

NATO expects quick approval of Sweden, Finland

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

NATO's top official said Tuesday that he wants swift approval of Sweden's and Finland's application for alliance membership, as allies launched a ratification process that demands the backing of all 30 members.

Historically, entry into NATO is a lengthy endeavor, taking years in some cases. But for Finland and Sweden, "we speak about months," Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

Stoltenberg said he expects a speedy entry for the Nordic

states, even as Turkey says it remains willing to derail alliance plans if its demands aren't met.

"There were security concerns that needed to be addressed," Stoltenberg said Tuesday. "And we did what we always do at NATO; we found common ground."

NATO ambassadors formally signed accession protocols for Sweden and Finland on Tuesday, which means the next step is for the U.S. Congress and allied parliaments to vote on the matter.

Normally, once a prospective ally has been officially invited in-

to NATO, ratification is a formality.

But after last week's NATO summit in Madrid, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Ankara could still refuse Sweden and Finland if they don't follow through on a memorandum that calls for more cooperation on terrorism between the countries.

In particular, Erdogan wants Finland and Sweden to extradite Kurdish suspects and members of other groups that Turkey has accused of involvement in a failed coup in 2016.

Swedish and Finnish officials said Tuesday that they are ready to meet the terms of a trilateral memorandum calling for more cooperation on security matters.

But while Erdogan has made specific demands, saying in Madrid that Sweden had vowed to extradite 73 suspects, Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde said Tuesday that no such promises were made.

Sweden has a legal process in place via which such requests will be handled, she said, adding that Swedish officials "will honor the memorandum fully."

Police: 70 rounds fired at parade; suspect arrested

Associated Press

HIGHLAND PARK, Ill. — The gunman who attacked an Independence Day parade in suburban Chicago fired more than 70 rounds with an AR-15-style gun that killed at least six people, then evaded initial capture by dressing as a woman and blending into the fleeing crowd, police said Tuesday.

Lake County Major Crime Task Force spokesman Christopher Covelli told a news conference that the suspected shooter, who was arrested late Monday, used a rifle "similar to an AR-15" to spray bullets from atop a commercial building into a crowd that had gathered for a parade. More than 30 people were also wounded.

Highland Park Police Chief Lou Jogmen said a police officer pulled over Robert E. Crimo III about 5 miles north of the shooting scene, several hours after police released the man's photo and warned that he was likely armed and dangerous.

Authorities initially said Crimo, whose father once ran for mayor of Highland Park, was 22, but an FBI bulletin and Crimo's social media said he was 21.

Investigators who have interrogated the suspect and reviewed his social media posts have not determined a motive for the attack, Covelli said. They have also not found any indication that the shooter targeted anyone

by race, religion or other protected status.

Charges were expected to be announced soon, according to a spokeswoman for the Lake County state's attorney, Sara Avalos.

Earlier in the day, FBI agents peeked into trash cans and under picnic blankets as they searched for more evidence at the site where the assailant opened fire.

The shots were initially mistaken for fireworks before hundreds of panicked revelers fled in terror.

A day later, baby strollers, lawn chairs and other items left behind by panicked parade attendees remained inside a wide police perimeter.

Outside the police tape, some residents drove up to collect blankets and chairs they abandoned.

The July 4 shooting was just the latest to shatter the rituals of American life.

Schools, churches, grocery stores and now community parades have all become killing grounds in recent months. This time, the bloodshed came as the nation tried to find cause to celebrate its founding and the bonds that still hold it together.

"It definitely hits a lot harder when it's not only your hometown but it's also right in front of you," Ron Tuazon said as he and a friend returned to the parade route Monday evening to retrieve chairs, blankets and a

child's bike that he and his family abandoned when the shooting began.

"It's commonplace now," Tuazon said. "We don't blink anymore. Until laws change, it's going to be more of the same."

The shooting occurred at a spot on the parade route where many residents had staked out prime viewing points early in the day for the annual celebration.

Among them was Nicolas Toledo, who was visiting his family in Illinois from Mexico.

He was shot and killed at the scene, his granddaughter, Xochil Toledo, told the Chicago Sun-Times.

Also killed was Jacki Sundheim, a lifelong congregant and "beloved" staff member at nearby North Shore Congregation Israel, which announced her death on its website.

Dozens of fired bullets sent hundreds of parade-goers — some visibly bloodied — fleeing. They left a trail of abandoned items that showed everyday life suddenly, violently disrupted: a box of chocolate cookies spilled onto the grass; a child's Chicago Cubs cap; baby strollers, some bearing American flags.

"There's no safe place," said Highland Park resident Barbara Harte, 73, who had stayed away from the parade fearing a mass shooting, but later ventured from her home.

High cost of Russian gains may limit advance

Associated Press

After more than four months of ferocious fighting, Russia claimed a key victory: full control over one of the two provinces in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland.

But Moscow's seizure of the last major stronghold of Ukrainian resistance in Luhansk province came at a steep price. The critical question now is whether Russia can muster enough strength for a new offensive to complete its capture of the Donbas and make gains elsewhere in Ukraine.

