

## Drills set for Ukraine at US sites in Germany

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — The U.S. Army will begin training an expanded cadre of Ukrainian soldiers as early as this week at ranges in Germany, where troops will learn how to fire and maneuver with new armored fighting vehicles, military officials said last week.

The stepped-up effort means about 500 troops will cycle monthly through the Army's training hubs in Germany, the largest of which is in the Bavarian town of Grafenwoehr.

The initial contingent of roughly 500 Ukrainian soldiers builds on other specialized training by U.S. forces since Russia's full-scale invasion of

the country in February, said Col. Martin O'Donnell, spokesman for U.S. Army Europe and Africa.

As of December, the Army in Europe had trained about 3,000 Ukrainian soldiers.

The training grounds in Grafenwoehr include more than 100 miles of tank and secondary trails as well as dozens of artillery and mortar firing positions, and aerial gunnery and close-air-support zones.

Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the top Pentagon spokesman, said Thursday the expectation is that Bradley armored vehicles, which were authorized for delivery to Ukraine earlier this month, will soon be operational in the war.

"We're looking at weeks, not months," Ryder said.

The arrival of the Bradleys coincides with a pledge by Germany to send Marder infantry fighting vehicles to Ukraine.

On Saturday, The Associated Press reported that U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak promised to provide Challenger 2 tanks and other artillery systems after speaking to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Meanwhile, other allies, including Poland, have indicated they are considering deliveries of modern battle tanks to the country.

The U.S. has sent some \$20 billion in assistance to Ukraine since the start of the war.

During that time, the range of weaponry delivered has expanded from simpler equipment such as Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to longer-range artillery and more advanced systems.

Ukrainian troops will soon begin training in the U.S. on the Patriot missile defense system, which is among the most complex in the Army's inventory.

Many months are required for mastery of it.

Meanwhile, the USAREUR-AF efforts in Germany will be overseen by the Security Assistance Group-Ukraine, which was established in Wiesbaden in November to coordinate support efforts for Ukraine.

## US intel: Hundreds of UAP sightings reported in 18 months

By DOUG G. WARE  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON—There have been hundreds of new reports of unidentified aerial phenomena — the government's term for UFO-type sightings — and many of them remain unexplained, according to a new intelligence report.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence issued the report Thursday and sent the classified version to Congress. The unclassified 11-page version notes roughly 350 new UAP sightings from March 2021 to Sept. 1, 2022.

The intelligence agency is required by law to produce the UAP report, and the Pentagon's All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office is tasked with investigating the sightings.

The AARO determined 163 of the new sightings appeared to involve balloons or balloon-like entities, according to the report.

About two dozen appeared to be drone or drone-like vehicles, and a handful of others appeared to be "clutter."

The Pentagon office is putting more effort into studying the other 171 reported sightings for which investigators have no preliminary explanation, the report states.

"The majority of new UAP reporting originates from U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force aviators and operators who witnessed UAP during the course of their operational duties," the report states. "Regardless of the collection or reporting method, many reports lack enough detailed data to enable attribution of UAP with high certainty."

In 2020, the Pentagon created a task force to study mysterious aerial phenomena reported by military personnel. With a dedicated team now available to study strange flying objects, it was expected the government

would receive many more UAP sightings — an expectation confirmed by Thursday's report.

In early 2021, for example, the national intelligence office said there had been just 144 sightings reported in the previous 17 years. Some of the reported sightings have been captured on video, including three from the Navy that were declassified in early 2020.

Thursday's assessment found none of the sightings have yielded indications of extraterrestrial life — but one of the ongoing concerns is that the unexplained objects might still be dangerous.

"UAP events continue to occur in restricted or sensitive airspace, highlighting possible concerns for safety of flight or adversary collection activity," the report states. "This may result from a collection bias due to the number of active aircraft and sensors, combined with focused attention and guidance to report anomalies."

The report underscores that some of the sensitive areas tied to the sightings include nuclear power plants and military depots where nuclear weapons are possibly stored.

"Analyzing and understanding the potential threats posed by UAP is an ongoing collaborative effort," Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon's top spokesman, said in a statement.

"The safety of our service personnel, our bases and installations, and the protection of U.S. operations security on land, in the skies, seas and space are paramount. We take reports of incursions into our designated space, land, sea, or airspaces seriously and examine each one."

The study concludes greater awareness for UAPs will continue to produce more sightings, and government agencies will have to try to determine what they are and where they came from.

# Service members receive \$100K life insurance raise

BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL  
*Stars and Stripes*

Life insurance coverage for service members will rise for the first time in 18 years beginning March 1.

The maximum coverage under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance program, which benefits designated beneficiaries, will increase from \$400,000 to \$500,000.

This is the first update to life insurance coverage for active-duty members and veterans since 2005.

The coverage will cost \$31 a month, a nearly 30% increase in monthly out-of-pocket contributions from service members' paychecks.

SGLI coverage is automatic at the maximum coverage amount, and all eligible service members will initially receive it unless they decline the coverage, according to a Department of Veterans Affairs update.

The increase is a result of the cost-of-living adjustments approved by Congress as part of the Supporting Families of the Fallen Act, which was signed into law by President Joe Biden on Oct. 17.

