

## Report: US assets ready in Ukraine crisis

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany—Up to 5,000 U.S. troops along with aircraft and warships could be deployed to central and Eastern Europe in anticipation of a new Russian invasion of Ukraine, according to a news report.

President Joe Biden could decide on the plan as early as this week, with the potential to increase troop numbers substantially should the security situation deteriorate further, The New York Times reported Sunday, citing White House officials speaking on condition of anonymity.

The focus on adding forces along NATO's eastern flank comes after weeks of talks with Moscow over its large-scale military buildup on the borders of Ukraine have so far failed to de-escalate the crisis.

There is no indication that the

United States plans to boost troop levels in Ukraine itself, where the Biden administration has ruled out direct U.S. military involvement.

For the Stuttgart, Germany-based U.S. European Command, a White House order to send several thousand more troops east would present few, if any, logistical obstacles and could likely be executed quickly.

Options include parachuting the 173rd Airborne Brigade based in Vicenza, Italy, into Eastern Europe; convoying the 2nd Cavalry Regiment into Poland from its base in Vilseck, Germany; and boarding Germany-based American artillery units onto eastbound planes.

The U.S. and its NATO allies already have military units in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. In addition to NATO battle-groups in the region, the Army

has a rotational tank brigade and a combat aviation unit operating up and down the eastern flank.

Some of those forces could be massed in larger numbers at long-standing areas of concern, such as the Suwalki Gap, a 60-mile chokepoint that connects Poland to Lithuania.

In a possible worst-case scenario, security experts have long feared that Russia could use its nearby exclave of Kaliningrad to seal off the Baltic states from the rest of NATO by seizing the corridor.

Another possible move could involve deployment of U.S. fighters based in Spangdahlem, Germany; Aviano, Italy; or the United Kingdom to Poland, where an Air Force detachment operates at a base in Lask.

Such mobilizations are not without precedent and would resemble U.S. actions in the after-

math of Russia's initial incursion into Ukraine in 2014.

Meanwhile, U.S. warships based in Rota, Spain, could be sent into the Black Sea or the Baltic Sea.

Should the White House decide to increase troop numbers beyond the possible 5,000, EUCOM might end up needing reinforcements from the U.S., such as the 82nd Airborne's Immediate Response Force.

Alternatively, elements of NATO's Response Force could be deployed, but it's unclear whether all members of the alliance would be on board.

Over the weekend, Germany's top naval officer resigned following comments in India that Russian President Vladimir Putin just wants respect and that the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula "is gone and will never come back" to Ukraine.

## J&J shot recipients in Germany not considered fully vaccinated

By JENNIFER H. SVAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany—U.S. personnel stationed in Germany and any others who received only the single Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 shot are no longer considered fully vaccinated under federal German rules.

Additionally, people who received the single J&J shot and a booster are no longer considered boosted, the German government said on its coronavirus website earlier this month.

As a result, they could be denied entrance to certain venues or be required to show proof of a recent negative coronavirus test, depending on diverging state policies.

Only people with three shots will be considered boosted, which is necessary in most cases

to eat at a restaurant without showing a negative test in several states, including Rheinland-Pfalz, home to tens of thousands of U.S. service members and their families.

But Defense Department personnel who had the initial J&J shot, also known as Janssen, won't be able to get a third shot on a U.S. base.

That's because the military follows U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, which are now at odds with the guidelines adopted by Germany on Jan. 15.

The Army in Europe is aware of the discrepancy and is seeking a solution, said Gino Mattorano, a spokesman for Regional Health Command Europe.

"In the meantime, those who were vaccinated with Janssen

may have to undergo COVID testing to enter some host-nation establishments," Mattorano said.

Military personnel in Germany who received J&J shots may receive third shots off-base, but it's unclear whether they would be blocked by their units or whether a third vaccination would be accepted by U.S. health agencies.

The Army has administered more than 190,000 COVID-19 vaccinations in Europe, of those than the other services. Of those, about 12,000 first doses and about 400 booster shots were with J&J, Mattorano said.

The Army stopped administering J&J at its European clinics late last year, after the CDC advised that Pfizer and Moderna were the preferred options for adults, given the mRNA vac-

cines' greater protection and lower risk of serious side effects.

U.S. health guidance still considers people who receive J&J and a second shot two months later fully vaccinated and boosted.

Germany is believed to be the first European country to require people to have two shots after a single dose of J&J in order for them to be considered boosted.

Unvaccinated people in Germany in many states cannot visit nonessential retail stores but can shop for food and go to the doctor, among other tasks deemed necessary.

Those who are fully vaccinated but not boosted typically must show proof of a negative antigen test taken within 24 hours or a PCR test no older than 48 hours for nonessential shopping or to visit venues like movie theaters.

# Marines to halt separations for razor bumps

By IMMANUEL JOHNSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

A skin condition brought on by shaving will no longer be sufficient grounds on its own for booting Marines from the service.

Pseudofolliculitis barbae, more commonly known as PFB or razor bumps, results in inflammation of the face and neck when a person shaves.

Last week, the Marine Corps announced that as of Jan. 31, a

series of policy changes pertaining to PFB will take effect.

Previously, commanders had the authority to recommend involuntary separation for Marines diagnosed with PFB and could base their recommendation solely on that diagnosis. That will no longer be the case.

