

Air-defense systems headed to Ukraine

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The United States will send two advanced air-defense systems to Ukraine as part of its latest \$820 million military aid package, Pentagon Press Secretary Todd Breasseale announced Friday.

Ukraine will receive two National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems, which can strike targets about 100 miles away. They will be purchased for Ukraine, rather than being pulled from U.S. stocks, according to the Pentagon. The Associated Press reported the delivery will take weeks, or even months.

“This announcement represents the beginning of a contracting process to provide additional capabilities to Ukraine’s armed forces,” Breasseale said.

The U.S. uses the Norwegian-developed anti-aircraft systems to protect airspace above the White House and U.S. Capitol building in Washington, according to The

Associated Press.

“The United States continues to work with its allies and partners to provide Ukraine with capabilities to meet its evolving battlefield requirements,” Breasseale said. “In particular, [the Defense Department] recognizes Norway’s cooperation to enable the historic provision by the United States of modern air defense systems that will help Ukraine defend against Russia’s brutal air attacks.”

The systems are expected to enhance Ukraine’s long-range rocket and missile capabilities that senior defense officials say have become more pertinent to the fight now focused in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine.

The NASAMS are the latest advanced weapons that the U.S. has sent Ukraine in its fight against invading Russian forces. In June, President Joe Biden sent eight High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, which can strike targets roughly 50 miles away.

Also included in the latest aid package are four counter-artillery radars, up to 150,000 rounds of 155mm howitzers artillery ammunition, and additional HIMARS ammunition.

The military aid announced Friday is the 14th time that the U.S. has sent weapons and equipment to Ukraine since August, according to the Pentagon, the majority of which has been sent since Russia invaded on Feb. 24.

The latest \$820 million brings the total amount of aid that the U.S. has sent Ukraine to about \$6.9 billion since the start of the war, and approximately \$8.8 billion since Biden took office in January 2021, Breasseale said.

The aid will come out of the approximately \$11 billion that Congress assigned for military aid in its supplemental funding bill to support Ukraine’s defense against the Russian invasion, according to the Pentagon.

Russians press assault on Ukraine’s last eastern hold

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian forces are pounding the city of Lysychansk and its surroundings in an all-out attempt to seize the last stronghold of resistance in eastern Ukraine’s Luhansk province, the governor said Saturday.

Ukrainian fighters have spent weeks trying to defend the city and to keep it from falling to Russia, as neighboring Sievierodonetsk did a week ago. The Russian Defense Ministry said its forces took control of an oil refinery on Lysychansk’s edge in recent days, but Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai reported Friday that fighting for the facility continued.

“Over the last day, the occupiers opened fire from all available kinds of weapons,” Haidai said Saturday on the Telegram messaging app.

Luhansk and neighboring Donetsk are the two provinces that make up the Donbas region, where Russia has focused its offensive since pulling back from northern Ukraine and the capital, Kyiv, in the spring.

Pro-Russia separatists have held portions

of both provinces since 2014, and Moscow recognizes all of Luhansk and Donetsk as sovereign republics. Syria’s government said Wednesday that it would also recognize the “independence and sovereignty” of the two areas and work to establish diplomatic relations with the separatists.

In Slovyansk, a major Donetsk city still under Ukrainian control, four people died when Russian forces fired cluster munitions late Friday, Mayor Vadym Lyakh said on Facebook. He said the neighborhoods that were hit did not contain any potential military targets.

Elsewhere, investigators combed through the wreckage from a Russian air-strike early Friday on residential areas near the Ukrainian port of Odesa that killed 21 people.

Ukrainian Prosecutor-General Iryna Venediktova said the investigators were recovering fragments from missiles that struck an apartment building in the small coastal town of Serhiivka. They also were taking measurements to determine the trajectory of the weapons, she said.

“We are taking all the necessary investigative measures to determine the specific people guilty of this terrible war crime,” Venediktova said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said three anti-ship missiles struck “an ordinary residential building, a nine-story building” housing about 160 people. The victims of Friday’s attack also included four members of a family staying at a “typical” seaside campsite, he said.

“I emphasize: this is a deliberate direct Russian terror, and not some mistake or an accidental missile strike,” Zelenskyy said.

The British Defense Ministry said Saturday that air-launched anti-ship missiles generally do not have precision accuracy against ground targets. It said Russia likely was using such missiles because of a shortage of more accurate weapons.

The Kremlin has repeatedly claimed that the Russian military is targeting fuel storage sites and military facilities, not residential areas, although missiles also recently hit an apartment building in Kyiv and a shopping mall in the central city of Kremenchuk.

High court takes on abortion, guns, more

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Abortion, guns and religion — a major change in the law in any one of these areas would have made for a fateful Supreme Court term. In its first full term together, the court's conservative majority ruled in all three and issued other significant decisions limiting the government's regulatory powers.

And it has signaled no plans to slow down.

With three appointees of former President Donald Trump in their 50s, the six-justice conservative majority seems poised to keep control of the court for years to come, if not decades.