The legislation falls more than \$100,000 short of a complete adjustment for inflation over time, however. The SGLI figure of

\$400,000 from 2005 would be equivalent to about \$622,000 today, using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator, which offers data up to last month.

Service members may reduce or decline coverage using the SGLI online enrollment system starting in March and must do so before the end of that month to avoid paying the increased premium.

Reservists with part-time SGLI coverage must reduce or decline coverage using Form SGLV 8286 via their personnel office.

Military personnel also may agree to Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance traumatic injury protection for an additional \$1 per month. The coverage offers up to \$100,000 in short-term financial support in cases of traumatic injury.

Service members who had declined SGLI coverage previously will now automatically receive the traumatic injury policy if they do not decline the updated SGLI coverage.

Under the Veterans' Group Life Insurance, former service members have the option to continue their coverage after they leave the military for as long as they continue to pay the premiums.

VGLI coverage will not be increased automatically, the department said.

# Navy eyes lean hospital ships for fast transport

BY WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

The massive defense spending bill signed into law last month includes funding for a new breed of Navy medical ship with the speed and agility to serve more as ambulance than hospital.

The vessels, dubbed expeditionary medical ships, will be built by Austal USA in Mobile, Ala.

The design is based on the Navy's existing expeditionary fast transport vessels, which are capable of operating in shallow waterways and can moor in austere port conditions.

Fast transport ships are used by the Navy to "support a wide range of operations including maneuver and sustainment, relief operations in small or damaged ports, flexible logistics support or as the key enabler for rapid transport," according to an online Navy fact sheet.

"We took the best of the EPF concept, such as high speed and shallow draft, and put it into bigger platform," Larry Ryder, vice president of development and external affairs at Austal USA, told Naval News. Ryder was interviewed at the Sea Air Space show in Maryland, where the company unveiled the design in August 2021.

An expeditionary medical ship is a "smaller package" but with all the capabilities of the Navy's two hospital ships, USNS Comfort and USNS Mercy, Ryder said.

Ryder said the concept would allow the Navy to field a much greater number of medical ships globally, which could then quickly reach hotspots should the need for more hospital beds arise.

The 417-foot-long catamaran-style expeditionary medical ship will have three operating rooms and 66 beds, six designed for intensive care, according to a fact sheet.

The ship will have a top speed of just over 30 knots and a range of 5,500 nautical miles, Austal said.

The ship's deck is big enough to land a tiltrotor Osprey.

By comparison, the USNS Comfort, at almost 900 feet long, has 12 operating rooms and 1,000-bed capacity if double-bunked in the event of mass casualties. Its top speed is just over 17 knots.

# Marine C-130 refueling unit activated

BY WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

MARINE CORPS BASE HAWAII, Hawaii — The Marine Corps has activated a cargo plane squadron in Hawaii that is one part of the service's move to design a force capable of outmaneuvering any adversary.

With a pair of KC-130J Super Hercules planes as a backdrop, the colors for Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 153 were uncased on Friday during a ceremony at Marine Corps Base Hawaii.

The squadron had been deactivated since 1959.

The squadron, whose pair of KC-130s are expected to reach their total of 15 by fiscal year 2026, will be used to transport troops

and refuel the base's two squadrons of tiltrotor MV-22 Ospreys.

"Today is a unique day — what a picture behind me," Brig. Gen. George Rowell, assistant wing commander of 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, told the audience as he motioned to the planes. "What a picturesque view of the evolution of the Marine Corps."

He described the planes and the crew members assembled on the field as "a very tangible, very visual manifestation of Force Design 2030 and of the evolution in the Marine Corps."

Force Design 2030 is a restructuring aimed at creating a force more adept at fighting in contested maritime spaces that would be central in a conflict with China.

# California hit with more wind, rain, snow

*Associated Press*

LOS ANGELES — Storm-battered California got more wind, rain and snow on Saturday, raising flooding concerns, causing power outages and making travel dangerous.

Bands of rain with gusty winds started in the north and spread south, with more storms expected to follow into early next week, the National Weather Service said.

More than 68,000 utility customers were without electricity Saturday morning, a number that was cut by more than half during the afternoon, according to power-outage.us.

Flood warnings were issued for the region north of San Francisco Bay, including Marin, Napa, Sonoma and Mendocino counties.

To the south, warnings were posted for parts of counties including San Mateo and Santa Cruz, where the tiny community of Felton Grove along the San Lorenzo River was ordered to evacuate.

An evacuation order was also issued for residents of the Wilton area in semirural southeastern Sacramento County. Authorities cited the threat of flooding from the Cosumnes River.

The swollen Salinas River swamped farmland in Monterey

County, and to the east, flood warnings were in effect for Merced County in the agricultural Central Valley, where Gov. Gavin Newsom visited to take stock of storm problems.

“The reality is that this is just the eighth of what we anticipate will be nine atmospheric rivers — we’re not done,” Newsom said at a briefing with local leaders where he urged local residents to remain vigilant about safety for the next 24 to 48 hours.

“This is happening all across California but I want to say ... you guys are disproportionately taking the brunt of it, and if you feel that way, you’re right,” Newsom

said.

President Joe Biden declared a major disaster in the state and ordered federal aid to supplement local recovery efforts in affected areas.

