

2 administrations failed in Afghan exit

The Washington Post

A State Department report released Friday faults the agency's crisis management and awareness before and during the fall of Afghanistan, findings certain to be trumpeted by Republicans and other critics who have charged that bureaucratic lethargy played a significant role in the chaos and violence that unfolded nearly two years ago during one of the Biden administration's darkest moments.

The report says President Joe Biden and his predecessor, Donald Trump, each failed to appreciate how a U.S. military pullout would affect the Afghan government's stability, and that standard summer diplomatic rotations in the weeks ahead of Kabul's collapse left the U.S. evacuation in the hands of personnel who in some cases had been in the country for only a few days or weeks.

Critical missteps identified in the report present fresh evidence of the mayhem that left Afghanistan's future in the hands of the oppressive Taliban regime, cost the lives of scores of Afghans and 13 U.S. service members, and sent Biden's approval ratings tumbling. The timing of its release — with little notice ahead of a long holiday weekend — is also likely to draw anger from those who have said his administration has tried to

downplay scrutiny of its actions during the spring and summer of 2021.

The State Department redacted large portions of the report, releasing 23 of its 87 pages, citing security concerns. The analysis focused primarily on actions and reforms inside the agency, rather than at the White House or the Pentagon, each of which has already produced accounts of the 20-year war's calamitous final chapter.

The analysis takes aim at failings on multiple levels. At the top, officials gave "insufficient senior-level consideration of worst-case scenarios and how quickly those might follow" after Biden affirmed Trump's decision to pull the U.S. military from Afghanistan.

Before the Afghan government's collapse, "it was unclear who in the [State] Department had the lead" on preparations for a full evacuation of the country, the report found. It called the department's participation in planning for an evacuation "hindered," even though the U.S. military had been working on the effort ahead of the pullout.

Once the Taliban drew near Kabul and the United States began the full withdrawal, the Biden administration's communications made the evacuation more chaotic and dangerous than it would have been other-

wise, the report found.

"Constantly changing policy guidance and public messaging from Washington" about who was eligible to be relocated from Afghanistan "added to the confusion and often failed to take into account key facts on the ground," it said. That exacerbated an already messy situation in which members of Congress, aid workers and others who had connections to Afghans were unilaterally trying to organize rescue missions for individuals and families, rather than allowing U.S. personnel on the ground to concentrate on a more systematic effort.

But there were lower-level problems, too. A June 2021 coronavirus breakout at the embassy led to a strict lockdown there, confining many personnel to their quarters in the bunker-like facility, and making it harder to collaborate and receive classified briefings as the military pullout intensified, the report noted.

And because the State Department didn't react to the instability in the country by extending the standard one-year hardship rotations of its diplomats, Kabul's collapse came at an especially vulnerable moment for the embassy, since much of its staff had just turned over or were still on their way to the country.

Milley: DOD should speed up efforts to modernize forces

BY DOUG G. WARE
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Army Gen. Mark Milley, who will retire as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in three months, said Friday that the U.S. military should pick up the pace on modernizing its forces so it will be able to withstand the changing conditions of future battles.

"The battlefield of the future will require rapid and constant movement and the ability to remain small and relatively invisible just to survive," Milley said at the National Press Club in Wash-

ington. "Our task is for our military to maintain our current decisive advantage ... by optimizing [new] technologies."

Milley, 65, who has been chairman of the Joint Chiefs since 2019, retires Sept. 30 when his term ends. Many sectors of the military are in the process of implementing new modernization plans, but Milley said he wanted to see the changes happen quicker.

"I think the United States military needs to accelerate our modernization," he said, adding the armed forces also must under-

stand that warfare is changing in "significant" and "radical" ways. "If we, the military, don't adapt ... then we won't have a military that's capable of operating in that future operating environment."

Having served in the Army for more than four decades, Milley warned future warfare will be influenced by emerging technologies such as robotics and artificial intelligence and the military must not lag behind potential adversaries such as China.

"So, you have to prepare for that. And that's going to require significant change," he said.

Milley underscored China is the No. 1 challenge for the U.S. military and the Pentagon must be ready to defend against Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific region. China has long considered Taiwan a breakaway territory and Chinese President Xi Jinping has often expressed a desire to "unify" with the island, by force if necessary.

"[We] want to make sure that every single day President Xi wakes up and says, 'Today's not that day,'" Milley said.

"And that's the whole essence of deterrence."

Report: Coast Guard hid abuse probe

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A previously undisclosed investigation into alleged sexual abuse at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy uncovered a history of rapes, assaults and other misconduct being ignored or covered up by high-ranking service officials, a news report on Friday revealed.

Operation Fouled Anchor was an investigation launched in 2014 after the Coast Guard Investigative Service, or CGIS, became aware of a sexual assault allegation that happened at the service's academy in Connecticut, a Coast Guard spokesperson said Friday in a statement.