Also under the new rules, neither a diagnosis of PFB nor treatment for it will make Marines subject to a 6105 counseling, a formal reprimand that

can severely damage a service member's military career.

Marines who have been diagnosed with the condition will no longer have to keep a copy of their medical waiver, or "shave chit," on them as proof.

Medical officers will be given final authority for granting temporary or permanent "no shave" status to Marines who have PFB. Under the old policy, medical officers could make recommendations, but the deci-

sion rested with the commanding officer.

The changes were adopted in accordance with the Talent Management 2030 plan, an overhaul of recruiting and retention aimed at remaking the Marine Corps into a service that more highly values experience and skills.

The Corps will not amend any separation documents for Marines with PFB who separated from the service before Jan. 31.

# UAE, US intercept 2 ballistic missiles over Abu Dhabi

*Associated Press*

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The United Arab Emirates and the U.S. military intercepted two ballistic missiles fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels over the skies of Abu Dhabi early Monday, authorities said, the second attack in a week that targeted the Emirati capital.

The missile fire further escalates tensions across the Persian Gulf, which previously had seen a series of assaults near — but never indisputably on — Emirati soil. American troops at Al-Dhafra Air Base took shelter in bunkers during the attack and fired back with their own Patriot missiles.

The attacks threaten the business-friendly, tourism-focused efforts of the Emirates, a federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula also home to Dubai. For years, the country has marketed itself as a safe corner of an otherwise-dangerous neighborhood.

Videos on social media showed the sky over Abu Dhabi light up before dawn Monday, with what appeared to be interceptor missiles racing into the clouds to target the incoming fire. Two explosions later thundered through the city. The state-run WAM news agency said missile fragments fell harmlessly over Abu Dhabi.

Navy Capt. Bill Urban, spokesperson for U.S. Central Command, in a statement acknowledged the assistance of American Patriot missile batteries prevented the Houthi missiles from striking targets in Abu Dhabi. Videos on social media suggested outgoing interceptor fire came from the base.

Houthi military spokesman Yehia Saree claimed the attack in a televised statement.

The U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi later issued a security alert to Americans living in the UAE, warning citizens to "maintain a high level of security awareness." The alert included instructions on how to cope with missile attacks.

# Syria Kurdish forces close in on ISIS-controlled prison wing

*Associated Press*

BEIRUT — U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish fighters deployed inside a prison in northeast Syria on Monday, closing in on the facility's last wing controlled by militants for days, the force and a war monitor said. The raid follows the surrender of hundreds of Islamic State fighters and aims to end one of the most brazen attacks by the group in years.

Forces took over buildings near the prison's northern wing, said Farhad Shami, a spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. That's

where dozens of ISIS militants have been holed up since Thursday.

Shami said SDF forces advanced after about 300 ISIS militants surrendered early Monday.

Over a dozen Kurdish fighters and more than 100 militants have been killed in clashes since the assault began, according to the Kurdish-led force. The number of fugitives remain unclear.

Journalists at the scene said Kurdish officials asked them to step away from the vicinity of the prison earlier Monday, apparently in anticipation of a mil-

itary operation.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported a buildup of Kurdish forces backed by U.S. armored vehicles around the prison.

Witnesses in the city of Hassakeh, where the prison is located and is under a tight security cordon, said buses arrived at the prison apparently to transport militants who had turned themselves in to another location. Coalition helicopters were hovering overhead, a resident said.

Late on Sunday, the Kurdish-led administration announced a

weeklong curfew in Hassakeh starting Monday. Hundreds of city residents have fled the fighting.

The standoff followed a bold assault on Gweiran Prison on Thursday. Militants rammed vehicles through its walls, enabling a number of imprisoned fighters to escape and take hostages. Clashes have continued since then, including with militants holed up in adjacent residential areas. The U.S.-led coalition carried out a number of strikes on suspected militants who had taken control of the prison's northern wing.

# High court to hear affirmative action case

Associated Press

The conservative-dominated Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear a challenge to the consideration of race in college admissions, adding affirmative action to major cases on abortion, guns, religion and COVID-19 already on the agenda.

The court said it will take up lawsuits claiming that Harvard University, a private institution, and the University of North Carolina, a state school, discriminate against Asian American applicants. A decision against the schools could mean the end of affirmative action in college admissions.

Lower courts rejected the challenges, citing more than 40 years of high court rulings that allow colleges and universities to consider race in admissions deci-

sions. But the colleges and universities must do so in a narrowly tailored way to promote diversity.

The court's most recent pronouncement was in 2016, in a 4-3 decision upholding the admissions program at the University of Texas against a challenge brought by a white woman. But the composition of the court has changed since then, with the addition of three conservative justices who were appointed by then-President Donald Trump.

Two members of that four-justice majority are gone from the court: Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg died in 2020, and Justice Anthony Kennedy retired in 2018. The three dissenters in the case, Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito, remain on the

court. Roberts, a moderating influence on some issues, has been a steadfast vote to limit the use of race in public programs, once writing, "It is a sordid business, this divvying us up by race."

The affirmative action case probably will be argued in the fall. Both suits were filed by Students for Fair Admissions, a Virginia-based group run by Edward Blum. He has worked for years to rid college admissions of racial considerations, and the court's new lineup breathed new life into his project.

