

US: No plan for nuke exercise with Seoul

By DAVID CHOI
AND YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — President Joe Biden is in talks with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol about a range of responses to North Korea's nuclear threat but has not discussed holding a joint nuclear exercise with Seoul, according to the U.S. National Security Council on Tuesday.

"The United States is fully committed to our alliance with [South Korea] and providing extended deterrence through the full range of U.S. defense capabilities," an unnamed National Security Council spokesperson told Stars and Stripes in an email Tuesday.

The discussions came after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un entered the new year with a vow to mass-produce battlefield nuclear weapons targeting South Korea and introduce a more powerful intercontinental ballistic missile capable of striking the mainland U.S. Some experts say Kim would eventually aim to use his enlarged weapons arsenal to wrest outside concessions like sanctions relief.

Biden and Yoon, following a trilateral summit with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in November, "tasked their teams to plan for an effective coordinated response to a range of scenarios, including nuclear use by North Korea," the spokesperson said.

"That is what the teams are working on," the spokesperson added.

The White House statement came hours after Biden, responding to a reporter's question as he exited Marine One, said he was not discussing joint nuclear exercises with South Korea.

The president's short denial at the White House follows Yoon's interview with the Seoul-based Chosun Ilbo newspaper on Sunday, in which Yoon said South Korea was holding "considerably positive" discussions with the U.S. about "joint exercise concepts" related to nuclear weapons.

"Nuclear weapons are the U.S.'s, but South Korea and the U.S. should work together in planning, information sharing, exercises and training," Yoon said.

Biden's response prompted a spokeswoman for Yoon, Kim Eun Hye, to clarify Tuesday that the U.S. and South Ko-

rea are discussing ways to deter North Korea from using nuclear weapons, including sharing information and joint planning with concern to U.S. nuclear assets, according to a statement from the South Korean presidential office.

The reporter's question to Biden about talks on a joint nuclear exercise lacked important context, which led the U.S. president to respond with "no," according to Kim's statement.

South Korea does not possess a nuclear weapon. The two Koreas mutually agreed in 1992 not to test, manufacture, or store nuclear weapons in the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula agreement.

Despite the agreement, North Korea conducted six nuclear tests, its most recent in 2017, and is believed by U.S. and South Korean officials to have prepared for its seventh detonation. The North fired a short-range ballistic missile toward the East Sea, or Sea of Japan, on Sunday.

The communist regime fired roughly 75 missiles in 36 separate days of testing in 2022, including three short-range missiles on Saturday.

Chinese drones, naval unit operate around Okinawa

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Japanese fighters have scrambled for the first time to intercept Chinese WZ-7 Soaring Eagle surveillance drones operating earlier this week near Okinawa, according to Japan's military.

Japan's Self-Defense Forces on Sunday and Monday sighted the drones over the East China Sea, where Japan, Taiwan and China have competing territorial claims, according to statements from the Joint Staff on both days.

Japan launched fighters to intercept the drones on both occasions, marking the first scrambles against the WZ-7, according to the Joint Staff. The Soaring Eagle is an advanced intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance drone with capabilities com-

parable to the U.S.-made RQ-4 Global Hawk, which flies up to 60,000 feet.

The WZ-7 has an estimated range of 4,350 miles and a service ceiling of 60,000 feet, according to a Nov. 18 report on the Frontier India technology website.

A WZ-7 passed from the East China Sea through the Miyako Strait between Okinawa and the Miyako Islands on Sunday. The drone flew south of Japan's Sakishima Islands before heading back toward Okinawa, according to a Joint Staff statement Sunday.

The Japan Air Self-Defense Force scrambled fighters in response, the Joint Staff said.

Japan's military did not say which type of fighters were scrambled.

The next day, another WZ-7 flew a similar path from the East China Sea to the Philip-

pine Sea, passing near Okinawa and other Japanese islands, according to a Joint Staff statement Monday.

The Chinese drones have plenty of unmanned company in the skies over the Far East. Japan and the U.S. Air Force fly Global Hawks from bases in Japan. The Air Force has also been flying MQ-9 Reaper drones from Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands, since November. U.S. Navy MQ-4C Triton drones have also operated from Misawa Air Base and Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in recent years.

The Chinese drone intercepts followed a Dec. 21 incident, reported Thursday by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, in which a Chinese J-11 fighter maneuvered within about 10 feet of a U.S. RC-135 Rivet Joint reconnaissance plane's wing over the South China Sea.

Book highlights WWI cartoons of Marines

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — History professor Cord Scott hopes his new book, “The Mud and the Mirth: Marine Cartoonists in World War I,” adds insight into the lives of ordinary Marine riflemen in World War I as the memory of that conflict has faded into history.

Scott, 53, teaches history, government and film through the University of Maryland Global Campus to classes of mostly service members on Okinawa. The Marine Corps University Press in August published his book on Marine Corps cartoons, he said Nov. 30 on Okinawa.

Frank Buckles, the last U.S. veteran of the Great War, died in 2011, according to the New York Times. The last Marine veteran, Albert Frederick “Jud” Wagner, died in Kansas in 2007, according to The Associated Press. Though living memory of the war is past, Scott said he hopes his book keeps some piece of it alive for future generations.