"This has been a revolutionary term in so many respects," said Tara Leigh Grove, a law professor at the University of Texas. "The court has massively changed constitutional law in really big ways."

Its remaining opinions issued, the court began its summer recess Thursday, and the justices will next return to the courtroom in October.

Overtaking *Roe v. Wade* and ending a nearly half-century guarantee of abortion rights had the most immediate impact, shutting down or severely restricting abortions in roughly a dozen states within days of the decision.

In expanding gun rights and finding religious discrimination in two cases, the justices also made it harder to sustain gun control laws and lowered barriers to religion in public life.

Setting important new limits on regulatory authority, they reined in the government's ability to fight climate change and blocked a Biden administration effort to get workers at large companies vaccinated against COVID-19.

The remarkable week at the

end of June in which the guns, abortion, religion and environmental cases were decided at least partially obscured other notable events, some of them troubling.

New Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson was sworn in Thursday as the first Black woman on the court. She replaced the retiring Justice Stephen Breyer, who served nearly 28 years, a switch that won't change the balance between liberals and conservatives on the court.

In early May, the court had to deal with the unprecedented leak of a draft opinion in the abortion case. Chief Justice John Roberts almost immediately ordered an investigation, about which the court has been mum ever since. Soon after, workers encircled the court with 8-foot-high fencing in response to security concerns. In June, police made a late-night arrest of an armed man near Justice Brett Kavanaugh's Maryland home, and charged him with attempted murder of the justice.

Kavanaugh is one of three Trump appointees along with Justices Neil Gorsuch and Amy Coney Barrett who fortified the right side of the court. Greg Garre, who served as former President George W. Bush's top Supreme Court lawyer, said when the court began its term in October "the biggest question was not so much which direction the court was headed in, but how fast it was going. The term answers that question pretty resoundingly, which is fast."

The speed also revealed that the chief justice no longer has the control over the court he held when he was one of five, not six, conservatives, Garre said.

Roberts, who favors a more incremental approach that

might bolster perceptions of the court as a nonpolitical institution, broke most notably with the other conservatives in the abortion case, writing that it was unnecessary to overturn *Roe*, which he called a "serious jolt" to the legal system. On the other hand, he was part of every other ideologically divided majority.

If the past year revealed limits on the chief justice's influence, it also showcased the sway of Justice Clarence Thomas, the longest-serving member of the court. He wrote the decision expanding gun rights and the abortion case marked the culmination of his 30-year effort on the Supreme Court to get rid of *Roe*, which had stood since 1973.

Abortion is just one of several areas in which Thomas is prepared to jettison court precedents. The justices interred a second of their decisions, *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, in ruling for a high school football coach's right to pray on the 50-yard line following games. It's not clear, though, that other justices are as comfortable as Thomas in overturning past decisions.

The abortion and guns cases also seemed contradictory to some critics in that the court handed states authority over the most personal decisions, but limited state power in regulating guns. One distinction the majorities in those cases drew, though, is that the Constitution explicitly mentions guns, but not abortion.

Those decisions do not seem especially popular with the public, according to opinion polls. Polls show a sharp drop in the court's approval rating and in people's confidence in the court as an institution.

Justices on courts past have acknowledged a concern about public perception. As recently

as last September, Justice Amy Coney Barrett said, "My goal today is to convince you that this court is not comprised of a bunch of partisan hacks."

But the conservatives, minus Roberts, rejected any concern about perception in the abortion case, said Grove, the University of Texas professor.

Justice Samuel Alito wrote in his majority opinion that "not only are we not going to focus on that, we should not focus on that," she said. "I'm sympathetic as an academic, but I was surprised to see that coming from that many real-world justices."

The liberal justices, though, wrote repeatedly that the court's aggressiveness in this epic term was doing damage to the institution. Justice Sonia Sotomayor described her fellow justices as "a restless and newly constituted Court." Justice Elena Kagan, in her abortion dissent, wrote: "The Court reverses course today for one reason and one reason only: because the composition of this Court has changed."

In 18 decisions, at least five conservative justices joined to form a majority and all three liberals were in dissent, roughly 30% of all the cases the court heard in its term that began last October.

Among these, the court also:

- Made it harder for people to sue state and federal authorities for violations of constitutional rights.

- Raised the bar for defendants asserting their rights were violated, ruling against a Michigan man who was shackled at trial.

- Limited how some death row inmates and others sentenced to lengthy prison terms can pursue claims that their lawyers did a poor job representing them.

Texas court: Abortions can't continue

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — The Texas Supreme Court blocked a lower court order late Friday night that said clinics could continue performing abortions, just days after some doctors had resumed seeing patients after the fall of *Roe v. Wade*.

It was not immediately clear whether Texas clinics that had resumed seeing patients this week would halt services again. A hearing is scheduled for later this month.

The whiplash of Texas clinics turning away patients, rescheduling them and now potentially canceling appointments again — all in the span of a week — illustrated the confusion and scrambling taking place across the country since *Roe* was overturned.

