

US, Saudi Arabia begin key meeting

Associated Press

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia — A crucial meeting to repair one of the world's most important diplomatic relationships began with a fist bump Friday as Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman welcomed U.S. President Joe Biden at a royal palace.

The first encounter, captured by Saudi television, occurred as Biden stepped out of his presidential limousine in Jeddah for a visit that is intended to reset their countries' longstanding partnership.

There was little evidence of any warmth between the leaders, and none of the backslapping or smiles that Biden or the crown prince usually display when greeting other leaders.

Until now, Biden had refused to speak to Prince Mohammed, the presumed heir to the throne currently held by his father, King Salman. Biden has harshly criticized the oil-rich kingdom for its human rights abuses, particularly the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, a U.S.-based journalist.

But those concerns have since been eclipsed by other challenges, including ris-

ing gas prices and Iranian aggression in the Middle East. At the same time, Saudi Arabia is looking to bolster its security relationship with the United States and seeking investments to transform its economy into one that's less reliant on pumping oil.

The Saudis held a subdued welcome for Biden at the airport in Jeddah, with none of the ceremony that accompanied his stop this week in Israel.

Biden was greeted by Mecca's governor, Prince Khalid bin Faisal, and Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the U.S., Princess Reema bint Bandar, and then walked down a lavender carpet that led to the limousine that whisked him to the palace.

The president was scheduled to sit down with King Salman, the 86-year-old monarch who has suffered from poor health, including two hospitalizations this year. Then he was to participate in a broader meeting including Prince Mohammed, the presumed heir to the throne who is known by his initials MBS.

The future of the region, including the possibility of closer ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel, as well as the ebb and flow of the

world's oil supply could depend on the relationship between the 79-year-old U.S. president and the 36-year-old Saudi royal.

The visit may already be seen as a win for Prince Mohammed. His rise to power has ushered in a new era for the kingdom as it works to build a homegrown military and weapons industry, wean itself from reliance on oil for revenue and build ties with Israel and other nations as a hedge against the perception that the U.S. is a less reliable security partner.

The meeting with Biden could bestow greater legitimacy on the crown prince's plans and his path to the throne.

There's been considerable speculation about both the choreography and the substance of how Biden, who had vowed as a presidential candidate to treat the Saudis as a "pariah" for their human rights record, would go about interacting with Prince Mohammed.

Asked if Biden would shake hands with him, a senior administration official demurred and noted the White House is "focused on the meetings, not the greetings."

Ukrainian rescue teams hunt for survivors of strike

Associated Press

VINNYTSIA, Ukraine — Rescue teams with sniffer dogs combed through the debris Friday in a central Ukrainian city looking for people still missing after a Russian missile strike a day earlier killed at least 23 people and wounded over 100 others.

Russian forces, meanwhile, pounded other sites in a relentless push to wrest territory from Ukraine and try to soften the unbending morale of its leaders, civilians and troops as the war nears the five-month mark.

Thursday's cruise missile strikes on the Ukrainian city of Vinnytsia launched by a Russian submarine were the latest incidents to take civilian lives and fan international outrage since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched the invasion on Feb. 24.

Even as the fighting raged, Russia noted signs of progress in talks on a possible deal to allow Ukraine to export millions of tons of

grain via the Black Sea that could help feed a world facing higher food prices.

Alluding to talks in Istanbul this week among Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Nations, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said a final document had been prepared and Russian proposals to help ease grain shipments through Ukrainian ports have been "largely supported" by other participants.

He said work on a document called "Black Sea initiative" was set to be completed "in the nearest time." The Russian proposal would allow shipments of food "while excluding the use of those logistical chains for the deliveries of weapons and military equipment" to Ukraine. He also said the plan seeks to "prevent any provocations."

About 22 million tons of grain have been stuck in Ukraine because of the war.

That was the most extensive Russian comment yet on the grain talks, which most-

ly involved military officials. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Russia and Ukraine had taken "a critical step" to ensuring exports of the desperately needed grain to help ease a global food crisis — but said more technical work toward finalizing a deal was needed.

Russia's military campaign now has been focusing on Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, but Russian forces regularly fire upon targets in many other parts of the country too.

Ukraine's Interior Ministry said Friday that Russian forces had conducted more than 17,000 strikes on civilian targets during the war, killing thousands of fighters and civilians and driving millions from their homes. The invasion has also rippled through the world economy by hiking prices and crimping exports of key Ukrainian and Russian products like grain, fuel and fertilizer.

Lawmakers propose group to combat targeted scams

By SARA SAMORA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A joint task force to combat consumer fraud targeting service members and veterans was introduced by House lawmakers as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act, the annual must-pass bill that sets policy and spending priorities for the Defense Department.

“The task force would issue regular recommendations to Congress about how we can better warn service members and veterans about the risk of financial scams and frauds, as well as strengthen our enforcement mechanisms and toughened criminal penalties for those who would seek to take advantage of our men and women in uniform,” Rep. Stephen Lynch, D-Mass., said Wednesday during a hearing of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform subpanel on national security.

