

## US kills senior ISIS official in Somalia

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — U.S. special operations forces have killed a senior Islamic State official and 10 other terrorist operatives in remote northern Somalia, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced Thursday.

The operation carried out on Wednesday targeted Bilal al-Sudani, a key financial facilitator for the global terrorist organization, in a mountainous cave complex.

“This action leaves the United States and its partners safer and more secure, and it reflects our steadfast commitment to protecting Americans from the threat of terrorism at home and abroad,” Austin said in a statement.

President Joe Biden was briefed last week about the proposed mission, which came together after months of planning. He gave final approval to carry out the oper-

ation this week following the recommendation of Austin and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army Gen. Mark Milley, according to two senior Biden administration officials who briefed reporters on the operation on the condition of anonymity.

Al-Sudani, who has been on the radar for U.S. intelligence officials for years, played a key role in helping to fund ISIS operations in Africa as well as the ISIS-K terrorist branch operating in Afghanistan, Austin said.

The U.S. Treasury Department alleged last year that al-Sudani had worked closely with another ISIS operative, Abdella Hussein Abadigga, who had recruited young men in South Africa and sent them to a weapons training camp.

No civilians were injured or killed in the operation, Pentagon officials said. One American involved in the operation was bit-

ten by a military dog, but was not seriously injured, according to an administration official.

U.S. officials provided scant details about how the operation was carried out or the circumstances surrounding al-Sudani’s killing. One official said that U.S. forces had intended to capture al-Sudani but that did not prove to be “feasible” as the operation was carried out.

The operation comes days after Africa Command said it had conducted a collective self-defense strike northeast of Mogadishu, the capital, near Galcad.

In that incident, Somalia National Army forces were engaged in heavy fighting following an extended and intense attack by more than 100 al-Shabab fighters.

The U.S. estimated approximately 30 al-Shabab fighters were killed in that operation.

## Russian artillery slams Ukrainian towns in south, east

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — A new barrage of Russian shelling killed at least 10 Ukrainian civilians and wounded 20 others in a day, the office of Ukraine’s president said Friday as the country worked to recover from an earlier wave of Russian missile strikes and drone attacks.

Regional officials said towns and villages in the east and in the south that are within reach of the Russian artillery suffered most. Six people died in the Donetsk region, two in Kherson, and two in the Kharkiv region. A day earlier, missiles and self-propelled drones that Russian forces fired had hit deeper into Ukrainian territory, killing at least 11 people.

Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said the Russian military used fiercely-burning phosphorus munitions in its shelling of

the village of Zvanivka, north of Bakhmut, a city that has become the focus of a grueling standoff in recent months. The shelling also damaged apartment buildings and two schools in the nearby town of Vuhledar, Kyrylenko said.

The governor of the neighboring Luhansk region, Serhii Haidai, said Ukrainian shelling hit two Russian bases in the occupied towns of Kreminna and Rubizhne, killing and wounding “dozens” of Russian soldiers. His claim couldn’t be independently verified.

Further south, Russian troops resumed shelling the town of Nikopol, across the river Dnieper from the Russia-held Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, damaging apartment buildings, gas pipelines, power lines and a bakery, officials said.

Planned Western deploy-

ments of modern tanks for Ukraine remained on many minds on Friday.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki told Canada’s CTV that his country was ready to send 60 modern tanks — half of them the PT-91 model, which was built in Poland from 1994 to 2001 as a modernized version of the Soviet-era T-72M1. He said those deliveries would come on top of Poland’s plans to send 14 of its Leopard 2s, after Berlin approved other allies sending the German-made tanks to Ukraine.

In other developments:

■ German officials said the country was targeted by a series of cyberattacks of apparent Russian origin following the decision to supply modern tanks to Ukraine. A spokeswoman for the Interior Ministry said the denial of service attacks, in

which websites or entire networks are bombarded with requests in an attempt to make them inaccessible, were observed on Wednesday and Thursday, and “were largely fought off or had no serious impact.”

■ Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said Russia used its latest hypersonic Kinzhal missiles to strike energy facilities in Kyiv and Zaporizhzhia regions Thursday. He said Ukraine lacks defenses against the Kinzhal, adding that Russia has few such missiles and mostly uses them against priority targets.

■ Russian state-run media say the state communications watchdog has restricted access to the CIA and FBI websites for spreading materials “containing inaccurate socially significant information” and “discrediting” Russia’s armed forces.

# Ransomware gang infiltrated by FBI: 'We hacked the hackers'

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The FBI and international partners have at least temporarily disrupted the network of a prolific ransomware gang they infiltrated last year, saving victims including hospitals and school districts a potential \$130 million in ransom payments, Attorney General Merrick Garland and other U.S. officials announced Thursday.

"Simply put, using lawful means we hacked the hackers," Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said at a news conference.

Officials said the targeted syndicate, known as Hive, is among the world's top five ransomware networks and has heavily targeted health care. The FBI quietly accessed its control panel in July and was able to obtain software keys it used with German and other partners to decrypt networks of some 1,300 victims globally,

said FBI Director Christopher Wray.

