

50 Bradleys included in aid to Ukraine

BY DOUG G. WARE
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The United States will send 50 Bradley Fighting Vehicles as part of another \$3 billion in military aid to Ukraine, which is the largest amount spent on a security assistance package for the country since Russian forces invaded last year, the Pentagon announced Friday.

Pentagon officials said it is the first time that U.S. military aid to Ukraine will include the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, known as a “tank killer.” The new shipment of arms also includes 500 missiles for the armored personnel and attack vehicles to fire.

Of the various Bradley models, officials said Ukraine is getting the M2A2 — a variant introduced in the late 1980s that is equipped with stronger armor and a more powerful engine. De-

fense officials said the Bradleys can help with “complex maneuvers” in all weather conditions.

Also for the first time, the Pentagon is sending more than a dozen 155 mm self-propelled Howitzers.

“The Bradley [Fighting Vehicles] and other armored vehicles and artillery systems will complement the recent commitment of combat vehicles to Ukraine by Germany and France,” the Defense Department said in a statement.

Germany agreed last week to send Ukraine a number of Marder infantry vehicles and France said it would contribute armored AMX-10 RC fighting vehicles.

Other items being sent to Ukraine with the new aid package include dozens of M113 armored personnel carriers and mine-resistant vehicles, more Humvees,

hundreds of precision-guided artillery rounds and air-defense missiles, sniper rifles, machine guns and ammunition for grenade launchers. Spare parts for various battlefield equipment and night vision devices are also part of the aid.

Laura Cooper, deputy assistant secretary of defense for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia, told reporters Friday at the Pentagon that the new equipment is needed along NATO’s eastern flank.

“This is the right time for us to provide this armored capability,” she said, underscoring combat and weather conditions are constantly evolving. “This is the right time for Ukraine to take advantage of its capabilities to change the dynamic on the battlefield.”

Cooper said it would take several weeks for American troops

to train Ukrainian forces to use the Bradley Fighting Vehicles and other equipment. Expanded training in Germany begins this month.

“It will take a couple of months, basically,” she said, adding Ukrainian forces will be “set up for success” once they’re trained to use the weapons.

The Pentagon said most of the new aid is being given through presidential drawdown authority, which allows the U.S. to quickly send equipment from Pentagon stockpiles. Also Friday, the State Department announced \$682 million in foreign military financing to “contribute to the long-term capacity and modernization of Ukraine’s military.”

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, the United States has provided more than \$24 billion to the Ukrainian war effort.

Questions surround McCarthy’s power after hectic victory

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republican Kevin McCarthy is the new House speaker, but as bruising as it was for him to seize the gavel in a history-making election, it may be even more difficult for the embattled leader to do much with the powerful position — or to even keep it.

Like the two most recent Republican speakers, John Boehner and Paul Ryan, McCarthy takes the helm of a restive, rebellious majority split in much the same way as the party itself, between what’s left of the Grand Old Party conservatives and a new generation of tea party-to-Donald Trump hard-liners preferring almost no big government at all.

The chaos that erupted in four

days of House voting, halting start of the new Congress, is a prelude to the highly uncertain path ahead as McCarthy tries to lead an unruly Republican majority to achieve its priorities and confront President Joe Biden’s agenda — and maybe even keep the government from shutting down.

“This is the great part: Because it took this long, now we learned how to govern,” McCarthy, who was first elected in 2006, suggested as he rounded toward victory.

McCarthy endured a grueling weeklong fight to get here, a speaker’s election like no other since the eve of the Civil War. A coalition of 20 holdouts refused to support his speakership unless he yielded to their demands to give away some power. He was forced

to roll through 14 ballots before he finally won a majority vote on the 15th vote, but not before the final chaotic scene of shouting between allies and holdouts pushed balloting into early Saturday.

In the end, McCarthy emerges as a weakened speaker, one with less authority on paper than those before him. That’s particularly true because he agreed to give the hard-right holdouts a key concession: restoring a rule that allows any single lawmaker to make a “motion to vacate the chair,” essentially a vote to oust the speaker from that leadership post.

But in some ways, the son of gritty Bakersfield, an oil-and-agricultural heartland in central California, also becomes emboldened as a survivor who withstood

one of history’s most brutal brawls for power and who prides himself on being an underestimated political fighter.

“Apparently, I like to make history,” McCarthy quipped at one point during the raucous week.

McCarthy staked his political career on early backing of Trump, and it was the former president who delivered when needed, “helping get those final votes.” When it was finally over, when McCarthy walked into the speaker’s office, the sign bearing his name already was hanging.

“What you saw over the last week,” said Republican Ralph Norman of South Carolina, one of the holdouts McCarthy won over with the rules changes, “is how democracy works.”

Colonel convicted of attempted assault

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — An officer was sentenced Sunday to dismissal from the Army but no time in prison after being found guilty of attempting to sexually assault a teenage family member while visiting Disneyland Paris three years ago.

Lt. Col. Andrew J. Dial had faced three charges related to sexual assault, all of which he pleaded not guilty to during a nearly week-long court-martial on Kleber Kaserne in Kaiserslautern.

A jury of eight high-ranking officers found Dial not guilty of indecent conduct and three counts of abusive sexual contact, while convicting him Saturday on the attempted sexual assault charge.