Harvard President Lawrence Bacow said that the Ivy League institution does not discriminate and vowed to continue defending its admissions plan.

Blum voiced continued hope that the high court will order an end to taking account of race in

college admissions.

Students for Fair Admissions claims that Harvard imposes a "racial penalty" on Asian American applicants by systematically scoring them lower in some categories than other applicants and awarding "massive preferences" to Black and Hispanic applicants.

Harvard flatly denies that it discriminates against Asian American applicants and has said its consideration of race is limited, pointing out that lower courts agreed with the university.

North Carolina's flagship public university prevailed in a federal district court in October. U.S. District Judge Loretta Biggs ruled that the school's program was intended to produce a diverse student body and had shown the benefits of doing so.

## Mich. high school again open 2 months after fatal shooting

Associated Press

OXFORD, Mich. — The Michigan high school where four students were fatally shot in late November reopened Monday for the first time since the attack with the school's principal declaring that "we are reclaiming our high school back."

Oxford High School students have been attending classes at other buildings since Jan. 10.

Four students were killed and six students and a teacher were injured during the Nov. 30 shooting. A fellow student, Ethan Crumbley, 15, is charged with murder and other crimes. His parents are also facing charges.

The high school is in Oakland County, about 30 miles north of Detroit. The school's interior has been renovated since the shooting with new paint, wall graphics and ceiling tiles.

Principal Steve Wolf said in a video posted Sunday that construction crews had been working "tirelessly" on the renova-

tions and school staff worked hard to "prepare our students for a safe return to school."

"We have been through so much to get to this moment. We've been grieving together, we've been praying together, we've attended funerals, vigils and memorials and we have been absolutely heartbroken. And we've been angry," Wolf said in the video. "Yet we've been determined to carry on ... And we are reclaiming our high school back."

Classes resumed at the school at 10:20 a.m. Monday, a late start for the school as it reopened to students, said Dani Stublensky, a spokeswoman for Oxford Community Schools.

A temporary memorial set up outside the school was removed before students returned. District Superintendent Tim Throne said experts advised that removing it would help students "further their healing process." A permanent memorial is planned.

## Chairman: Jan. 6 committee has spoken with ex-AG Barr

The Washington Post

Former Attorney General William Barr has spoken with the House select committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection, the committee chairman said Sunday, a further indication that several former Trump administration officials are cooperating with the panel even as others are fighting efforts to compel their testimony.

"We've had conversations with the former attorney general already. We have talked to Department of Defense individuals," Rep. Bennie Thompson, a Democrat from Mississippi and chairman of the committee, said Sunday on CBS's "Face the Nation."

The bipartisan House panel is investigating the Jan. 6 storming of the U.S. Capitol by a pro-Trump mob trying to stop the confirmation of Joe Biden's Electoral College win, an attack that injured about 140 members of law enforcement.

It is unclear what has been dis-

cussed between the committee and Barr, who stepped down as attorney general in the weeks before the insurrection. Barr had been closely allied with Trump through most of his tenure at the Department of Justice but resigned in December 2020 after publicly disputing claims of widespread election fraud.

Thompson was asked Sunday if he intended to ask Barr about a draft of a Trump executive order, first reported by Politico last week, that would have directed the defense secretary to seize voting machines in battleground states. Thompson said he did, though he acknowledged the plan never became operational.

"We are concerned that our military was part of this big lie on promoting that the election was false," Thompson told CBS News. "So if you are using the military to potentially seize voting machines, even though it's a discussion, the public needs to know. We've never had that before."

# 2 bases in Italy now in higher-risk virus zones

By ALISON BATH  
*Stars and Stripes*

NAPLES, Italy — Four Italian regions, including two that are home to Aviano Air Base and Naval Air Station Sigonella, moved into Italy's second-highest COVID-19 risk category Monday, triggering new restrictions for the unvaccinated.

The classification means people who are not vaccinated won't be able to travel outside of work or health reasons in most cases. They also won't be able to go to shopping malls on weekends but could go during the rest of the week, Aviano said on its website.

People who have been vaccinated in the last nine months or received a booster shot aren't subject to any further restrictions, the base said.

In Italy, unvaccinated people are already barred from most activities and many services, including at restaurants and going to the cinema, sporting events or museums. They can still go to the grocery store or pharmacy but can't use public transportation.

The change would not result in additional restrictions for fully vaccinated personnel at Sigonella but the base "strongly" encourages vaccinations and continued mask usage, said Lt. Drake Greer, an NAS Sigonella spokesman.

Dr. Michael Parenteau, a Naval Air Station Naples lieutenant commander and region public health emergency officer, called the omicron variant a "tidal wave" that was starting to im-

pact the on-base population, while speaking at an NSA Naples Facebook town hall meeting Thursday.

The Navy in Naples, however, along with Sigonella, Naval Station Rota in Spain and Naval Support Activity Souda Bay in Greece would not release infection rates or other details, said Lt. Cmdr. Matthew Comer, a Navy Region Europe Africa Central spokesman.

"Some of our bases have seen an increase in cases and continue to follow COVID health protection, reporting, and notification protocol in order to protect our communities and maintain operational readiness," Comer said in a statement.