How the takedown will affect Hive's long-term operations is unclear. Officials announced no arrests but said, to pursue prosecutions, they were building a map of the administrators who manage the software and the affiliates who infect targets and negotiate with victims.

"I think anyone involved with Hive should be concerned because this investigation is ongoing," Wray said.

On Wednesday night, FBI agents seized computer servers in Los Angeles used to support the network.

Two Hive dark web sites were seized: one used for leaking data of non-paying victims, the other for negotiating extortion payments.

"Cybercrime is a constantly evolving threat, but as I have said before, the Justice Department will spare no resource to bring to justice anyone anywh-

ere that targets the United States with a ransomware attack," Garland said.

He said the infiltration, led by the FBI's Tampa office, allowed agents in one instance to disrupt a Hive attack against a Texas school district, stopping it from making a \$5 million payment.

It's a big win for the Justice Department. Ransomware is the world's biggest cybercrime headache with everything from Britain's postal service and Ireland's national health network to Costa Rica's government crippled by Russian-speaking syndicates that enjoy Kremlin protection.

The criminals lock up, or encrypt, victims' networks, steal sensitive data and demand large sums.

Their extortion has evolved to where data is pilfered before ransomware is activated, then effectively held hostage. Pay up in cryptocurrency or it is released publicly.

# EU official: Russia shifts war focus to NATO, West

*Associated Press*

TOKYO — A senior EU official said Friday that Russia has taken its war against Ukraine to "a different stage" by making indiscriminate attacks on civilians and non-military targets, while criticizing Moscow for triggering recent moves by Germany and the United States to send advanced tanks to Ukraine.

Stefano Sannino, Secretary General of the European Union's European External Action Service, defended German and U.S. provisions of the military equipment to Ukraine, and criticized Russian President Vladimir Putin for waging a war on NATO and the West.

Sannino, speaking at a news conference in Tokyo as part of an Asia-Pacific tour, said Putin had "moved from a concept of special operation to a concept now of a war against NATO and the West."

He said German and U.S. tank provisions are meant to help Ukrainians defend themselves in the war, rather than making them attackers.

"I think that this latest development in terms of armed supply is just an evolution of the situation and of the way Russia started moving the war into a different stage," Sannino said.

He added that Russia is making "indiscriminate attacks" on civilians and cities and no longer military targets.

The EU is not moving the war into a different stage but is "just giving the possibility of saving lives and allowing the Ukrainians to defend (themselves) from these barbaric attacks," Sannino said.

# Warren is 5th justice with name on ship

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Former Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren's name is on the U.S. Navy's newest fuel ship. Justice Elena Kagan smashed a champagne bottle against its hull in a shipyard ceremony in San Diego last weekend.

Two other justices soon will join Warren, who in 1954 wrote the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that outlawed segregation in public schools, in a group of ships being named for civil rights leaders. The Navy has awarded contracts for the construction of the Thurgood

Marshall and the Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The first ship in this group is named for John Lewis, the longtime congressman and civil rights icon.

It may be unsurprising that Warren, who died in 1974, is not the first justice with a naval vessel bearing his name. But the four earlier justices who have been similarly honored are not among the better-known of the 116 men and women who have served on the Supreme Court.

Instead, the Navy has seen fit to name ships for James Iredell, Alfred Moore, Smith Thompson and Levi Woodbury.

Woodbury was on the court for six years until his death in 1851 and earlier was secretary of the Navy. He was the first to be recognized, and several vessels were named for him.

Like Woodbury, Thompson also had served as the Navy secretary before joining the court. He died in office in 1843 after serving 20 years.

Iredell was among the first justices, named by President George Washington.

Moore took Iredell's seat but produced only one recorded opinion in his four years as a justice and resigned in poor health.

# Past presidents asked to check for docs

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The National Archives has asked former U.S. presidents and vice presidents to recheck their personal records for any classified documents following the news that President Joe Biden and former Vice President Mike Pence had such documents in their possession.

The Archives sent a letter Thursday to representatives of former presidents and vice presidents extending back to Ronald Reagan to ensure compliance with the Presidential Records Act, according to a copy obtained by The Associated Press. The act states that any records created or received by the president are the property of the U.S. government and will

be managed by the Archives at the end of an administration.

The Archives sent the letter to representatives of former Presidents Donald Trump, Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George H.W. Bush and Ronald Reagan, and former Vice Presidents Pence, Biden, Dick Cheney, Al Gore and Dan Quayle.

Responsibility to comply with the Presidential Records Act “does not diminish after the end of an administration,” the Archives wrote in the letter. “Therefore, we request that you conduct an assessment of any materials held outside of (the Archives) that relate to the administration for which you serve as a designated representative under the PRA, to deter-

mine whether bodies of materials previously assumed to be personal in nature might inadvertently contain Presidential or Vice Presidential records subject to the PRA, whether classified or unclassified.”