Lynch said the task force would be led by

the secretaries of the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs in coordination with representatives from the veteran service organizations and other nongovernmental partners.

Service members and veterans are 40% more likely to be exploited by financial fraud, including robocalls, suspicious texts and scam offers, than their civilian counterparts, according to a recent AARP survey. More so, four out of five service members and veterans surveyed in 2021 reported they were targeted by scams directly related to their military service or benefits. One in three reported they lost money because of those scams, the survey found.

The Federal Trade Commission said service members, veterans and their families have reported more than \$267 million in financial losses due to scams or frauds in 2021. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau reported service members submitted more than 42,700 complaints in 2021.

USAF expands enlistment bonuses

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force announced it has expanded big bonus payments for recruits who enlist in certain high-priority specialties, offering more than \$50,000 to some willing to ship quickly as the service fights through tough times attracting troops.

The Air Force will now provide enlistment bonuses ranging from about \$3,000 to \$58,000 to some recruits who enlist into 22 active-duty specialties through Sept. 30, the end of the 2022 fiscal year, the service said in a statement issued Wednesday. Service officials said the Air Force needs to send thousands more troops to basic training in the coming weeks to meet its 2022 recruiting goal of about 26,000 new recruits.

Military officials from the Air Force — as well as the other service branches — have described fiscal 2022 as the toughest recruiting year in decades.

This week, the Air Force added maintenance-related specialties to its list of those eli-

gible for bonuses. Those who sign up to maintain missile and space systems, facilities, military vehicles, refueling and bomber aircraft, fuel systems and aircraft armament are now eligible for a \$3,000 bonus for signing a four-year contract or a \$6,000 bonus for a six-year enlistment.

The service is offering the most cash to those willing to enter special operations or explosive ordnance disposal. Those specialties come with a \$50,000 signing bonus for a six-year enlistment.

Those who enlist for six years to become survival, evasion, resistance and escape specialists are eligible for a \$40,000 bonus.

The service is also paying bonuses for cyber specialties. Those who enlist for six years can receive \$12,000 to \$20,000 enlistment bonuses, based on their existing cyber certifications, according to the service.

The service is also offering up to an \$8,000 bonus to recruits who can fill so-called “short-notice” slots to ship to basic training within five days of signing a contract, officials said.

Desert Storm vets celebrating new memorial on Mall

By SHIFRA DAYAK
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — As retired Gen. Rhonda Cornum stood in the blazing sun Thursday morning, looking out over hundreds of veterans, their family members, international ambassadors and others, she recalled the day her Black Hawk helicopter was shot down in Iraq during Operation Desert Storm.

It’s the day she was captured as a prisoner of war, suffering several broken bones and a gunshot wound.

“We’ve heard a lot of things about Desert Storm, but there’s one thing that really stands out,” Cornum said. “It’s that it was a demonstration of all the good things that can happen when there’s an unambiguous and positive moral mission like liberating Kuwait from a brutal invasion.”

Cornum was one of the 697,000 American troops that served during Desert Storm in 1991. In the 30-plus years since the conflict, those troops have not been recognized among the many other service members memorialized in Washington, D.C.

But now, as the nation approaches the 32nd anniversary of Operation Desert Storm and its preceding ground offensive Operation Desert Shield, a memorial is finally taking shape.

The National Desert Storm War Memorial Association broke ground Thursday on a memorial at the corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue, not far from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial.

At the groundbreaking, where over 100 veterans and their family members gathered, Scott C. Stump, NDSWM’s CEO, emphasized the long journey that the group has taken to make the memorial a reality.

“The road getting here has been fraught with obstacles, impediments and the need for our team to constantly improvise, adapt and overcome,” he said.

The effort to build a memorial in honor of Desert Storm has been ongoing since 2013, when former Rep. Phil Roe, D-Tenn., introduced legislation in Congress to allow construction on federal land in Washington, D.C.

House OKs bill to restore abortion rights

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House voted to restore abortion rights nationwide Friday in Democrats' first legislative response to the Supreme Court's decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

The bill has little chance of becoming law, with the necessary support lacking in the 50-50 Senate. Yet voting marks the beginning of a new era in the debate as lawmakers, governors and legislatures grapple with the impact of the court's decision.

The legislation passed 219-210. The House was also voting on a separate bill to prohibit punishment for a woman or child who decides to travel to another state to get an abortion.

"Just three weeks ago the Supreme Court took a wrecking ball to the fundamental rights by overturning *Roe v. Wade*," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi ahead of the votes, gathering with other Democratic women on the steps of the Capitol. "It is outrageous that 50 years later, women must again fight for our most basic rights against

an extremist court."

Republicans spoke forcefully against the bills, praising the Supreme Court's decision and warning that the legislation would go further than *Roe* ever did when it comes to legalizing abortion.

Urging her colleagues to vote no, Washington GOP Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers called abortion "the greatest human rights issue of our generation."

She said the Democratic legislation "has nothing to do with protecting the health of women. It has everything to do with forcing an extreme agenda on the American people."