"Yes, the Russians have seized the Luhansk region, but at what price?" asked Oleh Zhdanov, a military analyst in Ukraine, noting that some Russian units involved in the battle lost up to half of their soldiers.

Even President Vladimir Putin acknowledged Monday that Russian troops involved in action in Luhansk need to "take some rest and beef up their combat capability."

That raises doubts about whether Moscow's forces and their separatist allies are ready

to quickly thrust deeper into Donetsk, the other province that makes up the Donbas. Observers estimated in recent weeks that Russia controlled about half of Donetsk, and battle lines have changed little since then.

What happens in the Donbas could determine the course of the war. If Russia succeeds there, it could free up its forces to grab even more land and dictate the terms of any peace agreement. If Ukraine, on the other hand, manages to pin down the Russians for a protracted period, it could build up the resources for a counteroffensive.

Exhausting the Russians has long been part of the plan for the Ukrainians, who began the conflict outgunned — but hoped Western weapons could eventually tip the scales in their favor.

They are already effectively using heavy howitzers and advanced rocket systems sent by the United States and other Western allies, and more is on the way. But Ukrainian forces have said they remain badly outmatched.

Ukrainian Defense Minister Hanna Malyar said recently that Russian forces were firing 10 times more ammunition than the Ukrainian military.

After a failed attempt at a lightning advance on the capital of Kyiv in the opening weeks of the war, Russian forces withdrew from many parts of northern and central Ukraine and turned their attention to the Donbas, a region of mines and factories where Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting the Ukrainians since 2014.

Since then, Russia has adopted a slow-and-steady approach that allowed it to seize several remaining Ukrainian strongholds in Luhansk over the course of recent weeks.

While Ukrainian officials have acknowledged that their troops have withdrawn from the city of Lysychansk, the last bulwark of their resistance in Luhansk, the presidential office said Tuesday that the military was still defending small areas in the province.

But Russia's approach is not

without drawbacks. Moscow has not given a casualty count since it said some 1,300 troops were killed in the first month of fighting, but Western officials have said that was just a fraction of real losses. Since then, Western observers have noted that the number of Russian troops involved in combat in Ukraine has dwindled, reflecting both heavy attrition and the Kremlin's failure to fill up the ranks.

The limited manpower has forced Russian commanders to avoid ambitious attempts to encircle large areas in the Donbas, opting for smaller maneuvers and relying on heavy artillery barrages to slowly force the Ukrainians to retreat.

The military has also relied heavily on separatists, who have conducted several rounds of mobilization, and Western officials and analysts have said Moscow has increasingly engaged private military contractors. It has also tried to encourage Russian men who have done their tour of duty to sign up again, though it's unclear how successful that has been.

Mayor: Ukrainian city seeing 'massive shelling'

Associated Press

SRAMATORSK, Ukraine — A day after Russian President Vladimir Putin declared victory in seizing an eastern Ukraine province essential to his wartime aims, a city in the path of Moscow's offensive came under sustained bombardment, its mayor said Tuesday.

Mayor Vadim Lyakh said in a Facebook post that "massive shelling" pummeled Sloviansk, which had a population of about 107,000 before Russia invaded Ukraine more than four months ago. The mayor, who urged residents hours earlier to evacuate, advised them to take cover in shelters.

At least one person was killed and another seven wounded Tuesday, Lyakh said. He said the city's central market and several dis-

tricts came under attack, adding that authorities were assessing the extent of the damage.

The barrage targeting Sloviansk underscored fears that Russian forces were positioned to advance farther into Ukraine's Donbas region, a mostly Russian-speaking industrial area where the country's most experienced soldiers are concentrated.

Sloviansk has taken rocket and artillery fire during Russia's war in Ukraine, but the bombardment picked up in recent days after Moscow took the last major city in neighboring Luhansk province, Lyakh said.

"It's important to evacuate as many people as possible," he warned Tuesday morning, adding that shelling damaged 40 houses on Monday.

The Ukrainian military withdrew its

troops Sunday from the city of Lysychansk to keep them from being surrounded. Russia's defense minister and Putin said the city's subsequent capture put Moscow in control of all of Luhansk, one of two provinces that make up the Donbas.

The office of Ukraine's president said the Ukrainian military was still defending a small part of Luhansk and trying to buy time to establish fortified positions in nearby areas.

The question now is whether Russia can muster enough strength to complete its seizure of the Donbas by taking Donetsk province, too. Putin acknowledged Monday that Russian troops who fought in Luhansk need to "take some rest and beef up their combat capability."

Navy confirms toxins in Yokosuka wastewater

By ALEX WILSON
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Reports of an “unusual foam” led to the discovery in May of two toxins at a wastewater treatment facility on the base, Naval Forces Japan said Tuesday.

Wastewater treatment plant officials notified the base on May 4 they had discovered the foam, and subsequent testing May 9 confirmed the presence of the chemicals PFOS and PFOA, Naval Forces Japan spokeswoman Cmdr. Katie Cerezo said.

The chemicals were found in a combined concentration of 112

parts per trillion in one test and 57 parts per trillion in a second, exceeding the U.S. Forces Japan limit of 50 parts per trillion. The base immediately notified Japanese officials, she said.

