay a \$40,000 fine and \$23,584 in restitution to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Court documents show Jacob stole personal protective equipment, electronics and medical equipment while working as the assistant chief of supply chain management for the Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System, LaMarca's office said in a news release.

The thefts began in 2019 and continued through December 2020. Authorities said he stole the items owned by the VA and resold them to local pawn shops and on his personal eBay account. In total, Jacob made more than \$50,000 selling the stolen N-95 masks and over \$9,000 selling stolen iPads and iPhones, authorities said.

Live deer found in back of car at traffic stop

PA NEWBERRYTOWN — Police who pulled over a suspected drunken or drugged driver in Pennsylvania discovered a live deer that had apparently been hit and then placed in the hatchback area of her car.

The animal was freed after the stop Thursday by police in Newberry Township.

The occupants told officers they had realized the deer was still alive but kept driving anyway, police said. Police said they told a passenger to release the deer, which was seen in a video posted by police struggling as it was carried across the road.

The 19-year-old driver is being investigated for suspicion of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, police said.

— From wire reports

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Raiders' last-second win sets playoff field

Associated Press

Derek Carr and the Las Vegas Raiders played to win, knocking the Los Angeles Chargers out of the playoffs and sending the Pittsburgh Steelers to the tournament.

The NFL's playoff field was set when the Raiders locked up the final wild-card spot by beating the Chargers in overtime in a wild, winner-take-all game Sunday night.

The Raiders could've punched their ticket to the postseason — and given Los Angeles a spot — by taking a knee on the final play. Instead, Daniel Carlson kicked a 47-yard field goal as time expired in overtime for a 35-32 win.

The Steelers extended Ben Roethlisberger's career with an overtime win of their own and had to wait to make sure the Chargers-Raiders didn't finish in a tie.

The 49ers also needed overtime to advance to the playoffs.

Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers didn't let up against Carolina, and the reigning Super Bowl champions earned the No. 2 seed when Jimmy Garoppolo rallied San Francisco past the Rams.

An NFC championship rematch against Aaron Rodgers in Green Bay is in line if the Buccaneers and Packers keep winning.

First, Brady and Tampa Bay face rested Philadelphia, while Green Bay has a week off.

Tennessee fought off Houston to secure the AFC's bye, pushing the two-time defending conference champion Chiefs down to the second seed.

Lowly Jacksonville upset Indianapolis, paving the way for Roethlisberger and the Steelers to get in with a victory at Baltimore.

Here are the matchups and how things may go next weekend:

Saturday

Las Vegas (10-7) at Cincinnati (10-7): Joe

Burrow led the Bengals from worst to first in the AFC North and got a chance to skip the last game while Carr and the Raiders survived a late comeback to win their fourth straight to advance.

Burrow, dynamic rookie receiver Ja'Marr Chase and Pro Bowl running back Joe Mixon present a tough challenge for Las Vegas, which was gassed by the end of its 70-minute marathon against Los Angeles. Cincy hasn't won a playoff game in 31 years. The Raiders last won a playoff game in 2003. Both teams are due. Burrow and the Bengals get the edge because they're rested.

New England (10-7) at Buffalo (11-6): The AFC East rivals split two games last month, each winning on the road. The Patriots beat the Bills 14-10 while relying solely on their running game when rookie QB Mac Jones threw just three passes. Buffalo responded with a 33-21 win at New England three weeks later.

Josh Allen led the Bills to the AFC title game last year and they're back in the hunt for the third straight year with something to prove. Bill Belichick is seeking his first playoff win without Brady in New England. He should still be looking for it after this one.

Sunday

Philadelphia (9-8) at Tampa Bay (13-4): The Eagles have come a long way since a 28-22 home loss to the Buccaneers in Week 6. Rookie coach Nick Sirianni and second-year QB Jalen Hurts led Philly back from a 2-5 start to an unlikely playoff berth. They did it by relying on the run. But Tampa has one of the league's stingiest run defenses, led by nose tackle Vita Vea.

The banged-up Bucs lost key players down the stretch to injuries and Antonio Brown to drama. They still have Brady and he's enough. He led the NFL in yards passing, TDs, completions and attempts at age 44.

San Francisco (10-7) at Dallas (12-5): Facing elimination, Garoppolo and the 49ers overcame a 17-0 deficit to beat the NFC West champion Rams 27-24 in overtime. San Francisco has a strong rushing attack, George Kittle and Deebo Samuel, but Dallas made big strides on defense under first-year coordinator Dan Quinn and sensational seasons from rookie linebacker Micah Parsons and cornerback Trevon Diggs.