The collection of satirical and

often biting panels inspired by the brutalities of war offers a unique perspective into the realities of life in the trenches.

“Cartoons and comic strips and any sort of illustrative art can tell us more about history than just simple pictures,” Scott said. “It gives us insight of what your average individual was thinking about, and it also gives us an insight into what they think is humorous.”

World War I began with the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand by Serbian nationalists in June 1914. A network of alliances soon dragged Europe into a war that spread around the world. The United States originally abstained from the fight but declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, and its ally Austria-Hungary two days later. Estimates of military casualties range from 8.5 million to 10 million dead, including nearly 117,000 U.S. troops killed and 204,000 wounded.

Scott grew up in Minot, N.D., earned a bachelor’s in history from Minot State University, a master’s in international rela-

tions from Baylor University and his doctorate in American history in 2011 from Loyola University Chicago. For his dissertation, he wrote, “Comics and Conflict: War and Patriotically Themed Comics in American Cultural History from World War II through Operation Iraqi Freedom.”

From a successful July 2018 presentation on Marine cartoons of World War I at the Marine Corps History Division in Quantico, Va., his 111-page book, “The Mud and the Mirth,” was born.

The book starts with the genesis of political cartooning in the American colonies from Benjamin Franklin’s 1754 “Live Free or Die” depiction of a fragmented snake to the Civil War era, when magazines like Harpers Weekly sent combat sketch artists to the battlefields. The era of yellow journalism produced the first syndicated comic strip, Richard F. Outcault’s “The Yellow Kid,” in the New York World in 1895.

Much of Scott’s book focuses on the work of Abian A. “Wally” Wallgren of the 5th Marine Regiment and a cartoonist for The

Stars and Stripes newspaper. The paper was designed to keep enlisted troops apprised of news from back home and in Europe.

Wallgren, a sign painter and serial doodler, fell naturally into the newspaper. His cartoons in Scott’s book reflect the times, and some feature racist depictions of the enemy and friendly nationalities, but they also reveal the conflict’s brutality.

Overwhelmingly, the Wallgren strips provide a dose of humor. In one strip, “Spiral Puttees” from May 10, 1918, a Marine struggles to put on his wrapped leggings. In each panel he gets more and more frustrated as he becomes increasingly entangled.

“Anytime you throw anybody into a situation where it’s life and death, people are going to go to what can ease the tension, and humor is part of that,” Scott said.

“The Mud and the Mirth: Marine Cartoonists in World War I” is available free from the Marine Corps University Press at <https://www.usmcu.edu/Outreach/Publishing/Marine-Corps-University-Press/Books-by-topic/>.

Push in NATO to up defense spending beyond benchmark

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Some NATO countries want to increase defense spending requirements for members, which would turn a long-standing benchmark into a bare minimum, the alliance’s top official said this week.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, in an interview published Tuesday by the German news agency DPA, said there is a push for more ambitious goals for defense investment than the benchmark 2% of gross domestic product by 2024, which most members haven’t yet attained.

“Some allies are strongly in favor of turning the 2% goal into a

minimum target,” Stoltenberg said. “We will have ministerial meetings, we will have discussions in capitals.”

The alliance’s approach to military spending will be dealt with at a June summit of heads of state in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, Stoltenberg said.

All NATO members are expected to reach the 2% spending guideline by 2024, a deal arranged at the alliance’s 2014 summit in Wales. But the benchmark is more of a goal than a mandate. NATO has no mechanism to force its members to spend more.

It’s unclear whether setting a new minimum spending level or increasing targets will have the

effect of forcing countries that habitually fall short into ponying up.

Defense spending has long been a hot-button issue inside NATO, with multiple U.S. administrations admonishing members that consistently fall short on spending. Former President Donald Trump took those criticisms to a new level, accusing countries such as Germany of failing to invest enough in its own defense while enjoying security guarantees provided by the U.S. military.

Still, Germany and most other NATO members have steadily been increasing expenditures since Russia’s initial invasion of Ukraine in 2014. Berlin also has pledged to further ramp up

spending in the aftermath of Russia’s full-fledged war on Ukraine launched in February.

Even so, with only about 1.4% of GDP dedicated to defense, Germany falls far short of the target and doesn’t have a clear plan for getting to the NATO benchmark.

Meanwhile, Poland and the Baltic states have sharply increased spending and already have achieved the 2% mark.

Eight allies — the U.S., the United Kingdom, Greece, Poland, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia — met the 2% mark in 2021, up from just three in 2014, according to NATO data. The alliance’s annual report for 2022 has not yet been issued.

Republicans battle over House leadership

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republican leader Kevin McCarthy was dealt a historic defeat in first-round voting Tuesday to become House speaker, vowing to try again but sending the new Congress into opening day tumult as conservative colleagues opposed his leadership.

McCarthy had pledged a “battle on the floor” for as long as it takes to overcome right-flank fellow Republicans who were refusing to give him their votes. But it was not at all clear how the embattled GOP leader could rebound after becoming the first House speaker nominee in 100 years to fail to win the gavel from his fellow party members on the initial vote.

McCarthy strode into the chamber, posed for photos, and received a standing ovation from many on his side of the aisle after being nominated by the third-ranking Republican, Rep. Elise Stefanik, who said he “has what it takes” to lead House Republicans.