A series of atmospheric rivers has dumped rain and snow on California since late December, cutting power to thousands, swamping roads, unleashing debris flows and triggering landslides.

At least 19 storm-related deaths have occurred, and a 5-year-old boy remained missing after being swept out of his mother’s car by flood waters in San Luis Obispo County.

## Tornado survivors hid in tubs, shipping container

*Associated Press*

MARBURY, Ala. — An Alabama engine mechanic took refuge in a shipping container as a tornado from a violent storm decimated his shop and killed two of his neighbors along its destructive path across Alabama and Georgia.

The harrowing stories of David Hollon and other survivors of Thursday’s storm are emerging as residents comb through the wreckage wrought by tornadoes and blistering winds that have led to the deaths of at least nine people.

In Alabama’s rural Autauga County, where at least seven people have died, Hollon and his workers saw a massive tornado churning toward them. They needed to get to shelter — immediately.

Hollon said they ran into a metal shipping container near the back of his garage because the container had been anchored to the floor with concrete. Once inside, Hollon began frantically dialing his neighbor on the phone. But as they heard the garage being ripped apart by the storm, the call kept going to voicemail.

The storm passed and they emerged, only to find the body of his neighbor in the street, he said. Another neighbor up the road had also died, a family member said.

“I guess we did a lot better than most. We got damage, but we’re still here,” Hollon, 52, said in an interview Saturday as he walked amid the remains of his garage, stepping through a field littered with battered cars, shattered glass, snapped tree branches, splintered wood and other debris.

Leighea Johnson, a 54-year-old cafeteria worker who also lives in Autauga County, stood among the strewn remains of her trailer home. She pointed to a tall pile of rubble that she identified as her bedroom, bathroom and kitchen.

A swing set she had in her backyard was now across the street, mangled among some trees. Her outdoor trampoline had been wrapped around another set of trees in a neighbor’s front yard.

“The trailer should be here, and now it’s not,” Johnson said, pointing to a slab covered in debris, “And it is all over the place now.”

## Maine gets 1st Mega Millions jackpot winner with \$1.35B

*Associated Press*

Maine scored its first Mega Millions jackpot — and someone beat the ill fortune of Friday the 13th — when a ticket purchased in the state matched the winning numbers for the lottery’s estimated \$1.35 billion grand prize.

The lucky combination of numbers drawn late Friday night were: 30, 43, 45, 46, 61 and gold Mega Ball 14. The winning ticket was sold at Hometown Gas & Grill in Lebanon, Maine, according to the Maine State Lottery. The southern Maine town of over 6,500 residents borders New Hampshire.

“There’s quite a buzz at our small-town gas station this morning, I’ll tell you that,” said owner Fred Cotreau. The first thing he did was check to see if he had bought the winning ticket, which he hadn’t.

“Hopefully one of the residents and one of the regular customers is the winner,” Cotreau said. “It’s exciting to have sold it but it’s just more exciting for a single winner, and I’m just really hoping it’s somebody here in town.”

The winner, whose name is not yet known, overcame steep odds of 1 in 302.6 million, which led to three months of drawings without a claim on the jackpot.

“Congratulations to the Maine State Lottery, which has just won its first-ever Mega Millions jackpot,” Pat McDonald, Ohio lottery director and lead director of the Mega Millions Consortium, said in a statement early Saturday.

The jackpot was the second-largest in Mega Millions history and the fourth time the game has had a billion-dollar win. The largest Mega Millions jackpot in October 2018 was \$1.53 billion claimed by a single ticket holder in South Carolina.

Friday’s prosperous drawing also marked the seventh time there was a grand prize winner on Friday the 13th, a date superstitiously considered unlucky.

The next grand prize drawing on Tuesday will drop to an estimated \$20 million and a cash option of \$10.7 million.

Until Friday night, there had been 25 straight drawings without a jackpot winner.

# Strike on apartment building kills dozens

Associated Press

DNIPRO, Ukraine — The death toll from a Russian missile strike on an apartment building in the southeastern Ukrainian city of Dnipro rose to 29 Sunday, the regional governor reported as rescue workers scrambled to pull survivors from the rubble.

Emergency crews worked through the frigid night at the wrecked multi-story residential building, the site of the worst casualties from a widespread Russian barrage Saturday. The deaths reported in Dnipro were the most civilians killed in one place since a Sept. 30 strike in Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region, according to The Associated

Press-Frontline War Crimes Watch project.

Russia also targeted the capital, Kyiv, and the northeastern city of Kharkiv on Saturday, ending a two-week lull in the airstrikes it has launched against Ukraine's power infrastructure and urban centers almost weekly since October.

Russia on Sunday acknowledged the missile strikes but did not mention the Dnipro apartment building. Russia has repeatedly denied targeting civilians in the war.

Russia fired 33 cruise missiles on Saturday, of which 21 were shot down, according to Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi, the commander-in-chief of the Ukrai-

nian armed forces. The missile that hit the apartment building was a Kh-22 launched from Russia's Kursk region, according to the military's air force command, adding that Ukraine does not have a system capable of intercepting that type of weapon.