It'll be difficult for the Niners to keep up with Dak Prescott, Ezekiel Elliott, CeeDee Lamb, Amari Cooper and the Cowboys' star-studded offense.

Pittsburgh (9-7-1) at Kansas City (12-5): Roethlisberger got a chance to play one more game, but his last one should come in Kansas City. Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs went on a roll after a rough start. Mahomes has Travis Kelce, Tyreek Hill, Mecole Hardman and too many options for the Steelers to contain.

Monday

Arizona (11-6) at Los Angeles Rams (12-5): The first Monday night playoff game features another matchup of division rivals. Like the Patriots and Bills, the Cardinals and Rams split in the regular season with each team winning on the road.

Arizona missed an opportunity to win the division by losing at home to Seattle. The Cardinals went 4-6 after a 7-0 start. It's a new season now. Kyler Murray led Arizona to an impressive road win at Dallas in Week 17, and the Cardinals need James Conner to play after leaving with injured ribs against the Seahawks.

Matthew Stafford joined the Rams looking for playoff success. He seeks his first career postseason win with a superstar cast surrounding him led by Cooper Kupp and Odell Beckham Jr. on offense and Aaron Donald and Jalen Ramsey on defense.

NFL coach firings begin a day after season finales

Associated Press

From the NFC North to the AFC East, the firings began almost immediately after the NFL's first 17-game season concluded.

The Vikings fired coach Mike Zimmer and general manager Rick Spielman on Monday following an 8-9 season. Division rival Chicago parted with coach Matt Nagy and GM Ryan Pace after go-

ing 6-11.

And in a relative surprise, Miami dismissed coach Brian Flores, whose Dolphins went 9-8, including a sweep of archrival New England.

Indeed, the career coaching records for each total 130-112.

Yet, while in South Florida the Dolphins seemed to be over-achievers with a modest roster,

both the Vikings and Bears were major disappointments this season.

As were the New York Giants (4-13), and general manager Dave Gettleman retired Monday, though he likely would have been fired otherwise.

One major problem for Minnesota and Chicago resides in neighboring Wisconsin: the Packers.

Zimmer was 7-8-1 against the Packers, which isn't bad considering how Green Bay has performed in recent years. It was simply not close to good enough in that division.

Gettleman, 70, saw the Giants go 19-46 during his tenure and were rarely in playoff contention in that period.

Australian judge: Djokovic can stay in the country

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Novak Djokovic won a court battle Monday to stay in Australia to contest the Australian Open after his exemption from strict coronavirus vaccination rules was questioned, but the drama might not be finished, with the government threatening to cancel his visa a second time and deport him.

Hours later, the tennis star hit the court and was training, his brother told reporters. Djokovic himself tweeted that he was still planning to compete.

Federal Circuit Court Judge Anthony Kelly reinstated the Djokovic's visa, which was revoked after his arrival last week because officials said he didn't meet the criteria for an exemption to a rule that all non-citizens be fully vaccinated. Djokovic's lawyers say that since he recently recovered from COVID-19, he didn't need to be inoculated under Australia's rules.

The judge ruled the No. 1 player had not been given enough time to speak to his lawyers before the decision was made and ordered the government to release him within 30 minutes from a Melbourne quarantine hotel where he has spent the last four nights.

But government lawyer Christopher Tran told the judge that the immigration minister "will consider whether to exercise a personal power of cancellation."

That would mean that the nine-time Australian Open winner and defending champion could again face deportation and could miss the tournament, which starts on Jan. 17. It could also bar him from the country for three years.

The back and forth has gripped the world and caused a furor in Australia, where many initially decried the news that Djokovic, who has been a vocal skeptic of vaccines, had received an exemption to strict rules to compete in Melbourne. Many felt the star, who court documents say is not inoculated against COVID-19, was being given special treatment since Australians who aren't vaccinated face tough travel and quarantine restrictions.

But when border police then blocked him on arrival, others cried foul, saying he was being scapegoated by an Australian government facing criticism for its recent handling of the pandemic.

Speaking with television network Prva in Belgrade, Serbia, the tennis star's brother, Djordje Djokovic, described the judge's ruling as a "great defeat for Australian authorities."

"This is definitely politics, all this was politics," he added.

He said at one point Monday that the family was hearing that his brother might still be detained, though he gave no details. Later, he confirmed that the tennis player was not in detention.

"Novak is free. He was at the tennis court moments ago. He is training," he said.

The star himself tweeted out a photo of him standing on a court at the arena where the tournament is hosted.