A dismissal, which would lead to a dishonorable discharge pending any appeals and reviews, is the mandatory minimum punishment for attempted sexual assault.

The prosecution had called for up to a five-year prison sentence. It was denied by Army Judge Col. Charles Pritchard, whom Dial elected to determine his punishment instead of the jury.

Pritchard described the verdicts as “inconsistent” after the jury announced them Saturday.

He questioned how there could be evidence to support a guilty verdict of attempted sexual assault if the accused also had been found not guilty of touching the family member’s breasts and genital area without consent.

Pritchard considered a motion of his own that would have rendered a not guilty verdict, but upon deliberation allowed sentencing to continue.

The sentence comes a year after the trial was originally scheduled to begin. It was de-

layed when Pritchard ruled that a unanimous jury verdict would be required to convict Dial.

Pritchard’s ruling was later rejected by the Army’s top appeals court.

A split verdict has long been sufficient in military courts, but was effectively ruled unconstitutional in civilian criminal courts in a 2020 Supreme Court case.

It wasn’t specified Saturday whether the jury’s verdict was split or unanimous.

The incident occurred in December 2019, when Dial and various family members were visiting the theme park and nearby lodging resort, prosecutors said.

Dial testified that he bought the underage family member several alcoholic drinks at the resort’s bar, which caused her to become intoxicated. He allowed his daughters, then aged 14 and 18, to get intoxicated at the same time, he said.

When explaining why he gave the teenagers alcohol, Dial said he considered it “an opportunity for a bonding experience, the same as we do in the military,” referencing events like “right-arm nights,” when bosses and their subordinates drink together to promote camaraderie.

After the girls went to sleep that night, Dial entered the bedroom shared by his youngest daughter and the family member seven times over several hours, “to make sure they were OK,” he said.

But the family member testified that during the successive visits, Dial touched her breasts and genital area and penetrated her with his finger at least once.

“I was confused and terrified,” the family member told the court, adding that she was awake every time Dial entered the room, despite pretending to be asleep out of fear.

She eventually woke up Dial’s youngest daughter to explain what had happened, she said.

Dial’s daughter testified to seeing her father enter the room and lift the blankets covering the family member after their discussion.

“There was a light coming from under the cover,” Dial’s daughter said, adding that she believed it was caused by her father’s mobile phone, but couldn’t see what was happening underneath the blanket. “I then asked: ‘Dad, what are you doing?’”

Dial’s daughter later told her mother — who is an Army officer and now Dial’s ex-wife — what she experienced. The mother reported the allegations to the Army’s Criminal Investigation Division.

Prosecutors accused Dial of getting the family member drunk on purpose to take advantage of her. The defense countered that the family member invented the story in an attempt to break up Dial’s marriage.

“This is a question about whether or not a crime was committed, an evil touching was committed, out of the blue, without any precedent for no known reason in a way that would be discovered in so many ways,” defense lawyer Patrick McClain said in his closing arguments, in which he also extolled Dial’s “sober, hardworking” character and decades of military service.

The family member and Dial’s youngest daughter each broke down in tears while reading statements during the sentencing portion of the trial, explaining how the incident continues to affect them.

Also during the sentencing phase, Dial said dismissal from the military and any prison time would have a profound, negative impact on his family’s life.

Survey asking about overseas troops housing money

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military is asking service members abroad to complete an annual overseas housing allowance survey, which influences how much money they’ll get for rent and utility expenses.

The survey, which runs through March 31, collects utility

and recurring maintenance expense data of service members living in private housing off base.

This year’s information gathering comes amid high energy costs stemming from the Russia-Ukraine war. With imports of cheap gas from Russia largely cut off, heating bills have risen in much of Europe.

The survey asks for the amount of rent, actual utility expenses and recurring maintenance expenses, as stated on utility bills and receipts, or estimates for maintenance expenses, the Army said.

Among the reportable expenses: electricity, natural gas for heating and cooking, bottled gas

and other household fuel costs, such as kerosene. In addition, personnel can report sewer, trash and water costs.

The survey and a full list of reportable expenses can be found at www.travel.dod.mil/Allowances/Overseas-Housing-Allowance/OHA-Data-Collection-Surveys/.

Biden travels to investigate border situation

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden is heading to the U.S.-Mexico border on Sunday, his first trip there as president after two years of hounding by Republicans who have hammered him as soft on border security while the number of migrants crossing spirals.

Biden is due to spend a few hours in El Paso, Texas, currently the biggest corridor for illegal crossings, due in large part to Nicaraguans fleeing repression, crime and poverty in their country. They are among migrants from four countries who are now subject to quick expulsion under new rules enacted by the Biden administration in the past week that drew strong criticism from immigration advocates.

The president is expected to meet with border officials to discuss migration as well as the increased trafficking of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids, which are driving skyrocketing numbers of overdoses in the United States.

Biden will visit the El Paso County Migrant Services Center and meet with nonprofits and religious groups that support migrants arriving to the U.S. It is not clear whether Biden will talk to any migrants.

“The president’s very much looking forward to seeing for himself firsthand what the border security situation looks like,” said John Kirby, the White

House national security spokesman. “This is something that he wanted to see for himself.”

