

Special counsel to probe Biden docs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Attorney General Merrick Garland on Thursday appointed a special counsel to investigate the presence of classified documents found at President Joe Biden's home in Wilmington, Del., and at an unsecured office in Washington dating from his time as vice president.

Robert Hur, a onetime U.S. attorney appointed by former President Donald Trump, will lead the investigation and plans to begin his work soon. His appointment marks the second time in a few months that Garland has appointed a special counsel, an extraordinary fact that reflects the Justice Department's efforts to independently conduct high-profile probes in

an exceedingly heated political environment.

Both of those investigations, the earlier one involving Trump and documents recovered from his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, relate to the handling of classified information, though there are notable differences between those cases.

Garland's decision caps a tumultuous week at the White House, where Biden and his team opened the year hoping to celebrate stronger economic news ahead of launching an expected reelection campaign. But the administration faced a new challenge Monday, when it acknowledged that sensitive documents were found at the office of Biden's former institute in Washington. The situation in-

tensified by Thursday morning, when Biden's attorney said an additional classified document was found at a room in his Wilmington home — later revealed by Biden to be his personal library — along with other classified documents in his garage.

The attorney general revealed that Biden's lawyers informed the Justice Department of the latest discovery at the president's home on Thursday morning, after FBI agents first retrieved documents from the garage in December.

Biden told reporters at the White House that he was "cooperating fully and completely" with the Justice Department's investigation into how classified information and government records were stored.

Garland said the "extraordinary circumstances" of the matter required Hur's appointment, adding that the special counsel is authorized to investigate whether any person or entity violated the law. Federal law requires strict handling procedures for classified information, and official records from Biden's time as vice president are considered government property under the Presidential Records Act.

While Garland said the Justice Department received timely notifications from Biden's personal attorneys after each set of classified documents was identified, the White House provided delayed and incomplete notification to the American public about the discoveries.

Lethal tornadoes slam parts of Alabama, Georgia

Associated Press

SELMA, Ala. — Rescuers raced Friday to find any survivors trapped in debris after tornadoes barreled across parts of the South in a system that killed at least nine people in Alabama and Georgia and inflicted heavy damage on Selma.

At least 35 possible tornado touchdowns were reported across several states, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The National Weather Service, which was working to confirm the twisters, said suspected tornado damage was reported in at least 14 counties in Alabama and five in Georgia.

Tens of thousands of homes and businesses were without power in both states, according to PowerOutage.us, which

tracks outages nationwide.

One tornado cut a 20-mile path across two rural Alabama communities Thursday before the worst of the weather moved across Georgia on a track south of Atlanta.

Searchers in Autauga County found a body after daybreak near a home that had been badly damaged, authorities said. That death brought the toll to seven in the county about 40 miles northeast of Selma.

At least 12 people were injured severely enough to be taken to hospitals, Ernie Baggett, Autauga County's emergency management director, said as crews cut through downed trees looking for survivors.

He said about 40 homes were destroyed or seriously damaged, including several mobile

homes that were launched into the air.

"They weren't just blown over," he said. "They were blown a distance."

In Selma, a city etched in the history of the civil rights movement, the city council met on a sidewalk using lights from cell phones and declared a state of emergency.

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp said Friday that a state Department of Transportation worker was killed while responding to storm damage. Another death occurred in Georgia's Butts County, where a passenger died when a tree fell on a vehicle, the coroner said. The storm appeared to have knocked a freight train off its tracks in the same county, officials said.

The storm struck Griffin, Ga.,

where officials told local news outlets that multiple people had been trapped inside an apartment complex after trees fell on it. A Hobby Lobby store lost part of its roof, and firefighters cut loose a man who had been pinned for hours under a tree that fell on his house.

The tornado that hit Selma cut a wide path through the downtown area, where brick buildings collapsed, oak trees were uprooted, cars were tossed onto their sides and power lines were left dangling.

Plumes of thick, black smoke from a fire rose over the city. It wasn't clear whether the storm caused the blaze.

Selma Mayor James Perkins said no fatalities were reported, but several people were seriously injured.

Rifts in Russian military command seen

Associated Press

As Russian troops wage a ferocious house-to-house fight for control of strongholds in eastern Ukraine, a parallel battle is unfolding in the top echelons of military power in Moscow, with President Vladimir Putin reshuffling his top generals while rival camps try to win his favor.

The fighting for the salt mining town of Soledar and the nearby city of Bakhmut has highlighted a bitter rift between the Russian Defense Ministry leadership and Yevgeny Prigozhin, a rogue millionaire whose private military force known as the Wagner Group has played an increasingly visible role in Ukraine.

Putin's shake-up of the military brass this week was seen as a bid to show that the Defense Ministry still has his support and is in charge as the troubled conflict nears the 11-month mark.

Prigozhin declared Wednesday that his mercenary force had captured Soledar, arguing the prize was won exclusively by Wagner. The Defense Ministry waited until Friday to an-

nounce its capture, saying without mentioning Wagner that it became possible thanks to air and artillery strikes and airborne forces' maneuvers. A Ukrainian army spokesman denied that, saying Kyiv's troops were still in Soledar.