"I'm pleased and grateful that the Judge overturned my visa cancellation. Despite all that has happened, I want to stay and try to compete @AustralianOpen," he said in the post.

Chen, Zhou join Brown on US team for Olympics

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Three-time world champion Nathan Chen proclaimed 17-year-old Ilia Malinin to be the future of U.S. Figure Skating.

Maybe so, but Malinin's present won't include the Beijing Olympics.

That distinction belongs to Chen, who won his sixth straight national title Sunday, and veterans Vincent Zhou and Jason Brown, whom the selection committee chose over Malinin to represent the American team at the games next month.

"This team is incredible, just the amount of experience we all have," Chen said. "I think regardless of anything we're going to have great skates there. And going back to experience, I think that's so important. I have been to events for the first time and things didn't necessarily go the way I wanted it to. It's really daunting."

Indeed, it was so daunting four years ago that Chen stumbled through his short program at the Pyeongchang Games to dash any chance of winning an Olympic medal. He wound up a disappointing fifth with Zhou one spot behind him.

Meanwhile, Brown missed the 2018 team entirely after finishing ninth at the 2014 Games in Sochi.

"I've been through every single scenario: the young kid that makes it, the guy that gets left off the team. I so feel for (Malinin)," said Brown, who can't touch Malinin's jumping ability but makes up for it with his artistry and command.

Zegras lifts Ducks to shootout defeat of Red Wings

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Rookie Trevor Zegras had a goal and an assist before scoring again in the shootout, leading the Ducks to a 4-3 victory over the Detroit Red Wings on Sunday night in a game that was rescheduled due to Anaheim's COVID-19 problems.

Lukáš Dostál made 33 saves and won his NHL debut for Anaheim with two stops in the tiebreaker. Troy Terry got his 22nd goal and Max Comtois also scored for the Ducks, who won for just the second time in six

games since the holiday break.

After Zegras scored in the second round of the shootout, Rickard Rakell finished it off with a goal. Rakell also had two assists in a matchup initially scheduled for Thursday.

Tyler Bertuzzi had a goal and an assist for the Red Wings, who have lost four of five since the holiday break. Filip Hronek and Vladislav Namestnikov also scored for Detroit, and Thomas Greiss stopped 24 shots.

Blues 2, Stars 1: Jordan Kyrou and Ryan O'Reilly scored power-play goals in the final minute, rallying host St. Louis.

Kyrou won it with 29 seconds left. O'Reilly tied it at 1-all with 47 seconds to go while the Blues had a 6-on-4 advantage.

Braden Holtby had stymied them for most of the contest.

St. Louis extended its home ice point streak to 12 games, going 11-0-1 during the run. Jordan Binnington made 26 saves.

Jason Robertson scored a second-period goal for Dallas, which had a four-game winning streak snapped. The Blues' two goals came after Braden Holtby had stymied them for most of the contest.

Thompson returns, helps Warriors beat Cavs

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Klay Thompson scored 17 points in his return from two devastating injuries that sidelined him more than 2½ years, helping the Golden State Warriors beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 96-82 on Sunday night.

Thompson was 7-for-18 from the field and 3-for-8 from three-point range. He added three rebounds, an assist and a steal in 20 minutes, walking off the court to a thunderous ovation followed by chants of “Klay! Klay!” from the Chase Center crowd.

“I tried to visualize this moment for years,” Thompson said. “I’m just excited to get it out of the way now and I can get back in the rhythm of things. This is unbelievable. This is worth every second.”

Stephen Curry had 29 points, five rebounds and five assists, and Jordan Poole added 14 points for Golden State. The Warriors snapped a two-game losing streak to tie Phoenix for the NBA lead at 30-9.

Lamar Stevens had 17 points and four rebounds for Cleveland.

Thompson missed 941 days and hadn’t played since tearing the ACL in his left knee in Game 6 of the 2019 NBA Finals against Toronto. While rehabbing from surgery for that injury, he tore his right Achilles tendon scrimmaging on his own in November 2020.

The five-time All-Star finally made his much-anticipated return, and reached two career milestones — 12,000 points and 1,800 three-pointers.

Grizzlies 127, Lakers 119: Memphis set a franchise record with its ninth straight win, getting 16 points and a breathtaking block from Ja Morant in a win at Los Angeles.

Morant’s block came in the first quarter, when he soared from behind the Lakers’ Avery Bradley as he tried for a layup, caught the ball with both hands and smacked it off the glass about halfway up the backboard. Morant also threw down an alley-oop dunk off a lob from Desmond Bane in the third quarter, nearly hitting his head on the rim a night after sitting out against the Clippers.