Italy's regions of Abruzzo, Piedmont, Friuli Venezia Giulia

and Sicily were moved into the orange risk zone due to increased cases, hospitalizations and intensive care admissions, the Italian Health Ministry said Monday. Friuli Venezia Giulia and Sicily are home to Aviano and Sigonella, respectively.

Italy uses a color-coded system — red, orange, yellow and white — to classify COVID-19 risk and apply additional mitigation restrictions. NSA Naples and U.S. Army Garrison Italy in Vicenza remain in yellow risk zones.

The health ministry reported 138,860 new infections and 227 deaths Sunday. There were about 1.18 million new infections and 2,440 deaths nationwide in the preceding week, the ministry said.

## Tokyo surges; US military starts 3rd lockdown week

By JOSEPH DITZLER  
*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — The sixth wave of COVID-19 pushed past its own record in Japan's capital city on Saturday with 11,227 new cases reported by the metropolitan government.

The new record in Tokyo is nearly double the previous pandemic high of 5,908 in August, according to metropolitan government data online. On Monday, the city reported a modest decline to 8,503 new infections, according to public broadcaster NHK.

Japan reported more than 100,000 new cases on Saturday and Sunday, both record-setting days, according to Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center.

Americans in Japan with the U.S. military began a third week confined to their military installations or off-base homes Monday under an agreement between the U.S. and Japanese governments to help stem the virus's spread. A two-week stay-at-home order expected to end that day was ex-

tended another week by U.S. Forces Japan on Friday.

Service members, civilian employees and their families are expected to stay on their installations or in their homes except for essential services and travel to and from work. A 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew was imposed separately, and masks are required anywhere on or off base.

USFJ made no report of new cases by 6 p.m. Monday. It last announced 550 new cases Friday at 18 installations across Japan, and 17 individuals awaiting confirmation. None of the U.S. bases reported any hospitalizations or severe COVID-19 cases.

Sasebo Naval Base on Kyushu Island confirmed 92 new cases between Friday and Monday, according to a post on the official base Facebook page. Of those, 77 had fallen ill before testing positive and 15 were discovered by medical screenings. The base has 220 active cases, none hospitalized, and, so far, in January has reported 408 new cases.

## Chinese send 39 warplanes toward Taiwan, most in 2022

*Associated Press*

TAIPEI, Taiwan — China flew 39 warplanes toward Taiwan in its largest such sortie of the new year, amid tensions over the self-ruled island's future and as the United States pushes to assert its presence in the region.

The Chinese formation Sunday night included 24 J-16 fighter jets and 10 J-10 jets, among other support and electronic warfare aircraft, according to Taiwan's defense ministry.

Taiwan's air force scrambled its own jets and tracked the People's Liberation Army planes on its air defense radar systems, the ministry said.

The Chinese sortie came as the U.S. military said that two of its carrier strike groups were sailing Sunday in the South China Sea, led by USS Carl Vinson and USS Abraham Lincoln. They engaged in anti-submarine, air and combat readiness operations.

China's Ministry of Foreign

Affairs declined to comment on why the PLA had flown such a large sortie Monday, saying it was not a diplomatic matter.

Taiwan and China split during a civil war in 1949, but China claims the island as its own territory. Beijing has used diplomatic and military means to isolate and intimidate the self-ruled island, but the U.S. has continued to support Taiwan by selling it advanced weapons and fighter planes.

Chinese pilots have been flying toward Taiwan on a near-daily basis in the past year and a half, since Taiwan's government started publishing the data regularly. The largest sortie was 56 warplanes on a single day last October.

The activity has generally been in the airspace southwest of the island and falls into a zone that Taiwan's military says it monitors out of national security considerations.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Waterfront eatery deck collapses, 2 diners hurt

**FL** FORT LAUDERDALE — A group of diners fell in the water after the deck of a Florida waterfront restaurant collapsed, injuring two of them who had to be taken to a hospital.

Fire officials told news outlets the diners were eating outside at the Fort Lauderdale waterfront restaurant when a portion of the deck fell. At least three adults swam to a nearby boat at the dock and were pulled from the water by other people. Two of the diners were taken to the hospital with minor injuries.

Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue Battalion Chief Stephen Gollan told the South Florida Sun Sentinel the dock at Flip Flops Dockside Eatery had apparent signs of decay and visible areas that were recently repaired.

### Ex-coach posed as girl to get pics from other teens

**KS** TOPEKA — A former assistant boys high school basketball coach in Topeka has admitted to posing as a teenage girl on social media to get explicit photos from other teens.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported that 41-year-old Jeffrey Pierce pleaded guilty Friday to one count of producing child pornography in exchange for the dismissal of 11 other federal charges he faced.

Pierce taught ninth-grade social studies at Seaman High School and was an assistant basketball coach. He was fired after he was arrested in September 2020.

He admitted through his plea

that he asked nine 14-to 16-year-old boys for sexually explicit photos and videos of themselves while pretending to be a teenage girl on Snapchat, Instagram and other social media platforms.

### Probe begins in death of motorist held by police

**MD** CENTREVILLE — Maryland state prosecutors will investigate the death of a motorist arrested by troopers and held in a cell before he became unresponsive, authorities said Saturday.