"The alleged assault occurred years earlier and the matter had been mishandled," the Coast Guard spokesperson

said. "In response, CGIS commenced a broad investigation that followed up on all leads related to sexual assaults that were alleged to have occurred between 1988 and 2006."

Coast Guard officials informally briefed senators on the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee within the last week about Operation Fouled Anchor, two senators on the committee wrote in a letter dated Friday to Adm. Linda Fagan, commandant of the Coast Guard.

The internal investigation by the Coast Guard ran until 2020 and identified 62 substantiated incidents of rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment that occurred at the academy in New London, Conn., or by academy cadets, according to the letter from Sens. Maria Cantwell, D-

Wash., and Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis.

"This information is disturbing," the senators wrote.

The senators questioned why the report had been kept secret, including from members of Congress with oversight authority over the Coast Guard, which the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee has. Cantwell is the chairwoman of the committee and Baldwin is a chairwoman of a subpanel of the committee.

The senators wrote in the letter that the committee is seeking "to determine if the Coast Guard complied with the law and to inform potential legislative actions."

Besides all related documents, they are seeking answers to questions, including whether any individuals with

substantiated claims are employed by the Department of Homeland Security, including the Coast Guard, and whether they have security clearances.

Despite findings of wrongdoing against academy officials and former students, Operation Fouled Anchor was quietly closed by Coast Guard leaders, many of whom worked or studied alongside alleged perpetrators, according to the CNN report.

"This investigation made clear that the [school's] leadership was more concerned at that time about organizational and [the Coast Guard Academy's] reputation than about the victims of crimes who were members of our service," according to a 2019 draft of the Operation Fouled Anchor final report that CNN found.

Changes announced for DOD special needs policy

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

Policy changes announced last week to a Defense Department program that assists troops who have family members with special needs could result in some military families gaining services while others lose them, Pentagon officials said. Changes to the Exceptional Family Member Program revealed Friday — over two years after Congress mandated changes — were established so each service branch has similar standards and guidelines to track performance and improve oversight.

Previously, the military services implemented the program on their own, which has led to an uneven distribution of support,

particularly when it came to resources such as access to legal support, respite hours for caregivers and relocation services. As the new policy evens out across each military service, access to some resources will change. The program is for service members who have a family member with special needs requiring specialized medical care, treatment programs or educational services. It is meant to ensure those service members receive duty assignments to locations where those special needs can be met.

The new policy stemmed from changes included in the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal 2021, an annual bill that outlines defense priorities and spending.

Andersen back on its feet after typhoon struck base

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force's preeminent Indo-Pacific logistics hub weathered an "attack" when it was struck by a major typhoon on May 24, the base's outgoing commander said at a change-of-command ceremony Friday.

Typhoon Mawar's impact, which included structural damage and disruptions to communications and utilities, mirrored the potential effects of a military attack on Andersen Air Force Base, Brig. Gen. Paul Fast said before relinquishing command of the 36th Wing to Brig. Gen. Thomas Palenske.

"Today, five weeks after the attack, we're back on our feet,"

Fast said during his speech inside a hangar near the flight line. "Our airfield is fully functional; we've assessed over \$4 billion of rebuild efforts in the coming years, with big plans to harden and be more resilient in terms of structure, energy, communication and mission support, and sharing that resilience with our surrounding community of Guam."

Fast commanded Andersen just a few months, taking over in March when the Air Force relieved Brig. Gen. Paul Birch over "shortfalls in his personal conduct." Details were not disclosed, but that conduct was not "criminal in nature," 11th Air Force told Stars and Stripes at the time.

Heat wave scorches America's south

Associated Press

Dangerous heat levels kicked in again Saturday for much of the southern United States as temperatures throughout the weekend were expected to reach a scorching 100 degrees Fahrenheit or even higher in several states.

Excessive heat warnings were in place for Arizona's largest metro area, where Phoenix and surrounding communities were flirting with highs of 115 degrees.

Meanwhile, Las Vegas got its first taste of triple digits on Friday and forecasters warned that warmer temperatures would be in store all weekend, ranging between 105 F and 120 F for much of the region. Clark County officials opened cooling centers for residents on Saturday.

Some cities in the southern reaches of New Mexico also were seeing triple digits. While cloud cover from isolated storms

might help cool things off in the afternoon, forecasters warned that the storms would bring lightning and erratic gusts but not much rain, leading to elevated fire danger.

Josh Weiss, a meteorologist with the Weather Prediction Center in College Park, Md., said a ridge of high pressure that is expanding across the West and Southwest brings with it very warm to hot temperatures starting in California and expanding through the holiday and eventually into the Pacific Northwest by the middle of next week.

"We're looking at temperatures that will be exceeding 100 degrees, maybe as high as 110 in parts of California and in the desert Southwest through the weekend and maybe even exceeding 100 degrees as it gets toward Portland, Oregon, and into the 90s into Seattle by late next week," Weiss said.