An order by a Houston judge earlier this week had reassured some clinics they could temporarily resume abortions up to six weeks into pregnancy. That was quickly followed by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton asking the state's highest court, which is stocked with nine Republican justices, to temporarily put the order on hold.

"These laws are confusing, unnecessary, and cruel," said Marc Hearron, attorney for the Center for Reproductive Rights, after the order was issued Friday night.

Clinics in Texas had stopped performing abortions in the state of nearly 30 million people after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* last week and ended the constitutional right to abortion. Texas had technically left an abortion ban on the books for the past 50 years while *Roe* was in place.

A copy of Friday's order was provided by attorneys for Texas clinics. It could not immediately be found on the court's website.

Abortion providers and patients across the country have been struggling to navigate the evolving legal landscape around abortion laws and access.

In Florida, a law banning abortions after 15 weeks went into effect Friday, the day after a judge called it a violation of the state constitution and said he would sign an order temporarily blocking the law next week. The ban could have broader implications in the South, where Florida has wider access to the procedure than its neighbors.

Abortion rights have been lost and regained in the span of a few days in Kentucky. A so-called trigger law imposing a near-total ban on the procedure took effect last Friday, but a judge blocked the law Thursday, meaning the state's only two abortion providers can resume seeing pa-

tients — for now.

The legal wrangling is almost certain to continue to cause chaos for Americans seeking abortions in the near future, with court rulings able to upend access at a moment's notice and an influx of new patients from out of state overwhelming providers.

Even when women travel outside states with abortion bans in place, they may have fewer options to end their pregnancies as the prospect of prosecution follows them.

Planned Parenthood of Montana this week stopped providing medication abortions to patients who live in states with bans "to minimize potential risk for providers, health center staff and patients in the face of a rapidly changing landscape."

Planned Parenthood North Central States, which offers the procedure in Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska, is telling its patients that they must take both pills in the regimen in a state that allows abortions.

"There's a lot of confusion and concern that the providers may be at risk, and they are trying to limit their liability so they can provide care to people who need it," said Dr. Daniel Grossman, who directs the research group Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health at the University of California, San Francisco.

New York to overhaul handgun rules

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York lawmakers approved a sweeping overhaul Friday of the state's handgun licensing rules, seeking to preserve some limits on firearms after the Supreme Court ruled that most people have a right to carry a handgun for personal protection.

The measure, signed by Gov. Kathy Hochul after passing both chambers by wide margins, is almost sure to draw more legal challenges from gun rights advocates who say the state is still putting too many restrictions on who can get guns and where they can carry them.

Hochul, a Democrat, called the Democrat-controlled Legislature back to Albany to work on the law after last week's high-court ruling overturning the state's long-standing licensing restrictions.

Backers said the law, which takes effect Sept. 1, strikes the right balance between complying with the Supreme Court's ruling

and keeping weapons out of the hands of people likely to use them recklessly or with criminal intent.

But some Republican lawmakers, opposed to tighter restrictions, argued the law violated the constitutional right to bear arms. They predicted it too would end up being overturned.

Among other things, the state's new rules will require people applying for a handgun license to turn over a list of their social media accounts so officials could verify their "character and conduct."

Applicants will have to show they have "the essential character, temperament and judgment necessary to be entrusted with a weapon and to use it only in a manner that does not endanger oneself and others."

"Sometimes, they're telegraphing their intent to cause harm to others," Hochul said at a news conference.

Gun rights advocates and Republican leaders were incensed, saying the legisla-

tion not only violated the Second Amendment, but also privacy and free speech rights.

"New Yorkers' constitutional freedoms were just trampled on," state Republican Chair Nick Langworthy said.

The bill approved by lawmakers doesn't specify whether applicants will be required to provide licensing officers with access to private social media accounts not visible to the general public.

People applying for a license to carry a handgun will also have to provide four character references, take 16 hours of firearms safety training plus two hours of practice at a range, undergo periodic background checks and turn over contact information for their spouse, domestic partner or any other adults living in their household.

Hochul's chief lawyer, Elizabeth Fine, insisted the state was setting out "a very clear set of eligibility criteria" and noted that the legislation includes an appeals process.

WHO: Monkeypox cases triple in Europe

Associated Press

LONDON — The World Health Organization's Europe chief warned Friday that monkeypox cases in the region have tripled in the last two weeks and urged countries to do more to ensure the previously rare disease does not become entrenched on the continent.

And African health authorities said they are treating the expanding monkeypox outbreak as an emergency, calling on rich countries to share limited supplies of vaccines to avoid equity problems seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHO Europe chief Dr. Hans Kluge said in a statement that increased efforts were needed despite the U.N. health

agency's decision last week that the escalating outbreak did not yet warrant being declared a global health emergency.

"Urgent and coordinated action is imperative if we are to turn a corner in the race to reverse the ongoing spread of this disease," Kluge said.

To date, more than 5,000 monkeypox cases have been reported from 51 countries worldwide that don't normally report the disease, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Kluge said the number of infections in Europe represents about 90% of the global total, with 31 countries in the WHO's European region having identified cases.

