

Navy to offer cash for tips on smugglers

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Navy will start offering up to \$100,000 in cash for tips leading to the seizure of weapons, drugs and other smuggled goods in the waters of the Middle East.

The expected announcement of the program on Tuesday comes about a week before President Joe Biden's visit to the Middle East, where regional tensions persist over Iran's possible ambitions for nuclear weapons and its arming of rebel groups.

The 5th Fleet, based in Manama, Bahrain, is specifically looking for tips on people smuggling illegal weapons or illicit narcotics, as well as information on people planning attacks on U.S. forces, a spokesman for Naval Forces Central Command said.

"By adding this incentive to voluntarily report tips, we think this can enhance our awareness and vigilance of what's happening in the waters of the region," Cmdr. Timothy Hawkins, NAVCENT and 5th Fleet spokesman, told Stars and Stripes.

This is the first time that the 5th Fleet is opting into a military program used in Af-

ghanistan, Iraq and Syria to trade money for information, Hawkins said.

The U.S. Navy says that militant attacks and weapons seizures have increased in recent years in the busy shipping lanes of the Middle East.

Iran has been accused of transfers of rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and missiles to Houthi rebels in Yemen, despite a United Nations Security Council arms embargo.

The 5th Fleet intercepted 9,000 weapons last year, three times the number seized in 2020, U.S. 5th Fleet commander Vice Adm. Brad Cooper told Stars and Stripes in April.

Iran and the various armed groups that it backs have also been accused of seizing ships, laying mines, and launching rockets at a U.S. guided-missile destroyer in Yemen as well as oil facilities in Saudi Arabia.

In an incident last month, a U.S. Navy warship shot warning flares at Iranian Revolutionary Guard speedboats that buzzed within 50 yards of it in the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

The U.S. 5th Fleet will offer the rewards through the Department of Defense Re-

wards Program, which means that U.S. citizens are not eligible for the program, Hawkins said.

Tipsters could receive their award from the Navy in cash or items such as boats or food, Hawkins said.

The 5th Fleet will be responsible for vetting the tips, which can be sent either via a website or a phoneline operated by Arabic, English and Farsi speakers, Hawkins said.

The U.S. military's attempts at gaining information via cash rewards in Afghanistan and Iraq continually ran into serious issues, said Jonathan Schroden, a military operations analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses.

These programs often had tipsters providing false information in an attempt to get the U.S. military to arrest their rivals, often did not have enough resources to keep up with the volume of tips, and sometimes did not lead to results, Schroden said.

"If you're not able to mitigate these challenges, your tip line will become useless or at worst counterproductive," Schroden said.

US wrestles with Russia, Iran provocations in Mideast

The Washington Post

AL-TANF GARRISON, Syria — A burst of Russian and Iranian maneuvers against U.S. interests in the Middle East has forced the region's new military commander toward an early reckoning over how to re-establish deterrence without sparking a wider conflict, a perennial problem that has taken on new urgency amid the global instability ignited by Moscow's war in Ukraine.

Army Gen. Michael Erik Kurilla, who took charge of U.S. Central Command this spring, met in late June with dozens of the approximately 300 soldiers, special operations forces and foreign trainees stationed at this sprawling base in eastern

Syria. The high-level visit occurred just days after Russian fighter jets attacked a combat post operated by Syrian opposition fighters inside the garrison. Russian military officials, citing a purported vehicle explosion they claimed had wounded Syrian government troops, notified the Americans of their intent 35 minutes prior, according to a U.S. military official.

The Biden administration is presiding over a unique moment, as familiar threats like those posed by Iran and its proxies have, in ways, been overshadowed by Russia's aggressive posture toward Europe and China's quest for regional dominance in the Pacific. As the U.S. government looks to

reprioritize, key Middle Eastern allies — including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Israel — are growing impatient, acutely aware that Washington's attention and war capital are being drawn elsewhere.

It has given new urgency to a classic strategic challenge: How much harassment is the United States willing to tolerate, and how can it deter adversaries from testing Washington's red lines?

"The biggest question U.S. policymakers have to wrestle with is that at some point, the Emiratis, Saudis, Israelis, and other Middle Eastern allies, if they don't believe that the United States is going to deter Iran

on its own, they'll be looking for ways to deter Iran by themselves," said Raphael S. Cohen, who researches military strategy and doctrine at the Rand Corp.

No U.S. personnel were harmed in the Russian strike on Tanf. But that was little solace to Kurilla, who characterized the incident as part of a wider attempt by U.S. adversaries to assert dominance in the region while betting that the United States will not mount a kinetic response.

"They're going to push to what they think our limits are going to be and then re-establish our red lines," Kurilla told those assembled in the bright morning desert sun.

Japan protests after spotting warships

Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan protested to Beijing after spotting Chinese and Russian warships just outside its territorial waters around the disputed East China Sea islands on Monday.

Japan's Defense Ministry said a Chinese frigate sailed inside the "contiguous zone," just outside Japanese territorial waters around Senkaku Islands, which Beijing also claims and calls the Diaoyu, for several minutes Monday morning. The Chinese warship's presence was confirmed about 40 minutes after

a Russian frigate had entered the waters for more than an hour, the ministry said.