By midafternoon Saturday, the National

Weather Service had issued heat advisories or excessive heat warnings in Oregon, California, Nevada, Arizona, Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee and Florida.

The Weather Service says extreme heat and humidity significantly increases the potential for heat-related illnesses like heat stroke.

Weiss also said the Carolinas could be hit with intense heat through the Fourth of July.

New Orleans EMS Chief Bill Salmeron said city residents and those in town for the Essence Festival of Culture should drink double the amount of water they usually consume and avoid the sun when possible by wearing a hat and loose fitting or light-colored clothing. Several cooling centers also are open for those who might need to seek relief from the heat.

Baltimore party shooting leaves 2 dead, 28 injured

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Gunfire erupted at a block party in Baltimore on Sunday — killing two people, wounding 28 and leaving an extensive crime scene that marred the U.S. holiday weekend, police said. Three of the wounded were in critical condition.

Baltimore Police Department Acting Commissioner Richard Worley told reporters there were a total of 30 victims during a press conference at the scene.

The shooting took place just after 12:30 a.m. at a block party in the Brooklyn Homes area in the southern part of the city, Worley

said.

The shooting comes amid gatherings around the country leading up to the July Fourth holiday. Elsewhere, a shooting in Kansas left seven people with gunshot wounds and two more victims hospitalized after being trampled as people rushed out of a nightclub early Sunday morning, police there said.

All of the Baltimore victims were adults. Nine victims were transported by ambulance and 20 victims walked into area hospitals with injuries from the shooting, Worley said.

An 18-year-old woman was found dead at the scene and a 20-year-old man was pronounced dead at a hospital shortly after, police said.

"I want those who are responsible to hear me, and hear me very clearly," Mayor Brandon Scott said at the scene. "We will not stop until we find you, and we will find you. Until then, I hope that every single breath you take, that you think about the lives that you took, think about the lives that you impacted here tonight."

No arrests were made immediately after the shooting.

Morning-after pill vending machines gain popularity

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Need Plan B? Tap your credit card and enter B6.

Since last November, a library at the University of Washington has featured a different kind of vending machine, one that's become more popular on campuses around the country since the U.S. Supreme Court ended constitutional protections for abortion last year. It's stocked with ibuprofen, pregnancy tests and the morning-after pill.

With some states enacting abortion bans and others enshrining protections and expanding access to birth control, the ma-

chines are part of a push on college campuses to ensure emergency contraceptives are cheap, discreet and widely available.

There are now 39 universities in 17 states with emergency contraceptive vending machines, and at least 20 more considering them, according to the American Society for Emergency Contraception. Some, such as the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma, are in states where abortion is largely banned.

Over-the-counter purchase of Plan B and generic forms is legal in all 50 states.

The 2022 ruling overturning *Roe v. Wade* "is putting people's lives at stake, so it

makes pregnancy prevention all the more urgent," said Kelly Cleland, the ASEC's executive director. "If you live in a state where you cannot get an abortion and you can't get an abortion anywhere near you, the stakes are so much higher than they've ever been before."

Washington this year became first U.S. state to set aside money — \$200,000 to fund \$10,000 grants that colleges can obtain next year through an application process — to expand access to emergency contraceptives at public universities and technical colleges through the automatic dispensers.

France sees more riots over police killing teen

Associated Press

PARIS — Young rioters clashed with police into early Sunday and targeted a mayor's home with a burning car as France saw a fifth night of unrest after the police killing of a teenager. Overall violence, however, appeared to lessen from previous nights.

Police made 719 arrests nationwide by early Sunday following a mass security deployment aimed at quelling France's worst social upheaval in years.

The crisis posed a new challenge to President Emmanuel Macron's leadership and exposed deep-seated discontent in low-income neighborhoods over discrimination and lack of opportunity.

The 17-year-old whose death Tuesday spawned the anger

was laid to rest Saturday in a Muslim ceremony in Nanterre, a Paris suburb where emotions over his loss remain raw. He has been identified publicly only by his first name, Nahel.

As night fell Saturday, a small crowd gathered on the Champs-Élysées to protest his death and police violence but met hundreds of officers with batons and shields guarding the avenue and its boutiques. In a less chic Paris neighborhood, protesters set off firecrackers and lit barricades on fire as police shot back with tear gas and stun grenades.

A burning car hit the home of the mayor of the Paris suburb of l'Hay-les-Roses.

Several schools, police stations, town halls and stores have been targeted by fires or vandalism in

recent days, but such a personal attack on a mayor's home is unusual.

Mayor Vincent Jeanbrun said his wife and one of his children were injured in the 1:30 a.m. attack while they were sleeping and he was in the town hall monitoring the violence.

Jeanbrun, of the conservative opposition Republicans party, said the attack represented a new stage of "horror and ignominy" in the unrest, and urged the government to impose a state of emergency.