Prigozhin fired back at the Defense Ministry, saying, "They are constantly trying to steal Wagner's victory."

Prigozhin, who was known as "Putin's chef" for his lucrative catering contracts and was indicted in the U.S. for meddling in the 2016 presidential election, has expanded his assets to include Wagner, as well as mining and other spheres. He has scathingly criticized the military brass for blunders in Ukraine, saying Wagner was more efficient than regular troops.

He has found a powerful ally in Chechnya's leader Ramzan Kadyrov, who has deployed elite troops from his southern Russian region to fight in Ukraine and also assailed the military leadership and the Kremlin for being too soft and indecisive.

While both have pledged loy-

alty to Putin, their public attacks on his top generals openly challenged the Kremlin's monopoly on such criticism, something that Russia's tightly controlled political system hadn't seen before.

In the reshuffle announced Wednesday, the Defense Ministry said the head of the General Staff, Gen. Valery Gerasimov, was named the new chief of Russian forces in Ukraine, while the former top commander there was demoted to Gerasimov's deputy after only three months on the job.

The Washington-based Institute of the Study of War saw the reshuffle as an attempt by the Kremlin to "reassert the primacy of the Russian Ministry of Defense in an internal Russian power struggle," weaken the influence of its foes and send a signal to Prigozhin and others to reduce their criticism.

Prigozhin and his allies have repeatedly criticized Gerasimov, the main architect of the Russian operation in Ukraine, and held him responsible for military defeats.

Russian troops were forced to

retreat from Kyiv after a botched attempt to capture the Ukrainian capital in the opening weeks of the war. In the fall, they hastily pulled back from the northeastern Kharkiv region and the southern city of Kherson under the brunt of a Ukrainian counteroffensive.

The former commander in Ukraine, Gen. Sergei Surovikin, directed the retreat from Kherson, the only regional center captured by Russia, and was credited for shoring up command and increasing discipline in the ranks. But a Jan. 1 Ukrainian missile strike in the eastern town of Makiivka killed scores of Russian troops and tainted his image.

Political analyst Tatiana Stanovaya observed that Gerasimov's appointment marked yet another attempt by Putin to resolve his military problems by shaking up the brass.

"He is trying to reshuffle the pieces and is therefore giving chances to those who he finds persuasive," she wrote. "But in reality, the problem is not with the people, but with the tasks at hand."

NSA director urges renewal of surveillance powers

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The director of the National Security Agency urged Congress to renew sweeping powers granted to American spy agencies to surveil and examine communications, saying they were critical to stopping terrorism, cyberattacks and other threats.

The remarks Thursday by Army Gen. Paul Nakasone, opened what's expected to be a contentious debate over provisions of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act that expire at year's end. The bipartisan con-

sensus in favor of expanded surveillance powers in the years after Sept. 11 has given way to increased skepticism, especially among some Republicans who believe spy agencies used those powers to undermine former President Donald Trump.

The new GOP majority in the U.S. House has already formed a panel on the "weaponization of the federal government." And progressive Democrats have pushed for more curbs on warrantless surveillance.

The NSA and other spy agencies use authorities under FI-

SA's Section 702 to collect huge swaths of foreign communications, which also results in the incidental collection of emails and calls from Americans. The law prohibits spy agencies from targeting Americans and requires the FBI to seek a court order to access a U.S. citizen's communications.

Section 702 was renewed for six years in 2018, when Trump originally tweeted opposition to the program but then reversed himself.

Nakasone argued the law "plays an outsize role in protect-

ing the nation" and generates "some of the U.S. government's most valuable intelligence on our most challenging targets."

He gave several broad examples of that work, including the discovery of attempts to steal sensitive U.S. technology, stopping the transfer of weapons components, preventing cyberattacks and "understanding the strategic intentions" of China and Russia.

"We have saved lives because of 702," Nakasone told a virtual meeting of the U.S. Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board.

US stops hundreds fleeing Cuba, Haiti, returns most

Associated Press

MIAMI — The Coast Guard returned another 177 Cuban migrants who were caught at sea off Florida to the island on Thursday, while a group of about two dozen Haitians swam ashore in Miami.

The Cuban migrants were all intercepted separately off the coast earlier this month, according to a Coast Guard news release. They were repatriated by two Coast Guard cutters.

Twenty-five Haitians who had traveled by sailboat from Port-de-Paix, Haiti, swam ashore at Virginia Key, a small island just southeast of downtown Miami, and were taken into the custody of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, agency spokesman Michael Selva said.

Beachgoers helped some of the migrants ashore with small boats and jet skis, Selva said.

Dozens of additional mi-

grants still aboard the sailboat were being processed by federal officials at sea, which typically means they are returned to their home countries.

Increasing numbers of Cuban and Haitian migrants have attempted the risky Florida Straits crossing in recent months to illegally enter the Keys Island chain and other parts of the state as inflation soars and economic conditions deteriorate in their home countries.

