

Austin, Milley push back against GOP criticism

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon's top leaders on Wednesday offered full-throated defenses of their handling of extremism and diversity issues amid challenges from House Republicans skeptical of efforts to root out radicals and racists in the military force.

The Pentagon is not looking to punish troops for their political beliefs or mandate service members be taught so-called critical race theory, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told the House Armed Services Committee. The typically stoic Pentagon leader grew emotional at times as several Republican lawmakers questioned the stand-down that he ordered in February to discuss extremism and accused the military of embracing critical race theory.

"I don't know what the issue of critical race theory is, and what

the relevance is here with the [Defense] Department," Austin told Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., who questioned the military's use of critical race theory. "We don't teach critical race theory, we don't embrace critical race theory and I think that's a spurious conversation."

Austin testified Wednesday before the House Armed Services Committee alongside Army Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in defense of the Pentagon's \$715 billion fiscal 2022 budget request.

Another lawmaker, Rep. Michael Waltz, R-Fla., challenged Austin on the inclusion of a critical race theory book in at least one class at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., and a seminar attended by some 100 West Point cadets titled "Understanding Whiteness and White Rage."

"We need to understand our

past, I want to be very clear, but can you agree at least that 'Understand Whiteness and White Rage' ... probably is something that we shouldn't be teaching our future leaders of the United States Army?" Waltz, a retired Green Beret, asked Austin.

Austin, a West Point graduate and the first Black defense secretary, agreed that what Waltz described was likely inappropriate, but he added he would need more specifics to reach a conclusion.

Milley offered a different reaction. The general admitted he didn't have a full understanding of the issue of critical race theory, which is described by Harvard University as an area of academic study that examines racism as systemic. But, he said, troops should be exposed to many ways of thinking, especially as the military works to improve equity within the ranks.

Troops should be "open-minded and well-read," the general said. Then he went further, citing the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol by supporters of former President Donald Trump, which was, in part, the basis for Austin's stand-down to discuss extremism.

"I want to understand white rage, and I'm white, and I want to understand it," Milley said forcefully. "So, what is it that caused thousands of people to assault this building, and try to overturn the Constitution of the United States of America, what caused that? I want to find that out."

Austin told lawmakers that troops would not be punished for political or religious beliefs and the Defense Department was not looking to purge the ranks of Trump supporters, which Gaetz and others have accused the Pentagon of attempting to do.

US to evacuate Afghan interpreters who helped military

Associated Press

The Biden administration plans to evacuate tens of thousands of Afghan interpreters and others who worked with U.S. forces during the war while their applications for U.S. entry are processed, according to officials familiar with the matter.

A senior administration official said planning has accelerated in recent days to relocate Afghans, and their families who assisted Americans during the nearly 20-year war to other countries or U.S. territories. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss unannounced plans.

The administration intends to carry out the evacuation later this summer, likely in August, according to a second official famil-

iar with the deliberations but not authorized to discuss it publicly.

Both officials added that no country or countries for the planned temporary relocation have been settled on. Evacuating Afghans to a U.S. territory, however, is seen as complicated because it could lead to the visa applicants having greater legal rights as they are vetted.

The White House has begun briefing lawmakers on the outlines of the plans.

The administration has begun to identify a group of interpreters to be relocated outside of Afghanistan before the United States completes its drawdown by September, said a senior administration official.

Those individuals have already begun the process of apply-

ing for special immigrant visas available to Afghans who have worked with the U.S. The official stressed that administration relocation efforts would comply with U.S. consular law and would be coordinated with Congress.

The White House is planning for a variety of scenarios including "additional relocation or evacuation options" if necessary, the official said.

With U.S. and NATO forces facing a Sept. 11 deadline to leave Afghanistan, the Biden administration has faced increased pressure from lawmakers, veterans and others to evacuate thousands of Afghans who worked as interpreters or who otherwise helped U.S. military operations there in the past two decades.

Despite unusual bipartisan

support in Congress, the administration hasn't publicly gone on record in support of an evacuation as it unwinds a war that started after the 9/11 attacks. U.S. officials have been concerned that word of an evacuation could trigger a panic in Afghanistan, not to mention further complicate the present security situation.

The Taliban issued a statement earlier this month saying those who worked for U.S. and western interests would not be targeted. Still, the runaway corruption, deep insecurity and fear of violence from Taliban and from the many heavily armed U.S.-allied warlords has many Afghans seeing the special immigration visas as their last chance to leave their war-tortured nation.