“No one has worked harder for this ma-

jority than Kevin McCarthy,” said Stefanik, R-N.Y.

But a challenge was quickly raised by Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Ariz., a conservative former leader of the Freedom Caucus, who was nominated by a fellow conservative as speaker. In all, 19 Republicans peeled away, denying McCarthy the majority as they cast votes for Biggs or others in protest.

The mood was tense, at least on the Republican side, as lawmakers rose from their seats, in a lengthy first round of in-person voting. Democrats were joyous as they cast their own historic votes for their leader, Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York, the first Black person to lead a major American political party.

“We may have a battle on the floor, but the battle is for the conference and the country,” McCarthy said earlier at the Capitol.

McCarthy emerged from a contentious closed-door meeting with fellow House Republicans unable to win over detractors and lacking the support needed to become

speaker. He vowed to fight to the finish — even if it takes multiple tries in a public spectacle that would underscore divisions in his party and weaken its leadership in the first days of the new Congress.

A core group of conservatives led by the Freedom Caucus and aligned with Donald Trump’s MAGA agenda were furious, calling the private meeting a “beat down” by McCarthy allies and remaining steadfast in their opposition to the GOP leader.

“There’s one person who could have changed all this,” said Rep. Scott Perry, R-Pa., the chairman of the Freedom Caucus and a leader of Trump’s effort to challenge the 2020 presidential election.

The group said McCarthy refused the group’s last-ditch offer for rules changes in a meeting late Monday at the Capitol.

“If you want to drain the swamp you can’t put the biggest alligator in control of the exercise,” said Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla.

“He eagerly dismissed us,” said Rep. Lauren Boebert, R-Colo.

Sheriff: Wave of migrants in Florida Keys is crisis

Associated Press

KEY WEST, Fla. — At least 500 migrants have arrived in small boats along the Florida Keys over the last several days in what the local sheriff’s office described on Monday as a “crisis.”

Economic turmoil, food shortages and soaring inflation in Cuba and other parts of the Caribbean are spurring the most recent wave of migration. Over the weekend, 300 migrants arrived at the sparsely populated Dry Tortugas National Park, about 70 miles west of Key West. The park was closed so that law enforcement and medical personnel could evaluate the group before moving them to Key West, the park tweeted.

Separately, 160 migrants arrived by boats in other parts of the Florida Keys over the New Year’s Day weekend, officials said. On Monday, 30 people in two new groups of migrants were found in the Middle Keys.

In a news release, Monroe County Sheriff Rick Ramsay criticized the federal response to the uptick in migrant arrivals, saying they were stretching local resources. U.S. Border Patrol told the sheriff’s office that the federal response to some of the migrants arriving may have to wait a day, the news release said.

“Refugee arrivals require a lot of resources from the Sheriff’s Office as we help our federal law enforcement partners ensure the migrants are in good health and safe,” said Ramsay, whose office’s jurisdiction encompasses the Florida Keys. “This shows a lack of a working plan by the federal government to deal with a mass migration issue that was foreseeable.”

Officials at Dry Tortugas National Park said they expected it to be closed for several days because of the space and resources needed to attend to the migrants.

China threatens response to ‘unacceptable’ virus limits

Associated Press

BEIJING — The Chinese government sharply criticized COVID-19 testing requirements imposed on passengers from China and threatened countermeasures against countries involved, which include the U.S. and several European nations.

“We believe that the entry restrictions adopted by some countries targeting China lack scientific basis, and some excessive practices are even more unacceptable,” Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a daily briefing Tuesday.

“We are firmly opposed to attempts to manipulate the COVID measures for political purposes and will take countermeasures based on the principle of reciprocity,” she said. Mao did not specify what steps China might take.

The comments were China’s sharpest to date on the issue. Australia and Canada this week joined a growing list of coun-

tries requiring travelers from China to take a COVID-19 test prior to boarding their flight, as China battles a nationwide outbreak of the coronavirus after abruptly easing restrictions that were in place for much of the pandemic.

Other countries including the U.S., U.K., India, Japan and several European nations have announced tougher COVID-19 measures on travelers from China amid concerns over a lack of data on infections in China and fears of the possibility that new variants may emerge.

French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne defended the tests. Starting Wednesday, anyone flying from China to France will have to present a negative virus test taken within the previous 48 hours and be subject to random testing on arrival.

“We are in our role, my government is in its role, protecting the French,” Borne said Tuesday on France-Info radio.

4 alive in 'miracle' after car plunges off California cliff

Associated Press

MONTARA, Calif. — A 4-year-old girl, a 9-year-old boy and two adults survived Monday after their car plunged off a Northern California cliff along the Pacific Coast Highway near an area known as Devil's Slide that's known for fatal wrecks, officials said.

The Tesla sedan plummeted more than 250 feet from the highway and crashed into a rocky outcropping. It appears to have flipped a few times before landing on its wheels, wedged against the cliff just feet from the surf, according to Brian Pottenger, a battalion chief for Coastside Fire Protection District/Cal Fire.

Crashes along Devil's Slide, a steep, rocky and winding coastal area about 15 miles south of San Francisco that's between Pacifica and Montara, rarely end with survivors. On Monday, the victims were initially listed in critical condition but all four were conscious and alert when rescuers arrived.