Freddy Ford, chief of staff to former President George W. Bush, suggested in his response to the Archives that Bush’s office did not believe a search was necessary, saying, “Thank you for your note. We understand its purpose and remain confident that no such materials are in our possession.”

Biden’s lawyers came across classified documents from his time as vice president in a locked cabinet as they were packing up an office he no longer uses in November. Since

then, subsequent searches by the FBI and Biden’s lawyers have turned up more documents. Former Vice President Pence, too, this week, discovered documents and turned them in after saying previously he did not believe he had any.

Handling of classified documents has been a problem off and on for decades, from presidents to Cabinet members and staff across multiple administrations stretching as far back as Jimmy Carter. But the issue has taken on greater significance since former President Donald Trump willfully retained classified material at his Florida estate, prompting the unprecedented FBI seizure of thousands of pages of records last year.

## Islamic extremist convicted of killing 8 along bike path in New York City

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — An Islamic extremist who killed eight people with a speeding truck in a 2017 rampage on a popular New York City bike path was convicted Thursday of federal crimes and could face the death penalty.

Sayfullo Saipov bowed his head as he heard the verdict in a Manhattan courtroom just a few blocks from where the attack ended. Prosecutors said the Halloween rampage was inspired by his reverence for the Islamic State militant group.

The dozen jurors deliberated for about seven hours over two days before convicting Saipov, 34, of 28 counts of crimes that include murder in aid of racketeering and supporting a foreign terrorist organization. Jurors will return to court no earlier than Feb. 6 to hear more evidence to help them decide whether he should be executed or spend the rest of his life in prison.

A death sentence for Saipov, a citizen of Uzbekistan, would be an extreme rarity in New York. The state no longer has capital punishment and the last state execution was in 1963. A federal jury in New York has not rendered a death sentence that withstood legal appeals in decades, with the last execution in 1954.

Even before the trial, there was no doubt Saipov was a killer. His lawyers conceded to the jury that he rented a pickup truck near his New Jersey home, steered it onto the path along the Hudson River and mowed down bicyclists for blocks before crashing into a school bus near the World Trade Center.

He emerged from his truck yelling “God is great,” in Arabic, with pellet and paintball guns in his hands before he was shot by a police officer who thought they were real firearms.

The vehicle attack killed a

woman visiting from Belgium with her family, five friends from Argentina and two Americans. It left others with permanent injuries, including a woman who lost her legs.

“His actions were senseless, horrific, and there’s no justification for them,” defense attorney David Patton told the jury during the trial.

The defense asked jurors to acquit Saipov of racketeering charges, saying he intended to die a martyr and was not conspiring with the Islamic State organization, despite voluminous amounts of propaganda from the group found on his electronic devices and at his home.

Saipov did not testify at his trial. He sat quietly each day, unlike at a 2019 pretrial hearing where he insisted on questioning the judge about why he should be judged for eight deaths when “thousands and thousands of Muslims are dying all over the world.”

## FDA advisers back COVID vaccine plan

*Associated Press*

The U.S. is poised to make COVID-19 vaccinations more like a yearly flu shot, a major shift in strategy despite a long list of questions about how to best protect against a still rapidly mutating virus.

The Food and Drug Administration asked its scientific advisers Thursday to help lay the groundwork for switching to once-a-year boosters for most Americans — and how and when to periodically update the shots’ recipe.

The advisory panel mostly agreed with the FDA’s approach.

COVID-19 vaccines have saved millions of lives and booster doses continue to help the most vulnerable even as more contagious variants have popped up.

But protection does wane and the shots don’t fend off milder infections for long.



# Calif. winter storms boost water allotments for cities

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Weeks of historic rainfall in California won't be enough to end a severe drought, but it will provide public water agencies serving 27 million people with much more water than the suppliers had been told to expect a month ago, state officials announced Thursday.

The Department of Water Resources said public water agencies will now get 30% of what they had asked for, up from the 5% officials had previously announced in December. That's because for the first three weeks of January nine atmospheric rivers dumped an estimated 32 trillion gallons of rain and snow on California. It was enough water to increase storage in the state's two largest reservoirs by a combined 66%.

"We're not out of drought in California, but this certainly makes a significant dent," said Karla Nemeth, director of the

California Department of Water Resources.

California pumps water from its major rivers and streams and stores it in a bunch of reservoirs known as the State Water Project. State officials then deliver that water to 29 public agencies that supply the state's major population centers with drinking water and irrigate 1,151 square miles of farm land.

Years of drought have depleted many of those reservoirs to dangerously low levels, forcing significant cuts to water agencies across the state. Many agencies imposed mandatory restrictions on customers, and Gov. Gavin Newsom called on people and businesses to voluntarily reduce their water use by 15%.

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which includes major population centers like Los Angeles and San Diego counties, last month declared a drought

emergency for all of its 19 million customers. It has imposed mandatory restrictions on 7 million customers, meaning they can only water their lawns one day per week.