Kluge said data reported to the WHO show that 99% of cases have been in men — the majority in men that have sex with men. But he said there were now "small numbers" of cases among household contacts, including children. Most people reported symptoms including a rash, fever, fatigue, muscle pain, vomiting and chills.

About 10% of patients were hospitalized for treatment or to be isolated, and one person was admitted to an intensive care unit. No deaths have been reported.

Kluge said the problem of stigmatization in some countries might make some people wary of seeking health care and said the WHO was working with partners including organizers of gay pride events.

Death row inmate seeks to donate kidney

Associated Press

HOUSTON — A Texas inmate who is set to be put to death in less than two weeks asked that his execution be delayed so he can donate a kidney.

Ramiro Gonzales is scheduled to receive a lethal injection on July 13 for fatally shooting 18-year-old Bridget Townsend, a south-west Texas woman whose remains were found nearly two years after she vanished in 2001.

In a letter sent Wednesday, Gonzales' lawyers, Thea Posel and Raoul Schone-mann, asked Republican Gov. Greg Abbott to grant a 30-day reprieve so the inmate can be considered a living donor "to someone who is in urgent need of a kidney transplant."

His attorneys have made a separate request to the Texas Board of Pardons and Pa-

roles for a 180-day reprieve related to the kidney donation.

In their request to Abbott, Gonzales' attorneys included a letter from Cantor Michael Zoosman, an ordained Jewish clergyman from Maryland who has been corresponding with Gonzales.

"There has been no doubt in my mind that Ramiro's desire to be an altruistic kidney donor is not motivated by a last-minute attempt to stop or delay his execution. I will go to my grave believing in my heart that this is something that Ramiro wants to do to help make his soul right with his God," Zoosman wrote.

Gonzales' attorneys say he's been determined to be an "excellent candidate" for donation after being evaluated by the transplant team at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. The evaluation

found Gonzales has a rare blood type, meaning his donation could benefit someone who might have difficulty finding a match.

Texas Department of Criminal Justice policies allow inmates to make organ and tissue donations. Agency spokeswoman Amanda Hernandez said Gonzales was deemed ineligible after making a request to be a donor earlier this year. She did not give a reason, but Gonzales' lawyers said in their letter that the agency objected because of the pending execution date.

Abbott's office did not immediately reply to an email seeking comment.

The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles is set to vote July 11 on Gonzales' request to that agency.

Gonzales' attorneys have made a separate request asking the board to commute his death sentence to a lesser penalty.

Amazon bars off-duty workers from buildings

Associated Press

Amazon is barring off-duty warehouse workers from the company's facilities, a move organizers say can hamper union drives.

Under the policy shared with workers on Amazon's internal app, employees are barred from accessing buildings or other working areas on their scheduled days off, and before or after their shifts.

An Amazon spokesperson said the policy does not prohibit off-duty employees from engaging their co-workers in "non-working

areas" outside the company's buildings.

"There's nothing more important than the safety of our employees and the physical security of our buildings," Amazon spokesperson Kelly Nantel said. "This policy regarding building access applies to building interiors and working areas. It does not limit employee access to non-working areas outside of our facilities."

The notice of the new policy, dated Thursday, says the off-duty rule "will not be enforced discriminatorily" against employees seeking to unionize. But organizers say the

policy itself will hinder their efforts to garner support from co-workers during campaigns.

"On our days off, we come to work and we engage our co-workers in the break rooms," said Rev. Ryan Brown, an Amazon warehouse worker in Garner, N.C., who's aiming to organize his workplace following the labor win on Staten Island, N.Y., where workers at an Amazon warehouse voted in April to unionize.

"This was a direct response to that, to try to stop organizing by any means necessary," Brown said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Affidavit: Woman was stabbed 484 times

ME PERRY — An autopsy showed that a woman killed in her home in April was stabbed 484 times, according to newly unsealed court documents.

Kimberly Neptune, 43, of Perry, had wounds on her legs, stomach, neck and head when her body was discovered wrapped in a blanket, State Police Detective Lawrence Anderson wrote in the affidavit.

Donnell J. Dana and Kailie A. Brackett were both charged with murder on April 29, little more than a week after Neptune died. Both knew Neptune.

The affidavit that was unsealed indicated Brackett had accused Neptune of stealing money, and that Dana and Brackett planned to rob her.

Medal recipient named to hall of fame

WV CHARLESTON — A Medal of Honor recipient from West Virginia who recently died has been chosen as the first inductee into the West Virginia Military Hall of Fame, Gov. Jim Justice said.

Justice said he nominated Hershel “Woody” Williams, 98, for the Hall of Fame. The West Virginia Veterans Council unanimously voted to induct Williams, Justice’s office said in a news release.

Williams was America’s last surviving World War II Medal of Honor recipient.

The Hall of Fame, established this year by the legislature, honors veterans from West Virginia who went above and beyond the call of duty on the battlefield

and who continued to distinguish themselves in service after returning to the state.