"We go there all the time for cars over the cliff and they never live. This was an absolute miracle," Pottenger said.

The California Highway Patrol does not believe, based on its initial investigation, that the Tesla was operating in Autopilot or Full Self-Driving mode at the time, Officer Mark Andrews said.

The road's conditions were also not believed to

be a factor in the crash. There was no guardrail at the spot where the sedan went off the cliff.

"The car traveled off the main portion of the roadway. For what reason, we don't know," Andrews said.

Witnesses called 911 around 10:15 a.m. and the crews set up a rope system from the highway to lower firefighters down the cliff, the battalion chief said. At the same time, other firefighters watching the sedan through binoculars suddenly noticed movement — a sign that at least one person was still alive.

"Every one of us was shocked when we saw movement out of the front windshield," Pottenger said.

The incident turned from what had been likely a recovery of bodies to a rescue operation that took several hours amid constant rain, heavy winds, slick roads and crashing waves. The doors were smashed against the cliff and jammed shut, so firefighters were forced to cut the victims out of the car using the so-called "jaws of life" tools.

Crews pulled the kids out of the back window and brought them up the cliff by hand in a rescue basket using the rope system. They were rushed to the hospital by ambulance with musculoskeletal injuries.

"They were more scared than they were hurt," Pottenger said.

Top killings suspect held, will likely be sent to Idaho

Associated Press

STROUDSBURG, Pa. — A man facing first-degree murder charges in the slayings of four University of Idaho students in November is not expected to fight extradition at a hearing Tuesday in Pennsylvania, where he was captured at his parents' home.

Bryan Kohberger, a 28-year-old doctoral student and teaching assistant in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Washington State University, was taken into custody early Friday by state police in eastern Pennsylvania, authorities said. Monroe County's chief public defender, Jason LaBar, said his client is eager to be exonerated and plans to tell a judge in Pennsylvania that he will waive his extradition hearing so he can be taken to Idaho. LaBar said his client should be presumed innocent.

Capt. Anthony Dahlinger, of the Moscow Police Department in Idaho, told The Associated Press on Saturday that authorities believe Kohberger was responsible for all four slayings.

"We believe we've got our man," he said, adding that investigators obtained samples of Kohberger's DNA directly from him after he was arrested.

Kohberger's relatives in Pennsylvania have expressed sympathy for the families of the victims but vowed to promote "his presumption of innocence."

His parents, Michael and Maryann, and his two older sisters, Amanda and Melissa, said in a statement that they "care deeply for the four families who have lost their precious children. There are no words that can adequately express the sadness we feel, and we pray each day for them."

Man arrested in NYC machete attack on police

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A man accused of attacking police with a machete near New York's Times Square on New Year's Eve was arrested on charges of attempting to murder police officers, authorities said Monday as they continued to investigate whether he was motivated by Islamic extremism.

Trevor Bickford, 19, also faces attempted assault charges from the attack that injured two officers at the edge of the high-security zone where throngs of new year's revelers were gathered, the New York Police Department said in a news release.

Bickford, who lives in Wells, Maine, remained hospitalized

Monday with a gunshot wound to the shoulder from police fire during the confrontation.

A law enforcement official familiar with the matter told the AP on Sunday that investigators believe Bickford traveled to New York City earlier in the week. They are examining whether he made the trip to attack police at the Times Square festivities, the official said.

New York City police and federal officials are still trying to ascertain a motive, and investigators are reviewing Bickford's online postings, which included some mentions of Islamic extremist views, the official said. The official could not publicly discuss details about the ongoing

investigation and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Michael Driscoll, the assistant director in charge of the FBI's New York field office, said Sunday that investigators believe the attacker acted alone.

FBI spokespeople in New York and Boston declined to discuss the ongoing inquiry Monday. Boston field office spokesperson Kristen Setera called it a "very active investigation."

FBI agents were seen Sunday night entering Bickford's family home in Wells. Bickford competed in sports in high school, was part of Maine's state champion wrestling team and made the honor roll for his studies at least one year.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Statue of meat-packing magnate beheaded

CA SACRAMENTO — The statue of a 19th-century rancher and meat-packing magnate was decapitated last week, leaving investigators in the state's capital city scratching their heads to find a motive.

Tipsters could receive a \$1,000 reward for information about what befell the nearly century-old granite statue of Charles Swanston in Sacramento's William Land Park on Monday. The severed head was found on the ground nearby.

Swanston traveled west from Ohio as part of the California Gold Rush and quickly realized he'd make more money as a butcher, according to Sacramento City Historian Marcia Eymann.

Police are investigating whether the vandal — or vandals — had a beef with the Swanstons or if it was a random act.

"I have no idea why anyone, unless they're vegetarians and didn't like meat-packers" would decapitate the statue, Eymann said. "I find this very bizarre."

Woman charged in stabbing of Chihuahua

IL CHICAGO — A 61-year-old woman accused of repeatedly stabbing a small dog has been charged with aggravated cruelty to animals and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, Chicago police said.