Thursday's announcement did not automatically end those restrictions. Adel Hagekhalil, the district's general manager, said the extra water "will certainly help communities hit hardest by this drought." But he warned that "Southern California's water challenges are far from over."

The district gets about a third of its water from the State Water Project, a third from the Colorado River and a third from other sources. The Colorado River system has benefited from the recent storms, but not to the same extent as California's water system. Hagekhalil warned Southern California may "see significant reductions" from the Colorado river beginning next year.

# Inflation, consumer spending cool down

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge eased further in December, and consumer spending fell — the latest evidence that the Fed's series of interest rate hikes are slowing the economy.

Friday's report from the Commerce Department showed that prices rose 5% last month from a year earlier, down from a 5.5% year-over-year increase in November. It was the third straight drop.

Consumer spending fell 0.2% from November to December and was revised lower to show a drop of 0.1% from October to November. Last year's holiday sales were sluggish for many retailers, and the overall spending figures for the final two months of 2022 were the weakest in two years.

The pullback in consumer spending will likely be welcomed by Fed officials, who are seeking to cool the economy by making lending increasingly expensive. Still, the decline in year-over-year inflation matches the Fed's outlook and isn't likely to alter expectations that the central bank will raise its key rate by a quarter-point next week.

On a monthly basis, inflation ticked up just 0.1% from November to December for a second straight month. Energy prices plunged 5.1%, and the overall cost of goods also fell.

"Core" prices, which exclude volatile food and energy costs, rose 0.3% from November to December and 4.4% from a year earlier. The year-over-year figure was down from 4.7% in November, though still well above the Fed's 2% target.

# Farm where 4 died had earlier shooting

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The shooting that left four dead at a California mushroom farm on Monday was at least the second time an employee tried to kill a co-worker on the property, records show.

Martin Medina, a manager at California Terra Garden, was charged with attempted murder after he threatened to kill another manager and then fired a shot into the man's trailer. The bullet went through the trailer and into a neighboring one that was home to Yetao Bing, one of the workers killed on Monday, a prosecutor told The Associated Press. No one was injured.

Law enforcement inter-

viewed Bing's wife, Ping Yang, but it's not clear from those interviews whether Bing was at home during the shooting, said Sean Gallagher, chief deputy district attorney for San Mateo County.

Medina remains in custody on \$5 million bail and appeared in court Monday for a preliminary hearing, hours before authorities say Chunli Zhao shot and killed four co-workers and wounded a fifth at California Terra Garden. Prosecutors say Zhao then drove to a nearby farm where he used to work and killed three more people.

Zhao, 66, told KNTV-TV in a courthouse interview Thursday that he committed the fatal

shootings. Zhao said he was bullied and worked long hours on the farms and that his complaints were ignored.

Zhao spoke in Mandarin with the television station reporter during a 15-minute interview at a county jail in Redwood City. Zhao said he has been in the U.S. for 11 years and has a green card. He said he has a 40-year-old daughter in China and lived with his wife in Half Moon Bay.

Zhao told the station he bought the gun used in the killings in 2021 and didn't run into any obstacles when making the purchase. He was planning to turn himself in to authorities when he was spotted by deputies who arrested him Monday.

# Hong Kong to ban ‘dangerous drug’ CBD

Associated Press

HONG KONG — Hong Kong will ban CBD starting Wednesday, categorizing it as a “dangerous drug” and mandating harsh penalties for its smuggling, production and possession, customs authorities announced Friday.

Supporters say CBD can treat a range of ailments including anxiety and that, unlike its more famous cousin THC — which is already illegal in Hong Kong — CBD doesn’t get users high. Cannabidiol, derived from the cannabis plant, was previously legal in Hong Kong, where bars and shops sold products containing it.

But Hong Kong authorities

decided last year to prohibit the marijuana-derived substance — a change that will soon go into effect. Residents were given three months from Oct. 27 to dispose of their CBD products in special boxes set up around the city.

“Starting from February 1, cannabidiol, aka CBD, will be regarded as a dangerous drug and will be supervised and managed by the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance,” customs intelligence officer Au-Yeung Ka-lun said at a news briefing.

“As of then, transporting CBD for sale, including import and export, as well as producing, possessing and consuming CBD, will be illegal,” Au-Yeung

said.

Penalties include up to life in prison and fines for importing, exporting or producing CBD. Possession of the substance can result in a sentence of up to seven years and fines.

In announcing the ban last year, the Hong Kong government cited the difficulty of isolating pure CBD from cannabis, the possibility of contamination with THC during the production process and the relative ease by which CBD can be converted to THC.

Hong Kong maintains several categories of “dangerous drugs,” which include “hard drugs” such as heroin and cocaine, as well as marijuana.

Debate over CBD policy continues in many countries and regions.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration said Thursday there’s not enough evidence about CBD to confirm that it’s safe for consumption in foods or as a dietary supplement. It called on Congress to create new rules for the massive and growing market.