Regional prosecutor Stephane Hardouin opened an investigation into attempted murder in the attack, telling French television that an investigation suggests the car was meant to ram the house and set it ablaze. He said a flame accelerant was

found in a bottle in the car.

Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne went to l'Hay-les-Roses to meet Jeanbrun along with Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin and other officials, and promised that "we're going to do everything to bring order back as soon as possible."

Macron planned to hold a special security meeting Sunday evening with Borne, Darmanin and the justice minister.

Skirmishes erupted in the Mediterranean city of Marseille but appeared less intense than the night before, according to the Interior Ministry. A bolstered police contingent arrested 55 people there.

Nationwide arrests were lower than the night before. Darmanin attributed that to "the resolute action of security forces."

Israel's air force carries out strikes on Syria

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Israel carried out airstrikes on areas near the central Syrian city of Homs early Sunday causing material damage but no casualties, the Syrian military said in a statement.

A Syrian anti-aircraft missile exploded over Israeli territory, the Israeli military said, prompting another round of strikes.

Syrian state media quoted an un-

named military official as saying the air defenses shot down some of the missiles fired by Israeli warplanes flying over neighboring Lebanon.

Israeli authorities did not comment on the airstrike on Homs. But the military said one of the Syrian air defense missiles exploded over Israeli territory without causing any damage. Israeli police said the rocket's remains landed in the southern Israeli city of Rahat.

In response to the rocket, Israeli jets struck the air defense battery from where the anti-aircraft rocket was launched. The military said it also struck other targets, without elaborating.

Israel, which has vowed to stop Iranian entrenchment next door, has carried out hundreds of strikes on targets in government-controlled parts of neighboring Syria in recent years, but it rarely acknowledges them.

Australia to let some patients be prescribed psychedelics

Associated Press

SYDNEY — Australia is now the first country to allow psychiatrists to prescribe certain psychedelic substances to patients with depression or post-traumatic stress disorder.

Beginning Saturday, Australian physicians can prescribe doses of MDMA, also known as ecstasy, for PTSD. Psilocybin, the psychoactive ingredient in psychedelic mushrooms, can be given to people who have hard-to-treat depression. The coun-

try put the two drugs on the list of approved medicines by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Scientists in Australia were surprised by the move, which was announced in February but took effect July 1. One scientist said it puts Australia "at the forefront of research in this field."

Chris Langmead, deputy director of the Neuromedicines Discovery Centre at the Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sci-

ences in Melbourne, Australia, said there have been very few advancements on treatment of persistent mental health issues in the last 50 years.

Still, medical experts in the United States and elsewhere, Australia included, have cautioned that more research is needed on the drugs' efficacy and the extent of the risks of psychedelics, which can cause hallucinations.

"There are concerns that evidence remains inadequate and

moving to clinical service is premature; that incompetent or poorly equipped clinicians could flood the space; that treatment will be unaffordable for most; that formal oversight of training, treatment and patient outcomes will be minimal or ill-informed," said Dr. Paul Likhnaitzky, head of Monash University's Clinical Psychedelic Lab.

The drugs will also be expensive in Australia — about \$6,600 per patient for treatment.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Court: Tribal citizen not subject to traffic ticket

OK OKLAHOMA CITY — Tulsa lacks the jurisdiction to prosecute a Native American man cited for speeding because the city is within the boundaries of an Indian reservation, a federal appeals court ruled.

The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected the city's argument that the Curtis Act, an 1898 federal law passed before Oklahoma became a state, gave the city jurisdiction over municipal violations committed by Native Americans.

The court's ruling was based on the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark 2020 decision that found that much of eastern Oklahoma, including Tulsa, remains an Indian reservation because it was never formally disestablished by Congress.

Justin Hooper, a citizen of the Choctaw Nation, was cited for speeding in 2018 by Tulsa police in a part of the city within the historic boundaries of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. He argued that the city did not have jurisdiction because his offense was committed by a Native American in Indian Country.

Deputy who failed to act in shooting is acquitted

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — A Florida sheriff's deputy was acquitted of felony child neglect and other charges for failing to act during the 2018 Parkland school massacre, concluding the first trial in U.S. history of a law enforcement officer for conduct during an on-campus shooting.

Former Broward County

Deputy Scot Peterson wept as the verdicts were read, while the fathers of two students murdered at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Feb. 14, 2018, stared straight ahead and quickly left the courtroom.

The campus deputy at Stoneman Douglas, Peterson had been charged with failing to confront the shooter during his six-minute attack that left 17 dead.

Firefighters stuck when boat goes over falls

NJ CLIFTON — Two firefighters involved in a rescue effort in a New Jersey river became stranded themselves when their boat went over a waterfall, but a state police helicopter crew was eventually able to bring the pair to safety.

No injuries were reported in either rescue in the Passaic River, authorities said.