The spike among Cubans has been especially pronounced. Since Oct. 1, 2022, the Coast Guard has interdicted more than 4,900 Cuban migrants at sea, as compared with more than 6,100 Cubans intercepted during all of fiscal 2022, which ended Sept. 30, according to the news release.

The latest returns and landings came just after President

Joe Biden's administration began a new policy to start turning back Cubans, Haitians and Nicaraguans at the Texas border, along with Venezuelans, who arrive illegally.

The administration also is offering humanitarian parole for up to 30,000 people a month from those four countries if they apply online, pay their airfare and find a financial sponsor.

Migrants who arrive illegally and don't immediately return home will become ineligible for the new parole.

U.S. officials are hoping this will deter sea arrivals by offering a safer alternative and a pathway to residency.

The U.S. Embassy in Havana, Cuba recently resumed processing migrant visas, and said Wednesday that some initial Cuban applicants already had been accepted under the new parole.

NCAA's transgender inclusion protested

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Former Kentucky swimmer Riley Gaines and about two dozen demonstrators outside the NCAA convention Thursday protested the inclusion of transgender athletes in women's sports and threatened the association with legal action if it doesn't change its policies.

Gaines competed in last year's NCAA swimming and diving championships against Penn's Lia Thomas, who became first transgender woman to win a national title (the women's 500-yard freestyle). She also placed fifth in the 200 freestyle, tying with Gaines.

"Today, we intend to personally tell the NCAA to stop discriminating against female athletes by handing them a petition that we have garnered nearly 10,000 signatures on in just a couple of days," Gaines said.

The topic has divided the U.S. for the past several years, with critics saying transgender athletes have an advantage over cisgender women in competition. Eighteen states have passed laws banning transgender athletes from participating in female school sports; a federal judge earlier this month ruled West Virginia's ban is constitutional and can remain in place.

The Transgender Student-Athlete Participation Policy was updated a year ago, taking a sport-by-sport approach that brings the NCAA in line with the U.S. and international Olympic committees.

Full implementation of the policy was scheduled to be phased in by August but the NCAA Board of Governors this week approved a recommendation to delay that through the 2023-24 academic year "to address operational considerations."

Prosecutor says Proud Boys attacked 'heart' of democracy in 1/6 Capitol riot

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrío and four lieutenants led a coordinated attack on "the heart of our democracy" in a desperate attempt to keep Donald Trump in the White House, a federal prosecutor said Thursday at the start of their seditious conspiracy trial.

Jurors heard attorneys' opening statements for the trial more than two years after members of the far-right extremist group joined a pro-Trump mob in storming the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jason McCullough said the Proud Boys knew that Trump's hopes

for a second term in office were quickly fading as Jan. 6 approached. So the group leaders assembled a "fighting force" to stop the transfer of presidential power to Joe Biden, McCullough said. Tarrío saw a Biden presidency as a "threat to the Proud Boys' existence," the prosecutor said.

McCullough showed jurors a video clip of Trump infamously telling the Proud Boys to "stand back and stand by" during his first presidential debate with Biden in 2020, a moment that led to an explosion of interest in the group.

"These men did not stand back. They did not stand by. Instead, they mobilized," the pros-

ecutor said.

Defense attorneys said there is no evidence that the Proud Boys plotted to attack the Capitol and stop Congress from certifying the Electoral College vote on Jan. 6.

"They're trying to build this conspiracy that does not exist," said one of Tarrío's lawyers, Sabino Jauregui.

The trial comes on the heels of the seditious conspiracy convictions of two leaders of the Oath Keepers, another far-right extremist group.

The trial of Tarrío and his associates will provide an in-depth look at a group that has become an influential force in Republican politics.

More strikes by nurses may follow NY action

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Even as 7,000 nurses return to work at two of New York's busiest hospitals after a three-day strike, colleagues around the country say it's just a matter of time before workers at other hospitals begin walking the picket line.

Problems are mounting at hospitals across the nation as they try to deal with widespread staffing shortages, overworked nurses beaten down by the pandemic and a busted pipeline of new nurses.

That's led to nurses juggling dangerously high caseloads, said Michelle Collins, dean at the college of nursing and health at Loyola University New Orleans.

"There's no place that's immune from what's happening with the nursing shortage," Collins said. "It's everywhere."

Union leaders say the tentative contract agreement ending the strike by nurses at Mount Sinai Hospital and Montefiore Medical Center, each privately owned, nonprofit hospitals that hold over 1,000 beds in New York City, will relieve chronic short staffing and boost pay by 19% over three years.

The walkout, which ended Thursday, was just the latest dispute between nurses and their employers.

Last year, six unions representing a total of 32,000 nurses launched strikes outside of hospital systems around the country, according to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics.

Those strikes represented about a quarter of all the major strikes in the U.S. last year, an increase from the year before.

Describing hospital environments where nurses are unable

to take breaks because they are assigned too many patients — some of whom are pleading for care from frontline workers — the president of the American Nurses Association, Dr. Jennifer Mensik Kennedy, said some nurses may think their only option is to strike.

In California, nurse unions at two hospitals are likely to strike this year when their contract expires, said former nurse Peter Sidhu, who now works for the state union.