By overturning *Roe*, the court has allowed states to enact strict abortion limits, including many that had previously been deemed unconstitutional.

A number of GOP-controlled states have moved to curtail or outlaw abortion, while states controlled by Democrats have sought to champion access. Voters now rank abortion as among the most pressing issues facing the country, a shift in priorities that Democrats hope will reshape the political land-

scape in their favor for the midterm elections.

This is the second time the House has passed the bill, which would expand on the protections *Roe* had previously provided by banning what supporters say are medically unnecessary restrictions that block access to safe and accessible abortions.

It would prevent abortion bans earlier than 24 weeks, which is when fetal viability, the ability of a human fetus to survive outside the uterus, is generally thought to begin. It allows exceptions for abortions after fetal viability when a provider determines the life or health of the mother is at risk.

The Democrats' proposal would also prevent states from requiring providers to share "medically inaccurate" information, or from requiring additional tests or waiting periods, often aimed at dissuading a patient from having an abortion.

The bill that would prohibit punishment for traveling out of state would also specify that doctors can't be punished for providing reproductive care outside their home state.

Retail sales up in June as Americans show resilience

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Consumers picked up their spending from May to June, underscoring their resilience despite painfully higher prices at the gas pump and in grocery aisles and easing fears that the economy might be on the verge of a recession.

U.S. retail sales rose 1% in June, from a revised decline of 0.1% in May, the Commerce Department said Friday.

The figures aren't adjusted for inflation and so largely reflect higher prices, particularly for gas. But they also show that consumers are still providing crucial support for the economy, and are spending on discretionary items such as furniture, restaurant meals and sporting goods.

At the same time, last month's spending gain is modest enough that it likely won't encourage the Fed to raise interest rates even more aggressively. Stock

futures rose after the report's release.

"People did not fold in the face of the Ukraine shock and the subsequent surge in food and energy prices," said Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics. "Instead, they ran down a small part of their pandemic savings in order to keep up their discretionary spending."

Consumers still have significant savings, on average, bolstered by pandemic-era government relief checks and strong hiring and pay gains. JPMorgan executives said Thursday that their customers are still breaking out their credit and debit cards at a healthy pace.

The solid spending came even as shoppers were confronted with high prices in all areas. U.S. inflation surged to a new four-decade high in June because of rising prices for gas, food and rent.

Evacuations prompted as Northern Calif. fire grows

Associated Press

ANDERSON, Calif. — Challenging terrain and weather hampered firefighters in Northern California as a blaze grew quickly Thursday afternoon, forcing evacuations as the flames destroyed homes, scorched vegetation and threatened a tortoise sanctuary, authorities said.

The blaze broke out around mid-afternoon in Shasta County, just south of Redding, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire.

The fire quickly grew to 304 acres, Cal Fire said. The Redding Record Searchlight newspaper reported that at least three homes burned. The blaze was 25% contained shortly before 8:30 p.m.

Cal Fire reported Thursday night that 12 structures had been destroyed, though it was not immediately clear how

many were residences.

Firefighters aggressively attacked the blaze from the ground and the air, Cal Fire said in a news release, and crews were expected to work overnight to strengthen containment lines and mop up around structures.

An evacuation center was set up at a high school in Anderson, home to about 11,000 residents. Officials didn't immediately say how many people were under evacuation orders.

Flames briefly threatened Tortoise Acres, a sanctuary dedicated to turtles and tortoises in Anderson, co-owner Katie Hoffman told the San Francisco Chronicle. Hoffman said she managed to evacuate with her horses before receiving word that the property was spared, with the only damage some singed fencing.

The cause of the Peter Fire was under investigation.

Manchin wants to limit new package

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sen. Joe Manchin has said he'll oppose an economic measure he's been negotiating with Democratic leaders if it includes climate or energy provisions or higher taxes on the rich and corporations, a Democrat briefed on the conversations said late Thursday, delivering a stunning blow to one of the party's top election-year priorities.

The official said Manchin told Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., on Thursday that he will only support a new measure if it is limited to curbing pharmaceutical prices and extending federal subsidies for buying health care coverage. Manchin abruptly derailed his party's bigger and wider-ranging social and environment package last December after months of negotia-

tions and after the measure had already passed the House.

Manchin's demands leave the future of the latest measure unclear, seemingly upending the hopes of President Joe Biden and Democratic leaders' for a more sweeping package they could push through Congress by August. That would have let them show Democratic voters that they were addressing a range of party priorities like curbing climate change and taxing the rich and draw a contrast with Republicans, who are expected to oppose the legislation unanimously.

However, containing the costs of prescription drugs and extending subsidies for people buying health insurance under former President Barack Obama's 2010 health care law are also top Democratic priorities. Man-

chin's stance puts his party in the position of having to decide whether it should reluctantly declare victory by solely addressing some of its health care goals, as opposed to demanding more but potentially ending up with nothing.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has estimated that provisions Democrats have already agreed to curbing prescription drug costs — like letting Medicare negotiate prices for pharmaceuticals it buys — would save \$288 billion over the coming decade.