Marijuana-derived products have become increasingly popular in lotions, tinctures and foods, while their legal status has been murky in the U.S., where several states have legalized or decriminalized substances that remain illegal federally.

## Protests against burning of Quran spread in Mideast

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Protests were held on Friday in several predominantly Muslim countries to denounce the recent desecration of Islam’s holy book, the Quran, by far-right activists in Sweden and the Netherlands.

The protests in countries including Pakistan, Iraq and Lebanon ended with people dispersing peacefully. In Pakistan’s capital of Islamabad, police officers stopped some demonstrators trying to march toward the Swedish Embassy.

About 12,000 Islamists from the Tehreek-e-Labiak Pakistan party rallied in Lahore, the capital of the eastern Punjab province to denounce the desecration of the Quran in the two European countries.

Similar rallies were also held in the southern city of Karachi and in the northwest.

In Beirut, about 200 angry protesters burned the flags of Sweden and the Netherlands outside the blue-domed Mohammed Al-Amin mosque at Beirut’s central Martyrs Square.

This month, a far-right activist from Denmark received permission from police to stage a protest outside the Turkish Embassy in Stockholm where he burned the Quran.

Days later, Edwin Wagensveld, Dutch leader of the far-right Pegida movement in the Netherlands, tore pages out of a copy of the Quran near the Dutch Parliament and stomped on them.

## Watchdog blames Syria’s air force for chlorine attack

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — An investigation by the global chemical weapons watchdog established there are “reasonable grounds to believe” Syria’s air force dropped two cylinders containing chlorine gas on the city of Douma in April 2018, killing 43 people.

A report published Friday by a team from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons offered the latest confirmation that the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad used chemical weapons during his country’s grinding civil war.

“The use of chemical weapons in Douma — and anywhere — is unacceptable and a breach of international law,” OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias

said.

The organization said that “reasonable grounds to believe” is the standard of proof consistently adopted by international fact-finding bodies and commissions of inquiry.

Syria, which joined the OPCW in 2013 under international pressure after being blamed for another chemical weapon attack, does not recognize the investigation team’s authority and has denied using chemical weapons.

Despite the latest findings, bringing perpetrators to justice remains a long way off. Syria’s ally Russia has, in the past, blocked efforts by the U.N. Security Council to order an International Criminal Court investigation in Syria.

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# NFL's final 4 have offense-minded coaches

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Chris Foerster had spent nearly two decades as an assistant in the NFL when he first crossed paths with Kyle Shanahan long before he became one of the NFL's most-accomplished play-callers.

Shanahan was in his third year as an offensive coordinator in the NFL when Foerster joined head coach Mike Shanahan's staff in Washington as offensive line coach in 2010 and immediately was impressed by the knowledge, creativity and teaching ability of the precocious Shanahan.

That only grew during their four years together in Washington and the past four in San Francisco, where Foerster has been an assistant on Shanahan's staff.

"I've been amazed since I've worked with him and I don't stop doing that," Foerster said. "It's just how he does it and it's just his grasp on what he's doing."

Shanahan's success in San Francisco overseeing productive offenses without elite quarterback play is a reason why so many teams each January are seeking the next trendy, play-calling offensive coach to take over their teams.

All four head coaches in the NFL's conference championship games come from an offensive background with Kansas City's Andy Reid and Cincinnati's

Zac Taylor also calling plays like Shanahan, while Philadelphia's Nick Sirianni delegated that duty during his first season.

"Plays are just plays," Shanahan said. "It's how you tie them together, how you hide them, how you do things off of them and it's how you coach them."

Few do it better than Shanahan and Reid, whose influence on modern offenses runs deep with nearly half the teams in the NFL running offenses inspired by those two coaching philosophies.

Shanahan's offense is based on the running game, with his commitment to sticking with the ground game leading to opportunities with play-action passes downfield.

"He's not just copying plays from other people," 49ers defensive coordinator DeMeco Ryans said. "He has that very creative mind and he's always putting his players in position to make plays. That's what sets him apart from all the other coordinators in the league."

The Niners use frequent motion and different formations to disguise their intentions and Shanahan has created a nearly position-less offense that allows him to move playmakers such as Christian McCaffrey, Deebo Samuel, George Kittle and full-back Kyle Juszczyk all over the field to create mismatches.

"He pays attention to detail on every little thing," 49ers rookie quarterback Brock Purdy

said. "He's the one that's installing the plays every single day, which is pretty cool to have your head ball coach be the one that teaches you what you're running."

Shanahan built on the offense his father ran during two Super Bowl runs in Denver in the 1990s and has evolved it to the modern game.

He has built an encyclopedic knowledge of his system that allows him to pull plays from his past and tailor them to his current team.

Foerster also said Shanahan has the uncanny ability during a game to see how a defense is playing the Niners and will pull out a play they didn't even practice that week.

That has led to several big plays already this season.

"He's just looking, where's that dagger," Foerster said. "Where's that play that I think will really get them on this one?"