Sidhu, who fields objections from nurses across the state who say their caseloads are unsafe, has received 7,000 such complaints in Los Angeles County hospitals since December.

He said objections have at least doubled since before the pandemic began.

Nurse shortages were plagu-

ing some hospitals years before COVID-19 hit, and signs of a crisis loomed, with a large swath of the workforce nearing retirement age.

A policy brief from the Department of Health and Human Services last year found that over half of nurses were over the age of 50, a much higher percentage compared with the overall U.S. labor workforce, where only a quarter of people are 55 or older.

Aspiring nurses are lining up to replace those retirees but even that silver lining has hit a snag, with widespread faculty shortages at nursing colleges. In 2021, nearly 92,000 qualified nursing school applicants were denied entry into a program, largely because of a shortage of educators, according to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

After storm, FEMA's help for Alaska Natives had mistranslations, nonsense

Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — After tidal surges and high winds from the remnants of a rare typhoon caused extensive damage to homes along Alaska's western coast in September, the U.S. government stepped in to help residents — largely Alaska Natives — repair damage.

Residents who opened Federal Emergency Management Agency paperwork expecting to find instructions on how to file for aid in native languages like Yup'ik or Inupiaq instead were reading bizarre phrases.

"Tomorrow he will go hunting very early, and will (bring) nothing," read one passage. The translator randomly added the word "Alaska" in the middle of the sentence.

"Your husband is a polar bear, skinny," another said.

Yet another was written entirely in Inuktitut, an Indige-

nous language spoken in northern Canada, far from Alaska.

FEMA fired the California company hired to translate the documents once the errors became known, but the incident was an ugly reminder for Alaska Natives of the suppression of their culture and languages.

FEMA immediately took responsibility for the translation errors and corrected them, and the agency is working to make sure it doesn't happen again, spokesperson Jaclyn Rothenberg said. No one was denied aid because of the errors.

That's not good enough for one Alaska Native leader.

For Tara Sweeney, an Inupiaq who served as an assistant secretary of Indian Affairs in the U.S. Interior Department during the Trump administration, this was another reminder of steps taken to prevent Alaska Native children from speaking

Indigenous languages.

"When my mother was beaten for speaking her language in school, like so many hundreds, thousands of Alaska Natives, to then have the federal government distributing literature representing that it is an Alaska Native language, I can't even describe the emotion behind that sort of symbolism," Sweeney said.

Sweeney called for a congressional oversight hearing to uncover how long and widespread the practice has been used throughout government.

"These government contracting translators have certainly taken advantage of the system, and they have had a profound impact, in my opinion, on vulnerable communities," said Sweeney, whose great-grandfather, Roy Ahmaogak, invented the Inupiaq alphabet more than a half-century ago.

'Rick and Morty' creator faces violence charge

Associated Press

SANTA ANA, Calif. — Justin Roiland, who created the animated series "Rick and Morty" and provides the voices of the two title characters, is awaiting trial on charges of felony domestic violence against a former girlfriend.

A criminal complaint in Orange County, Calif., charged Roiland, 42, with corporal injury and false imprisonment by menace, fraud, violence or deceit against the woman, whom he was living with at the time. The woman was not identified in court documents.

Roiland has pleaded not guilty. The incident occurred in January of 2020 and Roiland was charged in May of that year, but the charges apparently went unnoticed by media outlets until a pre-trial hearing was held in the case Thursday.

Trump Organization fined \$1.6M for tax fraud

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Donald Trump's company was fined \$1.6 million Friday for a scheme in which the former president's top executives dodged personal income taxes on lavish job perks — a symbolic, hardly crippling blow for an enterprise boasting billions of dollars in assets.

A fine was the only penalty a judge could impose on the Trump Organization after its conviction last month for 17 tax

crimes, including conspiracy and falsifying business records.

The amount imposed by Judge Juan Manuel Merchan was the maximum allowed by law, double the taxes a small group of executives avoided on benefits including rent-free apartments in Trump buildings, luxury cars and private school tuition.

Merchan gave the company 14 days to pay.

Trump himself was not on

trial and denied any knowledge of his executives evading taxes illegally. In a statement released after sentencing, the Trump Organization said it did nothing wrong and would appeal.

"These politically motivated prosecutors will stop at nothing to get President Trump and continue the never ending witch-hunt which began the day he announced his presidency," it said.

Neither the former president or his children, who helped run and promote the Trump Organization, were in the courtroom.

While the fines — less than the cost of a Trump Tower apartment — aren't big enough to impact the company's operations or future, the conviction is a black mark on the Republican's reputation as a savvy businessman as he mounts a campaign to regain the White House.

Japan charges Abe suspect with murder

Associated Press

TOKYO — Japanese prosecutors formally charged the suspect in the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe with murder, sending him to stand trial, a court said Friday.

Tetsuya Yamagami was arrested immediately after allegedly shooting Abe with a homemade gun as the former leader was making a campaign speech in July outside a train station in Nara in western Japan. He then

underwent a nearly six-month mental evaluation, which prosecutors said showed he is fit to stand trial.