But Gov. Greg Abbott, R-Texas, scoffed at Biden’s outreach. “All he’s going to do down there is rearrange the chairs on the deck of the Titanic. He’s not going to achieve any solutions that will make the border safer, more secure and stop illegal immigration,” he told Fox News Channel.

Biden’s announcement on border security and his visit to the border are aimed in part at quelling the political noise and blunting the impact of upcoming investigations into immigration promised by House Republicans. But any enduring solution will require action by the sharply divided Congress,

where multiple efforts to enact sweeping changes have failed in recent years.

From El Paso, Biden will continue south to Mexico City, where he and the leaders of Mexico and Canada will gather on Monday and Tuesday for a North American leaders summit.

Immigration is among the items on the agenda.

The challenge facing the U.S. on its southern border “is something that is not unique to the United States. It’s gripping the hemisphere. And a regional challenge requires a regional solution,” Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas told ABC’s “This Week” before joining Biden on the trip.

Trial set in soldier’s suit after violent traffic stop

Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. — A U.S. Army lieutenant who was pepper sprayed, struck and handcuffed by police in rural Virginia, but never arrested, will argue to a jury that he was assaulted and falsely imprisoned and that his vehicle was illegally searched.

Video of the 2020 traffic stop got millions of views the next year after Caron Nazario filed the federal lawsuit that is now being heard, highlighting fears of mistreatment among Black drivers and intensifying the scrutiny of the boundaries of reasonable, and legal, police conduct.

The episode also served as a grim signal to many Black Americans that military uniforms don’t necessarily protect against abuse of authority by law enforcement.

The trial is scheduled to begin Monday in federal court in Richmond.

Video shows Windsor police officers Daniel Crocker and Joe Gutierrez pointing handguns at a uniformed Nazario behind the wheel of his Chevy Tahoe at a gas

station. The officers repeatedly commanded Nazario to exit his SUV, with Gutierrez warning at one point that Nazario was “fixing to ride the lightning” when he didn’t get out.

Nazario held his hands in the air outside the driver’s side window and continually asked why he was being stopped.

Nazario also said: “I’m honestly afraid to get out.”

“You should be,” Gutierrez responded.

Nazario stayed in the vehicle. Gutierrez went on to pepper spray him through the open window. Once Nazario exited the SUV, the officers commanded him to get on the ground, with Gutierrez using his knees to strike Nazario’s legs, the lawsuit states.

Since the traffic stop, Nazario has developed anxiety, depression and PTSD, according to his lawsuit.

He has been unable to leave home at times due to “hypervigilance regarding the potential for harassment by law enforcement,” court filings state.

New Congress has more vets, but representation still low

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — One of the largest cohorts of veterans in years is now on Capitol Hill.

The 118th Congress includes 97 members with military experience representing 36 states. It is the biggest share of veterans in the legislature since 2015.

Among the 19 freshmen are Congress’ first two Black graduates of West Point: Reps. Wesley Hunt, R-Texas, and John James, R-Mich. Two women have also joined the veteran ranks, bringing the total number of former female service members in Congress to a record seven first set by the 116th Congress. Rep. Jen Kiggans, R-Va., is a former helicopter pilot who served in the Navy for 10 years and deployed twice to the Persian Gulf. Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, R-Fla., is an Air Force veteran who served as an airfield manager.

Kiggans is replacing Democrat Elaine Luria, a Navy veteran.

Groups working to recruit and elect veterans to public office

said the makeup of the 118th Congress is promising. Five more veterans will serve in this Congress compared to the last Congress, making up 18% of the legislature. But representation still falls far short of peaks between 1965 and 1975, when at least 70% of lawmakers had military experience due to World War II and the Korean War.

Since the late 20th century, veteran service in Congress has dropped dramatically, according to the Pew Research Center.

Much of that is due to the end of the draft, said Gabriel Ramos, a Marine Corps veteran who now works for the bipartisan organization New Politics, which helps veterans run for public office.

Ramos said 2018 was a turning point for veterans seeking an electoral seat, particularly for female veterans who ran and won in record numbers. That upward trend continues to hold as the generation that surged into the armed forces following the 9/11 attacks considers their post-military career options, he said.

Ukraine denies Russia hit barracks in attack

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — The Russian military claimed Sunday to have carried out deadly missile strikes on barracks used by Ukrainian troops in retaliation for the deaths of dozens of Russian soldiers in a rocket attack a week ago. Ukrainian officials denied there were any casualties.

The Russian Defense Ministry said its missiles hit two temporary bases housing 1,300 Ukrainian troops in Kramatorsk, in the eastern Donetsk region, killing 600 of them. Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said the strikes were retaliation for Ukraine's attack in Makiivka, in which at least 89 Russian soldiers died.

Serhii Cherevatyi, a spokesperson for Ukraine's forces in the east, told The Associated Press that Russian strikes on Kramatorsk damaged only civilian infrastructure,

adding: "The armed forces of Ukraine weren't affected."

The Donetsk regional administration said seven Russian missiles hit Kramatorsk and two more hit Konstantynivka, without causing any casualties.

It said an educational institution, an industrial facility and garages were damaged in Kramatorsk, and an industrial zone was hit in Kostyantynivka.