In Dnipro, workers used a crane as they tried to rescue people trapped on upper floors of the apartment tower where about 1,700 were living. Some residents signaled for help with lights on their mobile phones.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reported that at least 73 people were wounded and 39 people had been rescued as of Sunday afternoon. The city gov-

ernment in Dnipro said 43 people were reported missing.

"Search and rescue operations and the dismantling of dangerous structural elements continues. Around the clock. We continue to fight for every life," the Ukrainian leader said.

Ivan Garnuk was in his apartment when the building was hit and said he felt lucky to have survived. He described his shock that the Russians would strike a residential building with no strategic value.

"There are no military facilities here. There is nothing here," he said. "There is no air defense, there are no military bases here. It just hit civilians, innocent people."

## Dozens dead after plane crashes in Nepal gorge

Associated Press

POKHARA, Nepal — A plane making a 27-minute flight to a Nepal tourist town crashed into a gorge Sunday while attempting to land at a newly opened airport, killing at least 68 of the 72 people aboard. At least one witness reported hearing cries for help from within the fiery wreck, the country's deadliest airplane accident in three decades.

Hours after dark, scores of onlookers crowded around the crash site near the airport in the resort town of Pokhara as rescue workers combed the wreckage on the edge of the cliff and in the ravine below. Officials suspended the search for the four missing people overnight and planned to resume looking Monday.

Local resident Bishnu Tiwari, who rushed to the crash site near the Seti River to help search for bodies, said the rescue efforts were hampered by thick smoke and a raging fire.

"The flames were so hot that we couldn't go near the wreckage. I heard a man crying for help, but because of the flames and smoke we couldn't help him," Tiwari said.

It was not immediately clear what caused the accident, Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority said.

A witness said he saw the aircraft spinning violently in the air after it began descending to land, watching from the terrace of his house.

Finally, Gaurav Gurung said, the plane fell nose-first toward its left and crashed into the gorge.

The aviation authority said the aircraft last made contact with the airport from near Seti Gorge at 10:50 a.m. before crashing.

The twin-engine ATR 72 aircraft, operated by Nepal's Yeti Airlines, was flying from the capital, Kathmandu, to Pokhara, located 125 miles west.

It was carrying 68 passengers including 15 foreign nationals, as well as four crew

members, Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority said in a statement.

The foreigners included five Indians, four Russians, two South Koreans, and one each from Ireland, Australia, Argentina and France.

Images and videos shared on Twitter showed plumes of smoke billowing from the crash site, nearly a mile away from Pokhara International Airport. The aircraft's fuselage was split into multiple parts that were scattered down the gorge.

Firefighters carried bodies, some burned beyond recognition, to hospitals where grief-stricken relatives had assembled. At Kathmandu airport, family members appeared distraught as they were escorted in and at times exchanged heated words with officials as they waited for information.

Tek Bahadur K.C., a senior administrative officer in the Kaski district, said he expected rescue workers to find more bodies at the bottom of the gorge.

## Iran executes Iranian-British ex-defense official for spy claim

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran said Saturday it executed a former high-ranking defense ministry official and dual Iranian-British national, despite international warnings not

to carry out the death sentence. The execution further escalated tensions with the West amid the nationwide anti-government protests shaking the Islamic Republic.

The hanging of Ali Reza Ak-

bari, a close ally of top security official Ali Shamkhani, suggests an ongoing power struggle within Iran's theocracy as it tries to contain the demonstrations over the September death of Mahsa Amini.

Akbari's hanging drew immediate anger from London.

Iran has alleged, without providing evidence, that Akbari served as a source for Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, known popularly as MI6.

**AMERICAN ROUNDUP**

**Responding officers find Bengal tiger in dog crate**

**NM** ALBUQUERQUE — Police officers responding to reports of a shooting in Albuquerque say they found a Bengal tiger in a dog crate.

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish took custody of the tiger Tuesday.

Four months ago, the department asked for the public's help to find a young tiger that had been whisked away from an Albuquerque-area house where police found drugs, guns, cash and a small alligator.

Police say it's unclear who owns the tiger and if it's the same animal sought since September.

Responding officers say a man was found at the mobile home Tuesday with a gunshot wound on one of his legs and may have been struck by a stray bullet.

**5 police officers fired amid sex scandal**

**TN** LA VERGNE — Officials in a Tennessee city have fired five officers and suspended three others following a sex scandal at the police department.

Jason Cole, the mayor of La Vergne, began investigating the department in December after getting an anonymous complaint, WSMV-TV reported.

The investigation found that some officers who worked second shift were engaging in unreported sexual relationships, having sex on duty and on city-owned property, and committing sexual harassment by sending explicit photos and videos.

Cole called the matter "unac-

ceptable" and said the city investigated it without delay.

**Salem Witch Trials documents get new home**

**MA** BOSTON — Hundreds of court documents from the 1692 Salem Witch Trials are being transferred from the Salem museum where they have been stored for more than four decades to the expanded Judicial Archives facility in Boston.

The 527 documents — which include transcripts of testimony and examinations, depositions, warrants for apprehension and other legal papers — were moved to the Peabody Essex Museum in 1980 for safekeeping, officials said Thursday.

Although the museum had acquired some documents on its own, most had been stored at the clerk's office at Essex County Superior Court, the museum said.