Yamagami was also charged with violating a gun control law, according to the Nara District Court.

Police have said Yamagami told them that he killed Abe, one of Japan's most influential and divisive politicians, because of Abe's apparent links to a religious group that he hated. In his statements and in social media

postings attributed to him, Yamagami said he developed a grudge because his mother had made donations to the Unification Church that bankrupted his family and ruined his life.

One of his lawyers, Masaaki Furukawa, told The Associated Press on Thursday that Yamagami will have to take responsibility for the serious consequences of his alleged actions and that his defense lawyers will do their best to reduce his sentence.

Sweden: Effigy aimed to ruin NATO bid

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson on Friday denounced a protest by Kurds in central Stockholm where an effigy of Turkey's president was hung from a lamppost as an act of sabotage against Sweden's bid to join NATO.

The protest outside City Hall on Wednesday drew an angry backlash from Turkey, a NATO member which already had held off approving Sweden's application to become part of the Western military alliance until the government in Stockholm satisfies its demands.

Turkey has made its approval conditional on Stockholm cracking down on Kurdish militants and other groups that Ankara considers a threat to national security. The Turkish Foreign Ministry summoned the Swedish ambassador on Thursday over the Stockholm demonstration.

Death toll climbs in Peru demonstrations

Associated Press

LIMA, Peru — A 16-year-old shot during a protest in the southern region of Puno died Thursday, bringing the death toll to 49 in more than a month of unrest following the ouster of President Pedro Castillo.

Relatives of the teen, who officials only identified by the initials B.A.J., say he had been hospitalized for two days after be-

ing shot in the head.

His passing raised the number of deaths during protests in hard-hit Puno, home to Lake Titicaca, to 19. Among the dead are a policeman who was attacked and burned to death by a group of protesters.

The Ombudsman's Office said Thursday that there were mobilizations, strikes and roadblocks in 35 provinces, most of

them in the southern regions.

In Lima, hundreds of people marched through the city's center demanding the resignation of President Dina Boluarte, the closure of Congress and immediate elections. Some called for the release of Castillo, who remains in prison. The governors of Puno, Cusco and Apurímac have called for Boluarte's resignation.

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Mavericks defeat Lakers in double-OT

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Luka Dončić hit tying 3-pointers in the final seconds of regulation and the first overtime, finishing with 35 points, 14 rebounds and 13 assists in the Dallas Mavericks' 119-115 double-overtime victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Thursday night.

Dončić highlighted his 56th career triple-double with that pair of clutch 3-pointers, while Christian Wood added 24 points and 14 rebounds in the Mavs' fourth straight win over the Lakers. Tim Hardaway Jr. had 22 points and eight rebounds for Dallas, and Spencer Dinwiddie scored twice in a late 6-0 run to put it away in double OT.

Russell Westbrook scored a season-high 28 points and LeBron James had 24 points, 16 rebounds and nine assists for the Lakers, who have lost two straight after a five-game winning streak. Los Angeles rallied all the way back from a 19-point regulation deficit and got to the brink of an unlikely win, but couldn't match Dončić's dramatic flair.

Celtics 109, Nets 98: Jayson Tatum had 20 points and 11 rebounds and Boston pulled away in the fourth quarter to beat

Brooklyn in the Nets' first game since losing Kevin Durant to a knee injury.

Marcus Smart added 16 points and 10 assists for the Celtics, who played without Jaylen Brown because of an injury. Malcolm Brogdon also scored 16 points as the NBA-leading Celtics won their fifth straight.

Brown had right adductor tightness, a night after scoring a season-high 41 points in a victory over New Orleans. Interim coach Joe Mazzulla said Brown could miss a week or more. Derrick White, starting for Brown, scored 15 points.

Kyrie Irving scored 24 points for the Nets, who were right with the Celtics until getting outscored 12-2 to open the fourth. T.J. Warren added 20 and Joe Harris, starting for Durant, had 18.

Heat 108, Bucks 102: Gabe Vincent scored a career-best 28 points, Bam Adebayo had 24 points and 12 rebounds, and Miami beat Milwaukee in a matchup of short-handed teams.

Jimmy Butler had 17 points and 11 rebounds for the Heat, who got 14 points, eight rebounds and seven assists from Victor Oladipo. Max Strus had

12 points and 10 rebounds for Miami (23-20), which moved a season-best three games over .500, even with starters Kyle Lowry, Tyler Herro and Caleb Martin sidelined.

Jrue Holiday had 24 points and 11 assists for the Bucks, who were without Giannis Antetokounmpo, Grayson Allen, Khris Middleton, Serge Ibaka and Joe Ingles. Jevon Carter scored 18, Jordan Nwora had 16, AJ Green scored 15 and Bobby Portis had 12 for the Bucks.

Cavaliers 119, Trail Blazers 113: Donovan Mitchell scored 26 points, Ricky Rubio had nine points in 10 minutes in his first game since a knee injury more than a year ago, and Cleveland rallied in the fourth quarter to beat Portland, which lead by as many as 14 points early in the game.

Damian Lillard had a season-high 50 points, but it wasn't enough for the Blazers, who lost their fifth straight.