It was not immediately clear what was behind the latest Chinese-Russian military activity in the area. Japanese defense officials mentioned a possibility that the ships may have been there to avoid a typhoon.

Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiji Kihara said Japan lodged a protest expressing "grave concern" to Beijing over the incident.

"The Senkaku islands are an inherent part of Japan's terri-

tory historically and under international law. The government will deal with the matter calmly but firmly to protect the Japanese land, territorial waters and air space," Kihara said.

There was no violation of the territorial waters, he said.

In Beijing, China justified the frigate's entry and criticized Tokyo's protest. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said the islands are Chinese territory.

"The activities of Chinese vessels in waters nearby are lawful and justified," he said

at a regular news conference. "Japan has no right to make such irresponsible remarks."

Japan sees China's increasingly assertive military activity in the East and South China seas as a threat to regional stability. Toyo is especially sensitive to Chinese activities near the disputed islands.

Kihara said that Monday's incursion into the contiguous zone, which is between the territorial sea and the wider exclusive economic zone, by the Chinese warship was a fourth such event since June 2016.

Putin claims victory in key eastern Ukrainian region

Associated Press

POKROVSK, Ukraine — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday declared victory in the eastern Ukrainian region of Luhansk, one day after Ukrainian forces withdrew from their last remaining bulwark of resistance in the province.

Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reported to Putin in a televised meeting Monday that Russian forces had taken control of Luhansk, which together with the neighboring Donetsk province makes up Ukraine's industrial heartland of Donbas.

Shoigu told Putin that "the operation" was completed on Sunday after Russian troops overran the city of Lysychansk, the last stronghold of Ukrainian forces in Luhansk. Putin, in turn, said that the military units "that took part in active hostilities and achieved success, victory" in Luhansk, "should rest, increase their combat capabilities."

Putin's declaration came as Russian forces tried to press their offensive deeper into east-

ern Ukraine after the Ukrainian military confirmed that its forces had withdrawn from Lysychansk on Sunday. Luhansk governor Serhii Haidai said on Monday that Ukrainian forces had retreated from the city to avoid being surrounded.

"There was a risk of Lysychansk encirclement," Haidai said, adding that Ukrainian troops could have held on for a few more weeks but would have potentially paid too high a price.

"We managed to do centralized withdrawal and evacuate all injured," Haidai said. "We took back all the equipment, so from this point withdrawal was organized well."

The Ukrainian General Staff said Russian forces were now focusing their efforts on pushing toward the line of Siversk, Fedorivka and Bakhmut in the Donetsk region, about half of which is controlled by Russia. The Russian army has also intensified its shelling of the key Ukrainian strongholds of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, deeper in Donetsk.

Taiwanese see parallels, join Ukraine's fight with Russia

The Washington Post

TAIPEI, Taiwan — When Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy called in February for foreign volunteers to help repulse invading Russian forces, Chuang Yu-wei, a Taiwanese tour guide, signed up the next day.

"Taiwan can't be a giant baby that cries for help but isn't willing to help others," said the 51-year-old from Taoyuan, near Taipei. Since arriving in Ukraine in March, he has joined patrols, helped cook, moved supplies and dug trenches near the front lines in Kharkiv. "It doesn't matter how many of you come, you just have to come," he said in a phone interview.

For many in Taiwan, Russia's assault on Ukraine hits close to home due to parallels with their own situation. The island's people live under threat from a powerful authoritarian neighbor, China, which claims sovereignty over democratic Taiwan and vows to seize it by force if necessary.

Chuang, who served in Taiwan's military in the 1990s, is

among a small group of Taiwanese volunteers in Ukraine for whom the war is a chance to bring battlefield experience back home and show the world that Taiwan is worth defending.

"I want the world to see that we aren't the kind of people who lie on the ground waiting to be rescued. If you want people to help you, you first have to help them," Chuang said.

It's not known how many Taiwanese are in Ukraine. Volunteer soldiers interviewed by The Washington Post estimate that about 10 of their compatriots have joined the war effort.

Taiwan officials caution that war in the Taiwan Strait, the 100-mile-wide corridor between China and Taiwan, is not imminent.

Yet the possibility of an attack by Beijing looms larger as Chinese leader Xi Jinping prepares to take on a third term this year. With China increasingly at odds with Western countries, and continuing an ambitious military buildup, more observers worry that Xi will take inspiration from his friend and partner, Russian President Vladimir Putin.

5 dead, 19 hurt in July 4 parade shooting

Associated Press

HIGHLAND PARK, Ill. — At least five people are dead and 19 were taken to hospitals after a shooting at a July Fourth parade in a Chicago suburb, and officers are searching for a suspect, police said Monday.

The Chicago Sun-Times reported that the parade began around 10 a.m. but it was suddenly halted 10 minutes later after shots were fired. A Sun-Times reporter saw blankets placed over three bloodied bodies. Several witnesses told the newspaper that they heard gunfire.

Hundreds of parade-goers — some visibly bloodied — fled the parade route, leaving behind chairs, baby strollers and blankets. Police told people: “Every-

body disperse, please. It is not safe to be here.”

Highland Park Police said in a statement early Monday afternoon that five people had been killed and 19 people were taken to hospitals.