The Clifton firefighters were among emergency responders who were helping three people stuck in two boats on the river when their rescue boat plunged over the falls at Dundee Dam in Clifton and into the river below. A third firefighter who was in the rescue boat managed to get out before it went over the falls, authorities said.

Man guilty in cow dung investment scheme

CA FRESNO — A California man is going to prison for running a cow dung-to-green energy scheme that authorities said was a load of manure.

Ray Brewer, 66, of Porterville was sentenced to six years and

nine months in federal prison in a scam that bilked investors out of \$8.75 million, according to a statement from the U.S. attorney's office.

Brewer ran a scheme from 2014 through 2019 in which he claimed to be building anaerobic digesters at dairies in California's Fresno, Kern, Kings and Tulare counties and in Idaho, prosecutors said.

Anaerobic digesters "use microorganisms to break down biodegradable material and turn it into methane" that can be sold and that also provide the producers with renewable energy credits for producing green energy, the statement said.

Biden has started using CPAP machine at night

DC WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden in recent weeks has started using a continuous positive airway pressure, or CPAP, machine at night to help with sleep apnea, the White House said. The revelation comes after indents from the mask were visible on the president's face as he departed the White House.

The president has disclosed since 2008 a history with sleep apnea, a potentially serious but common condition in which breathing can stop and start in the night. Biden used the machine, White House officials said. The imprint lines on his face were apparent when he left for a speech in Chicago.

State targets hundreds of unlicensed pot shops

NY NEW YORK — Fed up with hundreds of

bootleg pot shops, New York launched new inspections this month aimed at getting rid of the unlicensed stores that are troubling the state's fledgling legal marijuana market. "You will be caught," the governor vowed.

But anyone who expects to see the stores shape up or shut down might need patience.

Two weeks after the enforcement push debuted with authorities issuing violation notices and confiscating contraband weed at 11 Manhattan storefronts, only two appeared to have closed when an Associated Press reporter visited, and two others were no longer selling marijuana products. At the rest, it was business as usual.

Suit over allegations of chess cheating tossed

MO ST. LOUIS — A judge has dismissed a lawsuit filed by a 19-year-old chess grandmaster who alleged his career was ruined by allegations that he had cheated.

Last year, Hans Niemann sued former world champion Magnus Carlsen and the online chess organization Chess.com.

U.S. District Judge Audrey Fleissig dismissed libel and slander claims because she said she didn't have jurisdiction to oversee them, The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

The lawsuit came after Niemann shocked the chess world by defeating Carlsen at the Sinquefeld Cup last year in St. Louis, ending Carlsen's world-record unbeaten streak. Carlsen accused Niemann of cheating and withdrew from the tournament.

-From wire reports

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Djokovic begins quest for 24th major

Associated Press

WIMBLEDON, England — Listen to Novak Djokovic's opponents explain why he is as successful as he is — why he will begin his pursuit of a fifth consecutive and eighth overall Wimbledon championship on Monday; why he also will be attempting to claim an Open era-record 24th Grand Slam trophy over the coming fortnight on the All England Club's grass courts — and they'll offer plenty of answers.

His best-in-the-game return of serve. His dangerous two-handed backhand. His elasticity. His stamina. His defense. His ability to read someone else's intentions, get to where a ball is headed and send it back with force, a combination Casper Ruud described this way after losing to Djokovic in the French Open final: "He sort of just goes into this mode where he just becomes, like, a wall."

Listen to Novak Djokovic explain why he's done what he's done and why, at age 36, he's

still doing it, and he'll offer a reason far less tangible and far less observable, something he mentioned during his victory speech at Roland Garros a few weeks ago.

"I try to visualize every single thing in my life and not only believe it, but really feel it with every cell in my body. And I just want to send a message out there to every young person: Be in the present moment; forget about what happened in the past; the future is something that is just going to happen," Djokovic said. "But if you want a better future, you create it. Take the means in your hands. Believe it. Create it."

Speaking that day about his own hopes and dreams as a 7-year-old kid, Djokovic noted two primary goals: getting to No. 1 and winning Wimbledon.

He's already been No. 1 for more weeks than any man or woman in the half-century of computerized rankings. Now he will try to pull even with Roger Federer by earning title No. 8 at

the oldest of the four Grand Slam tennis tournaments. Djokovic is one ahead of the injured Rafael Nadal — and three ahead of the retired Federer — for the most singles majors won by a man, with 23.

"Those two guys," said Djokovic, who practiced at Centre Court on Thursday, "were occupying my mind for the last 15 years quite a lot."

His 23 is the same number Serena Williams ended her career with last season; only Margaret Court, who won 24 across both the amateur and professional eras, has more.

"Grand Slams are the goal. I don't know how many, but I think he has in his body a lot more," said Djokovic's coach, Goran Ivanisevic. "It's fascinating to see, because sometimes you think, 'OK, now you have 23.' But he's going to find, again, some kind of motivation to win 24, maybe 25. Who knows where is the end?"