Jarrett Allen added 24 points and 10 rebounds for the Cavaliers' fifth win in their last seven games.

Raptors 124, Hornets 114: Pascal Siakam scored 35 points, Scottie Barnes added 21 and Toronto beat Charlotte for its first

three-game winning streak of the season.

Gary Trent Jr. scored 19 points and O.G. Anunoby had 15 as the Raptors swept a pair of home games against the struggling Hornets. Toronto led by as many as 18 points and never trailed. The Raptors have won five straight home games against Charlotte. Fred VanVleet scored 11 points and Precious Achiuwa had 10 points and a career-best five steals.

LaMelo Ball scored 32 points before fouling out, and Terry Rozier had 21 points as Charlotte lost for the sixth time in seven games.

Thunder 133, 76ers 114: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 37 points and Josh Giddey had 20 to lead Oklahoma City past Philadelphia.

The Thunder won for the fourth time in six games. Oklahoma City was a solid 13-9 at home, but won just their sixth road game of the season.

Jaylin Williams and Tre Mann each scored 14 points as Oklahoma City avenged a 19-point loss to the 76ers on Dec. 31.

Joel Embiid had 30 points and 10 rebounds. James Harden had 24 points and 15 assists.

Gonzaga edges BYU on a late 3-pointer by Strawther

Associated Press

PROVO, Utah — Julian Strawther hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with 9.8 seconds left to lift No. 8 Gonzaga to a 75-74 victory over BYU on Thursday night.

Drew Timme had 19 points and 13 rebounds to lead the Bulldogs. Anton Watson added 18 points and Strawther finished with 11 — including the game-winner.

Gonzaga (15-3, 4-0 WCC) overcame 34.5% shooting in the second half to rally for the win.

Spencer Johnson scored 18 points to lead BYU. Gideon

George and Jaxon Robinson chipped in 17 points apiece for the Cougars. Johnson, George, and Robinson combined to make 12 3-pointers. BYU (13-7, 3-2 WCC) lost to Gonzaga for the sixth straight time.

No. 7 UCLA 68, Utah 49: Tyger Campbell scored 17 points, Adem Bona added 15, and UCLA rolled past Utah for the Bruins' 12th consecutive victory.

UCLA (15-2, 6-0 Pac-12) is on its longest winning streak since opening the 2016-17 season with 13 straight wins. The Bruins are 10-0 at home this season.

Bona scored five points in the second half when the Bruins ran away. They opened with a 15-6 run to extend their lead to 46-28. Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored his first points of the game in that span. He tied his season high with 12 rebounds.

Rollie Worster led the Utes (12-5, 5-2) with 12 points off the bench.

No. 9 Arizona 86, Oregon State 74: Pac-12 scoring leader Azuolas Tubelis had 25 points to help Arizona beat Oregon State.

The Wildcats (15-2, 4-2 Pac-12) were coming off a 74-61 loss to Washington State that

snapped Arizona's 28-game home winning streak. Tubelis got the team back in the win column.

He made 11 of 15 from the field and had 10 rebounds. Oumar Ballo scored 15 points with 14 rebounds and two blocks.

Oregon State (7-10, 1-5 Pac-12) struggled against Arizona's aggressive man-to-man defense. The Beavers shot just 25% in the first half and trailed 44-26 at the break. Tubelis scored 15 points in the first half.

Tyler Bilodeau and Michael Rataj scored 18 points apiece to pace the Beavers.

Jones makes 27 saves in Kraken victory

Associated Press

BOSTON — Martin Jones stopped 27 shots to lead the Kraken to a 3-0 victory over Boston, and Seattle matched its franchise record with a seventh straight victory Thursday night while sending the Bruins to their first regulation home loss all season.

Brandon Tanev, Eeli Tolvanen and Jaden Schwartz scored for Seattle, which also won seven in a row earlier this season — its second since joining the NHL as an expansion franchise. It was Jones' third shutout of the season.

Linus Ullmark made 28 saves for the Bruins, who had won four straight games while building an 11-point lead in the race for the NHL's best record. They had been 19-0-3 at home this season.

Golden Knights 4, Panthers 2: William Carrier snapped a tie with 2:36 left, leading Vegas to the victory.

The Panthers challenged Carrier's goal for goaltender interference. Officials ruled he was pushed into Florida goalie Sergei Bobrovsky by the Panthers' Brandon Montour, allowing the goal to stand.

Keegan Kolesar's pass found Carrier in the crease, causing the scrum. It was Kolesar's second assist of the game.

William Karlsson added an empty-net goal for the final margin. Jack Eichel and Nicolas Roy also scored for the Golden Knights.

Nick Cousins and Sam Reinhart scored for Florida.

Red Wings 4, Maple Leafs 1: Lucas Raymond had a goal and two assists, and the Red Wings earned their first victory over the Maple Leafs in nearly four years.

Robby Fabbri, Ben Chiarot and Moritz Seider also scored for Detroit, and Ville Husso stopped 31 shots.

Rasmus Sandin scored for the Maple Leafs, who had won three in a row.