Biden, senators on infrastructure: 'We have a deal'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden announced on Thursday that “we have a deal,” signaling a bipartisan agreement on a \$953 billion infrastructure plan that would achieve his top legislative priority and validate his efforts to reach across the political aisle.

Biden made a surprise appearance in front of the cameras with members of the group of senators, Republicans and Democrats, after an agreement was reached Thursday. Details of the deal were scarce to start, but the pared-down plan, with \$559 billion in new spending, has rare bipartisan backing and could open the door to the president’s more sweeping \$4 trillion proposals later on.

The president said not everyone got what they wanted, and that other White House priorities would be done separately in a congressional budget process known as reconciliation.

“We’ve struck a deal,” Biden then tweeted. “A group of senators — five Democrats and five Republicans — has come together and forged an infrastructure agreement that will create millions of American jobs.”

The senators have struggled over how to pay for the new spending, but left for the White House with a sense of confidence that funding issues had been addressed.

Biden’s top aides had met with senators for back-to-back meetings on Capitol Hill and later huddled with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

The agreement comes with a complex legislative push. Pelosi on Thursday welcomed the bipartisan package, but she warned that it must be paired with the president’s bigger goals now being prepared by Congress under a process that could push them through the Senate with only Democratic votes.

“This is important,” Pelosi said. “There ain’t going to be a bipartisan bill without a reconciliation bill.”

The Democratic leader vowed the House would not vote on it until the Senate had dealt with both packages.

Russia: Fire might target intruding ships next time

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russia is prepared to target intruding warships if they fail to heed warnings, a senior Russian diplomat declared Thursday after a Black Sea incident in which a British destroyer sailed near Crimea in an area that Russia claims as its territorial waters.

Russia said one of its warships fired warning shots and a warplane dropped bombs in the path of British destroyer Defender on Wednesday to drive it away from waters near the Crimean city of Sevastopol. Britain denied that account, insisted its ship wasn’t fired upon and said it was sailing in Ukrainian waters.

The incident marked the first time since the Cold War that Moscow acknowledged using live ammunition to deter a NATO warship, underlining the rising threat of military collisions amid Russia-West tensions.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Thursday that “the inviolability of the Russian borders is an absolute imperative,” adding that it will be protect-

ed “by all means, diplomatic, political and military, if needed.”

He sarcastically suggested the British navy should rename its destroyer from Defender to Aggressor, and warned that “those who try to test our strength are taking high risks.” Asked what Russia would do to prevent such intrusions in the future, Ryabkov told reporters it would stand ready to fire on targets if warnings don’t work.

“We may appeal to reason and demand to respect international law,” Ryabkov said in remarks carried by Russian news agencies. “If it doesn’t help, we may drop bombs and not just in the path but right on target, if colleagues don’t get it otherwise.”

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov deplored what he described as a “deliberate and well-prepared provocation” by Britain and seconded the tough warning.

“If unacceptable provocative actions are repeated, if those actions go too far, no options to legitimately protect the borders of the Russian Federation could be excluded,” Peskov told reporters.

No jail time for 1st riot sentence; Oath Keeper member pleads guilty

Associated Press

An Indiana woman on Wednesday became the first defendant to be sentenced in the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol and avoided time behind bars, while a member of the Oath Keepers extremist group pleaded guilty in a conspiracy case and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors in a major step forward for the massive investigation.

The two developments signal that the cases against those charged in the deadly siege are slowly advancing, even as the U.S. Department of Justice and the courthouse in Washington, D.C., struggle under the weight of roughly 500 federal arrests.

Graydon Young, who was accused alongside 15 other members and associates of the

Oath Keepers of conspiring to block the congressional certification of Joe Biden’s presidential victory, pleaded guilty to two counts: conspiracy and obstruction of an official proceeding. It was the first guilty plea in the major conspiracy case brought against members of the group.

Anna Morgan Lloyd, 49, of Indiana, was ordered by a federal judge to serve three years of probation, perform 120 hours of community service and pay \$500 in restitution after admitting to unlawfully entering the Capitol.

U.S. District Court Judge Royce Lamberth said he was giving her a “break,” but didn’t want others to think that probation — and not a stiffer sentence — would be the norm.

Wing of 12-story Fla. condo collapses

Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. — A wing of a 12-story beachfront condo building collapsed with a roar in a town outside Miami early Thursday, killing at least one person and trapping residents in rubble and twisted metal. Rescuers pulled dozens of survivors from the tower during the morning and continued to look for more.

Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett warned that the death toll was likely to rise, saying the building manager told him the tower was quite full at the time of the collapse around 1:30 a.m., but the exact number of people present was unclear.

“The building is literally pancaked,” Burkett said. “That is heartbreaking because it doesn’t mean, to me, that we are going to be as successful as we wanted to be in finding people alive.”

Hours after the collapse, searchers were trying to reach a trapped child whose parents were believed to be dead. In another case, rescuers saved a mother and child, but the wom-

an’s leg had to be amputated to remove her from the rubble, Frank Rollason, director of Miami-Dade Emergency Management, told the Miami Herald.

Authorities did not say what may have caused the collapse. On video footage captured from nearby, the center of the building appeared to fall first, with a section nearest the ocean teetering and coming down seconds later as a huge dust cloud swallowed the neighborhood.

Work was being done on the building’s roof, but Burkett said he did not see how that could have been the cause.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said she got a call from President Joe Biden, who offered federal aid. Hotels opened to some of the displaced residents, she said, and deliveries of food, medicine and more were being hastily arranged. Rescue officials tried to determine how many people might be missing and asked residents to check in with them.

About half of the building’s

roughly 130 units were affected, the mayor told a news conference. Rescuers pulled at least 35 people from the wreckage by midmorning, and heavy equipment was being brought in to help stabilize the structure to give them more access, Raide Jadalalah of Miami-Dade Fire and Rescue said.

Fifty-one people who were thought to be in the building at the time of the collapse were unaccounted for by midmorning, said Sally Heyman, of the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners.

The tower has a mix of seasonal and year-round residents, Burkett said.

Earlier, Burkett said two people were brought to the hospital, one of whom died. He added that 15 families walked out of the building on their own.

Gov. Ron DeSantis said officials were “bracing for some bad news just given the destruction that we’re seeing.”

The collapse, which appeared to affect one leg of the L-shaped

tower, tore away walls and left a number of homes in the still-standing part of the building exposed in what looked like a giant dollhouse.

Barry Cohen, the former vice mayor of Surfside, said he and his wife were asleep in the building when he first heard what he thought was a crack of thunder. The couple went onto their balcony, then opened the door to the building’s hallway to find “a pile of rubble and dust and smoke billowing around.”

Cohen, 63, and his wife made it to the basement and found rising water there. They returned upstairs, screamed for help and were eventually brought to safety by firefighters using a cherry-picker.

Surfside City Commissioner Eliana Salzhauer told Miami television station WPLG that the building’s county-mandated 40-year recertification process was ongoing. Salzhauer said the process was believed to be proceeding without difficulty. A building inspector was on-site Wednesday.

House panel pushes bill to put Big Tech in check

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A House panel pushed ahead Wednesday with ambitious legislation that could curb the market power of tech giants Facebook, Google, Amazon and Apple and force them to sever their dominant platforms from their other lines of business.

Conservative Republican lawmakers haggled over legislative language and pushed concerns of perceived anti-conservative bias in online platforms but couldn’t halt the bipartisan momentum behind the package. The drafting session and votes by the House Judiciary Committee are initial steps in what promises to be a strenuous slog through Congress.

Many GOP lawmakers denounce the market dominance of Big Tech but don’t support a wholesale revamp of the antitrust laws.

Work on the bipartisan legislation stretched into the night as a lengthy debate ensued over a complex bill that would require online platforms to allow users to communicate directly with users on rival services. Proponents said the measure also would give consumers more power to determine how and with whom their personal data is shared.

The legislative package targets the companies’ structure and could point toward breaking them up, a dramatic step to take against an industry whose products are woven into everyday life.

US jobless claims fall to 411,000, continuing trend

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits dropped last week, a sign that layoffs declined and the job market is improving.

The Labor Department said Thursday that jobless claims declined 7,000 from the previous week to 411,000. The number of weekly applications for unemployment aid has fallen steadily this year from about 900,000 in January. The level of unemployment claims generally reflects the pace of layoffs.

As the pandemic fades, states and cities are lifting more restrictions, and the economy is picking up as consumers are traveling,

eating out more, and visiting movie theaters and amusement parks. Growth could top 10% at an annual rate in the April-June quarter, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

With many employers desperate to hire, some states are starting to cut off several pandemic-related unemployment aid programs in response to business complaints that the assistance is making it harder for them to find workers. Starting this month, 26 states will end an extra \$300 weekly federal unemployment payment and 22 of those states will also cut off all jobless assistance to self-employed, gig workers, and those out of work more than six months.