Thieves pose as tourists, take necklace

NY NEW YORK — Thieves posing as New York City tourists drove up to an 87-year-old man and swiped his necklace, swapping it for one made of fake gold, police said.

The snatch-and-switch happened June 16 near Cunningham Park in Queens. The thieves claimed to be travelers from Dubai and engaged the man in conversation to draw him closer to their vehicle, police said.

Surveillance video made public showed the man standing close to the vehicle and the driver reaching for the man’s necklace, unclasping it and at one point removing a hat from the man’s head. The driver then placed a fake gold necklace, much cheaper than the \$1,000 original, on the man’s neck before driving off, police said.

No arrests have been made.

Edibles, beverages laced with THC legal

MN ST. PAUL — A new Minnesota law has taken effect that allows people 21 and older to buy edibles and beverages that contain a limited amount of THC, the ingredient in marijuana that creates a high.

Edibles, like gummies, and beverages can contain up to 5 milligrams of THC per serving and 50 milligrams per package under the law. Five milligrams is about half the standard dose found in recreational marijuana

products in other states.

Under the law, new THC products must be derived from legally certified hemp. But, industry experts say 5 milligrams will produce the same effect whether it’s derived from hemp or marijuana, the Star Tribune reported.

Man dies after being hit by 3 drivers

CA FULLERTON — A homeless man crossing a Fullerton street against a red light died when he was struck by three drivers and none of them stopped, authorities said.

Kenneth Edward Wassennar II, who was described as homeless, was pushing a cartful of belongings when he was struck in a crosswalk police and coroner’s officials told the Orange County Register.

Surveillance video showed he was hit by a white Dodge Charger and was struck again moments later by a black Jeep Wrangler, police Capt. Jon Radus said. As he lay in the roadway a couple of minutes later, he was hit again by a white, two-door Honda Civic.

“He was wearing dark clothing at the time,” Radus said. “The area is lit with streetlights, and he was crossing against a red light.”

No arrests had been made.

Plane crashes into river; 2 people, dog rescued

CT NEW HAVEN — Two people and a dog were helped to shore by bystanders after their small single-engine plane landed in the Quinnipiac River, authorities said.

The couple was flying to New Bedford, Mass., when the plane’s engine began to sputter. Sean Scanlon, executive director of Tweed New Haven Airport, said pilot radioed the control tower and was instructed to land at Tweed. However, the pilot felt it wasn’t possible and landed in the river instead.

Authorities said the couple was shaken up but uninjured. The bystanders brought the couple to shore by boat.

Rick Fontana, New Haven’s director of emergency operations, told the New Haven Register the couple began their ill-fated trip in Wellington, Fla. They had stopped in Woodbine, N.J., before making the river landing in Connecticut.

2nd visitor in 3 days gored by park bison

WY YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK — For the second time in three days, a visitor to Yellowstone National Park was gored by a bison, park officials said.

A 71-year-old woman from West Chester, Pa. and her daughter inadvertently approached the bison as they were returning to their vehicle at a Yellowstone Lake trailhead.

The woman’s injuries were not life-threatening, park officials said. She was taken by ambulance to the West Park Hospital in Cody, Wyo.

Earlier in the week, a 34-year-old Colorado Springs, Colo., man who had gotten too close to a bison near Giant Geyser was thrown as he grabbed a child who was running away from the beast. They both got up and ran away.

— From Associated Press

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Watson better off settling with NFL

Associated Press

Now that Deshaun Watson's disciplinary hearing has concluded, the best solution for the NFL and the quarterback's legal team is to reach a settlement before retired judge Sue Robinson issues a decision.

Watson was accused of sexual misconduct by 24 women and has settled 20 of the civil lawsuits. Two separate Texas grand juries declined to indict Watson on criminal complaints stemming from the allegations.

A settlement between the NFL and Watson would avoid an appeal that undermines the collectively bargained process with a disciplinary officer and prevents a potential federal court case. The longer the process drags on, the uglier it can get for the league and the QB.

The NFL is insisting on a sus-

pension of at least one year and Watson's team has argued there is no basis for that punishment, four people with knowledge of the case, including two who were present during the hearings, told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because details of the three-day proceedings were not publicly released.

Holding firm leaves little wiggle room for a settlement agreement and both sides are sticking to their strong positions.

Robinson, a former U.S. District Judge who was jointly appointed by the league and the NFL Players' Association, will decide whether Watson violated the NFL's personal conduct policy and whether to impose discipline — and most importantly, how severe. Both sides believe she will impose a sus-

pension. The question is how many games and whether either side would appeal her decision, putting it back in NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell's hands.

When a person familiar with Watson's defense team was asked what would be an acceptable suspension, the person told the AP: "Our goal is to get him back on the field this year."

A 6-8 game suspension would fulfill that goal and allow Watson to play for the Cleveland Browns in 2022. So would 10 games, for that matter.

But then the next question is what's acceptable for the NFL? The league is well aware of public perception. Fallout from its decision in the Ray Rice case in 2014 (in which the league increased its suspension only after video of Rice hitting his fian-

cée emerged) led the NFL to vow it would levy harsher penalties in cases involving violence and sexual assault against women.