Kramatorsk Mayor Oleksandr Honcharenko said two school buildings and eight apartment houses were damaged.

In the early hours of Jan. 1, Ukrainian forces fired rockets at a facility in Makiivka, also in the eastern Donetsk region, where Russian soldiers were stationed, killing dozens of them in one of the deadliest attacks on the Kremlin's forces since the war began more than 10 months ago.

Also on Sunday, the Ukrainian military claimed to have hit a residential hall of a medical university in Rubizhne, a town in the Russian-occupied eastern Luhansk region, killing 14 Russian soldiers housed there. The number of wounded was unknown, it said.

Elsewhere in the east, Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said one person was killed in strikes on Bakhmut, and eight others were wounded.

In the northeastern Kharkiv region, the town of Merefa was hit during the night, killing one person and two other settlements in the region were shelled, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said.

The latest developments come after Russian forces ended a partially observed cease-fire timed to coincide with Orthodox Christmas celebrations on Saturday.

Germany: Iranian arrested, suspect in chemical plot

Associated Press

BERLIN — A 32-year-old Iranian man has been arrested in Germany on suspicion of planning an attack with deadly chemicals, officials said Sunday.

Police and prosecutors said the man and another person were detained overnight in the town of Castrop-Rauxel, northwest of Dortmund.

In a joint statement they said the man is suspected to have planned a serious attack motivated by Islamic extremism, for which he had allegedly sought

to obtain the potent toxins cyanide and ricin.

Specialists wearing anti-contamination suits were seen carrying evidence out of the man's home.

A spokesman for Duesseldorf prosecutors later said an initial search of the premises turned up no toxic substances, German news agency dpa reported.

It wasn't immediately clear how far advanced the plans for an attack were and whether the suspect had picked a specific target.

Dpa quoted the top security official for North Rhine-Westphalia state, Herbert Reul, as saying authorities had received "a serious tip that led police to intervene the same night."

Tabloid newspaper Bild reported that the tip about the alleged plot came from an allied intelligence agency.

Dpa cited an unnamed German security official saying there was no indication the suspect had acted on behalf of the Iranian state, but rather that he allegedly supported a Sunni extremist group. Sunnis

are a religious minority in Iran.

Five years ago, German police arrested a Tunisian man and his wife on suspicion of planning to carry out a ricin attack in the name of Islamic State.

They were later found guilty and sentenced to 10 and eight years imprisonment, respectively.

Even small amounts of ricin, which is produced from the seeds of castor oil plants, can kill an adult if eaten, injected or inhaled.

California braces for more rain, storms, potential floods

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — California braced for more stormy weather with rain sweeping into the northern part the state and the San Francisco Bay area, preceding a series of powerful incoming Pacific storms and raising the potential for road flooding, rising rivers and mudslides on soils already saturated after days of rain.

The National Weather Service warned of a "relentless parade of atmospheric rivers" over the coming week, producing heavy rain and mountain snow. Atmospheric river

storms are long plumes of moisture stretching out into the Pacific and are capable of dropping staggering amounts of rain and snow. The agency's Sacramento office tweeted early Sunday that parts of the Sacramento Valley were experiencing "strong winds with gusts up to 60 mph," as well as "numerous trees and power lines down with power outages."

More than 300,000 customers had their electricity knocked out in and around the state's capital, according to a Sacramento Municipal Utility District online map of out-

ages overnight.

The wet weather comes after days of rain in California from Pacific storms.

A series of recent weather systems have knocked out power to thousands, flooded streets, battered the coastline and caused at least six deaths.

The first of the heavier storms was due to arrive Monday, and the weather service issued a flood watch for a large swath of Northern and Central California with 6 to 12 inches of rain expected through Wednesday in the Sacramento-area foothills.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Grant, president and general, gets day in Ohio

OH COLUMBUS — The president responsible for giving America the federal Christmas holiday is getting a special day of his own.

Beginning next year, April 27 will be celebrated as Ulysses S. Grant Day in the iconic Civil War general's home state of Ohio, after legislation creating the recognition cleared the Legislature Dec. 14 and was recently signed by Republican Gov. Mike DeWine.

Grant was born on that date 200 years ago this past spring.

The home-state recognition comes alongside congressional action marking the 200th year of Grant's birth, in 1822, with a posthumous military promotion: to the U.S. Army's highest rank of General of the Armies of the United States.

Funeral home owner sentenced for body sales

CO GRAND JUNCTION — A Colorado funeral home operator accused of illegally selling body parts and giving clients fake ashes was sentenced to 20 years in prison Tuesday by a federal court judge.

Megan Hess received the maximum sentence after pleading guilty to mail fraud in November under a plea agreement in which other charges against her were dropped, The Daily Sentinel reported.

U.S. authorities said that on dozens of occasions, Hess and her mother, Shirley Koch, who also pleaded guilty to mail fraud, transferred bodies or body parts to third parties for research without families' knowledge.

Man accused of chewing off ear of 78-year-old

OR PORTLAND — A man accused of chewing off the ear of a 78-year-old man on a light-rail train platform near Portland, Ore., told detectives he thought the victim was a robot trying to kill him, police said.

Koryn Daniel Kraemer was charged with second-degree assault in Multnomah County District Court on Wednesday, the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office said. Kraemer, 25, entered a not guilty plea to the charge.