Detroit's previous win

against the Maple Leafs was a 3-2 overtime victory on Feb. 1, 2019. Toronto had won nine in a row in regulation over the Red Wings, outscoring them 48-21.

Rangers 2, Stars 1, OT: Adam Fox scored 1:16 into overtime after fellow Rangers defenseman K'Andre Miller tied it with 0.2 seconds left in regulation.

Jake Oettinger was tenths of a second from the shutout — and the Rangers hadn't even managed a shot on goal with an extra skater on the ice — before Miller's shot made it through for his fifth of the season.

Igor Shesterkin made 24 saves for New York, allowing only Tyler Seguin's power-play goal late in the second period.

Oettinger finished with 29 saves.

Lightning 5, Canucks 4: Tampa Bay star Steven Stamkos scored his 499th goal during a 5-on-3 power play in the third period.

On the verge of becoming the 47th NHL player to reach 500 goals, Stamkos beat Collin Delia from the left circle to make it 5-2 at 5:30.

Quinn Hughes and Elias Pettersson scored to pull Vancouver to 5-4. Curtis Lazar had an in-close shot turned aside by Andrei Vasilevskiy in the final seconds.

Corey Perry, Alex Killorn, Nikita Kucherov and Brandon Hagel also scored for the Lightning, who have won nine straight at home. Vasilevskiy made 36 saves.

Blackhawks 3, Avalanche 2: Taylor Raddysh snapped a tie in the third period, and the last-place Blackhawks earned their third straight victory.

Sam Lafferty and Andreas Athanasiou also scored for Chicago, and Petr Mrazek made 31 saves.

The Blackhawks had a 2-20-1 stretch before their win streak.

Cale Makar and Evan Rodrigues scored for Colorado, and Nathan MacKinnon had two assists. Pavel Francouz had

27 stops for the defending Stanley Cup champions.

The slumping Avalanche dropped to 1-6-1 in their last eight games.

Wild 3, Islanders 1: Frederick Gaudreau, Sam Steel and Kirill Kaprizov scored in the third period, sending Minnesota to the road win.

Filip Gustavsson made 19 saves for the Wild, who snapped a three-game losing streak in the finale of a two-game road trip.

Scott Mayfield scored for New York, and Ilya Sorokin finished with 33 saves. It was the Islanders' fourth consecutive loss.

Canadiens 4, Predators 3: Cole Caufield scored two power-play goals and Montreal held off Nashville after honoring former defenseman P.K. Subban in a pregame ceremony.

Kirby Dach added a goal and an assist for Montreal. Jake Evans also scored and Jonathan Drouin had three assists. Samuel Montembeault stopped 39 shots.

Nino Niederreiter, Filip Forsberg and Juuso Parssinen scored for Nashville. Yaroslav Askarov made 31 saves in his NHL debut.

Hurricanes 6, Blue Jackets 2: Brett Pesce had two goals, and Carolina stopped a four-game slide.

Seth Jarvis and Jaccob Slevin each had a goal and an assist for Carolina, which had won 11 in a row before its losing streak. Brent Burns and Jalen Chatfield each scored one of five goals by Hurricanes defensemen.

Frederik Andersen stopped 21 shots in his first start after missing 29 games with a lower-body injury.

Johnny Gaudreau and Sean Kuraly scored for Columbus in its third straight loss. Joonas Korpisalo stopped 35 shots.

Jets 4, Sabres 2: Kyle Connor broke a tie on a third-period breakaway, lifting Winnipeg to the road win.

Nikolaj Ehlers intercepted Rasmus Dahlin's pass and sent the puck to Connor, who sprinted up the ice and beat Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen at 7:19 to help the Jets to their sixth victory in seven games.

Dylan Samberg, Josh Morrissey and Karson Kuhlman also scored for Winnipeg. Connor Hellebuyck made 39 saves.

Victor Olofsson and Tyson Jost scored for Buffalo, and Luukkonen made 23 saves. The Sabres have lost three in a row.

Flames 4, Blues 1: Dillon Dube scored twice in the third period and Dan Vladar made 25 saves to help Calgary to the victory.

Dube broke a 1-all tie, scoring with 9:10 left in regulation, and he added an empty-netter in the final minutes. Blake Coleman pushed the lead to 3-1 with his eighth goal of the season with 3:56 left.

Walker Duehr's first NHL goal broke a scoreless tie and gave Calgary the lead in the second period.

Jake Neighbours scored for St. Louis, which had won eight of its last nine against the Flames, including a 4-3 overtime decision on Tuesday.

Senators 5, Coyotes 3: Brady Tkachuk and Alex DeBrincat each had a goal and an assist, and Ottawa handed Arizona its seventh straight loss.

Tkachuk and Derick Brassard scored in a testy first period that included Arizona All-Star Clayton Keller's cross-checking game misconduct.

The Coyotes cut two-goal deficits in half three times, the last on Barrett Hayton's backhand with 2:44 left. Arizona then pulled goalie Karel Vejmelka and sent a flurry of shots at Anton Forsberg, but Artem Zub closed it out with an empty-netter.