Video shot by a Sun-Times journalist after the gunfire rang out shows a band on a float continuing to play as people run past, screaming. A photo posted to social media appeared to show pools of blood near upturned chairs in downtown Highland Park.

Gina Troiani and her son were lined up with his day care class ready to walk onto the parade route when she heard a loud sound that she believed was fireworks — until she heard people yell about a shooter.

“We just start running in the opposite direction,” she told The Associated Press.

Her 5-year-old son was riding his bike decorated with red and blue curled ribbons. He and other children in the group held small American flags. The city said on its website that the festivities were to include a children’s bike and pet parade.

Troiani said she pushed her son’s bike, running through the neighborhood to get back to their car.

In a video that Troiani shot on her phone, some of the kids are visibly startled at the loud noise and they scramble to the side of the road as a siren wails nearby.

It was just sort of chaos,” she said. “There were people that got separated from their fam-

ilies, looking for them. Others just dropped their wagons, grabbed their kids and started running.”

Debbie Glickman, a Highland Park resident, said she was on a parade float with coworkers and the group was preparing to turn onto the main route when she saw people running from the area.

“People started saying: ‘There’s a shooter, there’s a shooter, there’s a shooter,’ ” Glickman told the Associated Press. “So we just ran. We just ran. It’s like mass chaos down there.”

She didn’t hear any noises or see anyone who appeared to be injured.

“I’m so freaked out,” she said. “It’s just so sad.”

1/6 panel: More offer evidence against Trump

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More witnesses are coming forward with new details on the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol riot following former White House aide Cassidy Hutchinson’s devastating testimony last week against former President Donald Trump, says a member of a House committee investigating the insurrection.

The panel already has subpoenaed former White House counsel Pat Cipollone, who investigators remain hopeful will appear Wednesday for a deposition, and said it would also welcome follow-up details from

Secret Service members with Trump that day.

Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., cited Hutchinson’s testimony that Trump wanted to join an angry mob of his supporters who marched on Jan. 6, 2021, to the Capitol, where they rioted, as particularly valuable in “inspiring” more people to step forward as the committee gets set for at least two public hearings this month.

“Every day we get new people that come forward and say, ‘Hey, I didn’t think maybe this piece of the story that I knew was important,’ ” he said Sunday. “There will be

way more information and stay tuned.”

The committee has been intensifying its yearlong investigation into the Jan. 6 attack and Trump’s efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election. The next hearings will aim to show how Trump illegally directed a violent mob toward the Capitol on Jan. 6 and then failed to take quick action to stop the attack once it began. Over the weekend, Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., the committee’s vice chair, made clear that criminal referrals to the Justice Department, including against the Republican former president, could follow.

Trump cracks down on fundraising by others using his name

The Washington Post

Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich has spent months groundlessly telling Republicans that they can be on “Trump’s Team” or “Endorse Trump for President in 2024” by giving to his U.S. Senate campaign.

“Are you turning your back on Pres. Trump?” one Brnovich fundraising ad asked last year. “Renew your 2022 membership before it is too late.”

Such appeals pushed the actual team of advisers around Trump to a breaking point in June, after Trump endorsed Brnovich’s rival, Blake Masters, for the Senate seat in

Arizona. In a cease-and-desist letter obtained by The Washington Post, an attorney for Save America, Trump’s political action committee, threatened legal action if Brnovich did not stop using Trump’s image and name in misleading ways.

Trump’s lawyer pointed to a recent email with the subject line “ACCOUNT TERMINATION NOTICE” that threatened potential donors with losing “[a]ny chance of continuing to receive our Trump polls, Trump rally alerts, and 2024 Endorsement opportunities” if they did not give money to Brnovich.

The letter was one of dozens of demands that Trump’s attorneys and aides have sent in recent years. But those efforts have not stopped the deceptive solicitations that flood Republican phones and inboxes daily. Eighteen months after leaving office, Trump remains the biggest draw for GOP donors, especially those who give small contributions.

While he continues to rake in money, he also faces armies of unaffiliated fundraisers who ape or mimic Trump appeals and sometimes threaten or bully Republicans in Trump’s name to get money.

Police: Denmark shooting likely not terrorism

Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — A gunman who killed three people when he opened fire in a crowded shopping mall acted alone and apparently selected his victims at random, Danish police said Monday, all but ruling out that the attack was related to terrorism.

Authorities filed preliminary charges of murder and attempted murder against a 22-year-old Danish man, who will be held for 24 days in a secure mental health facility while authorities investigate the crime, prosecutor Søren Harbo told reporters.

After the custody hearing, defense lawyer Luise Høj said she agreed to have her client undergo a mental exam. She did not comment on the charges.

Police have said the man was known to

mental health service without elaborating.

Police have not identified a motive for Sunday's attack inside one of Scandinavia's biggest shopping centers. The suspect, carrying a rifle and knife, was quickly arrested, and Copenhagen chief police inspector Søren Thomassen said the man also had access to another gun. He said the firearms were obtained illegally but gave no further details.

"It was the worst possible nightmare," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said Monday, calling the attack "unusually brutal."