Around 2 a.m. Tuesday, police and deputies responded to a light rail platform in Gresham after a caller said they could see a lot of blood and an attacker on top of a victim, according to an affidavit of probable cause.

Officers used force to remove Kraemer from the victim and the victim was taken to a hospital, the affidavit said.

Emergency declared over underground landfill fire

AL MOODY — A county commission declared a state of emergency regarding an underground landfill fire that has been burning since November in Alabama.

The St. Clair County Commission voted to approve the emergency declaration, news outlets reported, in order to take more aggressive efforts to combat the fire at a private landfill. Commission Chairman Stan Bate-mon told news outlets that the declaration gives the county the legal and financial authority to combat the fire.

The underground fire was reported in late November at the

privately operated Environmental Landfill near the Birmingham suburbs of Moody and Trussville. The site was used to dispose of vegetative material such as leaves, limbs, trees, shrubs and similar materials.

Judge upholds state's transgender sports ban

WV CHARLESTON — West Virginia's ban on transgender athletes competing in female school sports is constitutional and can remain in place, a federal judge ruled Thursday.

"I recognize that being transgender is natural and is not a choice," U.S. District Court Judge Joseph Goodwin wrote in his decision. "But one's sex is also natural, and it dictates physical characteristics that are relevant to athletics."

The American Civil Liberties Union and its West Virginia chapter filed the lawsuit in 2021 on behalf of an 11-year-old transgender girl who hoped to compete in middle school cross-country in Harrison County.

Woman charged with poisoning husband

WI MADISON — A Wisconsin woman accused of repeatedly poisoning her veterinarian husband with animal euthanasia drugs has been charged with attempted first-degree intentional homicide.

Amanda Chapin, 50, of Monroe, was recently charged in Lafayette County. Authorities say she poisoned her husband, Gary Chapin, 70, three times during July and August, by putting barbiturates in his coffee, the Wisconsin State Journal reported.

According to a criminal complaint, the couple got married in March. Following the wedding, Amanda Chapin forged the signature of one of her husband's children on a power-of-attorney document, then demanded her husband amend his house deed so she would get the home if he died. The complaint says she poisoned her husband for the first time less than three weeks after the quit claim deed on the house was authorized.

The third time he drank the coffee, in early August, he fell into a coma that lasted for four days, the complaint said. Blood work showed barbiturates in his system came from drugs he used to euthanize animals.

State trooper suspended in missing Rolex case

VT WILLISTON — A Vermont State Police trooper has been suspended with pay while detectives conduct a criminal investigation into missing property, including a \$14,000 Rolex watch, from the temporary evidence storage room at the Williston barracks.

Detectives are investigating possible grand larceny, possession of stolen property and other charges, court records say. No charges have been filed.

The suspension of Trooper Giancarlo DiGenova, who has been with the state police since 2009, was announced recently by the state police. A request for a search warrant that was approved by a judge Dec. 22 says the missing property included a Rolex wristwatch and other items seized by narcotics investigators and Burlington police on Nov. 22.

— From wire reports

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Jaguars top Titans, take AFC South title

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — With a scoop and score that will go down in franchise lore, Josh Allen may have put an end to the chaos and disappointment that has defined the Jacksonville Jaguars for the better part of the past decade.

Allen's 37-yard fumble return with 2:51 remaining helped the Jaguars beat rival Tennessee 20-16 on Saturday night and secure their first AFC South championship since 2017.

"I'm speechless," Jaguars owner Shad Khan said before crediting coach Doug Pederson, general manager Trent Baalke and players. "I've always had confidence that we would be getting to where we needed to go."

Khan could have easily singled out Allen and safety Rayshawn Jenkins, who forced Josh Dobbs' fumble. Allen picked up the loose ball on a perfect bounce and ran, untouched, the other way for a lead that held up.

Dobbs fumbled again on the ensuing possession, and the Jaguars (9-8) started to celebrate their most significant regular-season victory in history.

"This was one of those games where our defense had to win it for us," Jaguars quarterback Trevor Lawrence said. "Us guys on offense, we're a little frustrated because we left a lot out there. But in these games, just win. Our defense picked us up today. They played great."

Jacksonville earned the No. 4 seed in the conference playoffs and will host either the Los Angeles Chargers or Baltimore in the wild-card round next weekend.

It's the 18th time in the last 20 seasons that at least one NFL team won its division after finishing last or tied for last the previous year.

Jacksonville closed the regular season with its fifth consecutive victory and became the fifth team in NFL history to make the playoffs with a five-

game losing streak and a five-game winning streak in the same season.

"We just kept believing," Lawrence said. "Nobody ever lost faith. Everybody believed in one another. We never started pointing the finger. We lost five games straight and we just got tighter."

Tennessee (7-10) lost its final seven games, a skid that had just about everyone writing it off before Saturday's finale.

"Nobody wants to finish how we did," Titans running back Derrick Henry said. "That's never the plan, never the goal. Like I said, stuff happens, adversity happens."

"We wanted to win the division and have a great record, yeah, but it didn't happen this year. All you can do is go back to work and be thankful for the journey and everybody in their efforts and look forward."