“We are committed to protecting the safety and health of the community and the environment, and to determining the cause of the release,” Cerezo said in an email.

The base south of Tokyo, the homeport of the U.S. 7th Fleet, is continuing to investigate the situation and plans to resample the wastewater treatment plant on Wednesday, she said.

The naval base’s treatment

plant likely discharged the contaminated water into the Port of Yokosuka, according to a Yokosuka city news release Friday.

The South Kanto Defense Bureau also sampled the wastewater, but has not yet received the results, a spokesperson said.

PFOS and PFOA are found in firefighting foam, aircraft grease, water-repellent materials and other products that use fluorine chemicals. Studies involving lab animals show exposure to PFOA increases the risk of certain tumors, according to the American Cancer Society. Studies involving human

exposure to PFOA are so far inconclusive.

Officials from the South Kanto Defense Bureau and Navy investigators inspected the wastewater facility.

The Navy found no issues with the base’s fire extinguishing system and no additional foam has been found since the initial report, the city said.

Yokosuka Mayor Katsuaki Kamiji wrote to Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi on Friday, calling the situation “extremely regrettable,” asking for the government of Japan to take preventive measures and to investigate the situation.

Poll: Many in US won’t still use virtual options post-pandemic

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Many Americans don’t expect to rely on the digital services that became commonplace during the pandemic after COVID-19 subsides, according to a new poll, even as many think it’s a good thing if those options remain available in the future.

Close to half or more of U.S. adults say they are not likely to attend virtual activities, receive virtual health care, have groceries delivered or use curbside pickup after the coronavirus pandemic is over, according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Less than 3 in 10 say they’re very likely to use any of those options at least some of the time.

Still, close to half also say it would be a good thing if virtual options for health care, community events and activities like fitness classes or religious services continue after the pandemic.

“Rather than this either-or, I think we’re more likely to be facing a hybrid future,” said Donna Hoffman, director of the Center for the Connected Consumer at the George Washington School of Business. “People have found

convenience in some of these virtual options that just makes sense, and they don’t necessarily have anything to do with keeping you safe or the pandemic even though they came of age during the pandemic.”

Digital routines became the default in 2020 as the nation reacted to the spreading virus, which prompted lockdowns, closed schools and shuttered businesses. Some substitutions, like online shopping and video conference calling, already existed. Others were reimagined or popularized during the pandemic.

Cornelius Hairston said his family took precautions throughout the pandemic because his wife is a first responder in the health care field.

“We tried to stay in as much as we could and only come out for essentials,” said Hairston, 40, who recently moved to Roanoke, Va.

Hairston joked that his twin 4-year-old boys are “COVID babies” who didn’t even go to a grocery store for much of their young lives. The family used delivery services almost exclusively to avoid venturing out. But going forward, he only expects to use them “from time to time.”

Judge sides with 3 drug distributors in opioid suit

Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — A federal judge on Monday ruled in favor of three major U.S. drug distributors in a landmark lawsuit that accused them of causing a health crisis by distributing 81 million pills over eight years in one West Virginia county ravaged by opioid addiction.

The verdict came nearly a year after closing arguments in a bench trial in the lawsuit filed by Cabell County and the city of Huntington against AmerisourceBergen Drug Co., Cardinal Health Inc. and McKesson Corp.

“The opioid crisis has taken a considerable toll on the citizens of Cabell County and the City of Huntington. And while there is a natural tendency to assign blame in such cases, they must be decided not based on sympathy, but on the facts and the law,” U.S. District Judge David Faber wrote in the 184-page ruling. “In view of the court’s findings and conclusions, the court finds that judgment should be entered in defendants’ favor.”

Cabell County attorney Paul Farrell had argued the distributors should be held responsible

for sending a “tsunami” of prescription pain pills into the community and that the defendants’ conduct was unreasonable, reckless and disregarded the public’s health and safety in an area ravaged by opioid addiction.

The companies blamed an increase in prescriptions written by doctors along with poor communication and pill quotas set by federal agents.

While the lawsuit alleged the distributors created a public nuisance, Faber said West Virginia’s Supreme Court has only applied public nuisance law in the context of conduct that interferes with public property or resources. He said to extend the law to cover the marketing and sale of opioids “is inconsistent with the history and traditional notions of nuisance.”

Huntington Mayor Steve Williams said the ruling was “a blow to our city and community, but we remain resilient even in the face of adversity.”

“The citizens of our city and county should not have to bear the principal responsibility of ensuring that an epidemic of this magnitude never occurs again.”

Judge mum on Miss. abortion law ruling

Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. — A judge held a hearing Tuesday but didn't say how she would decide a lawsuit filed by Mississippi's only abortion clinic, which is trying to remain open by blocking a law that would ban most abortions in the state.

The law — which state lawmakers passed before the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the 1973 ruling that allowed abortions nationwide — is set to take effect Thursday.

The Jackson Women's Health Organization sought a temporary restraining order that would allow it to remain open, at least while the lawsuit remains in court.

The closely watched lawsuit is part of a flurry of activity that has occurred nationwide since the Supreme Court ruled. Con-

servative states have moved to halt or limit abortions while others have sought to ensure abortion rights, all as some women try to obtain the medical procedure against the changing legal landscape.