That would be more than enough to pay for extending government subsidies for people who buy private health care coverage, assistance that expires in January.

Fetterman absence ups stakes for Dems

Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Democrat John Fetterman posted a massive \$11 million fundraising haul during the second quarter. He's on an advertising spree that's made him a near-constant presence on television in Pennsylvania. And he grabs attention with snarky, irreverent social media posts.

The only thing missing from one of the most competitive U.S. Senate races this year is the candidate himself.

Fetterman, 52, has yet to return to the campaign trail in a significant way since a May 13 stroke required surgery to implant a pacemaker with a defibrillator and prompted a revelation that he had a serious

heart condition.

The advertisements currently on the air were recorded before the stroke. He hasn't fielded questions from the press. And when the hoodie- and shorts-wearing Fetterman did make a campaign appearance, it was under tightly controlled circumstances and without advance notice to reporters.

Democratic hopes to maintain — or even expand — their fragile Senate majority hinge on the party's ability to capture the seat being vacated by the retiring Republican Sen. Pat Toomey. And with barely two months until voters can begin casting mail-in ballots, Fetterman is absent from traditional retail campaigning.

But in an otherwise anxiety-provoking

election year for Democrats, party officials in Pennsylvania say they're no longer worried about Fetterman's campaign and that they are being told repeatedly that he'll be fine.

"The campaign told me they figured mid-July he'd start getting out," said Joe Foster, who recently retired as party chair in heavily populated Montgomery County.

Fetterman's campaign has provided little detail about Fetterman's health since early June, though it acknowledges he has not completely recovered from the stroke and sometimes struggles to speak smoothly. But they don't intend to wait for a full recovery and say Fetterman will be on the campaign trail soon.

More doses of vaccine for monkeypox coming

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Thousands more doses of monkeypox vaccine are expected to soon begin shipping to the U.S. after federal health officials said they had completed an inspection of the overseas plant where they were manufactured.

The update from the Food and Drug Administration comes amid growing frustration about limited access to the two-dose vaccine as thousands of people in New York City, California and other parts of the U.S. await a chance to get the shot.

The U.S. government has purchased more

than 1.1 million completed doses of the vaccine produced by Bavarian Nordic in Denmark. But the company said earlier this week it needed authorization from an on-site FDA inspection before it could begin sending most of them to the U.S.

An FDA spokeswoman said late Wednesday that regulators "expedited and completed an inspection of the company's plant."

"We do not expect any delay in vaccine availability due to this process," she said in an emailed statement.

Bavarian Nordic has already shipped 300,000 doses that were made at a third-par-

ty facility that had previously been inspected by the FDA.

State and local officials in the U.S. say the limited vaccine supplies aren't keeping pace with the growing number of people seeking appointments, a gap that is fueling anxiety about the virus.

"The demand has been very, very high — overwhelming, at this point," said Dr. Mary Foote, of the New York City health department.

Earlier this week, New York city's system for scheduling vaccination appointments crashed due to online traffic.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Some residents yelling at tourists over parking

AZ JEROME — More than 1 million people a year visit the small town of Jerome, the former home to one of Arizona's largest copper mines and now a hub for artists.

But police said some residents are yelling at tourists over parking in the 504-acre town that has a population of about 450.

"It has come to our attention that some people visiting our town on short visits and using lawful short term parking passes are being yelled at or having notes left on their cars by local residents," police said on the department's website Monday. "Yelling at, or leaving notes could, in some cases, constitute harassment under Arizona Revised Statutes."

If any resident feels there may be a parking violation, they are being asked to notify the police department to investigate.

Pet caught after weeks on the run at airport

MA BOSTON — A family's beloved pet cat that's been dodging airport personnel, airline employees, and animal experts since escaping from a pet carrier at Boston's Logan International Airport about three weeks ago was finally caught Wednesday.

"Whether out of fatigue or hunger we'll never know, but this morning she finally let herself be caught," an airport statement said.

Rowdy was given a health check and will be returned to her family.

"She looks great, is happy to be with people and I am sure

will be happy to be reunited with us," pet owner Patty Nolet Sahli posted on Facebook.

Sahli previously posted that the family was returning to the U.S. after an assignment to Germany with the Army, but when their Lufthansa flight landed on June 24 the 4-year-old black female cat with green eyes escaped her cage and went to chase birds.

That set off a massive search that involved airport and Lufthansa personnel, construction workers, and animal welfare advocates, as well as the use of wildlife cameras and safe-release traps.

3 charged in connection with fire at church

WV SHADY SPRING — Three people have been arrested in connection with a fire that destroyed a historic church in West Virginia, state police said.

Braxton Allan Miller, 18, of Charleston; James Dean Elmore, 19, of Beckley; and a juvenile boy were charged in connection with the fire at St. Colman Catholic Church in the Shady Spring area of Raleigh County, police said Wednesday.

The fire was reported Sunday morning but had started the night before, police said.