The Jaguars were 6½-point favorites, according to FanDuel Sportsbook, and a near-sellout

crowd was on hand to witness what many thought would be more of a coronation than a scratch-and-claw nail-biter.

The Titans didn't do anything spectacular. With quarterback Ryan Tannehill (ankle) out for the season, they leaned on Dobbs — an aerospace engineer who has bounced around the league — to be smart with the ball and Henry to grind out tough yards. And they relied on a defense that's been stout against the run all year.

It worked for 57 minutes — and then it unraveled.

Henry finished with 109 yards on 30 carries. Dobbs completed 20 of 29 passes for 179 yards, with a touchdown, an interception and the fumble.

Lawrence completed 20 of 32 passes for 212 yards, with a touchdown and a fumble. Lawrence had two would-be touchdowns in the second half fall incomplete. He overthrew Zay Jones in the end zone and underthrew Christian Kirk.

Mahomes leads Chiefs past Raiders to AFC top seed

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The Kansas City Chiefs don't believe in simply wrapping up the AFC's top seed. They want to have fun doing it.

Late in the first half Saturday against the Las Vegas Raiders, the Chiefs huddled and spun in a circle, broke out into the shotgun with running back Jerick McKinnon taking a direct snap. He faked a handoff to Kadarius Toney and pitched to quarterback Patrick Mahomes, who then threw to Toney for a 9-yard touchdown.

But it didn't count. A holding penalty brought back the play. The Chiefs then scored anyway to take full control of what became a 31-13 victory.

The play is called the Snow Globe or Arctic Circle, depending on who is asked. But even if

it didn't count, it underscored the Chiefs' creativity and willingness to have fun, even while playing for playoff positioning and a week off.

"We talked about it on the side, 'Let's see if we can get some confusion going and throw something back.'" Mahomes said. "It worked. We just had the holding penalty. We got some good things going for the playoffs, and whatever we run has to work."

That, Chiefs coach Andy Reid said, was the bottom line.

"You do [want to make it fun], but you want to score, too," Reid said. "It's not fun when you're not doing that."

Almost lost was the NFL record for total yards in a season that Mahomes set. He passed for 202 yards and rushed for 29 against the Raiders, giving him

5,608 total yards this season. That surpassed the record of 5,562 yards set by Drew Brees in 2011 with the New Orleans Saints.

"Pat was on fire," Reid said. "He's throwing these (statistics) out there like they're nothing."

More than setting the mark, Mahomes helped ensure the top seed for the Chiefs (14-3) and a bye in the first round of the playoffs, which begin next weekend. Kansas City, however, is not assured of home-field advantage throughout the post-season.

Because Monday night's Buffalo-Cincinnati game was canceled, the Chiefs could wind up playing the Bills or Bengals in the AFC championship on a neutral field. The Buffalo-Cincinnati game ini-

tially was postponed after Bills safety Damar Hamlin went into cardiac arrest. Hamlin remains in critical condition, but is improving.

This was the first NFL game played since Hamlin was hospitalized. Both teams wore black shirts in warmups that read "LOVE FOR DAMAR" with his No. 3 in the middle. Mahomes also wore a hoodie that had a drawing of the player with "HAMLIN STRONG" below it.

Instead of a moment of silence before the game, the Allegiant Stadium public-address announcer asked fans to cheer on Hamlin's recovery.

The Raiders (6-11) ended their first season under coach Josh McDaniels with three consecutive losses and four defeats in five games.

No. 6 Texas wins with tough defense

Associated Press

STILLWATER, Okla. — No. 6 Texas took a key step toward moving past the Chris Beard era on Saturday.

Beard, who faces a felony domestic family violence charge stemming from a Dec. 12 incident involving his fiancée, was fired Thursday.

With interim coach Rodney Terry at the helm, the Longhorns focused on basketball. Marcus Carr scored 12 points in Texas' 56-46 win over Oklahoma State, and Texas (13-2, 2-1 Big 12) improved to 6-1 under Terry.

"I'm proud of our guys," Terry said. "And I said to them the other day, probably more than any team in the country, this group has really stuck together and persevered through some adversity and some challenges. ... They've really focused on what they can control and I think just kind of locked in and enjoyed playing with each other and being around each other every day."

Texas bounced back from Tuesday's 116-103 loss to Kansas State, despite shooting just 31.5% from the field against Oklahoma State. The Longhorns held the Cowboys to 30.4% shooting.

"We said that we needed to have a gritty team today," Terry said. "You know, the team that was going to come in and play their hardest today and really try to max out defensively was going to have a chance to win this game today."

Kalib Boone had 16 points, 10 rebounds and six blocks for Oklahoma State (9-6, 1-2).

Oklahoma State's Moussa Cisse, the 7-foot-1 forward who leads the Big 12 with 9.9 rebounds and 2.7 blocks per game, missed the game with an ankle injury.

Texas led 32-24 at halftime despite shooting 32.1% before the break. Eight Longhorns scored in the first half, but none posted more than five points. Texas held Oklahoma State to 33.3% shooting in the first 20 minutes.

No. 3 Kansas 76, West Virginia 62: Freshman Grady Dick scored 16 points, Jalen Wilson had 14 points and 14 rebounds, and the visiting Jayhawks rode a hot start to victory over the Mountaineers.