Meanwhile a Florida judge on Tuesday temporarily blocked a new 15-week abortion ban days after it took effect in the state, an expected move following an oral ruling last week in which he said the law violated the state constitution.

In Mississippi, if Chancery Judge Debbra K. Halford grants the clinic's request to block the new state law from taking effect, the decision could be quickly appealed to the state Supreme Court. Halford presided at a hearing without issuing a decision or saying when she would rule.

The new Mississippi law says abortion will be legal only if the pregnant woman's life is in danger or if a pregnancy is caused by a rape reported to law enforcement. It does not have an exception for pregnancies caused by incest.

Mississippi was one of several states with a "trigger" law contingent on the Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade*. The law was passed in 2007 and has never been challenged in court.

The clinic's lawsuit cites a 1998 Mississippi Supreme Court ruling that said the state constitution invokes a right to privacy that "includes an implied right to choose whether or not to have an abortion." That state decision was rooted in U.S. Supreme Court decisions in 1973 and 1992 that established

or protected abortion rights, but were overturned on June 24.

In arguments filed Sunday, the state attorney general's office said the Mississippi Constitution does not recognize a right to abortion and that the state has a long history of restricting the procedure.

"Text, history and precedent all show that the Mississippi Constitution does not protect a right to abortion and that the laws here are valid," the attorney general's office wrote.

The lawsuit was filed three days after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in a case that originated in Mississippi.

The clinic has continued to see patients, but owner Diane Derzis said it will close if the near-ban on abortions takes effect.

Issues linger with abortion travel costs for companies

Associated Press

After the U.S. Supreme Court revoked the federal right to an abortion that's been in place for half a century, companies like Amazon, Disney, Apple and JP Morgan pledged to cover travel costs for employees who live in states where the procedure is now illegal so they can terminate pregnancies. But the companies gave scant or no details on how they will do this and it's not clear if they will be able to — legally — while protecting employees' privacy and keeping them safe from prosecution.

"Most employers were not prepared for *Roe* to be overturned, and even those that were didn't realize the law would literally be changed the next minute," said Brian Kropp, a vice president at the consulting firm Gartner. "They're trying to play catch-up."

Kropp said many companies announced plans to offer travel

benefits without the infrastructure in place to make them work. Some, he added, are creating supplementary policies that employees can buy to cover abortion travel, while others are contacting insurers to see if travel can be added to their current plans. Others are trying to figure out how to offer a benefit without breaching employees' privacy.

"Are employees going to have to tell their manager they are going to have to travel from Texas to California to have an abortion?" Kropp said.

The answer is no — but they would likely have to tell human resources or a similar department that they are pregnant and want to get an abortion, said Sharona Hoffman, a health law professor at Case Western Reserve University. The company or its health insurer would then provide money upfront or a reimbursement after the fact.

New California wildfire strands July 4 revelers

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Firefighters in Northern California were battling a fresh wildfire that broke out Monday east of Sacramento at a recreation area packed with Fourth of July revelers and forced a number of evacuations.

As the fire quickly spread, 85 to 100 people celebrating the holiday at a recreation area known as Vox Beach along a river in the area had to be taken to a nearby Pacific Gas & Electric Co. facility, said Amador County Sheriff Gary Redman.

Those people were safe at the facility Monday night but unable to leave due to the fire danger, Redman said.

"We can't get in there. Fire can't get in there," Redman told The Associated Press late Monday. "The trees keep going down. The whole place is on fire."

The fire burning in Amador

County quickly spread to 959 acres as of just after 7 p.m. Monday, according to Cal Fire. The fire agency had said just hours earlier on Twitter that the fire was 75 acres in size and "burning at a dangerous rate of spread in dry grass."

Redman said the rate of the fire's spread had slowed by 10 p.m. Monday, and he was hopeful those stuck at the PG&E facility would not have to stay overnight.

He said firefighters were working to clear a path to the facility so a bus or patrol cars could be brought in to carry people out. Redman said about 500 other people had been affected by mandatory and recommended evacuations.

He said the cause of the fire was not known, but that it did start in the Vox Beach area. He said that could suggest fireworks or a barbecue as a potential cause.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

31 decomposing bodies found at funeral home

IN JEFFERSONVILLE — Police are investigating after more than 30 bodies, some decomposing, were found inside a southern Indiana funeral home.

Police in the Louisville suburb of Jeffersonville responded to Lankford Funeral Home and Family Center and found 31 bodies, including some “in the advanced stages of decomposition,” Maj. Isaac Parker said.

He said the county coroner’s office had reported a strong odor emanating from the building. Inside, officers wearing hazmat gear found bodies “in different places around the building.” Some of the bodies had been at the funeral home since March, Parker said. Police also found the cremated remains of 16 people.

“It was a very unpleasant scene,” Parker said. “The conditions were not good.”

The owner of the funeral home has been speaking with police, Parker said, and an investigation is ongoing.

Ex-senator charged with taking constituent’s gun

MA BOSTON — A former Massachusetts state senator and Republican candidate for Congress has been charged after allegedly stealing a gun from an elderly constituent and misleading investigators about what happened, Attorney General Maura Healey said.