Troopers conducting a traffic stop early Friday evening arrested the driver and accused him of possession of a controlled substance, according to news releases. The driver was conscious and responsive to questions at the time of his arrest, according to authorities.

He was taken to the state police barracks in Queen Anne's County and placed in a cell. About two hours after he arrived at the barracks, the driver began "exhibiting signs of distress and became unresponsive," the releases said. Troopers intervened and notified emergency medical services, which took him to a hospital where he died shortly before midnight, according to state police.

### Man carrying his own severed arm is saved

**ME** LEWISTON — A man who stumbled along a street while carrying his own severed arm was saved by two public workers who saw him and happened to be trained in the use of tourniquets, authorities in Maine said.

Witnesses said the man's arm

was cut off Friday near the shoulder, apparently in a workplace accident, the Sun Journal reported.

The members of the public works crew applied a tourniquet while waiting for an ambulance to arrive, according to Lewiston Police Lt. Derek St. Laurent.

Investigators followed a trail of blood back to a business where several people said the man had been operating a band saw. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration was alerted.

### Detroit councilman tries to save old water tower

**MI** ST. CLAIR SHORES — It's rusty and no longer needed, but a 165-foot water tower still has fans in a Detroit suburb.

St. Clair Shores City Council member David Rubello wants to save the tower, which stands at the city's golf course, The Macomb Daily reported.

The tower was built in the 1920s to improve water pressure in the community but now is obsolete. To some, it's a local landmark that deserves love.

Rubello has proposed finding a company that would pay to repair it in exchange for placing advertising on the tower. It could cost roughly \$400,000 — 10 times the cost to demolish it.

### Trio robbed man who cashed \$1.8K check

**LA** BOSSIER CITY — Three men from southwest Louisiana are in custody in north Louisiana accused of robbing a man who had just cashed an \$1,800 check.

Bossier Parish Sheriff's detectives said the suspects, all from

Lake Charles, La., agreed to give the man — who is from Sulphur — a ride on Wednesday to Bayou Dorcheat Correctional Center in Minden to retrieve a stimulus check that was mailed there after his release from the facility.

After stopping at a McDonald's restaurant and convenience store, the victim said he put the remaining cash in his front pocket and the men assaulted him, using a knife to cut his pants. The victim said after they got the money from him, they kicked him out of the car and took his shoes. The victim walked to a nearby church and called police.

Sheriff's deputies later found the car and arrested the three men. The cash was recovered and will be returned to the victim, the sheriff's office said.

### 3 of 6 puppies stolen from pet salon found

**VA** HAMPTON — Three of the six newborn huskies stolen from an eastern Virginia pet salon were found and reunited with their mother, the dogs' owner said.

The partial retrieval comes as Hampton police announced that a homeless man was arrested and charged with breaking into Critter Cleaners, animal larceny for stealing the puppies — each about 2 weeks old — and other crimes.

Officers found two of the puppies in a home where an acquaintance of the suspect lives, said Bandi Murdock, who owns the dogs and Critter Cleaners. The other was returned by a woman who told Murdock she paid \$100 for the puppy. Murdock said she reimbursed the woman.

— From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit [www.stripes.com](http://www.stripes.com).

Reporting  
World, National  
and Military News

# Chiefs rally past Buffalo in overtime

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — In a never-say-die showdown between two of the NFL's top teams, and two of its bright young quarterbacks, the Bills and Chiefs played a classic Sunday night decided by one of them calling tails and the other making him pay for it.

Josh Allen's decision on the overtime coin toss was his only mistake for Buffalo all night.

Patrick Mahomes promptly followed it by marching Kansas City downfield against the NFL's top-ranked but exhausted defense, then finding Travis Kelce in the corner of the end zone from 8 yards, giving the Chiefs a memorable 42-36 victory — and never giving his burgeoning rival an opportunity with the ball.

"It worked out well for us this time," said Mahomes, who has his team playing in its fourth consecutive AFC title game. "When you have two teams going back and forth, it stinks when you don't get to see the other guy go. But all you can do is play the rules the way the rules are explained, and that's what we did."

Did it perfectly, too, setting up a showdown next Sunday against Cincinnati for another trip to the Super Bowl.

"The guys didn't flinch," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said "You talk about an epic game, well, that's the way the players took it. They had tremendous respect for Buffalo

and they knew it was going to be a battle and they kept going."

What was Reid's advice for Mahomes down the stretch?

"When it's grim, be the grim reaper, and go get it," Reid said. "He made everyone around him better."

The lead changed hands three times in the final two minutes of regulation, and there were 25 points scored over that stretch. Harrison Butker, who earlier had missed a field goal and extra point, drilled a 49-yarder as time expired to force the extra session, and when Kansas City won the coin toss, Mahomes took care of the rest.

He finished with 378 yards passing and three touchdowns, including a 64-yarder to Tyreek Hill during the thrilling final minutes of regulation and the clutch throw to Kelce that sent players streaming off the bench.

"We got tremendous leaders on both sides of the ball, whether it's offense, defense or special teams," Hill said. "Nobody panicked. Nobody was like, 'Oh, the game is over, there's 13 seconds left.' We just made plays."