Entering the 2011 season, the so-called Big Three's Slam

standings looked like this: Federer with 16, Nadal with nine, Djokovic with one.

After winning his initial major title at the 2008 Australian Open, Djokovic went through an 11-major span where four of the losses came against Federer or Nadal in a semifinal or final.

His self-confidence waned a bit.

"That's where I was really doubting myself, whether I could do it or not, because you get far but then you fall on the last hurdle," Djokovic said. "The more times you kind of fall, the more you question everything, you know what I mean?"

And yet, with the same tenacity he uses on a court Djokovic dug in away from the court and found ways to improve. And still does that, which is part of why most consider him, and not No. 1 seed Carlos Alcaraz, the favorite as Djokovic continues to pursue the first calendar-year Grand Slam by a man since Rod Laver in 1969.

No. 1 Swiatek hasn't been successful on grass courts

Associated Press

Iga Swiatek is coming off her third title in the past four years on the French Open's red clay.

Last September, she won a championship on the U.S. Open's hard courts for the first time. That's also the surface used at the Australian Open, where she's been to the semifinals.

And what about on grass courts? Wimbledon, which begins Monday, has been her least successful Grand Slam tournament so far. Swiatek is just 5-3 at the All England Club — compare that to her 28-2 mark at Roland Garros, for example — and those three losses came in the first round, third round and fourth round.

Swiatek withdrew from the Bad Homburg Open on Friday with a fever and possible food poisoning, three days before the start of Wimbledon. She was scheduled to play in her first career grass-court semifinal match on Friday against Lucia Bronzetti, who got a walkover to Saturday's final.

"I'm so sorry but I have to pull out of my match today. I had a restless night because of some fever and possible food poisoning," Swiatek said in a statement on Instagram. "I'm not able to perform today and I need to take care of myself. I hope I'll be fine soon. Your support in Bad Homburg was amazing, thank you. It was a pleasure to play here. And I hope I will be back."

Swiatek, who has been ranked No. 1 since April 2022, offered a bit of insight on how she views her game on grass when she was asked in Paris last month about whether reaching the latter stages of a major is still a big deal to her.

"Well, it depends, because ... if I would (make) a quarterfinal of Wimbledon, I would be, like, over the moon," Swiatek replied, "and I wouldn't believe that I'm in that place."

So even though other players might concur with the sort of assessment Claire Liu, an American ranked in the Top 100, provided after facing Swiatek in Paris this year — "I'd say she's good on pretty much any surface" — the subject of playing on the slick

green stuff tends to bring certain sentiments to mind for the 22-year-old from Poland.

Two words she repeats when discussing grass: "uncomfortable" and "challenge."

It's such a contrast from how she feels on clay.

And yet, let's not forget: Swiatek was the 2018 junior champion at Wimbledon, so it's not as if it's a completely foreign surface or setting.

Still, she insists, "On grass, sometimes it's tougher and I still have to learn a lot."

"It just feels like you're going to go on court and not play the way you 'should,'" she said, making air quotes with her fingers, "or the way you 'could,' you know? So this thing is adding more pressure."

Hurricanes, Rangers start signing frenzy

Associated Press

Don Waddell's expectations were so low on the chances of improving the Hurricanes roster to open NHL free agency on Saturday, Carolina's general manager told his staff they might not even have to come in to the office.

Some four hours into the signing period, Waddell came away with a big haul. Aside from retaining their starting goalie tandem of Antti Raanta and Frederik Andersen and re-signing speedy forward Jesper Fast, the Hurricanes landed defenseman Dmitry Orlov and forward Michael Bunting.

"Things have changed here," Waddell said, referring to the league-wide perception of the Hurricanes, who have re-established themselves as a contender.

"We used to chase players, have to overpay," he added. "We've become a destination place. We're getting those calls first. And it's nice to be in that position."

The same applies to the New

York Rangers who, with far less salary cap space available than Carolina, still made an impressive series of signings — taking their Metropolitan Division rivalry with the Hurricanes off the ice and into free agency.

The Rangers additions were highlighted by forwards Blake Wheeler, Nick Bonino and Tyler Pitlick, defenseman Erik Gustafsson and two-time Stanley Cup champion goalie Jonathan Quick, who's coming off backing up when Vegas won it all.

"I'm biased. It was my life's dream to be a Ranger, and I think it's a pretty special place to play," GM Chris Drury said. "We're fortunate the players we did sign today wanted to be here and believe in what we're trying to do."

For a free-agent class regarded as thin on high-end talent, and with teams handcuffed by a flat salary cap that's risen just \$4 million since 2018-19, NHL GMs were quick out of the gate to fill their biggest needs.