Investigators said Dean Tran, 46, of Fitchburg, used his position as a public official to intimidate the constituent into parting

with her late husband’s firearms, making her sign a pre-prepared contract and giving her \$1,500 in cash for at least eight guns while visiting her in June 2019.

When asked to return them the next day, Tran complied. But a day after he gave the guns back, he returned to the woman’s home, forced his way in and demanded a key to the gun safe, according to investigators.

He then stole a Colt .45 while the constituent hid in her bedroom, investigators said. That gun was also later returned to the woman.

Tran allegedly gave conflicting stories and reasons for taking the guns when interviewed by police, investigators said, including denying any type of firearm sale, later producing a sales contract for the weapons, and disparaging the constituent’s mental capacity before demanding a written apology from her.

Shark attacks lifeguard during training exercise

NY FIRE ISLAND — Suffolk County officials closed a Long Island beach to swimming after what they described as an unprecedented shark attack that injured a lifeguard.

The lifeguard had been playing the role of a victim during a training exercise when the shark bit him in the chest and hand, Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone told an afternoon news conference.

The attack happened at Smith Point Beach. The lifeguard was receiving stitches and in “very good spirits,” Bellone said.

“If you’re going to have an encounter with a shark, this is probably the best scenario you could have,” Bellone said, adding the lifeguard received immediate treatment from other officials already engaged in the training. “We have never had an incident like this occur. Hopefully we never will again.”

Climber rescued after 700-foot fall on summit

OR PORTLAND — A Happy Valley man was rescued after a 700-foot fall from the Old Chute area near the summit of Mount Hood, authorities wrote in a news release.

Around 6:30 a.m., a 43-year-old man climbing up a popular route up the mountain’s western face lost his ice ax and tumbled down the steep and icy mountainside, the Clackamas County Sheriff’s Office reported.

Search and rescue coordinators with the sheriff’s office, Portland Mountain Rescue, Hood River Crag Rats and more took part in the rescue effort, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

A rescue team reached the injured climber just before 10:30 a.m. Around 1 p.m., an Oregon Army National Guard helicopter landed nearby, lowered a litter and flew the patient to a Portland-area hospital.

Fire that burned school deemed to be accident

VA RICHMOND — A nighttime blaze that engulfed a historic elementary school in Virginia’s capital city

has been deemed “accidental,” but the exact cause remains undetermined after a lengthy fire department investigation.

The Richmond Fire Department said in a statement that the monthslong investigation into the William Fox Elementary School fire found “no evidence to support any deliberate or criminal act,” local news outlets reported.

The school built in 1911 in Richmond’s Fan District caught fire in February and suffered substantial damage. Students finished the year at a previously closed school after it underwent renovations.

The city’s school board has voted to repair the building.

2 die when truck hits cyclist, fireworks stand

DC WASHINGTON — A truck hit a bicyclist and careened into a fireworks stand at an intersection in northeast Washington, killing the bicyclist and a man working in the stand, police said. No other injuries were reported.

The accident at the corner of Minnesota Avenue and Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue NE occurred at about 5:30 p.m., the Metropolitan Police Department said in a statement. The adult male victims were pronounced dead at the scene.

Assistant Police Chief Wilfredo Manlapaz said the driver of the truck was apparently suffering a medical emergency when the accident occurred and was being treated at a local hospital. The bicyclist was in the crosswalk when he was struck, Manlapaz said.

— From wire reports

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Djokovic rallies, makes Wimbledon semis

Associated Press

WIMBLEDON, England — It says a lot about Novak Djokovic that a two-sets-to-none hole at Wimbledon on a day he was hardly at his best never seemed insurmountable.

A lot about his history of overcoming that sort of deficit. A lot about his ability to adjust, adapt and to right himself quickly. A lot about his preeminence at the All England Club in recent years. A lot about what might happen if — or, rather, when — he got back into the match and it eventually went to a fifth set.

Djokovic spotted 10th-seeded Jannik Sinner of Italy the huge lead Tuesday, then worked his way back to win 5-7, 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 at Centre Court, earning an 11th semifinal berth at Wimbledon with his 26th consecutive victory at the grass-court Grand Slam tournament.

"I always believed," Djokovic said, "that I could turn the match around."

Among men, only Roger Federer has made more semifinal appearances at Wimbledon with 13 and more championships (eight) than the seven Djokovic could reach by lifting the trophy Sunday for what would be a fourth year in a row.

Djokovic managed his seventh career comeback in a match in which he trailed by two sets — he last did it in the 2021 French Open final against Stefanos Tsitsipas — and improved to 37-10 in five-setters. That includes a 10-1 mark in matches that go the distance at Wimbledon, including nine straight victories; the lone loss came in 2006.

In the semifinals Friday, the top-seeded 35-year-old Serbian will meet either No. 9 Cameron Norrie of Britain or unseeded David Goffin of Belgium. The men's quarterfinals Wednesday: No. 2 Rafael Nadal of Spain vs. No. 11 Taylor Fritz of the U.S., and Nick Kyrgios of Australia vs. Cristian Garin of Chile.