Reid's approach is a little different, relying much more on the passing game over his career with an offense that has hit a peak ever since Patrick Mahomes took over as the quarterback in Kansas City.

Reid also likes to pull out some gadget plays — whether it was a play from the 1949 Rose Bowl he used against San Francisco in the Super Bowl three years ago or the "ring-around-the-rosie" Snow Globe play against the Raiders in Week 18.

"You do (want to make it fun),

but you want to score, too," Reid said. "It's not fun when you're not doing that."

The Chiefs have done plenty of that since Mahomes took over in 2018, averaging a league-best 30.1 points per game in that span — 3.6 more points per game than No. 2 Tampa Bay in a gap that's bigger than the one between the Buccaneers and the 16th-place team.

"When you got Coach Reid, he can get anyone (open)," tight end Travis Kelce said. "He can get my dad open, if he was out there."

Not all the head coaches still alive in the playoffs call the plays, with Sirianni having made the decision during his first year in Philadelphia in 2021 to delegate those duties to coordinator Shane Steichen.

Sirianni said that has allowed him to better manage the game and deal with defensive coordinator Jonathan Gannon and special teams coordinator Michael Clay instead of always looking at his play sheet for the next play to call.

"That's my job as the head coach is to manage the game. Everybody does it a little bit differently, I get it, and what works best for us is that I do it this way," he said. "We like our processes of how we're going. We're always trying to tweak it and make it better, but I've got great coaches that I'm able to lean on there, and Shane is doing a great job of calling it."

## Panthers hire Frank Reich over Steve Wilks as coach

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Frank Reich is returning to the Carolina Panthers as their coach, more than 27 years after starting the franchise's first game at quarterback in 1995.

The Panthers announced Thursday they've agreed to terms with Reich to become the sixth head coach in franchise

history.

Reich was chosen among nine candidates who interviewed for the job, including former New Orleans Saints head coach Sean Payton and this season's interim head coach, Steve Wilks.

Reich received a four-year deal from the Panthers, according to a person familiar with the situation. The person spoke to

The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the team does not release details of coaching hires.

The 61-year-old Reich joins the Panthers after spending the past four-plus seasons with the Indianapolis Colts, where he went 40-33-1 as head coach before being fired on Nov. 7 after a 3-5-1 start.

The Colts went to the playoffs twice as a wild-card team under Reich, going 1-2 in the postseason.

Before joining the Colts, Reich worked two years as the offensive coordinator for the Philadelphia Eagles, helping them win the Super Bowl in his second season under head coach Doug Pederson.



# Randle, Brunson help Knicks edge Celtics

Associated Press

BOSTON — Julius Randle had 37 points and nine rebounds, and hit the free throws that gave the New York Knicks the lead for good in a 120-117 overtime victory over the Boston Celtics on Thursday night.

Jalen Brunson added 29 points, seven assists and a game-ending blocked shot for New York, which has won two straight. Immanuel Quickley finished with 17 points and five rebounds.

Boston's Jaylen Brown had a chance to put the Celtics ahead with 7.6 seconds remaining, but misfired on two free throws, forcing the Celtics to foul.

Jayson Tatum, who was voted an All-Star game starter for the third consecutive season prior to tipoff, finished with 35 points and 14 rebounds. Brown added 22 points and nine rebounds for Boston, which has lost three straight for just the second time this season.

**Mavericks 99, Suns 95:** Spencer Dinwiddie scored a season-high 36 points, Dorian Finney-Smith added 18 points and 12 rebounds, and Dallas beat Phoenix despite losing All-Star guard Luka Doncic to a sprained ankle early in the game.

Dinwiddie's hot shooting helped the Mavs thrive without Doncic, who limped to the locker room early in the first quarter and didn't return. The veteran guard shot 10 of 18 from the field, including 5 of 6 on 3-pointers. He also made 11 free throws.

The Mavs led the entire second half but Suns guard Chris Paul made a layup with 19.7 seconds left to cut the deficit to 96-95. The Mavs were able to close it out by making their free throws in the final seconds.

Cam Johnson and Chris Paul led the Suns with 22 points apiece. Deandre Ayton scored 19 points and grabbed 20 rebounds, but made just 6 of 20 shots. Paul added 10 assists.

**Pistons 130, Nets 122:** Sadiq Bey scored 25 points and Detroit won in Brooklyn for the first time in nearly five years.

Alec Burks added 20 for the Pistons, who snapped a four-game losing streak and were playing for the first time since giving up 150 points in a loss to Milwaukee on Monday.

They took advantage of a short-handed Nets team, ending a six-game skid. They had lost seven in a row overall to the Nets.

Kyrie Irving scored 40 points

for the Nets, tying his career high and the Nets NBA record with five straight games of 30 or more. Nic Claxton added a career-best 27 and Edmond Sumner had 24.

**Clippers 138, Spurs 100:** Paul George scored 35 points, Kawhi Leonard added 27 and Los Angeles extended its winning streak to a season-high four games with a rout of reeling San Antonio.