A 15-year-old girl was walking her family's pet Chihuahua around 3:20 p.m. Monday outside her apartment building on the city's Northwest Side when the woman stopped to talk to her, ran toward the dog named

Bebe and stabbed the animal "without warning or provocation," a police report said.

The girl ran away, but the woman chased her with a knife and stabbed Bebe several more times, resulting in serious injuries, police said. The woman ran off and dropped the knife about a block away but the girl's father caught her and held her until police arrived to arrest her.

Emergency responders find baby in stolen car

MN MINNEAPOLIS — Emergency responders in Minneapolis rescued a hypothermic baby they found abandoned in a stolen car.

Police were dispatched to a residential area in south Minneapolis, where they found the stolen car, the Star Tribune reported. A baby boy was in the car alone. He was not in a car seat and was not dressed for the cold, police said.

Emergency responders took the crying baby to a hospital for hypothermia. Police said his condition was not life-threatening.

The car was stolen in Alexandria, Minn., while the keys were inside, according to police. Police said investigators know the baby and mother's identities but haven't said how the baby ended up in the car.

Vets to compete for cash to build agribusinesses

WV CHARLESTON — Veterans who pitch an idea to build or expand an agribusiness in West Virginia could be eligible to win up to a \$10,000 grant from the state Department of Agriculture, officials said in a press release.

The department is hosting a

"Shark Tank"-style competition for members of West Virginia Veterans and Heroes to Agriculture, a state program that aims to support veterans working in and transitioning into the field of agriculture.

Veterans should submit an application by Jan. 16 describing their operation and business plans. Finalists will be given five minutes to pitch their idea in front of a panel of judges on March 11. The winner will receive \$10,000; five runners-up will win \$5,000 each; 10 others will get \$2,500.

Death row inmate dies of natural causes

NC RALEIGH — A prisoner on death row for the murder of a 5-year-old girl 20 years ago died on Thursday.

Eric Glenn Lane, 51, died of natural causes at the Central Prison Medical Center in Raleigh, the Department of Public Safety said in a news release.

Lane was convicted in 2005 of first-degree murder, rape and kidnapping related to the killing of Precious Ebony Whitfield three years earlier and was sentenced to death.

Convicted murderer released, recaptured

LA BATON ROUGE — A convicted murderer, who was mistakenly released from jail in November, has been re-arrested.

Michael "Ma-Man" LeBlanc was convicted of second-degree murder in 2017 for the drug-related killing of Adoriji Wilson in 2014, The Advocate reported.

When the inmate was mistakenly released Nov. 30 from Riverbend Detention Center, which houses Madison Parish's

pretrial detainees, family members of Wilson said they feared for their safety.

Although LeBlanc, 41, was convicted five years ago for second-degree murder, he is still awaiting sentencing — which was delayed due to continuances, the COVID-19 pandemic and the death of his original defense attorney.

When he finished serving time for an unrelated gun possession charge he was set free from the Riverbend Detention Center.

TikTok app blocked from state devices

IN INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana has blocked the Chinese-owned social media app TikTok from state devices, the state's technology office said.

The blockage came on the same day that Indiana's attorney general sued TikTok, claiming the video-sharing platform misleads its users, particularly children, about the level of inappropriate content and security of consumer information.

Republican Attorney General Todd Rokita claimed in a complaint that while the social video app says it is safe for users 13 years and older, the app contains "salacious and inappropriate content" available to young users "for unlimited periods of time, day and night, in an effort to line TikTok's pockets with billions of dollars from U.S. consumers."

A separate complaint from Rokita argued the app has users' sensitive and personal information but deceives consumers into believing that information is secure.

— From wire reports

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Bills' Hamlin suffers cardiac arrest on field

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Buffalo defensive back Damar Hamlin was in critical condition early Tuesday after the Bills said his heart stopped following a tackle during the Monday Night Football game, which was indefinitely postponed.

Hamlin, 24, collapsed on the field during the first quarter of the nationally televised game against the Cincinnati Bengals and was given medical treatment for nearly 20 minutes before being taken to a hospital.

"Damar Hamlin suffered a cardiac arrest following a hit in our game versus the Bengals. His heartbeat was restored on the field and he was transferred to the UC Medical Center for further testing and treatment," the Bills said in a statement. "He is currently sedated and listed in critical condition."

Jordon Rooney, a family representative who described himself as a good friend of the player, told ABC's "Good Morning America" on Tuesday that Hamlin's relatives are in good spirits but going through a lot and need their privacy. He declined to give details on Hamlin's condition

other than to say he is sedated.

"All I can say is he's fighting; he's a fighter," Rooney said.

In a chilling scene, Hamlin was administered CPR on the field, ESPN reported, while surrounded by teammates, some of them in tears, while they shielded him from public view. He was hurt while tackling Bengals receiver Tee Higgins on a seemingly routine play that didn't appear unusually violent.

The NFL announced Hamlin's condition shortly after he was taken to a hospital, but neither the league nor the hospital released any other details about Hamlin's medical condition.

On the play the 6-foot, 200-pound Hamlin was injured, Higgins led with his right shoulder, which hit the defensive back in the chest. Hamlin then wrapped his arms around Higgins' shoulders and helmet to drag him down. Hamlin quickly got to his feet, appeared to adjust his face mask with his right hand and then fell backward about three seconds later and lay motionless.