The three killed were a 17-year-old boy and a 17-year-old girl, both Danes, and a 47-year-old Russian man, according to Thomassen. Four more people were hospital-

ized with gunshot wounds and were in critical but stable condition.

In all, around two dozen people were hurt, most in the panicked stampede after the shots rang out at the Field's shopping center, on the outskirts of the Danish capital.

Gun violence is relatively rare in Denmark.

The suspect, who cannot be named by court order, was brought before a judge Monday in a packed courtroom to face three preliminary charges of murder and four of attempted murder.

When the court ruled that the hearing should be held behind closed doors, the media were sent out.

It wasn't immediately clear how the suspect pleaded.

Sydney residents told to flee as rain floods city

Associated Press

SYDNEY — More than 30,000 residents of Sydney and its surrounding areas were told to evacuate or prepare to abandon their homes Monday as Australia's largest city faces its fourth, and possibly worst, round of flooding in less than a year and a half.

Days of torrential rain caused dams to overflow and waterways to break their banks, bringing a new flood emergency to parts of the city of 5 million people.

"The latest information we have is that there's a very good chance that the flooding will be worse than any of the other three floods that those areas had in the last 18 months," Emergency Management Minister

Murray Watt said.

The current flooding might affect areas that were spared during the previous floods in March last year, March this year and April, Watt added.

New South Wales state Premier Dominic Perrottet said 32,000 people were impacted by evacuation orders and warnings.

"You'd probably expect to see that number increase over the course of the week," Perrottet said.

Emergency services made numerous flood rescues Sunday and early Monday and were getting hundreds more calls for help.

Australia's Bureau of Meteorology manager Jane Golding said some areas between New-

castle, north of Sydney, and Wollongong, south of Sydney had received more than 39 inches of rain in the previous 24 hours. Some had received more than 59 inches.

Those totals are near the average annual rainfall for coastal areas of New South Wales.

"The system that has been generating this weather does show signs that it will ease tomorrow, but throughout today, expect more rain," Golding said.

Rain was forecast across New South Wales' coast, including Sydney, all week, she said.

The Bureau of Meteorology says up to 4.7 inches of rain could fall in Sydney on Monday.

The flooding danger was highest along the Hawkesbury

River, in northwest Sydney.

The bureau Monday afternoon reported major flooding at the Nepean communities of Menangle and Wallacia on Sydney's southwest fringe.

Major flooding also occurred on the Hawkesbury at North Richmond on Sydney's northwest edge.

The Hawkesbury communities of Windsor and Lower Portland were expected to be flooded Monday afternoon and Wisemans Ferry on Tuesday, a bureau statement said.

State Emergency Services Commissioner Carlene York said strong winds had toppled trees, damaging rooves and blocking roads.

She advised against unnecessary travel.

Romanian tourist killed in 2nd Egypt shark attack in days

Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Romania — Romania's Foreign Ministry said Sunday that a tourist from the country was killed in a shark attack while vacationing in Egypt, making it the second shark attack death there in recent days.

A 68-year-old Austrian woman died on Friday after losing an arm and a leg in an-

other attack by a Mako shark while swimming in the Red Sea near the resort town of Hurghada.

Egyptian local media widely reported on the death of a second woman from a shark attack on Sunday.

The Romanian Foreign Ministry said it was working to identify the victim, notify the family and see the body repatriated.

On Saturday, Egyptian authorities closed off a stretch of the country's Red Sea coastline after the Austrian woman died.

Shark attacks have been relatively rare in Egypt's Red Sea coastal region in recent years.

In 2020, a young Ukrainian boy lost an arm and an Egyptian tour guide lost a leg in a shark attack.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Dozens rescued after zoo's ride abruptly stops

MA MENDON — Dozens of people were safely rescued from an amusement ride at a Massachusetts zoo after an oil leak left them stranded high in the air.

Similar to a ski lift, the Skyfari Ride at Southwick's Zoo in Mendon allows guests to see the zoo from as high as 30 feet in the air. About 40 people were aloft when workers discovered a small oil leak and shut down the ride as a precaution.

Zoo employees had already rescued about half the riders when authorities arrived on the scene. Firefighters using bucket and ladder trucks then worked with zoo employees to retrieve the remaining riders.

Nurse practitioner pleads guilty in \$15M scheme

NC CHARLOTTE — A North Carolina nurse has pleaded guilty to his role in a scheme to defraud Medicare of nearly \$15 million by filing claims for medically unnecessary orthopedic braces and other medical equipment, a prosecutor said.

Justin Segrest, 44, of Mount Airy, pleaded guilty to a conspiracy charge, said Dena J. King, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina, in a news release.

During 2018 and 2019, Segrest was a nurse practitioner and was working for a Delaware telemedicine company. Filed plea documents and information presented at a plea hearing showed Segrest was responsible for thousands of claims to be submitted for the medical equipment.

Segrest admitted in court to signing false medical records describing "assessments" of Medicare beneficiaries and certifying that he had performed medical examinations when he actually had no contact with beneficiaries.

1 person killed after explosion at air show

MI BATTLE CREEK — One person has died following an explosion during a jet-fueled semitruck performance at a southwestern Michigan air show, officials said.