Allen did everything he could to prevent another season-ending loss inside Arrowhead Stadium. He threw a go-ahead touchdown pass to Gabriel Davis with 1:54 left in the regulation, then another to Davis — his playoff-record fourth TD catch of the game — with 13 seconds remaining in regu-

lation.

He finished with 329 yards passing, and Davis with eight catches for 201 yards, as the Bills lost their ninth straight road play-off game — a streak that includes last year's loss to Kansas City in the AFC title game.

"It's just tough, you know? To be in that moment again," Allen said. "It sucks the way it happened, you know? We wanted to win that game. We had opportunities. Just, yeah, taking it all in, holding onto that feeling, and making sure we don't feel like this again — back-to-back years in the same spot. It's tough to take in."

All told, Mahomes and Allen each threw for at least 300 yards and three touchdowns, completed at least 70% of their passes without an interception, and — get this — led their teams with at least 65 yards rushing.

No other quarterback in NFL history has accomplished those feats in a game, regular season or postseason.

"The Chiefs are a good football team. We knew it was going to take a heck of an effort coming out here," Bills coach Sean McDermott said, "and I thought the guys gave us that effort, starting with Josh and all the way down the line. But those guys are hurt, we're disappointed — we're all disappointed, we're all sick to our stomach. You move on and you try and get yourself to learn from it, but it stings. It stings. I'm not going to sugarcoat it. It stings."

# Rams oust Brady, Bucs on last-second field goal

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Matthew Stafford stood on the sideline helplessly watching Tom Brady be Tom Brady, leading another exhilarating comeback.

This time, though, the seven-time Super Bowl champion left too much time on the clock, giving Stafford a chance to create some playoff magic of his own.

Turns out, 42 seconds was just enough for the Los Angeles quarterback to pull off a Brady-like finish that sent the Rams to the NFC championship game for the second time in four seasons with a 30-27 victory over the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Sunday.

"We knew it wasn't going to be

easy," Stafford said. "I mean, we sure let 'em back in the game with a bunch of mistakes on offense. Our defense played outstanding. We've got to clean some stuff up, do a little better job in the turnover department.

"This is a tough team, man, this is what we're all about. Just happy to get a win and keep on moving."

Stafford threw for 366 yards and two touchdowns without an interception, and used a pair of long completions to NFL receiving leader Cooper Kupp to position Los Angeles for Matt Gay's 30-yard field goal as time expired.

"Man, I'm still trying to proc-

ess everything. That was a crazy game," linebacker Von Miller said after the win over the defending Super Bowl champions. "I knew it was going to come down to the end. All the times that I've played Tom Brady, it always comes down to the end. No lead that we had was safe."

The Rams (14-5) will host next Sunday's NFC title game against the San Francisco 49ers, aiming for a second trip to the Super Bowl in four seasons.

Brady rallied the Bucs from a 27-3 second-half deficit with help from three of LA's four turnovers, tying the game on Leonard Fournette's 9-yard run on fourth-and-inches with 42 seconds re-

maining.

The NFL's all-time passer leader didn't get an opportunity to finish the job.

And it's uncertain if that was the final game for Brady, who's undecided on retirement.

"I haven't put a lot of thought into it," said the 44-year-old quarterback, who led the league with a career-best 5,136 yards passing while also throwing for a league-high 43 TDs during the regular season.

Stafford, obtained in the off-season in a trade that sent Jared Goff to Detroit, had never won a postseason game before beating Arizona in the previous week's wild-card round.

# Cornet reaches quarters in her 63rd Grand Slam

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Alize Cornet dropped to her knees on the hard blue court, clasped her hands and took a few moments to let it sink in.

In her 17th trip to the Australia Open, her 63rd run at a Grand Slam, and two days after celebrating her 32nd birthday, Cornet finally qualified for the quarterfinals at one of the four major events in tennis.

Cornet recovered after a second-set meltdown in the hot Melbourne sun on Monday to advance to the last eight at the Australian Open with a 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 win over two-time major champion Simona Halep.

Her victory over Halep, a former Wimbledon and French Open champion and runner-up in Australia, gave her a record for most appearances at a major before reaching the quarterfinals. Tamarine Tanasugarn previously held the mark at 45, set at Wimbledon in 2008.

"It's never too late to try again!" Cornet said in her on-court TV interview. "To be in my

first quarterfinal. It's a dream come true.

"The journey goes on. I still can't believe it."

No. 115-ranked Kaia Kanepi had the same feeling, waiting until she was 36 to reach the quarterfinals in Australia and finally advancing when, after wasting four match points, she upset second-seeded Aryna Sabalenka 5-7, 6-2, 7-6 (7).

Within seconds, fourth-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas defeated No. 20 Taylor Fritz 4-6, 6-4, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 on Rod Laver Arena to conclude Day 8.

Kanepi's match had to be shifted off the main stadium court because of a late-finishing day program. Kanepi wrapped it up just after midnight on Margaret Court Arena to set up a showdown against 2020 French Open champion Iga Swiatek, who beat Sorana Cirstea 5-7, 6-3, 6-3.

"I thought I was going to lose it after the match points I had on my serve," said Kanepi, who had reached the quarterfinals twice at each of the other three majors. "It was difficult to come back."

# Marquette defeats No. 20 Xavier

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Justin Lewis had 20 points and 13 rebounds to pace Marquette to a 75-64 victory over No. 20 Xavier on Sunday.