It was the fifth time this season George has had at least 35 points. He is averaging 22.4 points after he missed five games earlier this month due to right hamstring soreness.

George was 14 of 19 from the field, including 5 of 8 from beyond the arc as the Clippers posted their largest winning margin since 2021. It was only the 11th time they have won a game by at least 38 points.

Keldon Johnson scored 19 points for San Antonio, while Isaiah Roby scored 14 and Keita Bates-Diop 13. The Spurs have dropped nine of their last 10 and 12 of their 14.

**Cavaliers 113, Rockets 95:** Darius Garland scored 26 points and Evan Mobley added 21 as Cleveland routed short-handed Houston despite missing Donovan Mitchell.

Garland also had nine assists and four rebounds for the Cavs.

Mitchell sat out for the fourth time in five games with a groin strain. He returned Tuesday night after missing three games, but aggravated it near the end of that game to keep him out Thursday.

Tari Eason had 18 points and 11 rebounds to lead Houston. The Rockets were without Eric Gordon, Jae'Sean Tate and Kevin Porter Jr. as they lost their second straight since snapping a 13-game skid Monday night.

**Hornets 111, Bulls 96:** Terry Rozier scored 28 points, Mason Plumlee added 21 points and 12 rebounds and Charlotte defeated Chicago.

Gordon Hayward added 17 points, and LaMelo Ball returned from a three-game absence due to a sprained ankle and wrist injury and chipped in with 15 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists to overcome a horrible 2-for-15 shooting performance from the field.

DeMar DeRozan had 28 points for the Bulls, while Zach LaVine finished with 18 points and nine rebounds, but was quiet in the second half. Patrick Williams had 15 points, but Chicago's three-game win streak came to an end.

# Boogie Ellis leads Southern Cal past No. 8 UCLA

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Boogie Ellis scored 27 of his career-high 31 points in the second half, leading a 27-6 run that put the Trojans ahead for good, and Southern California beat No. 8 UCLA 77-64 on Thursday night.

Three weeks ago, the Bruins eked out a 60-58 victory after blowing an 18-point lead in front of their home fans.

This time, UCLA led by 12 in the first half only to watch Ellis put on a show after he scored four points and went 0 for 5 from 3-point range in the first half.

Drew Peterson added 16 points for the Trojans (15-6, 7-3 Pac-12). They improved to 10-1 at home this season, having won 10 straight at Galen Center since dropping their season opener to Florida Gulf Coast.

Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored 15 points and David Singleton and Tyger Campbell added 14 points each for the Bruins (17-4, 8-2).

**No. 1 Purdue 75, Michigan 70:** Zach Edey had 15 of his 19 points in the first half and Fletcher Loyer finished with 17 points to help Purdue hold off Michigan.

The Boilermakers (20-1, 9-1 Big Ten) had a 15-0 run to go ahead 41-28 lead in the first half after there were 10 lead changes, but they couldn't pull away.

Hunter Dickinson scored 21 points for Michigan. The Wolverines (11-9, 5-4) were without standout freshman Jett Howard, who missed the game with an ankle injury, and hung around until the final seconds.

Joey Baker made a 3-pointer — off the glass — with 5.9 seconds left to pull Michigan within three points, but Purdue's Brandon Newman sealed the victory

with two free throws.

**No. 6 Arizona 63, Washington State 58:** Aзуolas Tubelis had 18 points and 12 rebounds and Arizona beat Washington State.

Kerr Kriisa added 15 points to help the Wildcats (18-3, 7-3 Pac-12) split the season series with the Cougars (9-13, 4-7).

Washington State beat a Top 5 team on the road for the first time when it upset the Wildcats 74-61 in Tucson this month.

Justin Powell and Mouhamed Gueye each scored 15 points for Washington State.

# Ovechkin scores 32nd as Capitals win

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Alex Ovechkin scored his 32nd goal of the season, Nicklas Backstrom had the shootout winner and the Washington Capitals beat the Pittsburgh Penguins 3-2 on Thursday night.

The Capitals snapped a two-game skid and handed the Penguins a fifth loss in eight games. But Pittsburgh trails Washington by just a single point in the standings and has three additional games left on its schedule.

Evgeny Kuznetsov and Backstrom scored in the shootout long after Ovechkin reached 812 goals in his NHL career and Marcus Johansson put the Capitals ahead early in the third period. Darcy Kuemper ended it by denying Evgeni Malkin in the third round of the shootout.

The Penguins played past regulation for the fifth time in six games thanks to Bryan Rust's tying goal with 7:08 left in the third period.

Casey DeSmith kept them in it with a sharp performance in place of injured No. 1 goaltender Tristan Jarry. DeSmith stopped 43 of the 45 shots he faced in regulation and overtime, including 20 saves in the first period alone.

Pittsburgh's Danton Heinen also scored.

**Lightning 3, Bruins 2:** Victor Hedman scored the go-ahead goal with 6:31 remaining and Tampa Bay beat Boston to tie a team record with its 11th straight home victory.