Miller and the juvenile were charged with arson and conspiracy, while Elmore was charged with accessory after the fact and conspiracy.

5 workers injured in power line incident

IL GRAND RIDGE — Three workers were hospitalized in critical condition

and two others in serious condition Tuesday after an aluminum gutter came into contact with a power line while working on a northern Illinois home, fire officials said.

The five workers were erecting an aluminum gutter when it came into contact with a power line in Grand Ridge, officials said.

The workers, from a company based in Roanoke, Ill., were all on aluminum ladders and touching portions of the house when the gutter became electrified, sending them tumbling 25 feet from the ladders to the ground, officials told WLS-TV.

Ski resort announces Saskadena Six name

VT SOUTH POMFRET — A small ski area in Vermont announced Wednesday that it has changed its name from Suicide Six to Saskadena Six amid an increased awareness about mental health and concerns about the nature of the original name.

"Saskadena" means "standing mountain" in the Abenaki language, the ski area in South Pomfret, near Woodstock, said on its website.

700 animals seized after neglect complaint

ND ROLLA — Sheriff's officials said 700 animals have been seized following a complaint about neglect in Rolette County.

Acting on an anonymous tip, sheriff's deputies with assistance from the North Dakota Stockmen's Association and the North Dakota State Veterinarian's Office, went to a property

in Rolette County armed with a search warrant early last month.

In a Facebook post, the sheriff's office says deputies found dead cattle and an insufficient amount of feed for hundreds of other animals. The conditions of about 500 head of cattle were documented and instructions given to their owner on their well-being.

Rolette County deputies continued to monitor the herd and returned late in June and determined the livestock, as well as 200 head of cattle owned by the same person in other counties, needed to be seized.

The sheriff's office said it has contracted third-party individuals to care, feed and monitor the animals, which will be sold.

Company's test balloons prompt calls of concern

SD SIOUX FALLS — Citizens who called the National Weather Service concerned about some "silvery objects" in the sky around Sioux Falls this week prompted the agency to tweet that the objects were not aliens, but rather test balloons launched by a South Dakota aerospace subsidiary.

"Sorry, not aliens," the NWS tweeted in response to calls.

The high altitude balloons were launched by Raven Aerospace, a subsidiary of Raven Industries.

The balloons, which look like hot air balloons, operate miles above the surface of the earth. Once the balloon reaches the stratosphere, it changes from a teardrop to a pumpkin shape, South Dakota Public Broadcasting reported.

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Woods gets emotional sendoff in Scotland

Associated Press

ST. ANDREWS, Scotland — Tiger Woods removed his cap a few strides from Swilcan Bridge, knowing Friday might be the last time he crossed over in a British Open at St. Andrews.

This is where the legends pause, pose and wave goodbye.

“Stop! Stop!” a few photographers cried out as they positioned themselves for another historic moment at the home of golf.

Woods kept right on walking, even as tears began to form in his eyes.

“That’s when I started to realize — that’s when I started thinking about — the next time it comes around here, I might not be around,” Woods said.

He said this wouldn’t be his last British Open. Woods just doesn’t know if his 46-year-old body, battered by multiple surgeries on both legs and his back, would be fit enough to compete when it returns to the home of golf. Woods mentioned 2030. The R&A hasn’t announced the rotation that far out.

Still, the moment was not lost

on him.

Woods saluted the thousands of fans in the grandstands on the left, and thousands more who watched from hotel balconies and rooftops on the perimeter of the Old Course, some peering through windows, others without a ticket hanging from the top of the fence on the road down the right side of the 18th fairway.

Rory McIlroy looked over at him from the first fairway — he was starting his second round as Woods was finishing a 75 to miss the cut — and tipped his cap. Justin Thomas was on the first tee and nodded to Woods.

“As I got closer to the green, the ovation got louder,” Woods said. “You could feel the warmth and you could feel the people from both sides. Felt like the whole tournament was right there.”

It may as well have been.

This is where Woods won his first Open in 2000 to become the youngest player to complete the career Grand Slam. He won another claret jug at St. Andrews in 2005, the year Jack Nicklaus

finished his major championship career.

No one has ever won an Open at St. Andrews three times, and Woods wasn’t about to change that. The only thing ceremonial for him was his golf — a 78 in the first round, only one birdie in the second round despite the most benign conditions of the week.

No matter. The Old Course, which had been relatively quiet all morning, came to life the closer he made his way to the finish.

“The people knew that I wasn’t going to make the cut,” Woods said. “But the ovations got louder as I was coming home. And that to me was ... just the respect. I’ve always respected this event. I’ve always respected the traditions of the game.”

“I put my heart and soul into this event over the years,” he said. “And I think the people have appreciated my play.”

Woods gave them little to celebrate on what might be his final round at St. Andrews. He only had four reasonable birdie

chances. His flop shot over a pot bunker guarding the front pin on the 16th hit the top and rolled back into the sand, leading to his third double bogey of the week.

By then, it didn’t matter. The people just wanted to see him.