The first player into the women's semifinals was 103rd-ranked Tatjana Maria, who defeated Jule Niemeier 4-6, 6-2, 7-5 in an all-German matchup. Maria is 34, making her only the sixth woman at least that old to get this far at Wimbledon in the professional era, which began in 1968.

The others? It's quite a list: Martina Navratilova, Billie Jean King, Chris Evert, Serena Williams and Venus Williams.

This is Maria's 35th Grand

Slam tournament; only once had she made it as far as the third round.

She'll take on No. 3 Ons Jabeur of Tunisia or Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic for a spot in Saturday's final. The other women's quarterfinals: 2019 champion Simona Halep of Romania vs. No. 20 Amanda Anisimova of the U.S., and No. 17 Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan vs. Ajla Tomljanovic of Australia.

Of the women's quarterfinalists, only Halep owns a major title (she has two).

That sort of edge in experience certainly aided Djokovic, who is seeking his 21st Grand Slam trophy. Tuesday's match brought Sinner's major quarterfinal appearance total to three, which is exactly — checks notes — 50 fewer than Djokovic's.

Djokovic is 14-plus years older than Sinner, 20, which made for the third-largest age gap in a Wimbledon men's quarterfinal.

Sinner has shown enormous potential, reaching the quarterfinals at the 2020 French Open before losing to Nadal and the 2022 Australian Open before losing to Tsitsipas.

As for grass? Sinner was 0-4 until last week. But he got win No. 1 at Wimbledon by eliminat-

ing three-time major champion Stan Wawrinka, and then beat a pair of seeded foes: No. 20 John Isner and No. 5 Carlos Alcaraz.

With his wide wingspan, and a Djokovic-style ability to slide into strokes, the 6-foot-2 Sinner gets to balls that appear out of reach and is able to reply with considerable power. That allows him to lengthen exchanges and make even a consummate baseliner like Djokovic put in extra work to earn a point.

On Tuesday, Djokovic led 4-1 and held a break point at 30-40 to move ahead 5-1 and serve for the opening set. But Sinner erased that with a 122 mph service winner, generating a run that quickly made it 4-all. After Djokovic held to lead 5-4, Sinner put another string of games together to claim that set.

Djokovic sailed a backhand long early in the second set then bowed his head, and Sinner was up a break. He broke again for 5-2, and soon enough, 1½ hours in, was a set from the biggest triumph of his nascent career.

Before the start of the third, Djokovic headed toward the locker room for a bathroom break, just like he did at Roland Garros against Tsitsipas 13 months ago.

Morgan helps US women's soccer team cruise past Haiti

Associated Press

MONTERREY, Mexico — Alex Morgan scored a pair of first-half goals and the U.S. women's national team defeated Haiti 3-0 on Monday night in the opening match of the CONCACAF W Championship.

The tournament determines the region's four direct berths in the 2023 Women's World Cup, co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand.

Midge Purce also scored for the United States, which has won the past two World Cups.

Morgan opened scoring for the U.S. in the 16th minute

with a heel flick off a pass from Mallory Pugh that got past Haiti goalkeeper Lara Larco.

Morgan's second goal came on a header in the 23rd minute.

Haiti was awarded a penalty in the 42nd but Roselord Borgella's attempt hit the post and caromed away. Borgella was handed a red card in the 45th, but video review rescinded the call and she was given a yellow.

The United States appeared to score on an own goal in the 78th, but Megan Rapinoe was ruled offside. Purce scored her

fourth international goal in the 84th.

U.S. coach Vlatko Andonovski praised Morgan and said he was pleased with the result, although there's things to work on before the Americans face Jamaica on Thursday.

"On the other side, we gave up a lot of opportunities, gave up a penalty kick. That's something we're going to have to do better and tie up a few things for the next game," Andonovski said.

Eight teams are split into two groups for the W Championship. The top two finishers

in each group earn World Cup berths. The third-place finishers in each group advance to a 10-team intercontinental playoff, to be held in New Zealand in February.

The winner of the W Championship also earns a spot in the 2024 Olympics.

Haiti has never qualified for a World Cup or an Olympics.

In the group's late match, Khadija Shaw scored in the eighth minute and Jamaica held on to defeat Mexico 1-0.

Canada, Costa Rica, Panama and Trinidad & Tobago are in the other group.

Griner asks Biden for help in a letter

Associated Press

Brittney Griner has made an appeal to President Joe Biden in a letter passed to the White House through her representatives saying she feared she might never return home and asking that he not “forget about me and the other American Detainees.”

Griner’s agent, Lindsay Kagawa Colas, said the letter was delivered on Monday. Most of the letter’s contents to President Biden remain private, though Griner’s representatives shared a few lines from the handwritten note.

“As I sit here in a Russian prison, alone with my thoughts and without the protection of my wife, family, friends, Olympic jersey, or any accomplishments, I’m terrified I might be here forever,” Griner wrote.

“On the 4th of July, our family normally honors the service of those who fought for our freedom, including my father who is a Vietnam War Veteran,” the Phoenix Mercury center added. “It hurts thinking about how I usually celebrate this day because freedom means something completely different to me this year.”