A person familiar with the hearing told the AP the league believes it presented sufficient evidence to warrant keeping Watson off the field this season. The person said the league's investigation determined Watson committed multiple violations of the personal conduct policy.

If Robinson doesn't impose a suspension suitable to the NFL, the league still has the power to do so on its own. Per terms of Article 46 in the collective bargaining agreement, Goodell or his designee "will issue a written decision that will constitute full, final and complete disposition of the dispute," if either side appeals.

Cornet stops Swiatek's 37-match winning streak

Associated Press

WIMBLEDON, England — Top-ranked Iga Swiatek was unbeaten since February and sure seemed unbeatable, compiling 37 consecutive match wins and six consecutive tournament titles.

She's never quite been as comfortable on grass courts as other surfaces, though, and a mistake-filled Saturday sent Swiatek out of Wimbledon in the third round with a 6-4, 6-2 loss to 37th-ranked Alize Cornet of France.

"I know I didn't play good tennis. I was pretty confused about my tactics," said Swiatek, a two-time French Open champion who has never advanced past the fourth round at the All England Club. "For sure, it wasn't a good performance for me."

It was not just the match's winner that was unexpected. It was also just how one-sided this 1-hour, 33-minute encounter

was.

"This kind of match is what I'm living for, it's what I'm practicing for every day," Cornet said. "It really drives me. I knew I could do it. Somehow, I had this belief."

No woman had won as many matches in a row as Swiatek since Martina Hingis also put together a run of 37 in 1997.

But right away, it seemed, this would not be Swiatek's day.

"I didn't know what to do," she said.

On a chilly, windy afternoon at No. 1 Court, she quickly fell behind 3-0 and of Cornet's first 14 points, nine came via unforced errors off the racket of the 21-year-old player from Poland. Only one came via a winner produced by Cornet herself.

Normally so crisp with her shots and calm with her demeanor, Swiatek was not exactly at ease in either sense. After one missed forehand return, she swatted the toes of her right

shoe with her racket.

By the end, Swiatek had made 33 unforced errors — a whopping 26 more than Cornet. And Swiatek's strong forehand produced nine winners, only two more than Cornet amassed.

When the match ended — appropriately enough, with Swiatek dumping a forehand into the net — Cornet raised her arms and smiled as wide a smile as can be.

Cornet is a 32-year-old who reached her first quarterfinal in 63 appearances at majors by getting that far at the Australian Open in January. Now she's a win away from getting that far again, facing unseeded Ajla Tomljanovic of Australia next.

"I'm like good wine," Cornet said. "Good wine always ages well."

Tomljanovic, a quarterfinalist a year ago at the All England Club, eliminated 2021 French Open champion Barbora Krejčíková 2-6, 6-4, 6-3.

In a contest between two young Americans — and a rematch of the 2017 U.S. Open junior final — No. 20 seed Amanda Anisimova came back to top No. 11 Coco Gauff 6-7 (4), 6-2, 6-1 at Centre Court.

Next for Anisimova is a match against Harmony Tan, who is making her Wimbledon debut and defeated Williams in the first round last Tuesday.

Other women's fourth-round matches Monday will be No. 17 Elena Rybakina vs. Petra Martić, and 2019 champion Simona Halep against No. 4 Paula Badosa, who got past two-time Wimbledon winner Petra Kvitová 7-5, 7-6 (4).

A total of four American men are into the round of 16 at the All England Club for the first time since 1999 after victories Saturday by No. 11 Taylor Fritz and unseeded Brandon Nakashima. They join No. 23 Frances Tiafoe and No. 30 Tommy Paul, who advanced a day earlier.

LaVine, Nurkic stay put in NBA free agency

Associated Press

Zach LaVine is staying in Chicago. Same goes for Jusuf Nurkic in Portland.

Day 2 of NBA free agency on Friday brought another max deal — this time, going to LaVine, who secured the richest contract in Bulls history when he agreed to a \$215 million, five-year contract.

LaVine technically was a free agent, for about 18 hours. Klutch Sports, which represents LaVine, made the announcement of the max agreement, with Chicago able to offer the Olympic gold medalist and two-time All-Star \$56 million more than any other club could this summer.

Nurkic got by far the biggest payday of his career, agreeing to a four-year, \$70 million contract with Portland. The center just completed his eighth NBA season, the last six of those coming with the Trail Blazers,

for whom he averaged 15 points and 11.1 rebounds this past season.

Mitchell Robinson is another big man not moving elsewhere, agreeing Friday to a \$60 million, four-year contract to remain with the New York Knicks.

There are some players who will be changing addresses. Danilo Gallinari, according to a person familiar with his decision, intends to sign a two-year deal with the Eastern Conference champion Boston Celtics — once his waiving by the San Antonio Spurs is completed. Gallinari was sent to San Antonio this week in a trade that brought All-Star guard Dejounte Murray to Atlanta.