The witch trials were fomented by superstition and fear of disease, outsiders and Native Americans, and were stoked by petty jealousies and personal vendettas involving several families. Of the 20 people convicted of witchcraft and subsequently put to death, 19 were hanged and one was crushed to death by rocks.

**Court rules against state's vaccine mandates**

**OH** CINCINNATI — An appeals court has affirmed a ban in three states on enforcing a federal vaccine mandate for workers who contract with the federal government.

A panel of the Sixth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Cincinnati on Thursday affirmed a

lower court's ruling that said the mandate was unconstitutional. President Joe Biden's administration is not enforcing the rule while legal battles play out around the country.

A federal judge in Louisville, Ky., blocked the Biden rule in November 2021 for that state and two others: Tennessee and Ohio. The mandate requires workers contracting with the federal government to wear face masks and be vaccinated for COVID-19.

The Fifth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals issued a similar ruling in December for Indiana, Louisiana and Mississippi.

**State sues drug firms over prices for insulin**

**CA** SACRAMENTO — California announced it will sue the companies that make and promote most of the nation's insulin, accusing them of scheming to illegally increase the price of the drug and demanding they return millions of dollars to some diabetics who state officials say were overcharged for the medicine they must have to survive.

The lawsuit, to be filed by Attorney General Rob Bonta, is the latest in a parade of legal actions against these companies from states across the political spectrum — all who have accused the corporate giants of abusing their power to quash competition and boost their profits by keeping the price of insulin high.

A 2021 study by the Rand Corp. comparing the insulin prices of nearly three dozen countries found prices in the United States were about 10 times higher than everywhere else. The average price of a vial

of insulin in the United States was \$98, while in Canada it was \$12.

Bonta sued three companies who make insulin — Eli Lilly, Novo Nordisk and Sanofi — and three companies who manage prescription drug programs that provide insulin — CVS Caremark, Express Scripts and OptumRx.

**School becomes part of civil rights trail**

**LA** NEW ORLEANS — The New Orleans school that was desegregated by a young Ruby Bridges in 1960 officially became a stop on the Louisiana Civil Rights Trail as a marker commemorating the event was unveiled Thursday.

Bridges, who was 6 years old when she first walked into William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, didn't attend Thursday's event. But members of her family were there as Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser and others spoke of her family's courage in the days of vehement opposition to the desegregation.

"She walked these stairs and not only changed the course of integration in this city, but also the course of history. This is never lost on us as a staff and a student body," Principal Jasmine Graves Black-Clemons said. "We are grateful for her sacrifice."

Four Black children integrated New Orleans schools on Nov. 14, 1960 — three girls entered McDonough 19 school that day as Bridges walked into Frantz. Bridges' walk into the school with federal marshals was immortalized in a famous Norman Rockwell painting.

— From wire reports



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**Reporting World, National and Military News**

# Jags rally from 27 down, top Chargers

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Trevor Lawrence's confidence somehow never wavered. Not after the first interception. Or the second. Or the third. Or even the fourth.

The generational quarterback simply delivered a generational comeback.

The No. 1 overall pick in the 2021 draft followed four interceptions with four touchdown passes — one of the most improbable turnarounds in NFL postseason history — and rallied the Jacksonville Jaguars to a 31-30 victory over the Los Angeles Chargers on Saturday night.

Lawrence engineered the winning drive, highlighted by Travis Etienne's 25-yard run on a fourth-and-1 play, and put the Jaguars in position for Riley Patterson's 36-yard field goal on the final play. It capped a 27-point comeback, the largest in franchise history and the third largest in playoff history.

"You couldn't write a crazier

script," Lawrence said. "We said in the locker room that's kind of how our season's going. We're never out of the fight. ... I'm kind of speechless, honestly, just to see what belief can do and to see when a team believes in each other what you can accomplish."

Patterson's kick barely stayed inside the right upright and set off a raucous celebration for a franchise that had won a combined four games over the previous two years. The Jaguars (10-8) won their sixth consecutive game and fifth straight at home — all five in come-from-behind fashion.

Nonetheless, no one could have seen this one coming. Maybe not even Lawrence. But he was the steady hand in charge after a debacle of a first half. He finished 28-for-47 passing for 288 yards, a shocker considering the way he started.

Lawrence was downright dreadful to begin Jacksonville's first playoff game since losing in the 2017 AFC title game. He

became the third quarterback in the Super Bowl era to throw four interceptions in the first half of a playoff game, joining Detroit's Gary Danielson and Denver's Craig Morton.

But he bounced back as well as anyone in NFL history. Jacksonville's comeback goes down in postseason lore behind only Buffalo's rally on Jan. 3, 1993 (32 points against Houston) and Indianapolis' on Jan. 4, 2014 (28 points against Kansas City).

"I didn't have a choice," Lawrence said. "These guys have sacrificed way too much for me to be the reason we lose an opportunity."

The Jaguars, who also turned the ball over when a punt hit Chris Claybrook's helmet, became the first team to win a playoff game with a turnover differential of minus-five or worse. Teams with that turnover deficit had been 0-19 in the Super Bowl era.