Bane had 23 points, Jaren Jackson Jr. added 21 and the Grizzlies won for the 12th time in 13 road games.

LeBron James scored 23 of his 35 points in the first half for Los Angeles. He made 14 of 19 shots and added seven assists.

Mavericks 113, Bulls 99: Luka Doncic had 22 points, 14 rebounds and 14 assists for his third triple-double of the season and host Dallas beat Chicago, running its season-best winning streak to six and ending the Bulls’ at nine.

Doncic, back in the lineup after missing the previous game with a right ankle sprain, had his first triple-double since Nov. 29. The Mavericks’ streak is their longest since winning six straight in 2016.

Dallas’ Kristaps Porzingis missed his fifth straight game and coach Jason Kidd his second straight while in the NBA’s health and safety protocol. The Mavericks were led by assistant coach Sean Sweeney. Josh Green and Maxi Kleber had season highs with 18 points each for Dallas.

DeMar DeRozan and Zach LaVine scored 20 points each for Chicago.

Nets 121, Spurs 119 (OT): Rookie Cam Thomas made a runner in the lane with 1.4 seconds left in overtime and Brooklyn beat San Antonio to end a five-game home losing skid.

Kevin Durant scored 28 points for the Nets and James Harden had 26 points, 12 assists and seven rebounds. But both struggled after Brooklyn had a 10-point lead with four minutes to play in regulation, forcing the extra period.

Timberwolves 141, Rockets 123: Karl-Anthony Towns scored a season-high 40 points, D’Angelo Russell added 22 points and 10 assists and visiting Minnesota beat Houston for its fourth straight win.

Towns scored 22 points in the first half as the Timberwolves built a 75-54 lead. He finished 15-for-25 from the floor and added nine rebounds and seven assists. Jarred Vanderbilt had career-highs of 21 points and 19 rebounds.

Clippers 106, Hawks 93: Amir Coffey tied a career high with 21 points, Serge Ibaka added 16 and host Los Angeles beat Atlanta.

Coffey, undrafted out of Minnesota in 2019, is on a two-way contract with the Clippers and the G-League. He made 8 of 12 field goals and 5 of 8 three-pointers.

Raptors 105, Pelicans 101: Pascal Siakam had 29 points and 10 rebounds, Fred VanVleet scored 32 points and host Toronto beat New Orleans for its season-high sixth straight victory.

Nuggets 99, Thunder 95: Nikola Jokic had 22 points and 18 rebounds to help Denver win at Oklahoma City.

Wizards 102, Magic 100: Kyle Kuzma had 27 points and a career-best 22 rebounds, Bradley Beal scored 20 points and Washington rallied in the fourth quarter to win at Orlando.

Trail Blazers 103 Kings 88: Anfernee Simons scored 31 points and host Portland beat Sacramento.

Bowe drops 500 Olympic spot so Jackson can qualify

Associated Press

Erin Jackson is heading to the Beijing Olympics thanks to Britany Bowe.

Bowe has given up her spot in the 500 meters, allowing Jackson — ranked No. 1 in the world in the 500 — to make the U.S. team, according to a report Sunday on USA Network. Jackson slipped in her race Friday at the U.S. trials in Milwaukee and finished third in the event she has dominated this season.

Bowe won the 500 and Kimi

Goetz took second to earn the two available Olympic spots. The rules didn’t allow for Jackson to have a re-skate — only a mechanical failure or a fall are reason for a do-over.

In November in Poland, Jackson became the first Black woman to win a World Cup event. She won four of eight 500 races on the World Cup circuit, along with a second and third.

Bowe and Jackson are friends from the same hometown of Ocala, Fla.

Jackson will be making her second Olympic appearance, having finished 24th in the 500 in 2018, not long after she switched from online skating to the ice.

Three-time Olympian Bowe will compete in the 1,000 and 1,500 in Beijing. Goetz will compete in the 500 and 1,000.

In the 16-lap mass start Sunday at the Pettit National Ice Center, Ian Quinn won the men’s race and Giorgia Birkeland took the women’s event.

Quinn won in 7 minutes, 56.82

to earn the guaranteed Olympic spot.

Ethan Cepuran was second and Emery Lehman finished third. Joey Mantia was sixth. That trio already earned Olympic berths in their specialties.

Birkeland won in 9:53.20. Mia Manganello Kilburg took second at 9:53.34. Jamie Jurak was third at 9:54.56.

Manganello Kilburg earned the guaranteed Olympic spot because she leads the overall point total.