Kansas (14-1, 3-0 Big 12) has won eight straight and avoided the nail-biting finishes of its first two conference games.

No. 4 UConn 69, Creighton 60: Big East preseason player of the year Adama Sanogo scored 26 points and the host Huskies bounced back from their first two losses of the season with a win over the Bluejays.

UConn's big man hit 10 of 20 shots, including two three-pointers, and pulled down

nine rebounds. Jordan Hawkins added 17 points for the Huskies (15-2, 4-2 Big East).

Washington State 74, No. 5 Arizona 61: Mouhamed Gueye had 24 points and 14 rebounds, and the Cougars ended the Wildcats' 28-game home winning streak.

Washington State (7-10, 2-4 Pac-12) built an 18-point lead midway through the second half, withstood Arizona's late run and shot 12-for-28 from three-point range to end what had been the nation's third-longest active winning streak.

No. 7 Alabama 78, Kentucky 52: Star freshman Brandon Miller had 19 points and seven rebounds for the host Crimson Tide, who dominated the Wildcats.

No. 8 Tennessee 85, South Carolina 42: Olivier Nkamhoua scored a season-high 21 points on 10-for-10 shooting and the visiting Volunteers started 3-0 in the Southeastern Conference for the first time in four seasons.

No. 9 Gonzaga 81, Santa Clara 76: Drew Timme and Nolan Hickman scored 20 points each and the visiting Bulldogs earned their 25th straight win against the Broncos.

Julian Strawther had 18 points and Ben Gregg grabbed eight rebounds for Gonzaga (14-3, 3-0 West Coast Conference).

No. 11 Virginia 73, Syracuse 66: Armaan Franklin scored 16 points and the host Cavaliers held on after squandering most of a 23-point, second-half lead, giving coach Tony Bennett the most victories in school history.

No. 22 Auburn 72, No. 13 Arkansas 59: Wendell Green Jr. scored 19 points and Allen Flanigan matched his season high with 18 to lead the host Tigers in their first win against a ranked opponent.

Illinois 79, No. 14 Wisconsin 69: Terrence Shannon Jr. scored 24 points and Coleman Hawkins made six threes and scored 20 points to lead the host Illini over the Badgers.

No. 16 Duke 65, Boston College 64: Dariq Whitehead scored 18 points, Kyle Filipowski hit two clutch free throws and the visiting Blue Devils rebounded from a miserable loss by holding off the Eagles.

No. 25 Iowa State 69, No. 17 TCU 67: Gabe Kalscheur scored 15 points, including a three-pointer with 1.3 seconds remaining, to give the visiting Cyclones a narrow win.

Mike Miles led TCU (13-2, 2-1 Big 12) with 18 points.

No. 18 Xavier 88, Villanova 80: Zach Freemantle scored 29 points, including eight in a row during a crucial stretch late in the second half, to lead the Musketeers to their ninth straight victory.

Lakers win 5th straight

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — LeBron James scored 37 points, Dennis Schroder made two free throws with 3.6 seconds left and the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Sacramento Kings 136-134 on Saturday night for their fifth straight victory.

"Trending in the right direction and learning from our mistakes," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said. "At the end of the day, everything we have gone through I think has been a huge education for us. We are trending in the right direction currently."

De'Aaron Fox had 34 points and nine assists for Sacramento. He missed a half-court shot at the buzzer.

Schroder finished with 27 points to help the Lakers improve to 19-21 with their sixth victory in seven games.

James also had eight rebounds and seven assists. He drew Domantas Sabonis' sixth foul with 48.1 seconds left and converted the shot and free throw to give the Lakers a one-point lead.

Thomas Bryant added 29 points and 14 rebounds for the Lakers.

"It says a lot about the confidence," Bryant said. "Strong resiliency that we try and bring each and every night out. I know each and every last one of those guys are proud of each other out there."

Mavericks 127, Pelicans 117: Luka Doncic had 34 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for his ninth triple-double of the season, Christian Wood added 28 points and host Dallas outlasted New Orleans.

New Orleans played without its three leading scorers — Zion Williamson, Brandon Ingram and CJ McCollum.

Celtics 121, Spurs 116: Jayson Tatum scored 34 points, hitting the tiebreaking jumper with 33 seconds left, and NBA-leading Boston beat host San Antonio for its sixth victory in eight games.

Magic 115, Warriors 101: Paolo Banchero scored 25 points, Franz Wagner added 24 points and Orlando sent Golden State to its second straight home loss, winning on the Warriors' home floor for the first time in more than 10 years.

Bulls 126, Jazz 118: Zach LaVine made three consecutive three-pointers during a key fourth-quarter stretch and scored 36 points, DeMar DeRozan had 35 and host Chicago beat Utah.

Devils rally to beat Rangers in overtime

Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — The New Jersey Devils were well aware they were playing poorly at home.

Coach Lindy Ruff spent most of Friday reminding his players they hadn't won at the Prudential Center since Dec. 6, and if that wasn't enough, the fans were clearly unhappy.

The Devils did something about it Saturday, rallying from two goals down in the third period and beating the rival New York Rangers 4-3 to snap an eight-game (0-7-1) winless streak at home.

Damon Severson provided the game winner with 2:13 left in overtime while Jesper Bratt started the comeback with a power-play goal, and Jack Hughes forced the overtime with his second of the game.