Emergency crews responded after the explosion happened at the Battle Creek Field of Flight Air Show and Balloon Festival. One death was announced by the Battle Creek Police Department.

The Shockwave Jet Truck was going down a runway at Battle Creek Executive Airport when the explosion occurred, air show spokeswoman Suze Guschling told the Battle Creek Enquirer.

The truck is powered by two jet engines and reached speeds topping 300 mph, according to Springfield, Mo.-based Darnell Racing Enterprises.

Flamethrower used to torch Pan-African flag

FL ST. PETERSBURG — A person using a flamethrower set fire to a Pan-African flag flying on a pole outside the headquarters of the Uhuru Movement, a Black international socialist group based in Florida.

Security video released by the group showed the driver of a white Honda sedan pulling up outside the group's St. Petersburg headquarters, removing a

flamethrower from the trunk and shooting a tower of fire at the flag flying about 30 feet above the ground. The group said the man stopped when a worker inside the building yelled at him.

St. Petersburg police said they are investigating the fire and are working to identify a suspect.

3-year-old boy dies after fall from the 29th floor

NY NEW YORK — A 3-year-old boy has died after falling from a 29th floor balcony of a New York City apartment building, police said.

Officers found the injured toddler lying on a 3rd floor scaffolding after receiving a 911 call. The boy was taken to a nearby hospital where he was pronounced dead.

"We believe the child exited through a window, but exactly how that occurred is under investigation at the time," a police spokesperson told The Associated Press. The apartment is located in the Taino Towers residential complex in Harlem.

New York City law requires owners of buildings with three or more apartments to install window guards if a child age 10 years or younger lives there or if a tenant or occupant requests them. It's unclear whether window guards were installed in this particular apartment.

Woman lied about having MS to defraud friends

WA SEATTLE — Federal prosecutors said they will recommend no more than 27 months in prison for a Washington state woman who defrauded friends and acquaintances of more than

\$600,000 by falsely telling them she needed money for tuition, multiple sclerosis treatment and other causes.

Sabrina Taylor pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Seattle to one count of wire fraud. The 40-year-old admitted that beginning in 2013 she lied about her health, employment status and education to get money from her victims, including some she met online using shared interests such as Japanese anime, comic books or video games.

She also falsely claimed she needed money to bail her brother out of jail.

The U.S. Attorney's Office said she spent \$60,000 on trips to Japan and South Korea, \$38,000 for online purchases from Amazon and Etsy, \$29,000 on clothing, and \$16,000 on makeup.

Bacterial outbreak found at largest state hatchery

AZ PHOENIX — Arizona officials have halted all fish stockings from the largest state-run hatchery because of a bacterial outbreak among its trout.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department announced a temporary ceasing of stockings from Page Springs Hatchery, which is north of Phoenix in Cornville.

The agency said officials noticed fish deaths in early June but with symptoms not associated with diseases previously seen there.

A University of Arizona lab identified the pathogen as a naturally occurring bacterium that had not been found in the state before. The bacterium, however, were discovered in California hatcheries in 2020.

— From wire reports

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NBA teams go all-in for shot at title

Associated Press

There will be chaos.

The Minnesota Timberwolves grabbed a megaphone and announced that to the world when they traded multiple players and several first-round picks — one of them in 2029, which means that youngster is currently 12 and probably can't dunk yet — to the Utah Jazz for Rudy Gobert.

And with that, Minnesota is officially added to a list of legit Western Conference title contenders. There are solid arguments that can be made for no fewer than seven teams right now when debating who'll represent the West in this coming season's NBA Finals: defending champion Golden State, along with Phoenix, Dallas, the Los Angeles Clippers, Memphis, Denver and Minnesota are all on that list.

Remember, at least three of those teams won't get past the first round next spring. At least three.

But give the Timberwolves credit for what they did, because this is the way of the NBA world now. Organizations are either

all-in or all-out.

Some team is about to send another massive package of players and picks to Brooklyn for Kevin Durant, unless the Nets somehow change his mind about wanting to be traded elsewhere. And that team — doesn't matter which one — will instantly see its title hopes soar even higher by adding perhaps the most unguardable player in the game today. Durant is owed nearly \$200 million for the next four years, is about to enter his 15th season (not including one missed for injury), will turn 34 this fall and teams are still lining up to bet it all to get him in their uniform.

"The ones who were locked in that gym with me know what it is, they know what I'm about," Durant tweeted on Saturday, his first public comment since requesting a trade from the Nets. "If u haven't been in there with me, ask around."

Cryptic in some ways, clear in others. Durant wants more rings. In other words, somebody better go all-in.

That's what it takes.

Golden State spent somewh-

ere around \$340 million this past season on a championship-winning roster, about half of it in salary and the other half in luxury tax. Sure, the Warriors are deep-pocketed. But such is the price of doing business right now, especially in an NBA coming off a year where a record \$8.9 billion in basketball related income was generated.

And the Timberwolves are the latest team to embrace that reality.

Gobert is owed \$170 million over the next four seasons. Karl-Anthony Towns is owed \$295 million over the next six seasons, after guaranteeing most of that in an extension that was struck a few hours before the Gobert trade happened. Anthony Edwards, a star in the making, is on pace for a massive rookie extension next summer. Minnesota, a team that hasn't won a playoff series since 2004, is swinging for the fences. New owner Alex Rodriguez, he of the 696 career home runs, must be proud.