After he ripped his drive over the Old Course Hotel sign and into the 17th fairway, hotel guests and spectators lined up against the wall in front of the hotel and the Jigger Inn. The grandstand was full behind the 17th, and people stood six deep in the space behind the road and the stands.

It was similar to when Nicklaus played for the last time in 2005. He was 65 and had announced months out it would be his last Open, his 166th and final major. Everyone knew it was coming.

Not even Woods knows his future, only that he was thankful — and lucky — to be playing an Open on the Old Course just 17 months after he crashed his car in Los Angeles and sustained so many broken bones that doctors contemplated amputation of his right leg.

Lawyer: Griner’s cannabis use approved by doctor

Associated Press

KHIMKI, Russia — A lawyer for WNBA star Brittney Griner at her drug possession trial in Russia on Friday gave the court a U.S. doctor’s letter recommending she use medical cannabis to treat pain.

Griner, a two-time Olympic gold medalist and standout for the Phoenix Mercury, was arrested at Moscow’s Sheremetyevo Airport in February after customs officials said they found vape canisters containing cannabis oil in her luggage. She faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted on charges of transporting drugs.

In court last week, Griner pleaded guilty and acknowledged possessing the canisters

but said she had no criminal intent and said they were in her luggage because she packed hastily in her return to Russia to play for the UMMC Ekaterinburg basketball team during the WNBA’s offseason.

In Russia’s judicial system, admitting guilt doesn’t automatically end a trial. Since that plea, her court sessions have focused on in-person and written testimony to her good character and athletic prowess.

“The attending physician gave Brittney recommendations for the use of medical cannabis,” said her lawyer, Maria Blagovolina. “The permission was issued on behalf of the Arizona Department of Health.”

The defense on Friday also

submitted tests she underwent as part of an anti-doping check, which didn’t detect any prohibited substances in her system.

The next hearing of Griner’s case was scheduled for July 26.

President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken have said they are doing all they can to win her release, as well as that of other Americans the U.S. considers “wrongly detained” by Russia, including former Marine Paul Whelan, who is serving 16 years on an espionage conviction.

Washington may have little leverage with Moscow, though, because of strong animosity over its military operation in Ukraine.

“In the hearings yesterday

and today what became very clear is the tremendous amount of respect and admiration both in the United States and here in Russia where Miss Griner has been playing basketball for seven years, not only for her professional achievements but for her character and integrity,” U.S. Embassy charge d’affaires Elizabeth Rood said outside the courthouse in the Moscow suburb of Khimki, where the airport is located.

The director and team captain of UMMC Ekaterinburg testified on her behalf on Thursday.

Russian media have speculated that Griner could be swapped for Russian arms trader Viktor Bout.

NHL: Devils sign Palat, Capitals add Strome

Associated Press

A day after the New Jersey Devils missed out on the top prize in NHL free agency, they landed two-time Stanley Cup champion Ondrej Palat on Thursday.

The Washington Capitals, meanwhile, continued their busy offseason by signing former Chicago Blackhawks forward Dylan Strome.

The Devils signed Palat to a \$30 million, five-year contract. The left-winger had 52 points in 71 games during Tampa Bay's three consecutive trips to the Cup Final. He finished sixth in Conn Smythe Trophy voting as playoff MVP this year.

Tampa Bay attempted to keep the 31-year-old from Czechia and defenseman Jan Rutta, who signed with Pittsburgh, but couldn't make the salary cap numbers work. Instead, general manager Julien BriseBois signed defensemen Mikhail Sergachev and Erik Cernak and center Anthony Cirelli to eight-year extensions through 2031.

The Devils landed Palat after losing the Johnny Gaudreau sweepstakes to the Columbus Blue Jackets. Gaudreau signed a \$68.25 million, eight-year contract with Columbus after deciding to leave Calgary. His decision came after an initial frenzy of signings, including the Washington Capitals getting Cup-winning goaltender Darcy Kuemper and Claude Giroux leaving Florida for Ottawa.

Strome, who signed for \$3.5 million on a one-year deal, became Washington's latest addition after Chicago decided against a qualifying offer to keep him around. The 25-year-old scored a career-high 22 goals last season and added 26 assists in 69 games.

The Capitals previously signed Kuemper to be their starting goaltender and Charlie Lindgren to be their backup, re-signed winger Marcus Johansson and defenseman Matt Irwin, and signed two other Blackhawks castoffs, Erik Gustafsson and Henrik Borgstrom.

They acquired winger Connor Brown from the Ottawa Senators for a 2024 second-round pick.

Ottawa also stayed busy, following up on signing former Flyers captain Giroux by locking up third-year center Josh Norris through the 2029-30 season with a \$63.3 million, eight-year deal.

The spree of signings that occurred during the first day of free agency slowed to a trickle on Thursday, with forward Nazem Kadri and defenseman John Klingberg the most notable names still on the market.

The reigning champion Colorado Avalanche have said they would like to bring back Kadri, who helped them win it all. The Dallas Stars all but ruled out keeping Klingberg, who could still sign one of the biggest contracts of the offseason.