Hamlin was treated on the field by team and independent medical personnel and local paramedics, and he was taken by

ambulance to University of Cincinnati Medical Center. Teammate Stefon Diggs later joined Hamlin at the hospital.

About 100 Bills fans and a few Bengals fans gathered on a corner one block from the emergency room entrance, some of them holding candles.

Jeff Miller, an NFL executive vice president, told reporters on a conference call early Tuesday that the league had made no plans yet to play the game, adding that Hamlin's health was the main focus.

An ambulance was on the field four minutes after Hamlin collapsed while many players embraced, including quarterbacks Buffalo's Josh Allen and Cincinnati's Joe Burrow.

"Please pray for our brother," Allen tweeted.

Hamlin collapsed at 8:55 p.m., and when he was taken off the field about 19 minutes later in what seemed like an eternity, the Bills gathered in prayer. A few minutes after the ambulance left the field, the game was suspended, and players walked off the field slowly and into their locker rooms where they awaited word on Hamlin and the game.

"I've never seen anything like it since I was playing," NFL executive Troy Vincent, who was a six-time Pro Bowl cornerback, said during the conference call Tuesday. "Immediately, my player hat went on, like, how do you resume playing after seeing a traumatic event in front of you?"

Hamlin's uniform was cut off as he was attended to by medical personnel. ESPN reported on its telecast that Hamlin was also given oxygen.

Vincent said the league took no steps toward restarting the game and did not ask players to begin a five-minute warmup period as ESPN's broadcasters had announced. "It never crossed our mind to talk about warming up to resume play," Vincent said. "That's ridiculous. That's insensitive. That's not a place we should ever be in."

"The NFLPA and everyone in our community is praying for Damar Hamlin," the players' union said in a statement. "We have been in touch with Bills and Bengals players, and with the NFL. The only thing that matters at this moment is Damar's health and well-being."

Titans starting Dobbs at quarterback against Jaguars

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Quarterback Joshua Dobbs will make a second straight start Saturday night in Jacksonville with the Titans' playoff hopes on the line despite being signed Dec. 21 off Detroit's practice squad.

"Josh will be our quarterback," Titans coach Mike Vrabel said Monday. "I've talked to both quarterbacks and let them know that Josh will be our quarterback for this week, and then Malik (Willis) has to continue to prepare like a starter."

The Titans (7-9) can win their third straight AFC South title with a victory Saturday night. That would give them a home playoff game along with snapping a six-game skid. Dobbs is the third different quarterback to start since Tennessee's last win Nov. 17 at Green Bay.

Dobbs made just his first NFL start in Tennessee's 27-13 loss to Dallas last Thursday night, hours after the Titans put 11-year veteran Ryan Tannehill on injured reserve. Willis was the Titans' third-round draft pick by general manager Jon Robinson, who was fired Dec. 6.

The six-year veteran had more yards passing by halftime of his Titans' debut than Willis managed in any of his three starts and eight appearances.

Dobbs finished with 232 yards passing, almost as many as Willis had had combined (276) this season. Willis has been intercepted three times with his only TD off a run.

Vrabel made it clear they've been impressed with Dobbs' work ethic, noting that the quarterback has worked hard the past couple of days.

Dobbs was a fourth-round pick by Pitts-

burgh in 2017 and has now appeared in seven games. He played in five with the Steelers in 2018 and one in 2020. He spent 2019 with Jacksonville after the Jaguars traded for him to help back up Gardner Minshew after Nick Foles broke his collarbone.

The newest Titans starter will also have a full week of practice as compared to prepping for one game as a backup signed four days before his Tennessee debut. Dobbs then had five days to prepare for the first start of his NFL career.

Now the Titans can see how much Dobbs can absorb with an emphasis on red zone plays.

"There'll be some things that we will try to add or maybe things that we practiced last week that we didn't run," Vrabel said. "Well, I think it's just going to be good to have a full week."

Big Rose Bowl plays put Penn State past Utah

Associated Press

PASADENA, Calif. — After Sean Clifford walked off the rainy field and into a warm standing ovation from Penn State's fans in the waning minutes of a Rose Bowl victory, he couldn't help but think back 13 years to a camp that the 11-year-old quarterback attended in this venerable stadium.

"I just remember falling in love with football," Clifford said of his first trip to Pasadena. "For it to come full circle, and then to be able to be a spoke in the wheel for this team in the Rose Bowl, is just such a blessing."

Clifford and his teammates undoubtedly did their part to pass their love to a new generation of Nittany Lions with a monumental series of big plays in a 35-21 victory over No. 7 Utah on Monday in the 109th edition of the Granddaddy of Them All.

Early in the third quarter, freshman Nicholas Singleton scored on a tiebreaking 87-yard touchdown run. On the first snap of the fourth KeAndre Lambert-Smith made the longest touchdown reception in Rose Bowl history on an 88-yard pass from Clifford.

Those two scores — and Utah quarterback Cameron Rising's game-ending injury in the third

quarter — decided it in favor of the ninth-ranked Nittany Lions (11-2), whose reward for a resilient season was the second Rose Bowl victory in school history.

They stood on stage together afterward amid floating confetti and falling rain, oblivious to both artificial and natural elements after Penn State's first Rose Bowl triumph since Jan. 2, 1995.