Someone is going to get Durant. It's not reckless to think that Kyrie Irving could want a

trade now as well, and if the Nets move Durant, they may as well move Irving instead of losing him for nothing next summer. Imagine Irving reuniting with LeBron James, this time with the Los Angeles Lakers, trying to recreate what they did in 2016 when Cleveland got to celebrate a title.

Keep in mind, moves are happening in the East, too.

Eastern Conference champion Boston significantly upgraded its depth by landing Malcolm Brogdon — another example of big spending, with \$67.5 million and three years left on his deal — and Danilo Gallinari.

Miami, the No. 1 seed in the East playoffs this past season, is known to be in the Durant sweepstakes and Pat Riley is always looking for more stars. It wasn't a free-agent move, but Atlanta believes it got better by trading for Dejounte Murray to play alongside Trae Young. James Harden delivered his most significant assist as a 76er by opting out and giving Philadelphia the freedom to go get P.J. Tucker.

Lightning deal McDonagh to free cap space

Associated Press

Julien BriseBois wanted to explain his plan to Ryan McDonagh in person, laying out exactly why he was asking the veteran defenseman to waive his no-trade clause.

After one of the most difficult conversations in his tenure as general manager, BriseBois made perhaps his toughest move yet during the Tampa Bay Lightning's run of success by trading a prominent member of two Stanley Cup championship teams in an effort to win it again in the coming years.

The Lightning sent McDonagh to the Nashville Predators on Sunday for younger defenseman Philippe Myers and forward prospect Grant Mismash, clearing significant salary cap space to make more moves this offseason and setting up Tampa Bay to keep younger core players around for the long term.

After previously forecasting his team's

Cup window lasting through only next season, BriseBois moving McDonagh has changed the game for the NHL's most successful franchise over the past five years.

"It allows us to make sure we can make sure we extend it beyond one season," BriseBois said. "We've freed up some cap space for this year, 2022-23, but more importantly we freed up some cap space for 2023-24 and beyond, which I hope will allow us to secure the rights to Anthony Cirelli, Mikhail Sergechev and Erik Cernak for years to come."

The immediate aftermath of exchanging McDonagh's \$6.75 million cap hit for Myers' \$2.55 million could allow the Eastern Conference champions to bring back top left winger and playoff star Ondrej Palat and/or dependable defender Jan Rutta, each of whom was set to be a free agent when the market opens July 13.

BriseBois did not have an update on either situation, but acknowledged moving McDonagh does open the door to more possibilities. He plans to speak with the agents for Palat and Rutta in the coming days.

Those should be better discussions than talking to McDonagh about why he needed to prioritize other players for the future and hoped to find a trade partner for the 33-year-old, who finished the playoffs and helped Tampa Bay make a third consecutive final by playing with a mangled finger. Above all else, McDonagh was known for sacrificing his body to block shots while locking down opponents' top stars.

"He's one of the best defenders in the NHL — he's a selfless player and a great leader," BriseBois said. "Ryan McDonagh is an awesome human being and a great hockey player, and he's done a lot of winning and he's helped us do a lot of winning."

McLaughlin wins Mid-Ohio amid Andretti team dust-up

Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ohio — As Scott McLaughlin celebrated with his parents and Team Penske on the quaint victory podium at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course, a full-blown crisis raged across the paddock at Andretti Autosport.

McLaughlin picked up his second career IndyCar victory on Sunday, his first with his parents in attendance after a 31-month separation because of the pandemic. Wayne McLaughlin paced pit lane over the closing laps, while his wife, Diane, wiped away a tear as their only son crossed the finish line.

"I'm just so excited for him just that he could get a win while we were here," Wayne McLaughlin told The Associated Press in victory lane. "I knew he wanted to do that, but we'd never talked about it because we didn't want to put any pressure on him. What an amazing result."

It was one of the few celebra-

tions at Mid-Ohio, where Chevrolet lost five cars to malfunctions and the Andretti camp fumed over contact between its drivers. Team owner Michael Andretti stormed away from Alexander Rossi's pit stand after contact between Rossi and teammate Romain Grosjean knocked them both off course, and Andretti was later seen in a heated discussion with Rossi's father.

Rossi is leaving Andretti at the end of the season to drive for Arrow McLaren SP.

Rossi and Grosjean had repeated wheel-to-wheel contact and one of the bumps knocked the steering wheel out of Rossi's hands, leaving him unable to turn as both cars went off course.

"What the hell is wrong with him?" Grosjean screamed.

Grosjean was less than pleased to later receive team orders to aid Rossi's finish.

"What do you want me to do? Just block everyone behind and not go ahead?" Grosjean asked.

Reddick outduels Elliott, wins at Road America

Associated Press

ELKHART LAKE, Wis. — Tyler Reddick needed a little longer than expected to win in the NASCAR Cup Series.

The circumstances of his triumph made it worth the wait.

Reddick won Sunday at Road America by outdueling Chase Elliott, the defending champion on the course and the current points leader. The victory came in the 92nd start of his Cup career, which has included five second-place finishes.