The Senators continued building on what could be the most promising offseason in the franchise's 30-year history with Norris' signing.

Selected 19th in the 2017 draft, the 23-year-old from Michigan is considered a key fixture on a young, developing team. He's coming off a season in which he scored a team-leading 35 goals and 55 points in 66 games.

Norris' signing comes on the heels of the Senators landing Giroux in a move that brings the 34-year-old former Flyers captain back to the region where he played junior hockey. Ottawa also acquired winger Alex DeBrincat and goaltender Cam Talbot in trades over the past week in signaling the team is prepared to take the next step toward contending in the Eastern Conference.

The Vegas Golden Knights made two bargain signings, adding forwards Sakari Manninen and Spencer Foo on one-year deals each worth \$750,000. Manninen was Finland's leading goal-scorer on the way to winning gold at the Beijing Olympics, while Foo played for host China.

US women's soccer wins semifinal against Costa Rica

Associated Press

MONTERREY, Mexico—The U.S. women's national team will play Canada in the final of the CONCACAF W Championship for a spot in the 2024 Olympics.

The United States beat Costa Rica 3-0 in the semifinals Thursday night on goals from Emily Sonnett, Mallory Pugh and Ashley Sanchez. Canada downed Jamaica 3-0 in the late game to advance to earn the other spot Monday night in the championship.

The four teams had already qualified for the region's berths at the 2023 Women's World Cup as the top finishers in the group stage. The winner of the W Championship additionally earns one of the region's spots in the Olympics.

The U.S. team extended its shutout streak in World Cup or Olympic qualifying matches to 32 games.

"I think we need to be overall sharper," Sonnett said about facing Canada. "I don't think our team's very satisfied with that win. There's a lot that we need to focus on."

The U.S. has won the past two World Cups, but the Americans are heading into next summer's tournament in Australia and New Zealand with a different look. Coach Vlatko Andonovski has focused on developing young talent since winning the bronze medal at last year's Olympics, and up-and-coming players including Sophia Smith and Mallory Pugh have cracked the starting lineup.

A few veterans remain, including Alex Morgan and Becky Sauerbrunn, who both started Thursday.

Morgan had the team's best chances early on. One of her opportunities, a left-footed shot, went wide left in the 13th minute.

Defender Sonnett broke through with her first international goal in the 33rd minute. Pugh scored her first goal of the tournament in first-half stoppage time — with a back-heel assist from Rose Lavelle — to give the U.S. a 2-0 lead at the break.

Sanchez capped the victory with her goal

in stoppage time.

Casey Murphy got the starting nod in goal for the U.S.

"Obviously, it's a semifinal, we're here to go to the final, to win the final," Murphy said. "That was one step to get to there."

For Costa Rica, Noelia Bermudez made the first start of the tournament in goal. Costa Rica won its first two group-stage matches before falling to Canada 2-0 on Monday.

Jessie Fleming scored for Canada in the 18th minute of the late game at Estadio Universitario. The conditions were muggy, with temperatures in the mid-90s at the start of the night.

Allysha Chapman added a goal on a header in the 64th minute. It was her first international goal since 2015. Adriana Leon scored in the 76th.

In addition to the four direct berths in the World Cup, the third-place finishers in the two groups at the W Championship, Panama and Haiti, advanced to an intercontinental playoff in February in New Zealand.

Royals win without 10 unvaccinated players

Associated Press

TORONTO — Double-A callup Angel Zerpa pitched five innings to win for the first time as a big league starter, Bobby Witt Jr. hit a tiebreaking home run and the Kansas City Royals overcame the absence of 10 unvaccinated players to beat the Toronto Blue Jays 3-1 on Thursday night.

Zerpa (2-0) allowed one run and four hits, walked two and struck out two. Fellow callup Nate Eaton hit his first career homer as the Royals won for the fifth time in six games.

Foreign nationals who aren't vaccinated against COVID-19 are not allowed to enter Canada, save for limited exceptions that require a 14-day quarantine. Unvaccinated baseball players are placed on the restricted list, which means they are not paid and do not accrue major league service time.

Matt Chapman homered for Toronto. Kevin Gausman (6-7) started for the first time since taking a line drive off his ankle in a July 2 start against Tampa Bay. He allowed two runs and seven hits in six innings.

Mariners 6, Rangers 5: Ty France hit a two-run single in the eighth inning as visiting Seattle rallied from a four-run deficit and beat Texas to extend its winning streak to 11 games.

Seattle's winning streak is the second-longest in club history behind the 2001 Mariners, who won 15 straight. That team was the franchise's most recent playoff team. The run is also the second-longest streak in the majors this season, behind Atlanta's 14-game winning streak. The Mariners are 19-3 since being 10 games under .500 on June 19.

Seattle trailed 5-1 before tagging Texas' bullpen for two runs in the seventh and three in the eighth. Up to that point, the Mariners' only run came on Sam Haggerty's inside-the-park homer in the fourth. Haggerty had his fourth career four-hit game and second in 10 days.