Barry Trotz opened his tenure as Predators general man-

ager by signing one of the game's top two-way forwards, Ryan O'Reilly, to a four-year, \$18 million contract. The Predators also signed winger Gustav Nyquist to a \$6.37 million, two-year deal, and defenseman Luke Schenn to a three-year, \$8.25 million contract.

O'Reilly, who was playoff MVP for the Stanley Cup-winning Blues in 2019, arrives in Music City after the Predators began purging high-priced veterans. They bought out the remainder of Matt Duchene's contract and traded Ryan Johansen to Colorado.

"I think I'm going to sleep well tonight," said Trotz, who takes over following David Poile's retirement and inherits a team that missed the playoffs for the first time in nine years. "This is the start of what we want to do."

The Detroit Red Wings signed 2022 Stanley Cup-winning forward J.T. Compher to a \$25.5 million, five-year contract.

In losing Compher, and after

acquiring Ross Colton in a trade from Tampa Bay, the Colorado Avalanche signed former Devils forward Miles Wood to a six-year contract and former Montreal forward Jonathan Drouin to a one-year deal.

Forward Alex Killorn became the latest member of 2020 and '21 Stanley Cup champion Tampa Bay to cash in, signing a \$25 million, four-year contract with Anaheim.

The Pittsburgh Penguins were another busy Metropolitan team, re-signing goalie Tristan Jarry to a five-year, \$26.875 million deal, while adding several free agents, headed by defenseman Ryan Graves.

In the meantime, Minnesota Wild GM Bill Guerin served as a mere observer, knowing he lacked the cap space to join the signing spree.

"I was bored. But I would have loved to have been more active," Guerin said. "At certain times of the day you get frustrated. But then you look at your board and you realize that most of your team's already intact."

Goalies sign as Pens keep Jarry, Senators get Korpisalo

Associated Press

Even with not a lot of money to go around and after Vegas won the Stanley Cup with a surprise starting goaltender, NHL contenders showed on the first day of free agency that they're willing to spend to keep or find reliable help in net.

The Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday re-signed two-time All-Star Tristan Jarry to a five-year contract worth just under \$27 million, the Ottawa Senators added Joonas Korpisalo for \$20 million over five years and the New York Islanders extended franchise goalie Ilya Sorokin to an eight-year, \$66 million deal through 2032.

Jarry will average \$5.375 million a year on this contract, which new Penguins general

manager Kyle Dubas was comfortable signing after meeting with the 28-year-old in Edmonton recently and talking through expectations.

"And at his age, as well, within looking at the marketplace, we just felt it was the best bet to make for our club at this time," Dubas said.

The Carolina Hurricanes made smaller bets in retaining their veteran tandem of Frederik Andersen and Antti Raanta that helped them reach the playoffs each of the past two seasons. Andersen got \$6.8 million over two years and Raanta \$1.5 million for 2023-24, and the team still has young Pyotr Kochetkov waiting in the wings as the goalie of the future.

"We don't have a ton of money (invested in goal)," general manager Don Waddell said. "There's a lot of goalies and league starters that make more than all three of those guys, so if we were going to bring them back, I felt that we needed the insurance to have all three of them back."

Andersen, Raanta and Kochetkov combine to count, at most, \$5.9 million against the salary cap next season. Seven different goalies have a higher number by themselves.

Sorokin will at \$8.25 million when his new contract kicks in for the 2024-25 season, according to a person with knowledge of the situation who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because

terms were not announced. That's the going rate for a Vezina Trophy finalist who will be just 29 years old when the deal starts.

The Islanders also brought back Semyon Varlamov on an \$11 million, four-year deal to keep Sorokin's longtime partner around.

Other teams went more of a bargain route in goal, including the New York Rangers signing two-time Stanley Cup champion Jonathan Quick to a one-year contract worth \$825,000, with another \$100,000 in potential incentives. Quick, the playoff MVP when Los Angeles won in 2012, is coming off backing up Adin Hill when Vegas hoisted the Cup for the first time this past season.

Many NBA free agents are staying put

Associated Press

The Los Angeles Lakers kept two of their best guards. The Milwaukee Bucks retained their big man, as the early trend in free agency of most players staying put continued Saturday.

Dillon Brooks, though, is off to a new beginning in Houston.

Austin Reaves agreed to a four-year deal that could be worth \$56 million, and D'Angelo Russell returned to the Lakers as well on a \$37 million, two-year deal, people with knowledge of those transactions told The Associated Press. The Athletic first reported the agreement with Reaves, and ESPN first reported the agreement with Russell.

Reaves and Russell were both starters in the postseason for the Lakers, who made the Western Conference finals before falling to the eventual NBA champion Denver Nuggets.

Also Saturday, Milwaukee — which had already retained Khris Middleton — kept center Brook Lopez on a two-year deal, a person familiar with the agreement told the AP. The Athletic and ESPN reported the deal was worth \$48 million for the 35-year-old Lopez, who averaged 15.9 points in 78 games this past season for the Bucks.