"We had a couple of games here at home where as a team we couldn't find a way to win," Bratt said. "This was a huge rivalry game, a playoff-type game. We really needed this extra point. It was huge for us."

The Rangers could have moved past the Devils in the standings, but New Jersey stepped up before starting a five-game road trip.

Blue Jackets 4, Hurricanes 3 (SO): Kirill Marchenko had his first career hat trick and scored in a shootout to lift host Columbus.

Max Pacioretty had two goals and Brady Skjei scored on the power play for Carolina. Antti Raanta stopped 15 shots in his first loss since Nov. 17.

Sabres 6, Wild 5 (OT): Rasmus Dahlin had two goals and three assists, Victor Olofsson also scored twice — including the winner with 18.3 seconds left in overtime — as host Buffalo won for the eighth time in nine games.

Joel Eriksson Ek and Ryan Hartman each had a goal and an assist for Minnesota, and Brandon Duhaime, Kirill Kaprizov and Marcus Foligno also scored. Marc-Andre Fleury finished with 31 saves as the Wild snapped a three-game winning streak.

Maple Leafs 4, Red Wings 1: Mitch Marner had a goal and an assist to reach 500 career points, and host Toronto snapped a two-game skid.

Jake Walman scored for Detroit in its third straight loss. Magnus Hellberg finished with 25 saves.

Kings 5, Golden Knights 1: Kevin Fiala scored three goals to lead visiting Los Angeles.

Matt Roy and Viktor Arvidsson also scored for the Kings, and Gabriel Vilardi had three assists. Second-place Los Angeles has 52 points, just four behind the Golden Knights, who have a game in hand.

Avalanche 3, Oilers 2 (OT): Cale Makar

scored at 2:09 of overtime and visiting Colorado snapped a five-game losing streak.

Zach Hyman scored twice for Edmonton, which lost for the sixth time in its last seven home games. Stuart Skinner stopped 43 shots.

Canadiens 5, Blues 4: Joel Armia scored twice and host Montreal snapped a seven-game skid.

Nikita Alexandrov got his first NHL goal for St. Louis, and Alexey Toropchenko, Brandon Saad and Pavel Buchnevich also scored. Jordan Binnington made 22 saves.

Kraken 8, Senators 4: Jordan Eberle and Andre Burakovsky each had a goal and two assists and visiting Seattle won its fourth straight.

Tim Stutzle had three goals and an assist in his second career hat trick, and Brady Tkachuk also scored for Ottawa. Anton Forsberg started in goal for the Senators but was pulled in favor of Cam Talbot 15 minutes into the game after allowing three goals on five shots. Talbot turned aside 14 shots.

Bruins 4, Sharks 2: David Pastrnak scored twice as visiting Boston beat San Jose.

Logan Couture and Mario Ferraro scored for the Sharks, and James Reimer made 25 saves. Erik Karlsson was held off the scoresheet, ending the veteran defenseman's 14-game point streak.

Shiffrin ties Vonn's career record for victories at 82

Associated Press

KRANJSKA GORA, Slovenia — The emotions came pouring out of Mikaela Shiffrin when she matched Lindsey Vonn's women's World Cup skiing record with her 82nd win Sunday.

First there was a scream of delight following a serious case of nerves that had been building inside her throughout the day. Then came tears during the playing of the American anthem when her thoughts turned to her father, Jeff, who died three years ago.

"My dad used to be there and taking pictures. Most races these days I'll think about him and I'm able to kind of refocus," Shiffrin said. "But when I'm singing the national an-

them (it's different). It was just before I ever won my first World Cup, he said, 'You better memorize the words of the national anthem, because if you ever win, you better sing it.' And so I always think about him when I'm up there."

Shiffrin led from start to finish to win a giant slalom by a large margin and can now break Vonn's mark in a night slalom scheduled for Flachau, Austria, on Tuesday.

"I was so nervous this run. I have a rash on my face I was so nervous," Shiffrin said. "I don't know why, maybe a little bit was because of 82. I just really wanted to ski well, and I did."

Where other skiers struggled on a dark, bumpy and unusual-

ly steep course, Shiffrin was able to ski smoothly.

"It was a fight. But it was pretty amazing conditions and I got a report from the coaches and they were like, 'It's really attackable, so just go for it,'" she said. "I've been in this position before and I've given it away and today I wanted to fight for it."

Already with eight wins this season, Shiffrin is also quickly approaching Ingemar Stenmark's overall record — between men and women — of 86 victories.

Vonn retired four years ago when injuries ended her pursuit of Stenmark's record.

Shiffrin and Vonn now each have 20 more wins than the next woman on the all-time

list, Annemarie Moser-Pröll of Austria at 62.

While the often-injured Vonn required 395 races for her 82 wins, Shiffrin has done it in just 233 races. And at age 27, Shiffrin could compete for several more years and win many more races.

Shiffrin's achievement comes almost a year after a disappointing performance at the Beijing Olympics, when she competed in six events without winning a medal.

Winning this race, though, never really seemed in doubt.

Shiffrin was the last skier to start the second run and increased her advantage at every checkpoint to finish a whopping 0.77 seconds ahead of Italy's Federica Brignone.