Brayden Point's pass for Steven Stamkos on a 2-on-1 misfired, but the puck came right to Hedman. His shot from the left circle beat Linus Ullmark after the Boston goalie was run over by teammate Brandon Carlo, breaking a 2-all tie.

The Lightning matched the franchise mark for consecutive home wins, set in 2019-20. They ended Boston's six-game winning streak and the Bruins' run of seven road victories in a row.

Brandon Hagel and Nikita Kucherov also scored for Tampa Bay, and Andrei Vasilevskiy made 37 saves. Brad Marchand and Pavel Zacha scored for NHL-leading Boston.

**Sabres 3, Jets 2:** Tage Thompson had a goal and an assist and Buffalo beat Winnipeg for its fifth straight victory.

Thompson scored his 34th goal of the season and stretched his points streak to six games. He has three goals and seven assists during the streak.

Owen Power and Victor Olofsson also scored for the Sabres, Jeff Skinner and Rasmus Dahlin each had a pair of assists, and Eric Comrie stopped 19 shots.

Nate Schmidt and Pierre-Luc Dubois scored for Winnipeg, and Connor Hellebuyck made 33 saves.

**Ducks 5, Avalanche 3:** Frank Vatrano scored three goals, Adam Henrique and Mason McTavish scored 24 seconds apart in the third period and Anaheim ended Colorado's six-

game winning streak.

John Gibson stopped 40 shots as the Ducks, in last place in the Pacific Division, finished a six-game trip 3-2-1.

Mikko Rantanen scored twice, Samuel Girard added a goal and an assist and Cale Makar had an assist in his return from injury, but the Avs fell to fourth in the Central Division, a point behind Minnesota.

**Predators 6, Devils 4:** Matt Duchene scored a third-period goal and assisted on another to lead Nashville past New Jersey.

Cody Glass, Cole Smith, Mikael Granlund, Filip Forsberg and Tanner Jeannot also scored for Nashville, which has won three straight and five of six heading into the All-Star break. Juuse Saros stopped 36 shots.

Jack Hughes had a goal and an assist for the Devils, who lost in regulation for just the second time in January and fell to 7-1-1 in their last nine games.

Jesper Bratt, Yegor Sharangovich and Dawson Mercer also scored for New Jersey.

**Blackhawks 5, Flames 1:** Rookie goaltender Jaxson Stauber made it two wins in two career starts by stopping 34 shots, sending Chicago past Calgary.

Taylor Raddysch, Boris Katchouk, Jason Dickinson, Sam Lafferty and Connor Murphy scored for Chicago (15-28-4), which entered last in the NHL standings. Max Domi had an assist, extending his points streak to four games.

Jonathan Huberdeau scored for the Flames.

**Wild 3, Flyers 2, OT:** Mats Zuccarello scored in overtime, Matt Boldy had two goals and Minnesota returned home to beat Philadelphia.

Marc-Andre Fleury made 28 saves for Minnesota, which had lost three in a row and was 1-3 on a four-game trip.

With goalie Carter Hart pulled in the final minutes, Tony DeAngelo sent the game into overtime for the Flyers with 1:28 remaining in regulation. Noah Cates also scored for Philadelphia.

**Coyotes 5, Blues 0:** Nick Schmaltz had his first NHL hat trick, Karel Vejmelka made 33 saves for his third shutout of the season and Arizona beat St. Louis.

Travis Boyd and Barrett Hayton also scored in for the Coyotes in their third victory 15 games. Hayton has five goals in his last 11 games.

**Red Wings 4, Canadiens 3, OT:** Robby Fabbri scored at 2:36 of overtime to lift Detroit past Montreal.

Michael Rasmussen set up Fabbri with a pass through the crease. Rasmussen, Jonatan Berggren and Oskar Sunqvist also scored, Moritz Seider had three assists, and Ville Husso made 20 saves.

Rafael Harvey-Pinard scored twice and had an assist for Montreal. Michael Pezzetta added a goal and an assist, and Jake Allen made 38 saves.

## Djokovic to face Tsitsipas in Australian Open final

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Novak Djokovic put aside some shaky play in the early going and took over his Australian Open semifinal against unseeded American Tommy Paul on Friday, winning 7-5, 6-1, 6-2 to close in on a 10th championship

at Melbourne Park and 22nd Grand Slam title overall.

Djokovic's parents and brother are in town for the tournament for the first time since he claimed major trophy No. 1 there back in 2008, but his father stayed away from this match after getting caught up

in a flap connected to spectators who brought banned Russian flags on site earlier in the week.

Forget about that potential distraction. As usual, Djokovic summoned what it took to extend his Australian Open winning streak to 27 matches, the

longest in the Open era, which dates to 1968.

On Sunday, No. 4 seed Djokovic will take on No. 3 seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, who eliminated Karen Khachanov 7-6 (2), 6-4, 6-7 (6), 6-3 to reach his first final at Melbourne Park and second at a Slam.