The two-time Olympic gold medalist is in the midst of a trial in Russia that began last week after she was arrested on Feb. 17 on

charges of possessing cannabis oil while returning to play for her Russian team. The trial will resume Thursday.

Fewer than 1% of defendants in Russian criminal cases are acquitted, and unlike in U.S. courts, acquittals can be overturned.

The White House National Security Council confirmed the White House has received Griner’s letter.

“We believe the Russian Federation is wrongfully detaining Brittney Griner,” NSC spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said on Monday. “President Biden has been clear about the need to see all U.S. nationals who are held hostage or wrongfully detained abroad released, including Brittney Griner. The U.S. government continues to work aggressively — using every available means — to bring her home.”

Griner pleaded with Biden in the letter to use his powers to ensure her return.

“Please do all you can to bring us home. I voted for the first time in 2020 and I voted for you. I believe in you. I still have so much good to do with my freedom that you can help restore,” Griner said “I miss my wife! I miss my family! I miss my teammates! It kills me to know they are suffering so much right now. I am grateful for whatever you

can do at this moment to get me home.”

Griner has been able to have sporadic communications with family, friends and WNBA players through an email account her agent set up. The emails are printed out and delivered in bunches to Griner by her lawyer after they are vetted by Russian officials. Once the lawyers get back to their office, they’ll scan any responses from Griner and pass them back to the U.S. to send along. She was supposed to have a phone call with her wife on their anniversary but it failed because of an “unfortunate mistake,” Biden administration officials said.

Griner’s supporters have encouraged a prisoner swap like the one in April that brought home Marine veteran Trevor Reed in exchange for a Russian pilot convicted of drug trafficking conspiracy. The State Department in May designated her as wrongfully detained, moving her case under the supervision of its special presidential envoy for hostage affairs, effectively the government’s chief hostage negotiator.

Griner isn’t the only American being wrongfully detained in Russia. Paul Whelan, a former Marine and security director is serving a 16-year sentence on an espionage conviction.

USA men’s basketball pulls away for a win in Cuba

Associated Press

HAVANA — There were some cheers for “The Star-Spangled Banner” before USA Basketball’s game in Cuba on Independence Day.

And then the Americans celebrated the holiday with a big win.

Xavier Munford scored 24 points and the U.S. defeated Cuba 87-64 on Monday night to close the first round of qualifying for next year’s Basketball World Cup — improving to 31-1 all-time against the island nation.

“It’s emotional to play on the Fourth of July,” said Jim Boylen, who coached the U.S. in all three of the two-game windows in the opening qualifying round. “It’s emotional to be here with this group of guys, with USA across our chests. It’s a big day. Our country is 246 years old to-

day and we’re just thankful for this moment together.”

Munford was 10-for-12 from the floor for the Americans, who got 13 points from Justin Jackson, 12 from John Jenkins — all from three-point range — and 10 apiece from Will Davis and Langston Galloway.

“It’s July 4th. No better feeling than to get a win tonight,” Munford said.

Jordan Bell finished with eight rebounds and six assists for the Americans, whose spot in the second round of qualifying was previously secured. They’ll take a 5-1 record into the second round, well on their way to clinching a spot in the World Cup and moving a big step closer toward getting USA Basketball qualified for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Yoel Cubilla led Cuba (0-6) with 15 points.

The Americans will start the second round of World Cup qualifying on Aug. 25, with the expectation that the first matchup will be against Uruguay in Las Vegas. The U.S. will also play on Aug. 29, probably on the road and likely against Colombia, though FIBA has yet to confirm that as the matchup.

The two road wins on this trip — the Americans beat Puerto Rico on Friday — put the U.S. in a prime position to qualify for the World Cup. The roster was primarily composed of G League players, as is always the case for the Americans in World Cup qualifying, and Boylen said this group came together quickly.

“We came together 11 days ago and our team was focused, our guys were great, we worked on the basics, we got better every day and I thought we played

the right way,” Boylen said. “The ball moved, we grew together, and we cared for each other.”

The U.S. will be grouped with Brazil, Uruguay, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Colombia in the second round. Also grouped from the Americas region will be Venezuela, Argentina, Panama, Canada, the Dominican Republic and the Bahamas.

Both of those groups will send three teams to the World Cup; the best fourth-place team from either of those groups will also go, with the Americas region sending seven teams to the tournament that will be played in the summer of 2023 in the Philippines, Japan and Indonesia.

Cuba led 16-14 after the first quarter Monday night. That is, until the Americans scored 14 points in the first 2:19 of the second quarter.

White Sox, MLB opt to play after shooting

Associated Press

CHICAGO — The Chicago White Sox talked to Major League Baseball on Monday about postponing their game against the Minnesota Twins after a gunman opened fire on an Independence Day parade in suburban Chicago, killing at least six people.

After the team's conversation with MLB and contact with local authorities, the game was played as scheduled. The postgame fireworks show was canceled, and a moment of silence was observed before the first pitch of the Twins' 6-3 victory.

"Our hearts are with the Highland Park community," the White Sox said in a statement. "The entire Chicago White Sox organization expresses our deepest sympathies to the families and friends of the innocent victims of today's horrific shooting and all of those who have been affected by this tragedy."