Also on the move: Bruce Brown Jr., a guard who has decided to leave Brooklyn and sign with Denver on a two-year deal worth just over \$13 million. Brown averaged a career-

best 9 points per game this past season for the Nets.

Another deal that was put into motion earlier in the week was completed, when five-time All-Star John Wall — bought out by the Houston Rockets — announced he had agreed to a two-year deal with the Los Angeles Clippers. Wall was under contract for \$47.4 million this season, got bought out by Houston for about \$41 million, and will get the \$6.4 million difference from the Clippers. Wall hasn't played in the NBA since April 2021, and has appeared in 82 games, including playoffs, over the last 4½ seasons.

The champion Golden State Warriors brought back one of their key free agents, retaining Kevon Looney — who appeared in all 104 of the team's games this past season — on a three-year deal that could be worth about \$26 million if the final year becomes fully guar-

anteed. But another two rotation pieces went elsewhere; Gary Payton II is headed to the Portland Trail Blazers and Otto Porter Jr. is signing with the Toronto Raptors.

LaVine's agreement was at least the fifth deal of at least \$200 million struck since free agency opened on Thursday. The others all came on Day 1, going to Nikola Jokic (\$264 million extension in Denver), Bradley Beal (\$251 million contract to stay in Washington), Devin Booker (\$224 million extension with Phoenix) and Karl-Anthony Towns (\$224 million extension with Minnesota).

And a sixth deal could very easily join that \$200 million club: Memphis' Ja Morant agreed to a \$193 million extension that could reach \$231 million based on what awards he qualifies for this coming season.

Conference realignment has another seismic shift

Associated Press

Conference realignment in college sports has been going on since 1984, when the Supreme Court invalidated the NCAA's national television contract for football.

The conference juggling has gone through ebbs and flows through the years since, from small schools bumping up to bigger leagues to power programs switching to other major conferences.

The latest move, Southern California and UCLA bolting the Pac-12 for the Big Ten, could be part of a tectonic shift. Not just because of the marquee schools involved, but because it happened at a time when the NCAA is looking to take a more decentralized approach to governing college athletics, handing more power to schools and conferences.

"You might think this is more

seismic because it's involving wealthier schools — and arguably it is — but also it's seismic because of the underpinnings of the system, the foundations of the system, are being challenged at a time when the financial structure is exploding," Smith College economics professor Andrew Zimbalist said Friday. "It may have larger ramifications, but it is a process that's been ongoing."

The decisions by USC and UCLA to join the Big Ten in 2024 come roughly a year after Texas and Oklahoma announced they were leaving the Big 12 for the Southeastern Conference.

While surprising, even to Pac-12 officials, the announcement Thursday gives the Los Angeles schools stability and exposure in a shifting collegiate sports landscape.

"It's huge for our student ath-

letes, just from a national exposure perspective," UCLA athletic director Martin Jarmond said. "They're going compete at the highest level in a major elite conference in different time zones. UCLA is always national, but now we have the ability for student athletes to showcase their talent across the country. That's exciting."

For all the other benefits, the bottom line to the defections is the bottom line.

The SEC has become a college football behemoth that distributed \$54.6 million to each of its member schools in the 2021 fiscal year. The Big Ten has tried to keep up and had a per-school distribution of \$46.1 million last year.

The Pac-12 had the lowest distribution number among Power Five schools, paying its member institutions \$19.8 million in 2021.

At the core, it's all about the TV.

The SEC has a \$3 billion deal with ESPN that's set to begin in 2024 and the Big Ten is currently negotiating a massive media rights deal. The Pac-12 has floundered when it comes to TV as the conference's network has struggled to gain footing while many of its games are played late at night.

With costs to run college athletic programs climbing in recent years, exacerbated by the pandemic, moving to an even bigger conference provides more financial stability. For the Big Ten, adding UCLA and USC gives the conference a foothold in the nation's second-largest media market.

"Money talks," said Tom McMillen, President and CEO of Lead1, which represents Football Bowl Subdivision athletic directors and programs.

Tellez homers for 5th time in 5 games

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Rowdy Tellez homered for the fifth time in five games and drove in five runs, Corbin Burnes took a no-hit bid into the sixth inning and the Milwaukee Brewers routed the Pittsburgh Pirates 19-2 Friday night.

Willy Adames hit a grand slam as the Brewers connected five times. They also had five doubles among their 16 hits.

Milwaukee got seven runs in the second inning and eight more in eighth — it was the first time in franchise history the team had scored at least seven runs twice in an inning in the same game.

The NL Central-leading Brewers won for the fifth time in six games and are 7-1 against the Pirates this season. Pittsburgh has lost six of eight.

Mets 4, Rangers 3: Eduardo Escobar hit a tiebreaking three-run homer, expectant father David Peterson tied a career high with 10 strikeouts in six innings and host New York beat Texas to stop a season-high three-game losing streak.

Mark Canha hit a tying RBI single in the fourth that ended an 0-for-14 slide. Two batters later, Escobar snapped a 0-for-10 rut by hitting a 3-2 sinker from Glenn Otto (5-5) into the right field second deck for a 4-1 lead.