"Our guys just stuck together, made some big plays when we needed to, and we found a way to get a win against a really good Utah team," Penn State coach James Franklin said.

Cotton Bowl

No. 14 Tulane 46, No. 8 Southern California 45: Tight end Alex Bauman caught a 6-yard touchdown from Michael Pratt with nine seconds left to cap a frantic finish and Tulane beat Heisman Trophy winner Caleb Williams and Southern California in the Cotton Bowl in Arlington, Texas.

Bauman's contested catch, with linebacker Eric Gentry draped over him, was initially ruled an incompleteness, but a replay review showed the ball never touched the ground as the players rolled over in the end zone. The Green Wave scored 16

points in the final 4:07, the game-winning touchdown coming after they got the ball back after a safety.

Williams was 37-for-52 passing for 462 yards and a Cotton Bowl-record five touchdowns, exactly one month after the quarterback suffered a hamstring injury in USC's loss to Utah in the Pac-12 championship game.

Tyjae Spears ran for 205 yards and his career-best fourth touchdown started the final scoring surge for the American Athletic Conference champion Green Wave (12-2), who completed an FBS-record 10-win turnaround around after going 2-10 last season. They were in the New Year's Six game as the highest-ranked Group of Five team.

Reliaquest Bowl

No. 24 Mississippi State 19, Illinois 10: Massimo Biscardi made a 27-yard tiebreaking field goal with four seconds left, Marcus Banks returned a fumble 60 yards for a touchdown on the game's last play and Mississippi State rallied to beat Illinois in the Reliaquest Bowl in Tampa, Fla., in the Bulldogs' first game since coach Mike Leach's death.

Banks' score came on Illinois'

fifth lateral following a completed pass after the Fighting Illini got the ball at their own 29. There was a scrum on the field as the game ended, but order was restored after a couple of minutes.

Will Rogers was 29-for-44 for 261 yards and one touchdown for Mississippi State (9-4).

Tommy DeVito completed 23 of 34 passes for 253 yards for Illinois (8-5), and Reggie Love III rushed for 53 yards on 12 carries.

Citrus Bowl

No. 16 LSU 63, Purdue 7: Malik Nabers threw for a touchdown, caught one and had 163 yards receiving in LSU's rout of Purdue in the Citrus Bowl in Orlando, Fla.

LSU never trailed against the Boilermakers, recording 594 yards of offense and concluding the scoring with Quad Wilson's 99-yard interception return for a touchdown.

LSU controlled the game from the start. And nothing changed when starting quarterback Jayden Daniels was relieved by backup Garrett Nussmeier. After punting on their first drive, the Tigers scored touchdowns on seven of their next eight possessions to take a 49-0 lead.

Late 3 propels Rutgers past No. 1 Purdue again

Associated Press

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Last season, Cam Spencer could only dream about playing a part in Rutgers' stunning upset over No. 1 Purdue.

On Monday night, the grad transfer played the starring role in the even more shocking sequel.

Spencer made the go-ahead three-pointer with 13.3 seconds to play, and the Scarlet Knights thwarted the Boilermakers' last two chances to save their perfect season by holding on for a 65-64 victory over the nation's top-ranked team again.

"It was one of the best games I'd ever seen," Spencer said, referring to Ron Har-

per Jr.'s buzzer-beating half-court shot to beat Purdue in December 2021. "So it was pretty cool to do it again, here."

This time, the Scarlet Knights (10-4, 2-1 Big Ten) were playing in front of a roaring, sellout crowd at Mackey Arena as Purdue charged back from a 10-point halftime deficit.

But with Spencer, a grad transfer from Loyola (Maryland), and a little help from his new friends, Rutgers earned the school's second ever victory over the nation's top-ranked team — both coming against the Boilermakers.

Paul Mulcahy finished with 16 points, eight rebounds and six assists to lead the

Scarlet Knights. Spencer scored 14, Clifford Omoruyi added 12 points and together Rutgers' suffocating defense held the high-scoring Boilermakers largely in check.

Purdue (13-1, 2-1) was led by Zach Edey, who overcame early foul trouble to finish with 19 points and 11 rebounds. It just wasn't enough to earn a 14th win that would have matched the best start in school history — or to have kept pace with New Mexico as the Division I's last unbeaten teams.

"I just thought at the end of the day, Rutgers was mentally and physically tougher, even if we had won the game," Purdue coach Matt Painter said. "I thought we could have if we had gotten a stop or two there."

Mitchell scores 71 as Cavs top Bulls

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Already an All-Star, Donovan Mitchell added his name to one of the NBA's most rarefied lists Monday night.

Mitchell set a Cleveland record with 71 points, the most by any player in 17 years, and the Cavaliers rallied from 21 down to beat the Chicago Bulls 145-134 in overtime.

Mitchell's total matched the eighth-highest in league history and marked the most points by an NBA player since Lakers great Kobe Bryant scored 81 against Toronto on Jan. 22, 2006. Wilt Chamberlain owns the NBA record with 100 for Philadelphia against New York on March 2, 1962, at Hershey, Pa.