"It was just a huge sense of relief," Reddick said.

The Richard Childress Racing driver won by 3.304 seconds over Elliott, who had the pole position and led for 36 of the 62

laps. Elliott was seeking his eighth career Cup road-course win to tie Tony Stewart for second place — one behind Jeff Gordon's record.

"He's been the guy that's won more road courses the last couple of years than anybody," Reddick said.

Kyle Larson was third, followed by Ross Chastain and Daniel Suárez.

Elliott and Reddick were both well ahead of the field before making pit stops with about 20 laps remaining. Elliott had a narrow lead over Reddick as they came out of the pits, but Reddick eventually pulled ahead of him as they headed back toward the front of the pack.

American Fritz, Kyrgios advance at Wimbledon

Associated Press

WIMBLEDON, England — Much quieter, much calmer than in his previous match, Nick Kyrgios overcame a troublesome right shoulder to deliver 35 aces and beat Brandon Nakashima 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (2), 3-6, 6-2 at Wimbledon on Monday to reach a Grand Slam quarterfinal for the first time in 7½ years.

The unseeded Kyrgios improved to 6-0 over his career in five-setters at the All England Club and collected his tour-leading 11th grass-court victory of the season.

"I need a glass of wine, for sure, tonight. For sure," Kyrgios told the crowd, after swapping out his rule-conforming white hat and shoes for red versions.

Playing before a nearly full house at Centre Court, the 27-year-old Australian only occasionally displayed his unusual repertoire of trick shots — a between-the-legs swing here, an underarm serve there — or the temper that earned fines of \$10,000 for spitting in the direction of a heckling spectator at the end of his first-round match and \$4,000 for an audible obscenity during his tempestuous win against No. 4 seed Stefanos Tsitsipas in the third round.

Against Nakashima, an unseeded 20-year-old from California, Kyrgios repeatedly was visited during changeovers by a trainer, who massaged and manipulated his shoulder. There was a stretch where Kyrgios' high-speed serves dipped from above 135 mph to closer to 110 mph, but he eventually seemed to get past that and was back to producing un-

returnable offerings over and over.

After Nakashima evened things by taking the fourth set with a break, then went up 1-0 in the fifth, Kyrgios surged to the finish. He earned five games in a row, before serving it out and closing this way from love-30: cross-court forehand passing winner; hanging in on an 11-stroke exchange until Nakashima missed a backhand; 134 mph service winner; forehand volley winner.

"I've played a lot of tennis in the last month and a half. I'm just proud of the way I steadied the ship," Kyrgios said. "Honestly that's what I was thinking about: I've never lost a five-set match here. ... I was like, 'I've been here before. I've done it before.'"

Kyrgios next faces unseeded Cristian Garin, a 26-year-old from Chile who authored the fortnight's first comeback from two sets down, saving two match points to defeat No. 19 seed Alex de Minaur 2-6, 5-7, 7-6 (3), 6-4, 7-6 (10-6) after more than 4½ hours.

Taylor Fritz made sure there will be an American man in the Wimbledon quarterfinals.

After three of his countrymen lost in the fourth round, the 11th-seeded Fritz ended that streak by beating qualifier Jason Kubler 6-3, 6-1, 6-4 to reach the last eight of a Grand Slam for the first time.

"I'm glad I could get the win on the Fourth of July, being an American," Fritz said in an on-court interview.

It was Fritz's eighth straight victory on grass after winning a warmup tournament in Eastbourne.

Guardians hold Yanks to 1 hit in win

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Triston McKenzie shut down New York's big-bashing lineup for seven superb innings in a combined one-hitter and closer Emmanuel Clase survived a harrowing ninth, giving the Cleveland Guardians a 2-0 win over the Yankees on Sunday.

Franmil Reyes drove in both Cleveland runs — homering in the fourth and hitting a clutch RBI single in the eighth — as the Guardians salvaged the series finale and handed New York just its seventh loss in 32 games.

McKenzie (5-6) allowed only a broken-bat single to Josh Donaldson in the fourth. The right-hander, who has been hurt by giving up home runs this season, kept the ball in the park and batters off balance.

"I don't think any of us came into this game looking at the Yankees as the No. 1 team in baseball," McKenzie said. "We came out here looking at them as a team we have to beat."

Eli Morgan worked a 1-2-3 in the eighth before giving way to Clase, the AL's top reliever in June, for a ninth that had a little of everything.

Clase walked Anthony Rizzo leading off and got Giancarlo Stanton to hit a slow grounder that should have been an out, but first baseman Owen Miller dropped the throw. The right-hander retired the next two before New York summoned Aaron Judge, who leads the majors with 29 homers but wasn't in the starting lineup.

"He looked like he was swinging four bats over there in the dugout," Francona cracked.

With the crowd at Progressive Field hanging on every pitch, Clase went to a full count before walking Judge to load the bases. He then retired Aaron Hicks on a grounder to second for the final out and his 19th save in 21 chances.

"You don't expect him to throw three sliders in a row," said Hicks, who dropped to .138 (8 for 58) in his career with the bases loaded. "I just got jammed trying to hit the ball up the middle and got out."