Phillies 5, Cardinals 3: Darick Hall's tiebreaking home run was his third homer since being called up, and Rhys Hoskins went deep to add an insurance run, leading host Philadelphia over Nolan Arenado and St. Louis.

Hall broke a 3-all tie in the sixth when he led off by driving a 79-mph changeup from Miles Mikolas (5-6) into the seats in right. All three of Hall's hits have been home runs since his arriving from Triple-A Lehigh Valley on Wednesday. The 26-year-old Hall went deep twice in the Phillies' 14-4 victory over the Atlanta Braves on Thursday night.

Astros 8, Angels 1: Cristian Javier struck out a career-best 14 while allowing just one hit in seven innings to lead host Houston past Los Angeles.

The 25-year-old Javier (6-3) was brilliant in his first start since striking out 13 in seven innings of a combined no-hitter against the Yankees on Saturday. Shohei Ohtani was the only Angels baserunner Javier permitted, hitting a homer with two outs in the first.

Twins 3, Orioles 2: Byron Buxton hit his second game-ending home run of the season, a two-run drive off Jorge López in the ninth inning that lifted host Minnesota over Baltimore.

The Orioles took a 2-1 lead when Ryan McKenna doubled off Caleb Thielbar leading off the eighth, advanced on Trey Mancini's groundout and scored as Jorge Mateo grounded out to Luis Arraez, beating the second baseman's late and off-line throw home.

Dodgers 5, Padres 1: Tony Gonsolin pitched into the eighth inning and became the first 10-game winner in the National League as host Los Angeles beat San Diego.

Max Muncy and Cody Bellinger hit home runs as the Dodgers won their third consecutive game and improved to 2-0 on a season-long 11-game homestand. Los Angeles has won four of five against San Diego this year and lead the Padres by 3½ games atop the NL West.

Braves 9, Reds 1: Max Fried won his eighth straight decision, Austin Riley put Atlanta ahead to stay in the first inning with his team-high 19th home run and the visiting Braves routed Cincinnati.

Dansby Swanson added a three-run homer in the seventh for defending World Series champion Atlanta, which is 22-6 since the start of June to close within 3½ games of the NL East-leading New York Mets.

Blue Jays 9, Rays 2: José Berríos

stopped his three-start winless streak, Vladimir Guerrero Jr. drove in three runs, and host Toronto celebrated Canada Day by beating Tampa Bay for its fourth win in five games.

Lourdes Gurriel Jr. went 3-for-3 with a solo home run and also walked. Cavan Biggio was 2-for-2 with two doubles and two walks, and also scored twice. Seven of the Blue Jays' 11 hits were for extra bases.

Marlins 6, Nationals 3: Brian Anderson homered, and Miami beat host Washington for its ninth win in 10 games against the Nationals this season.

Jon Berti stole two bases to increase his major-league leading total to 24.

Cubs 6, Red Sox 5: Rookie Christopher Morel homered in his third consecutive game, and host Chicago rallied to beat Boston.

Jarren Duran, back in the lineup for the Red Sox after missing a three-game series at Toronto because he's unvaccinated, drove the game's first pitch from Adrian Sampson for a home run.

Royals 3, Tigers 1: Vinnie Pasquantino hit his first major league home run and Hunter Dozier followed with a drive into the bullpen, leading Brad Keller and Kansas City past host Detroit.

Diamondbacks 9, Rockies 3: David Peralta, Alek Thomas and Carson Kelly homered, and Merrill Kelly pitched seven strong innings to lead Arizona to a win at Colorado, which lost a starting pitcher to injury for the second straight game.

Athletics 3, Mariners 1: Sean Murphy delivered a pair of key two-out hits, including a solo home run, and Oakland won at Seattle to snap a four-game losing streak.

White Sox 1, Giants 0: Leury García broke up a scoreless game on an RBI single with two outs in the top of the ninth, and Chicago edged host San Francisco for its third win in nine games.

Chastain threads a thin line of aggression, patience

Associated Press

Ross Chastain has proven to be a decent road racer over his career and there's no reason to believe he won't be in the mix Sunday at Road America in Wisconsin.

But it takes a fine line of patience and aggression to battle for race wins and Chastain has been

trying hard to find that balance in his breakout season. Chastain has picked up a pair of Cup victories this season, his first with Trackhouse Racing, but he's rattled some cages among his rivals along the way.

He's admittedly made a series of overaggressive on-track moves that have strained some

relationships, but the 29-year-old Chastain is torn on how to proceed. What's he done so far has Chastain both qualified for NASCAR's playoffs and ranked second in the Cup standings.

"All I know is I've chased this dream and this goal of competing in the Cup Series for going on 11 years, 12 years now," Chastain

said. "When I race guys, I want it to be for the win and I want to race them for the win, and I need to not do (big moves) for fifth place. I need to have some better couth about it. I don't know how to fix it, I just know that I want this so bad.

"And that doesn't mean that I just get to run into people, like, I get that."