"To be there in the record book with guys like Wilt is truly humbling," said Mitchell, acquired from Utah in the offseason. "I always believed I could be one of the best players in the league. I'm speechless and blessed to be in the company of that greatness."

As the final seconds of OT ticked off the clock, Mitchell waved his arm for the Cleveland crowd, which has embraced him in his short time with the Cavs, to make more noise and then soaked in their applause.

Seconds later, Mitchell was doused with water by his teammates and forward Cedi Osman grabbed a microphone on the floor to lead an "M-V-P, M-V-P," chant.

Mitchell scored 13 points in the extra session after forcing OT by grabbing his own intentionally missed free throw and making a circus shot with three seconds left in regulation, tying the game at 130 and breaking the Cleveland record with 58 points.

In OT, Mitchell became the seventh player in the 70-point club. Chamberlain

did it six times, while Bryant, David Thompson, Elgin Baylor, David Robinson and Devin Booker reached the figure once apiece.

"We were treated tonight to one of the greatest performances in the history of the game," Cleveland coach J.B. Bickerstaff said. "Every single play that he made was a play that was necessary."

"Donovan has never put himself above the team, so how can you not root for a guy like that? I told everyone else to get out of the way."

Nets 139, Spurs 103: Kyrie Irving made his first seven shots, sparked a big bench celebration with a one-handed follow slam after he finally missed and scored 27 points as host Brooklyn earned a 12th straight victory.

Kevin Durant added 25 points and 11 assists for the Nets (25-12), who have ridden the longest winning streak in the NBA this season to within a game of Boston for the best record in the league. Brooklyn has won 16 of its last 17 games.

Warriors 143, Hawks 141 (2 OT): Klay Thompson scored a season-best 54 points and Kevon Looney tipped in his own miss at the buzzer in the second overtime as host Golden State outlasted Atlanta.

Trae Young tied the score for the Hawks on a layup with 8.2 seconds remaining before the Warriors won it. Young finished with 30 points and 14 assists.

76ers 120, Pelicans 111: Joel Embiid had 42 points and 11 rebounds, James Harden scored 27 and host Philadelphia beat a New Orleans team that lost Zion Williamson to a strained right hamstring.

Williamson scored 26 points on 10-for-12

shooting through three quarters before he left for the locker room in the fourth. Williamson pulled up on a fastbreak and handed off the ball late in the third. He gingerly ran to the corner and lingered on the court for a bit before he was lifted from the game.

Lakers 121, Hornets 115: LeBron James scored 43 points to pull closer to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's NBA career scoring record, and visiting Los Angeles avenged last month's home loss to Charlotte.

James had two dunks on alley-oops, including a high-flying reverse slam off a feed from Dennis Schroder, to push his career total to 37,903 points, leaving him 484 behind Abdul-Jabbar's record of 38,387.

Heat 110, Clippers 100: Bam Adebayo had 31 points and 13 rebounds, and visiting Miami recovered from blowing a 21-point lead to beat Los Angeles.

Knicks 102, Suns 83: Julius Randle had 28 points and 16 rebounds to lead host New York over Phoenix.

Pacers 122, Raptors 114: Bennedict Mathurin scored 21 points and Buddy Hield added 19 to lead host Indiana to their fourth consecutive victory.

Mavericks 111, Rockets 106: Luka Dončić had 39 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists as visiting Dallas rallied from an 18-point second half deficit to beat Houston for the Mavericks' seventh straight win.

Timberwolves 124, Nuggets 111: Anthony Edwards scored 29 points, including 15 in the third quarter, to help host Minnesota withstand a push by Denver.

Trail Blazers 135, Pistons 106: Jerami Grant scored 36 points against his former team, Anfernee Simons added 30 and host Portland cruised past Detroit.

DeBrusk scores 2 in third as Bruins rally past Pens

Associated Press

BOSTON — Jake DeBrusk scored his second goal of the third period with just over two minutes remaining and the NHL-leading Boston Bruins rallied for a 2-1 victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins in the Winter Classic on Monday at Fenway Park.

Linus Ullmark made 26 saves for Boston, which is 8-0-3 in its past 11 games. Because the Bruins were the "home" team, they improved their home record to 19-0-3 this season.

Kasper Kapanen scored for the Penguins, and Casey DeSmith made 19 saves in

relief of Tristan Jarry, who left with an apparent injury late in the first period.

Playing on an unseasonably warm day with temperatures in the upper 40s early in the game, the Bruins won for the fourth time in the NHL's 14th annual showcase event.

DeBrusk swooped in and banged home the rebound of Taylor Hall's backhand shot with 2:24 left.

DeBrusk tied it at the 7:46 mark of the period, when he collected a pass from Brad Marchand at the side of the net, spun in front and slipped it behind DeSmith.

Golden Knights 3, Avalanche 2: Nicolas

Roy scored twice in the second period, Mark Stone extended his road point streak to a franchise-record eight games and visiting Vegas held off banged-up Colorado.

Stone has three goals and six assists during his streak.

Michael Amadio also scored for the Pacific Division-leading Golden Knights.

Flyers 4, Ducks 1: Travis Konecny and Joel Farabee each had a goal and an assist to lead visiting Philadelphia.

Morgan Frost and Scott Laughton also scored to help the Flyers finish 3-2-0 on a five-game trip.