Russell Westbrook is also staying where he ended last season, agreeing to a two-year deal with the Los Angeles Clippers —

after starting the last 21 games for them in the regular season and their five playoff games.

Brooks — who made tons of headlines for his talking, on and off the court, during Memphis' first-round playoff series against the Lakers — is getting a new home in Houston, after agreeing to a four-year deal worth nearly \$80 million, a source told AP. ESPN reported it may become a sign-and-trade, one that would create a massive trade exception for the Grizzlies.

Brooks was fined by the NBA for not talking to the media after some playoff losses, and he was ejected from Game 3 of that series for striking LeBron James in the groin. That was after he called James “old” and led the NBA with 18 technical fouls this season, earning a pair of one-game suspensions.

While Reaves, Russell, Lopez and Westbrook stayed put, Max Strus found a new home.

Strus — who helped Miami get to the NBA Finals — is headed to the Cleveland Cavaliers, agreeing to a \$63 million, four-year deal that was finalized Saturday by making the transaction part of a three-team trade, according to two people familiar with the negotiations.

Strus averaged a career-best 11.5 points this past season and has shot 37% from three-point range in his career.

Cleveland clearly prioritized shooting. The Cavs struck deals with Caris LeVert and Georges Niang on Friday; Niang is a career 40% shooter on threes, and LeVert shot 39% from beyond the arc this past season.

The Knicks added another former NCAA champion from Villanova by agreeing to a deal with Donte DiVincenzo. The swingman joins college teammates Jalen Brunson and Josh Hart with a four-year, \$50 million deal, a person with knowledge of the details said.

The Knicks also agreed to trade Obi Toppin to the Indiana Pacers, dealing away a former lottery pick who was loved by fans but never as much by coach Tom Thibodeau. The Knicks will get back two second-round picks.

Toppin was the No. 8 pick in the 2020 draft after winning national player of the year honors at Dayton. He was stuck playing behind All-Star Julius Randle.

Dwight Powell agreed to return to the Mavericks on a three-year contract. The 6-foot-10 Canadian has averaged 7.6 points and 4.6 rebounds for the Mavs, who agreed with Kyrie Irving on Friday on a \$126 million, three-year contract in the opening hour of NBA free agency.

Most deals cannot be finalized until July 6, and Strus became

one of the biggest names to leave for a new team in the early stages of free agency. Fred VanVleet (\$130 million, three years) left Toronto for Houston, and Bruce Brown Jr. (\$45 million, two years) left Denver for Indiana.

Many players stayed put on Friday in addition to Irving: Jerami Grant (\$160 million, five years) remained in Portland, Cam Johnson (\$108 million, four years) stays in Brooklyn, Middleton (\$102 million, three years) stayed in Milwaukee, Kyle Kuzma (\$102 million, four years) remained in Washington and Draymond Green (\$100 million, four years) remained with Golden State.

And some players eligible for rookie-scale extensions also cashed in Saturday on deals that will take effect in 2024-25.

Desmond Bane in Memphis and Tyrese Haliburton in Indiana struck agreements in the wee hours of Saturday on contracts that will be worth an estimated \$207 million apiece over five years, with Haliburton potentially able to reach \$260 million if he makes an All-NBA team. Later Saturday, LaMelo Ball agreed to the framework of a similar deal with Charlotte, a person with knowledge of the details said, and he could also see the value escalate from \$207 million to \$260 million if he reaches All-NBA status.

Mets, Verlander get July started by beating Giants

Associated Press

NEW YORK — No team was happier to flip the calendar Saturday than the New York Mets.

Justin Verlander pitched seven steady innings for his first victory in nearly six weeks and slumping rookie Francisco Alvarez hit the first of three quick homers that powered the struggling Mets to a 4-1 win over the San Francisco Giants.

“It’s July. We’ve got July off

to a good start. We’re hoping to build on it,” manager Buck Showalter said. “There’s a real accountability to trying to get where we want to get. The potential’s still there for us.”

San Francisco (46-37) fell to 14-5 in its last 19 games dating to June 11.

Brandon Nimmo and Francisco Lindor launched back-to-back shots as the Mets went deep three times in a span of

four batters against Anthony DeSclafani (4-8) in the third.

Tommy Pham added an RBI double off Sean Manaea in the fourth, and New York (37-46) earned a much-needed win after going 6-19 in its previous 25 games.

“I’m glad June’s over,” Showalter said before the game.

The 40-year-old Verlander (3-4) gave up five hits, struck out six and didn’t allow an

earned run for his 247th victory and first since May 21 against Cleveland.

The three-time Cy Young Award winner was 0-2 in his previous six starts.

“It wasn’t perfect, but I was able to make pitches when I needed to and felt a lot better than last time,” Verlander said. “Definitely a huge step in the right direction and just trying to build off that momentum.”