Paul Scruggs scored on a layup to get Xavier within 64-59, but the Musketeers did not get another field goal until Jack Nunge's basket with 34 seconds left to make it 73-64.

Xavier hit its first six shots of the second half, but was just 5 of 26 the rest of the way.

Darryl Morsell scored 19 and Kam Jones added 12 points for the Golden Eagles (14-6, 6-3 Big East), who shot 53% in the second half.

Scruggs had 13 points and Colby Jones and Adam Kunkel 12 each for the Musketeers (14-4, 4-3).

**No. 3 Arizona 96, California 71:** Christian Koloko had 19 points, 13 rebounds and three blocks to lead the visiting Wildcats past the Golden Bears.

Benedict Mathurin added 14 points and eight rebounds for Arizona (16-1, 6-0 Pac-12), while Oumar Ballo scored 14 and Kerr Krissa had 13 with four three-pointers.

The Wildcats are off to their best start since winning 21 straight to open the 2013-14 season.

This season's only loss came against then-No. 19 Tennessee on Dec. 22.

Jordan Shepherd scored 21 points for California (9-10, 2-6).

**No. 4 Purdue 80, Northwestern 60:** Sasha Stefanovic scored 22 points to help the host Boilermakers beat the Wildcats.

Purdue coach Matt Painter tied Ward "Piggy" Lambert for second on the school's victories list with his 371st win at his alma mater.

The Boilermakers (16-3, 5-3) have won 10 straight in the series, turning away Northwestern once again despite playing without leading scorer Jaden Ivey because of an injured hip flexor. Trevion Williams and Zach Edey had 12 points apiece.

The Wildcats were led by Boo Buie with 17 points. Pete Nance and Robbie Beran each scored nine for Northwestern (9-8, 2-6), which has lost six of seven and has never won a road game against a top-five opponent.

**No. 21 Providence 69, Butler 62:** Nate Watson had 18 points and seven rebounds and the host Friars held off the Bulldogs.

It was the third straight win for Providence (16-2, 6-1 Big East).

# Penguins rally to edge road-weary Jets in shootout

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Kasperi Kapanen and Jeff Carter scored nine seconds apart in the third period to erase a two-goal deficit and Sidney Crosby scored the only goal of the shootout as the Pittsburgh Penguins rallied to beat the road-weary Winnipeg Jets 3-2 on Sunday.

The Penguins trailed for more than 40 minutes after falling behind early in the first but recovered late to extend their winning streak to five.

"I thought it was a high-event game on both sides and fortunately we found a way to win," Pittsburgh coach Mike Sullivan said. "But I don't think it was the game that we want to play most nights."

Kapanen began the comeback by redirecting a pass from Evgeni Malkin to bring his team within a goal 6:55 into the third period. The din had barely died down when Carter tied it after he knocked down Hellebuyck's clearing attempt and laced a shot into the open net before Hellebuyck could scramble back into position.

**Senators 2, Blue Jackets 1:** Anton Forsberg stopped 35 shots as visiting Ottawa ended a three-game losing streak.

Artem Zub and Tim Stützle scored for the Senators. Forsberg got his first win since Dec. 14 after going 0-2-1 in four games in between.

**Kings 3, Devils 2:** Carl Grundstrom scored the tiebreaking goal midway through the third period and Cal Petersen made 23 saves to lift visiting Los Angeles.

Alex Iafallo and Viktor Arvidsson also scored for the Kings, who snapped a three-game losing streak to start a six-game trip.

Jesper Bratt scored twice for New Jersey.

**Kraken 5, Panthers 3:** Mason Appleton scored his first goal in nearly two months 26 seconds into the third period, Philipp Grubauer made 28 saves, and host Seattle beat league-leading Florida for the second time this season.

Marcus Johansson, Yanni Gourde and Colin Blackwell all scored during the Kraken's three-goal second period.

Anthony Duclair, Jonathan Huberdeau and Aleksander Barkov scored for the Panthers, who entered the night tied with Tampa Bay for the most points in the NHL.

**Blues 3, Canucks 1:** Justin Faulk had a goal and an assist and visiting St. Louis beat undermanned Vancouver.

Brayden Schenn and Jordan Kyrou also scored for the Blues.

# Jazz drop their 4th straight to Warriors

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Jordan Poole scored 20 points to lead a balanced Golden State scoring attack, and the Warriors held off a late Utah rally to beat the Jazz 94-92 on Sunday night.

Royce O'Neale rebounded Bojan Bogdanovic's missed three-pointer with a hand in his face but O'Neale couldn't convert a tip-in as the final buzzer sounded.

Stephen Curry added 13 points, but struggled again with his three-point stroke a month after becoming the all-time NBA threes leader, going 1-for-13 from deep and 5-for-20 overall.

Brother-in-law Damion Lee did his part for Golden State, coming off the bench to hit four big three-pointers and score 12 points for a team that was looking to build some momentum off Curry's buzzer-beater in a 105-103 win over Houston on Friday night.

Bogdanovic — who has recently nursed an injured left ring finger — scored 21 points while Rudy Gobert grabbed 18 rebounds to go with 12 points for the Jazz, who lost their fourth straight to the Warriors.