The gunman wounded at least 30 and sent hundreds of marchers, parents with strollers and children on bicycles fleeing in terror, police said. A 22-year-old man identified as a

person of interest was taken into custody following an hourslong manhunt.

Several nearby cities canceled events, including parades and fireworks, some of them noting at the time that the Highland Park shooter was still at large.

"Something needs to change," Chicago closer Liam Hendriks said. "Something needs to be done, something needs to happen because there's too many people losing their lives."

The July 4 shooting was just the latest to shatter the rituals of American life. Schools, churches, grocery stores and now community parades have all become killing grounds in recent months.

"Unfortunately, it's almost daily," White Sox manager Tony La Russa said of the shootings. "Way too frequently."

"Even when there's an explanation, there's no explanation. It doesn't make sense."

Highland Park is a close-knit community of about 30,000 people located on the shores of Lake Michigan just north of Chicago, with

mansions and sprawling lakeside estates that have long drawn the rich and sometimes famous, including NBA legend Michael Jordan, who lived in the city for years.

"What happened today in Highland Park was horrifying and senseless," the Bulls said in a statement. "Over the years, Highland Park has been home to many members of Bulls nation, including a number of Bulls players and staff. Our connection with the community is personal, and it holds a particularly special place in our heart."

"We are grieving with the community and everyone affected, and we support them as we all mourn this tragedy."

The Cubs said they "are heartbroken and grief-stricken" over the violence. The NFL's Bears called the shooting "senseless and disgraceful," and the NHL's Blackhawks also expressed their grief.

"Everyone deserves to feel safe where they live, work and play, and this simply cannot be accepted as commonplace," the Blackhawks said in their statement.

Red Sox blank Rays, add to July 4 winning streak

Associated Press

BOSTON — Trevor Story hit a solo homer, Kutter Crawford pitched 5½ innings of two-hit relief and the Boston Red Sox won their eighth straight Fourth of July game, beating the Tampa Bay Rays 4-0 on Monday.

Franchy Cordero added an RBI single for the Red Sox, who won their second consecutive game and improved to 9-16 against AL East rivals.

Tampa Bay had its three-game winning streak halted. The Rays had just two hits, both singles.

Braves 6, Cardinals 3: Dansby Swanson hit a three-run double in a five-run second inning and host Atlanta held off St. Louis in a game delayed more than 2½ hours by rain.

The Cardinals loaded the bases for a couple of big hitters in the ninth, but Will Smith struck out Nolan Arenado and retired Albert Pujols on a grounder back to the mound for his fifth save.

Matt Olson had two RBI sin-

gles for the Braves, driving in Swanson both times.

Swanson's bases-loaded double was the big hit against Dakota Hudson (6-5) in the second. Swanson also doubled and scored in the first.

The Braves remained 3½ games behind the first-place New York Mets in the NL East. The Cardinals fell three games behind NL Central-leading Milwaukee.

Atlanta reliever Jesse Chavez (2-1) gave up homers to rookies Juan Ypez and Conner Capel in the sixth. Capel's homer was the first of his career.

Tigers 4-5, Guardians 1-3: Jonathan Schoop singled twice to cap a six-hit day, Eric Haase homered and Tyler Alexander pitched 3½ innings of scoreless relief as host Detroit completed a sweep of Cleveland in a day-night doubleheader.

Schoop, who entered the day hitting .191, had four singles in four at-bats and scored two runs to help the Tigers win the open-

In the nightcap, Detroit starter Alex Faedo was pulled with right hip soreness in the fourth before Alexander (2-3) took over.

Orioles 7, Rangers 6 (10): Jorge Mateo limped to first base when Matt Moore (3-1) hit him near the left knee with the bases loaded in the 10th to lift host Baltimore.

Rookie Adley Rutschman tied the score against Joe Barlow with a two-out RBI double in the ninth that hit off the right-field wall.

Marlins 3, Nationals 2: Bryan De La Cruz hit a two-run homer off the foul pole in the 10th, a drive off Tanner Rainey (1-3) to give Miami a win at Washington.

The Marlins beat the Nationals for the 12th time in 13 games this year, including seven in a row. They extended their winning streak to five.

Astros 7, Royals 6: Yordan Álvarez hit his 24th homer, a tie-breaking, two-out drive off Scott Barlow (2-2) in the ninth as host

Houston overcame a 5-0 fourth-inning deficit and won its seventh straight.

Brewers 5, Cubs 2: Victor Caratini hit a three-run homer off Scott Effross (1-4) with two outs in the 10th after striking out in his four previous at-bats to give host Milwaukee a win.

Mets 7, Reds 4: Brandon Nimmo and Francisco Lindor homered to lead New York to a win at Cincinnati.

Diamondbacks 8, Giants 3: Madison Bumgarner beat his former team and host Arizona sent San Francisco to its fifth straight loss.

Athletics 5, Blue Jays 1: Stephen Vogt hit a home run and a sacrifice fly, treating his family to a big performance after they just arrived for the summer, and host Oakland defeated Toronto.

Dodgers 5, Rockies 3: Trayce Thompson hit a go-ahead, three-run homer in the fifth inning and host Los Angeles finally broke though against Kyle Freeland.