"Let me tell you something, man. I think from playing football, watching football, I know a lot of quarterbacks would've

folded in that situation that he went through," Jaguars receiver Zay Jones said. "For him just to be as poised and composed as he was, it showed another side of who we have on this team. I mean, that guy right there, standing right there, that's a special man."

He wasn't early. Lawrence misfired on 12 of his first 16 throws and started getting booed long before halftime. His confidence seemed shot. His swagger appeared gone. All the progress he made in his first season with coach Doug Pederson looked like it would be flushed in the team's finale.

But Lawrence never gave up. He connected with Evan Engram, Marvin Jones, Zay Jones and Christian Kirk for touchdowns that increasingly raised the team's belief in its quarterback and its comeback.

Lawrence added one of the biggest plays when he jumped for a two-point conversion with 5:25 to play that made it 30-28 — and put the Jaguars in position to win instead of tie.

## Purdy answers another test, leads 49ers past Seahawks

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Brock Purdy got flushed out of the pocket, spun back the other direction and found a wide-open Elijah Mitchell for the score that put San Francisco in control for good.

Purdy answered another test and delivered another sterling performance in a remarkable rookie season that began as the final pick in the NFL Draft.

Purdy threw three touchdown passes and ran for a fourth score in his playoff debut, leading the 49ers to a 41-23 victory over the Seattle Seahawks in a wild-card game on Saturday.

"Once the game started, it was just 11 on 11, I have to do my job, get it to the guys in space and go

from there," Purdy said. "We didn't make it more than what it was. ... It wasn't, 'Oh my gosh it's the playoffs and we got to get all tense.' We just have to play our game."

Purdy picked up where he left off in the regular season for the 49ers (14-4) and showed few signs of playoff jitters by winning his sixth straight start since replacing an injured Jimmy Garoppolo early in a Week 13 win over Miami.

The Niners advanced to the divisional round where they will host either Minnesota, Tampa Bay or Dallas next weekend.

Purdy connected on a 3-yard pass to Christian McCaffrey in the first quarter, converted a 1-yard sneak in the third quarter

and the 7-yard TD pass to Mitchell early in the fourth to make it 31-17.

The Niners broke it open when Deebo Samuel took a short pass from Purdy and raced in for a 74-yard score with help from a downfield block by Brandon Aiyuk.

Purdy threw for 332 yards — the second most ever for a rookie in the playoffs to Russell Wilson's 385 in a loss to Atlanta 10 years ago — and he became the first rookie QB ever to account for four TDs in a playoff game.

Purdy has lived up to the confidence his coaches and teammates have shown in him ever since he took over.

"I felt that way from the beginning once he got in that game

against Miami," coach Kyle Shanahan said. "We didn't have the luxury to sit there and worry about stuff the way the game was going. We just had to win the game and he's done a hell of a job. He's done it every time since. I have a lot of confidence in him."

The Seahawks (9-9) kept it close for most of three quarters before a strip sack by Charles Omenihu late in the third quarter spoiled a red zone drive.

Purdy then hit Jauan Jennings on a 33-yard pass to set up the TD pass to Mitchell that broke the game open. Purdy tied an NFL record for rookies set by Justin Herbert with his seventh straight game with multiple TD passes.

# No. 2 Kansas edges No. 14 Iowa St.

Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Kan. — KJ Adams scored in the paint, breaking a tie with under 12 seconds left and No. 2 Kansas held off No. 14 Iowa State 62-60 Saturday. Iowa State had a last shot to win, but Caleb Grill's three-point attempt caromed off the rim at the buzzer.

"I don't know that this many close games helps you in the postseason," Kansas coach Bill Self said. "Close games help you because you put yourself under duress, but I would welcome anything that's a win. We don't go into any game thinking it's going to be easy."

"Today was Iowa State, then we're at K-State, ranked 11th, TCU, Baylor, Kentucky then K-State and Iowa State right after that. That's a joke. There's not going to be any [easy] games," he said.

**Kentucky 63, No. 5 Tennessee 56:** Antonio Reeves scored 18 points and Oscar Tshiebwe had 15 points and 13 rebounds to lead Kentucky over No. 5 Tennessee.

The Wildcats (11-6, 2-3 Southeastern Conference) showed a physical presence and dominated the Volunteers (14-3, 4-1) on

the boards.

C.J. Fredrick scored 10 of his 13 points in the first half as the Wildcats led by seven at halftime.

**No. 4 Alabama 106, LSU 66:** Brandon Miller finished with 31 points and had six three-pointers by halftime to lead host Alabama to its most lopsided win over LSU.

Miller, the nation's top scoring freshman and a potential NBA lottery pick, matched LSU's 22 first-half points by himself for the streaking Crimson Tide (15-2, 5-0 Southeastern Conference).

**No. 7 UCLA 68, Colorado 54:** Jaime Jaquez Jr. had 23 points, Jaylen Clark added 18 and host UCLA rallied in the second half.

Jaquez also tied a career-high with 13 rebounds for his second double-double of the season as the Bruins (16-2, 7-0 Pac-12) extended their winning streak to 13.

**No. 8 Gonzaga 115, Portland 75:** Malachi Smith led six teammates in double figures with his season-high 27 points, seven three-pointers and a team-leading eight rebounds, and host Gonzaga used a dom-

inant first half to earn its NCAA-best 75th straight home victory and 15th straight win over Portland.