Red Sox 4, Cubs 2 (11): Pitcher Rowan Wick (1-3) threw Trevor Story's comebacker down the right-field line for a two-run error with two outs in the 11th inning, and visiting Boston averted a three-game sweep.

Red Sox shortstop Xander Bogaerts left in the seventh inning with a left thigh laceration after he was hurt when Willson Contreras was caught stealing second.

Jake Diekman (3-0) struck out four in two hitless innings in a game that took 4 hours and 25 minutes.

Padres 4, Dodgers 2: Jake Cronenworth lined a single off the back of Craig Kimbrel (1-4) to spark a four-run ninth as visiting San Diego averted a four-game sweep. Luke Voit hit a tying double and Eric Hosmer singled home the go-ahead run.

Los Angeles' Mookie Betts returned from the injured list with two doubles and scored twice. Clayton Kershaw threw four-hit ball over seven innings.

Astros 4, Angels 2: Angels star Mike Trout finished 0-for-11 with nine strikeouts in a three-game series and Los Angeles hitters fanned 20 times overall in the finale as host Houston completed a three-game sweep.

Rookie Jeremy Peña homered twice, capped by a two-run drive with two outs in the ninth inning off Ryan Tepera (1-2).

Framber Valdez struck out a career-high 13 in six innings, allowing two runs on three hits and five walks.

Marlins 7, Nationals 4 (10): Brian Anderson hit a go-ahead infield single in the 10th off Carl Edwards Jr. (2-3) as visiting Miami improved to 11-1 against Washington. The Marlins are 26-39 against everyone else.

Nationals outfielder Juan Soto injured his left calf making a throw in right field in the third and was taken out after being involved in a rundown in the fourth.

Rockies 6, Diamondbacks 5: C.J. Cron hit a pair of three-run homers, including a go-ahead shot in the eighth off Noé Ramirez (2-2) as host Colorado overcame a 5-0 deficit.

Jake Bird (1-0) pitched a scoreless eighth and Daniel Bard earned his 16th save by getting Arizona's Daulton Varsho to ground out with the bases loaded.

Rays 7, Blue Jays 1: Shane Baz (1-1) allowed one run and seven hits in six innings and struck out seven for his first win this season for visiting Tampa Bay.

Harold Ramirez and Randy Arozarena hit two-run homers. Ji-Man Choi had a solo home run for the Rays in the six-run, seven-hit fifth inning — their biggest inning of the season.

Mets 4, Rangers 1: Eduardo Escobar homered for the third straight game, Starling Marte went deep for the second consecutive day and Jeff McNeil hit an RBI double to help visiting New York take two of three from Texas in the interleague series.

Carlos Carrasco (9-4) struck out eight and walked one in 5½ innings, Edwin Díaz got

three outs for his 18th save and Buck Showalter got his 1,600th win, passing Hall of Famer Tommy Lasorda for 22nd place.

Orioles 3, Twins 1: Tyler Wells (7-4) won his sixth consecutive decision, striking out a career-high seven while allowing one run and three hits in six innings for visiting Baltimore.

Rougned Odor put the Orioles ahead when he led off the fifth with his eighth homer. Trey Mancini and Ryan Mountcastle homered on consecutive pitches in the sixth.

Royals 7, Tigers 4: Edward Olivares and Emmanuel Rivera homered in visiting Kansas City's three-run second inning, and Detroit pitchers tied a season high with eight walks, including two with the bases loaded.

Reds 4, Braves 3: Albert Almora Jr. slapped a bases-loaded single past a drawn-in infield in the ninth against A.J. Minter (4-2), and Cincinnati stopped a 10-game losing streak at Great American Ball Park, the Reds' longest home skid since 11 straight losses at Riverfront Stadium in April-May 1986.

Hunter Strickland (1-2) won after wasting a 3-1 lead by allowing ninth-inning homers to Atlanta's Marcell Ozuna — his second of the afternoon — and Michael Harris II.

Brewers 2, Pirates 0: Brandon Woodruff (7-3) gave up six hits and struck out eight in six innings, and Omar Narváez gave visiting Milwaukee its two runs by driving a cutter from Pittsburgh's Zach Thompson for a two-run homer in the fifth.

Josh Hader struck out two and got Bryan Reynolds to fly out with the bases loaded in the ninth for his 25th save.

White Sox 13, Giants 4: Lucas Giolito (5-4) gave up three hits in six innings as visiting Chicago finished a three-game sweep of San Francisco.

Selby Zavala had three hits and three RBIs, Gavin Sheets drove in three runs and Leury García added three hits as the White Sox improved to 7-1 at Oracle Park.

Mariners 2, Athletics 1: Seattle's Julio Rodríguez homered on Frankie Montas' first pitch and drove in both runs, Robbie Ray struck out a season-high 12 and visiting Oakland lost for the 25th time in 31 games.

Ray (7-6) combined with Andrés Muñoz and Paul Sewald (ninth save) on a four-hitter and to strike out 16.

Phillies 4, Cardinals 0: Zack Wheeler threw seven shutout innings of four-hit ball and Rhys Hoskins and J.T. Realmuto slugged home runs to lead host Philadelphia past St. Louis.