Reds 7, Yankees 6 (10): Joey Votto lined a tiebreaking double in a three-run 10th inning for his second go-ahead hit of the night, and visiting Cincinnati beat New York to earn an unexpected series win.

Last in the NL Central, the Reds took two of three at Yankee Stadium from the top team in the majors. They blew a sizable lead for the second consecutive night, but this time recovered and held on.

Tyler Stephenson followed Votto's double off Lucas Luetge (2-3) with an RBI double of his own, and Donovan Solano added a run-scoring single with two outs to make it 7-4.

Braves 5, Nationals 4: Kyle Wright earned his 11th victory to tie for the major league lead and visiting Atlanta beat Washington in the opener of a four-game series.

Michael Harris II, Matt Olson and Dansby Swanson homered for Atlanta, which has won five of its last seven. The Braves improved to 8-2 against the Nationals this season.

Wright (11-4), who gave up a solo homer to Josh Bell in the first, set down 17 of his last 21 batters in his seven-inning outing, allowing two runs while striking out four. He's tied with the Los Angeles Dodgers' Tony Gonsolin and Houston's Justin Verlander for the most victories in baseball.

Guardians 4, Tigers 0: Triston McKenzie struck out a career-high 12 and extended his scoreless streak to 21 innings, leading host Cleveland past Detroit.

McKenzie (7-6) pitched eight dominant innings, giving up five singles and walking none. He matched his longest outing, set a career best with 109 pitches and won his third start in a row while helping the Guardians end a streak of five consecutive losses to the Tigers.

Josh Naylor homered in the first off rookie Elvin Rodríguez (0-3), who made his first start for

the Tigers since June 10. All-Star Andrés Giménez added a solo shot in the eighth inning for Cleveland.

Mets 8, Cubs 0: Carlos Carrasco pitched six sharp innings, Brandon Nimmo and Pete Alonso homered and visiting New York handed Chicago its seventh straight loss.

The Mets won for the third time in four games, maintained their 2½-game lead over Atlanta in the NL East and improved their road record to 28-19. The Cubs have totaled three runs over their last three games.

Nimmo's three hits paced a 12-hit attack. His homer off reliever Mark Leiter Jr. in the sixth extended the Mets' streak of hitting at least one homer at Wrigley Field to nine consecutive games.

Rays 5, Red Sox 4: Taylor Walls and Yandy Díaz had two-run singles during a five-run outburst in the seventh inning, helping host Tampa Bay beat Boston to complete a four-game sweep.

After rookie Kutter Crawford took a three-hitter into the seventh with Boston leading 3-0, John Schreiber (2-1) came in and gave up Walls' tying hit and Díaz's go-ahead single. Crawford ended up allowing three runs and six hits along with six strikeouts.

Astros 3, Angels 2 (10): Jeremy Peña drove in the tiebreaking run in the 10th and visiting Houston earned its 13th victory in 16 games with a win over Los Angeles.

Automatic runner Korey Lee advanced on Mauricio Dubon's flyout and scored on Peña's single to right off Aaron Loup (0-3) for the Astros, who hadn't scored since the first inning.

Ryan Pressley (3-2) struck out Brandon Marsh to end it with the potential tying run on third.

Marlins 3, Pirates 2 (11): Brian Anderson atoned for a costly error with a two-run triple in the 11th and host Miami edged Pittsburgh.

Anderson was originally ruled

to have been hit by a pitch from Wil Crowe (3-6), but the Pirates successfully challenged, saying it hit his bat first. Anderson then sent a drive to deep right center that scored Jesús Aguilar and Avisail García.

Joey Wendle doubled, singled and walked for the Marlins, who had their second straight walk-off against Pittsburgh and split the four-game series.

Dodgers 4, Cardinals 0: Tyler Anderson pitched six shutout innings, Gavin Lux hit a two-run homer and visiting Los Angeles blanked St. Louis.

Anderson (10-1) scattered three hits, struck out four and walked two while needing just 88 pitches to get through six innings. Yency Almonte, Evan Phillips and Craig Kimbrel each pitched an inning of scoreless relief to finish the combined five-hitter.

The Dodgers won for the 13th time in their last 15 games. They improved to 9½ games ahead of San Diego for first place in the National League West after being tied with the Padres on June 22.

Rockies 8, Padres 5: Randal Grichuk doubled twice and drove in three runs, C.J. Cron had two hits in his return to the starting lineup and host Colorado beat San Diego.

Cron, the Rockies' lone All-Star selection, missed three of the last five games with a wrist injury suffered Friday night at Arizona. He had a pinch-hit single Wednesday night.

White Sox 12, Twins 2: Luis Robert hit his first grand slam, Johnny Cueto pitched six strong innings and visiting Chicago beat Minnesota to extend its winning streak to three games.

Brewers 3, Giants 2 (10): Pinch-runner Christian Yelich scurried home for the winning run in the 10th on an infield single by Jonathan Davis that pitcher Camilo Doval couldn't secure on the grass in front of third to give visiting Milwaukee the victory.