Drew Timme scored 18 for Gonzaga (16-3, 5-0 West Coast Conference).

**Oregon 87, No. 9 Arizona 68:** Jermaine Cousinard scored 27 points in his first start of the season as host Oregon beat Arizona.

**No. 10 Texas 72, Texas Tech 70:** Marcus Carr scored 20 points, Sir' Jabari Rice added 18 and Texas rallied in the second half, snapping the Red Raiders' four-game win streak on the Longhorns' home court.

Timmy Allen scored 17 for the Longhorns (15-2, 4-1 Big 12).

**No. 17 TCU 82, No. 11 Kansas State 68:** Emanuel Miller scored 23 points, Eddie Lampkin Jr. had a season-high 17 with several key inside baskets and host TCU ended Kansas State's nine-game winning streak.

**No. 13 Virginia 67, Florida State 58:** Armaan Franklin scored 20 points and Ben Vander Plas added 15 points and seven rebounds as visiting Virginia controlled from the opening minutes.

**Vanderbilt 97, No. 15 Arkan-**

**sas 84:** Tyrin Lawrence scored 22 points as host Vanderbilt rallied from a 10-point deficit in the second half and snapped a two-game skid.

**N.C. State 83, No. 16 Miami 81 (OT):** Ernest Ross scored a go-ahead putback in traffic with 33 seconds left in overtime and host North Carolina State made a pair of late stops to hold off Miami.

**Indiana 63, No. 18 Wisconsin 45:** Trayce Jackson-Davis had 18 points and 12 rebounds and Jalen Hood-Schifino added 16 points as host Indiana won for the first time in three weeks.

**Creighton 73, No. 19 Providence 67:** Ryan Kalkbrenner scored 13 of his 21 points in the final 15 minutes and host Creighton ended Providence's nine-game win streak.

**Florida 73, No. 20 Missouri 64:** Colin Castleton had 16 points and 13 rebounds for his third double-double of the season, and host Florida rallied from 11 down to beat Missouri.

**No. 21 Auburn 69, Mississippi State 63:** Jaylin Williams scored a season-high 21 points, Wendell Green Jr. added 17 and host Auburn won its 28th straight game at home.

# Morant's slam highlights Grizzlies' 9th straight win

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Ja Morant had 23 points, 10 assists and another ferocious dunk, and the Memphis Grizzlies beat the Indiana Pacers 130-112 on Saturday night to extend the NBA's longest current winning streak to nine games.

Desmond Bane scored 25 points to lead the Grizzlies, who tied Denver for the Western Conference's best record at 29-13.

Neither Bane nor Morant was needed in the fourth quarter. Morant's soaring slam over Jalen Smith made it a 20-point game with 4:20 left in the third, and Memphis led by as much as 34 in the fourth.

Asked if the dunk was his best, Morant said, "Yeah, easy" because of the difficulty, then added, "It's what everybody has been

waiting for. I finally made it."

**Celtics 122, Hornets 106:** Jayson Tatum scored 17 of his 33 points in a pivotal third quarter, Malcolm Brogdon added 30 points and visiting Boston beat Charlotte to push its winning streak to six.

Al Horford had 16 points and Marcus Smart added 13 points and 12 assists for the Celtics, who made 19 three-pointers and erased a 16-point, first-half deficit.

**76ers 118, Jazz 117:** Joel Embiid made a jumper with 5.7 seconds left to lift visiting Philadelphia to a victory over Utah.

James Harden had 31 points and 11 assists to lead Philadelphia. Embiid chipped in 30 points and seven rebounds.

**Heat 111, Bucks 95:** Gabe Vincent scored 27 points, Bam Adebayo had 20

points and 13 rebounds and host Miami beat Milwaukee.

Victor Oladipo added 20 points and Jimmy Butler had 16 for the Heat.

Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo missed the two games against Miami because of left knee soreness.

**Trail Blazers 136, Mavericks 119:** Damian Lillard had 36 points and 10 assists, and host Portland snapped a five-game losing streak with a win over Dallas.

**Hawks 114, Raptors 103:** Trae Young scored 29 points, Dejounte Murray had 27 and visiting Atlanta never trailed.

**Timberwolves 110, Cavaliers 102:** Anthony Edwards scored 26 points and host Minnesota got a huge boost from its bench in a victory over Cleveland.

# Bruins score late to top Maple Leafs

Associated Press

BOSTON — The NHL-best Boston Bruins haven't lost back-to-back games all season, and they wanted to keep it that way.

"The game meant more to us than I imagined before the game," coach Jim Montgomery said after Boston bounced back from its first shutout of the season and beat the Toronto Maple Leafs 4-3 on Saturday night.

"And I'm glad it did," Montgomery added. "We're proud of not having lost two in a row. There was a purpose to what we were doing — not only because it was a second-place team in Toronto that we were playing, but we don't want to lose two in a row."

Two nights after being shut out by the Seattle Kraken — Boston's first regulation loss at home all season — Matt Grzelcyk scored with 76 seconds left to help the Bruins beat Toronto for the first time in five tries

since before the pandemic.