**Heat 113, Lakers 107:** Jimmy Butler broke LeBron James' record for triple-doubles in a Miami uniform, Duncan Robinson scored 25 points and the host Heat held on late to beat Los Angeles.

Butler finished with 20 points, 10 rebounds and 12 assists for Miami, his 10th regular-season triple-double for the Heat — one more than James had in his four Miami seasons.

Caleb Martin scored 15, Bam Adebayo scored 14 and Gabe Vincent had 11 for Miami, which wasted most of a 26-point first-half lead.

James carried the Lakers yet again, finishing with 33 points — his 17th consecutive game with at least 26 — and 11 rebounds. Russell Westbrook scored 24 for the Lakers, former Heat guard Avery Bradley added 15 and Carmelo Anthony scored 11.

**Nuggets 117, Pistons 111:** Nikola Jokic scored 34 points, including four free throws in the closing seconds, and host Denver held on to beat Detroit.

Jokic also had nine rebounds and eight assists, just missing a fifth straight triple-double. Will Barton had 14 points and Aaron Gordon added 13 points for the Nuggets, who went 4-2 on a six-game homestand.

Isaiah Stewart, Cade Cunningham, Cory Joseph and Trey Lyles each scored 18 points for the Pistons, who have lost four of five.

**Mavericks 104, Grizzlies 91:** Luka Doncic had 37 points, 11 rebounds and nine assists and Kristaps Porzingis had 15 points, eight rebounds and a season-best six blocks as host Dallas beat Memphis.

The Mavericks never trailed and led by as many as 22 points in winning for the 11th time in their last 13 games. They took the season series 3-1 and pulled within four games of the Southwest Division-leading Grizzlies.

**Timberwolves 136, Nets 125:** Anthony Edwards scored 25 points, D'Angelo Rus-

sell had 23 points and 10 assists, and host Minnesota defeated Brooklyn.

Karl-Anthony Towns overcame a poor shooting night, scoring 15 of his 23 points in the fourth quarter as the Wolves put the game away.

**76ers 115, Spurs 109:** Joel Embiid had 38 points and 12 rebounds, and Philadelphia held off a late rally to win at San Antonio.

**Magic 114, Bulls 95:** Moritz Wagner scored 23 points, younger brother Franz Wagner added 18, and host Orlando defeated a short-handed Chicago team.

DeMar DeRozan scored a season-high 41 points for the Bulls, while Coby White had 22 points. Nikola Vucevic hit two of Chicago's five three-pointers and scored 13 points to go with his 13 rebounds before fouling out.

**Hawks 113, Hornets 91:** Trae Young scored 30 points and tied a season-high with eight three-pointers, and a streaky Atlanta team downed host Charlotte for its fourth straight win.

**Trail Blazers 114, Raptors 105:** CJ McCollum had 19 points and 10 rebounds, Jusuf Nurkic had 11 points and 11 rebounds for his fifth straight double-double, and Portland won at Toronto.

**Celtics 116, Wizards 87:** Jayson Tatum scored 51 points — 48 of them in the first three quarters — and Boston breezed to a big win at Washington.

**Knicks 110, Clippers 102:** RJ Barrett had 28 points, 14 rebounds and six assists, and host New York beat Los Angeles.

## Red Sox slugger Ortiz on track for election in Hall

Associated Press

BOSTON — Boston's Big Papi appears headed to the Baseball Hall of Fame — no last-minute walk-off needed.

The Red Sox slugger looks to be on track for induction in Cooperstown this summer, riding the strength of his on- and off-field achievements to overcome stigmas that have stalled or derailed the candidacies of some of his predecessors.

Namely, Ortiz appears to have bucked anti-designated hitter sentiment that has been blunted by the inductions of Frank Thomas, Edgar Martinez and Harold Baines. And Ortiz's

lone reported positive for performance-enhancing drugs — on an expected anonymous 2003 survey test lacking the usual due process — seems to be hurting him less than the more substantial evidence against candidates such as Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens and Alex Rodriguez.

Through Friday, Ortiz had been named on 84% of the ballots revealed at the bhotracker.com website maintained by former Oakland Athletics fan Ryan Thibodaux and his number-crunching minions. A candidate needs 75% for induction; totals traditionally go down

when the final numbers are released.

Clemens and Bonds, all-time greats whose accomplishments are tainted by steroid use, were barely above the threshold in their 10th and final appearance on the baseball writers' ballot.

The Hall will announce the results of the BBWAA vote on Tuesday, and anyone elected to the Class of 2022 will join Gil Hodges, Jim Kaat, Minnie Miñoso, Tony Oliva, Bud Fowler and Buck O'Neil, who were elected by the Hall's era committees.

A 10-time All-Star, Ortiz batted .286 with 541 homers and

1,768 RBIs in a career that started with the Twins before they released him to avoid a big payday in arbitration. After arriving in Boston, he finished in the top five of the AL MVP balloting for each the next five seasons; he came in sixth in his final year, 2016, when he batted .315 with 38 homers and 127 RBIs.

But Ortiz's case is also buttressed by his contributions in big moments, with 23 game-winning hits in his career — three of them during the 2004 postseason, when he helped Boston end its 86-year World Series drought. He led the team to two more titles after that.