Mark Kastelic also scored and Forsberg stopped 27 shots.

Dylan Guenther had a goal and an assist, and Lawson Crouse also scored for Arizona. Vejmelka had 42 saves.

NCAA board approves recommendations

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — At the NCAA convention Thursday, outgoing President Mark Emmert said goodbye, incoming President Charlie Baker introduced himself and the state of college sports was declared perilous.

“As a collective enterprise, we are both thriving and threatened,” said Baylor President Linda Livingstone, who is the chairwoman of the NCAA’s Board of Governors.

Livingstone handled most of the annual state of college sports address with the NCAA in a period of both transition and transformation.

Earlier in the day, the Division I Board of Directors approved a host of recommendations intended to reform the top-tier of college sports, from membership standards to the size of championship brackets.

But Livingstone reiterated what has become a familiar refrain from college sports leaders during her time on stage, saying fed-

eral intervention is needed.

“We need a safe harbor to a certain degree from antitrust complaints,” Livingstone said. “We’re not looking for, nor do we need, a broad antitrust exemption. But we do need the ability to make common sense rules without limitless threats of litigation.”

Amid a patchwork of state laws, the NCAA is struggling to regulate the way athletes can now be compensated for the use of their names, images and likenesses. The association lifted its ban on athletes being paid by sponsors and endorsers in July 2021 and many within college sports worry it has quickly become a way to induce recruits or pay for play.

There are also multiple movements to grant college athletes employee status.

Livingstone said while it is essential college athletes not become employees of the schools in which they attend, that doesn’t mean they couldn’t eventually be compen-

sated.

“That’s one of the questions that we’re working on, trying to answer that question,” she said during a news conference after her address to membership. “It’s why protection of the status of our student-athletes is so important, that they be viewed as sort of a unique status on our campus, that they would not be employees.”

Baker, the former Republican governor of Massachusetts, was brought in to lead the NCAA because of his reputation as a consensus builder in a mostly Democratic state.

He conceded getting federal legislation passed is challenging, but not having it might not be an option.

“I do believe that there are serious issues with just letting this train run without doing something to deal with the consequences that are currently facing college sports,” he said in the news conference after he briefly addressed membership.

Spieth part of a 3-way tie for the lead at Sony Open

Associated Press

HONOLULU — Jordan Spieth played about the way he expected Thursday, another sign of growing confidence in his game, as he opened with a 6-under 64 and a share of the lead at the Sony Open with Chris Kirk and Taylor Montgomery.

Harris English had a 65 on a gorgeous day at Waialae Country Club, with a blazing sun and just enough wind to make players think every now and then. The large group one behind also included

Olympic silver medalist Rory Sabbatini of Slovakia.

S.H. Kim of South Korea was 5 under with two holes to play when the opening round was halted by darkness.

Spieth ended nearly four years without a victory when he won the Texas Open in 2021, and then added another win at Hilton Head last year. Missing on this day was the slow swing rehearsal to ingrain the changes he made to his swing.

His key word is freedom, and it sure

looked that way at Waialae. He had three birdies in a four-hole stretch around the turn, and outside of his lone bogey on 13th hole, his only disappointment was having to settle for par on his final hole at the par-5 ninth.

K.J. Choi, making a rare PGA Tour start age 52, was in the group at 66 that included Stewart Cink, who turns 50 in May.

Defending champion Hideki Matsuyama opened with a 68, one better than Adam Scott.

Atlanta will be site if Bills, Chiefs meet for AFC title

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Atlanta’s Mercedes-Benz Stadium will be the neutral site if Buffalo and Kansas City meet in the AFC championship game.

The NFL decided to put that potential matchup in a neutral city after the Bills’ Week 17 game against Cincinnati was canceled when Damar Hamlin went into cardiac arrest on the field.

The Chiefs (14-3) are the No. 1 seed in the AFC, but played one more game than the second-seeded Bills (13-3). The league brokered the neutral site deal because Buffalo could have been the top seed with a victory over the Bengals.

The Buffalo-Cincinnati game Jan. 2 was halted in the first quarter after Hamlin collapsed and was resuscitated on the field.

Hamlin was released from a Buffalo hospital on Wednesday.

The NFL said Thursday that Atlanta was designated as a potential backup postseason site before the 2022 season. All other potential matchups in the AFC title game will be played on the higher seed’s home field.

“We are heartened by the continued improvement and progress of Damar Hamlin in his recovery, and Damar and his family remain top of mind for the entire NFL community,” NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said in a statement. “We are also grate-

ful to Arthur Blank and the Atlanta Falcons for agreeing to host the AFC championship game in Atlanta should the Bills and Chiefs advance.”

Steve Cannon, vice chairman of Falcons owner Arthur Blank’s Sports and Entertainment portfolio, which also includes the MLS’ Atlanta United and Mercedes-Benz Stadium, said Atlanta is accustomed to hosting such big events as the Super Bowl in 2019, the college football national championship game in 2017 and this season’s College Football Playoff semifinal Peach Bowl.

“We’re certainly ready to host it,” Cannon said Sunday when he confirmed Atlanta’s interest in the game.