Patrice Bergeron, David Pastrnak and A.J. Greer also scored for Boston, and Linus Ullmark stopped 18 shots. The Bruins have the NHL's best record and 70 points in 42 games — 11 points ahead of Atlantic Division rival Toronto. The Carolina Hurricanes are No. 2 in the league with 61 points.

Michael Bunting, Pierre Engvall and Auston Matthews scored for the Maple Leafs, and Matt Murray made 30 saves. The teams fought twice, including a scrum at the end of the second period that led to 10-minute misconduct penalties against Wayne Simmonds and Greer.

**Blue Jackets 4, Red Wings 3:** Patrik Laine had his 10th NHL hat trick and visiting Columbus snapped a 10-game road losing streak.

**Islanders 2, Canadiens 1:** Casey Cizikas and Anthony

Beauvillier scored in the first period and host New York snapped a four-game losing streak.

**Flames 6, Stars 5:** Nazem Kadri's team-best 17th goal and Chris Tanev's first of the season were part of visiting Calgary's four-goal second period in its victory over Dallas.

**Avalanche 7, Senators 0:** Artturi Lehkonen and Alex Neuhook each had two goals and an assist, Mikko Rantanen also scored twice and Pavel Francouz made 29 saves for his first shutout of the season to lead host Colorado over Ottawa.

**Flyers 3, Capitals 1:** Scott Laughton had a goal and an assist and visiting Philadelphia beat Washington.

**Hurricanes 2, Penguins 1:** Frederik Andersen stopped 33 shots and overcame a mishap in the third period for host Carolina.

**Panthers 4, Canucks 3:** Aaron Ekblad scored the tiebreak-

ing goal in host Florida's three-goal second period.

**Wild 2, Coyotes 1:** Mats Zuccarello and Freddy Gaudreau scored 51 seconds apart in the second period, and host Minnesota held off reeling Arizona.

**Sabres 5, Predators 3:** Jack Quinn had a goal and an assist to lead visiting Buffalo.

**Kraken 8, Blackhawks 5:** Jared McCann had his first career hat trick and visiting Seattle got its franchise-record eighth straight victory.

**Lightning 4, Blues 2:** Brayden Point had two goals and an assist, leading visiting Tampa Bay past St. Louis.

**Oilers 4, Golden Knights 3:** Leon Draisaitl scored two goals and visiting Edmonton held on to beat Vegas.

**Devils 5, Kings 2:** Erik Haula, Nikita Khokhlov and Ryan Graves scored in the second period, and visiting New Jersey became the first NHL team to win 17 of its first 20 road games.

## Three players take big, 1-year deals, avoid arbitration

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Juan Soto, Pete Alonso and Vladimir Guerrero Jr. reached big-money agreements on one-year contracts as 170 players avoided salary arbitration with deals Friday and 33 exchanged proposed figures with their teams.

All-Star pitcher Max Fried and the Atlanta Braves were headed toward a hearing for the second straight year, while Toronto shortstop Bo Bichette and Houston outfielder Kyle Tucker were the farthest apart from their clubs, each asking for \$7.5 million while their team offered \$5 million.

Seattle outfielder Teoscar Hernández, acquired in a trade from the Blue Jays, requested \$16 million and was offered \$14 million.

AL batting champion Luis

Arraez was the only eligible Minnesota player who didn't settle, asking for \$6.1 million while the Twins offered \$5 million. NL batting champion Jeff McNeil was the lone New York Mets player on track for a hearing, asking for \$7.75 million while the team proposed \$6.25 million.

Fried was awarded \$6.85 million last year rather than Atlanta's \$6.6 million offer. This time, he asked for \$15 million as the Braves offered \$13.5 million.

Seven Tampa Bay players were headed toward hearings, including reliever Colin Poche. He asked for \$1.3 million and was offered \$1,175,000 in the smallest gap.

Three players each from Seattle and the Los Angeles Angels were on track for hearings.

Soto got a \$23 million deal

with San Diego, tied for the fourth-highest one-year contract among arbitration-eligible players. Shohei Ohtani set the record when the two-way star agreed last fall to a \$30 million contract with the Los Angeles Angels.

Soto also trailed Mookie Betts (\$27 million with Boston in 2020) and Nolan Arenado (\$26 million with Colorado in 2019), and he matched Josh Donaldson's \$23 million with Toronto in 2018. Soto, who turned down a \$440 million, 15-year offer from Washington last summer before he was traded to the Padres, can become a free agent following the 2024 World Series.

In addition to its deal with the star outfielder, San Diego also reached a \$14.1 million, one-year agreement with Josh Had-

er, the largest salary for an arbitration-eligible relief pitcher.

The high-spending Mets struck a \$14.5 million agreement with Alonso, who hit 40 homers and tied for the major league lead with 131 RBIs last season. The first baseman nearly doubled his \$7.4 million salary.

Guerrero, runner-up in 2021 AL MVP voting, agreed to the same figure with Toronto, the first baseman increasing his salary from \$7.9 million.

Left-hander Julio Urías settled with the Los Angeles Dodgers at \$14.25 million, first baseman Rhys Hoskins with NL champion Philadelphia at \$12 million, outfielder Ian Happ with the Chicago Cubs at \$10.85 million and right-hander Brandon Woodruff with Milwaukee at \$10.8 million.