Pelosi creates panel on Capitol attack

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi made it official Thursday that she is creating a special committee to investigate the attack on the Capitol, saying it is “imperative that we seek the truth.”

The new committee comes after Republican senators blocked legislation that would have set up a bipartisan commission to investigate the attack. A violent mob of then-President Donald Trump’s supporters overran the police on Jan. 6, broke into the

building and hunted for lawmakers as they tried to stop the certification of Joe Biden’s presidential election victory.

The House passed the bill to form a commission last month, and Pelosi, D-Calif., said it was her preference to have an independent panel lead the inquiry. But she said Congress cannot wait any longer to begin a deeper look at the insurrection.

“January 6 was a day of darkness for our country,” Pelosi said, and the “terror and trauma” to members and staff who

were there is something she cannot forgive. She said there is no fixed timeline for the committee, which will investigate and report on the facts and causes of the attack and make recommendations to prevent it from happening again.

She did not say who will lead or serve on the committee.

Pelosi’s official announcement, two days after she signaled to colleagues that she would create the committee, means Democrats will lead what probably will be the most com-

prehensive look at the siege. More than three dozen Republicans in the House and seven Republican senators said they wanted to avoid a partisan investigation and supported the legislation to form a commission, which would have been modeled after a similar panel that investigated the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

But those numbers were not strong enough to overcome GOP opposition in the Senate, where support from 10 Republicans is needed to pass most bills if all Democrats vote yes.

CDC extends eviction moratorium a month

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration has extended the nationwide ban on evictions for a month to help tenants who are unable to make rent payments during the coronavirus pandemic, but it said this is expected to be the last time it does so.

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, extended the evictions moratorium until July 31. It had been scheduled to end June 30. The CDC said Thursday that “this is intended to be the final extension of the moratorium.”

The White House had acknowledged Wednesday that the emergency pandemic protection will have to end at some point. The trick is devising the right sort of off-ramp to make the transition without massive social upheaval.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the separate bans on evictions for renters and mortgage holders were “always intended to be temporary.”

This week, dozens of members of Congress wrote to President Joe Biden and Walensky calling for the moratorium to be not only extended but also strengthened in

some ways.

The letter, spearheaded by Democratic Reps. Ayanna Pressley, of Massachusetts; Jimmy Gomez, of California; and Cori Bush, of Missouri, called for an unspecified extension in order to allow the nearly \$47 billion in emergency rental assistance included in the American Rescue Plan to get into the hands of tenants.

Ending the assistance too abruptly, they said, would disproportionately hurt some of the same minority communities that were hit so hard by the virus itself. They also echoed many housing advocates by calling for the moratorium’s protections to be made automatic, requiring no special steps from the tenant in order to gain its protections.

Diane Yentel, president of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, called an extension of the eviction ban “the right thing to do — morally, fiscally, politically and as a continued public health measure.”

But landlords, who have opposed the moratorium and challenged it in court, are against any extension. They have argued the focus should be on speeding the distribution of rental assistance.

Justices rule in favor of student in case of ‘cursing cheerleader’

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In the case of the cursing cheerleader, the Supreme Court notched a victory for the free speech rights of students Wednesday, siding with a high school student whose vulgar social media post got her kicked off the junior varsity squad.

The court voted 8-1 in favor of Brandi Levy, who was a 14-year-old freshman when she expressed her disappointment over not making the varsity cheerleading team with a string of curse words and a raised middle finger on Snapchat.

Levy, of Mahanoy City, Pa., was not at school when she made her post, but she was suspended from cheerleading activities for a year anyway. In an opinion by Justice Stephen Breyer, the high court ruled that the suspension violated Levy’s First Amendment freedom of speech rights. Justice Clarence Thomas dissented, noting he would have upheld the suspension.

The justices did not foreclose schools from disciplining students for what they say off campus, though they did not spell out when schools could act. An earlier federal appeals court ruling in this case would have barred public schools from punishing off-

campus speech.

Despite ruling in Levy’s favor, Breyer wrote that “we do not believe the special characteristics that give schools additional license to regulate student speech always disappear when a school regulates speech that takes place off campus. The school’s regulatory interests remain significant in some off-campus circumstances.”

The case drew extra interest at a time of remote learning — because of the coronavirus pandemic — and a rising awareness of the harmful effects of online bullying.

The decision was a strong endorsement of students’ right to speak freely, which the court first expressed more than a half century ago in defending armbands worn by high school students in protest of the Vietnam War, said Abner Greene, a constitutional law professor at the Fordham University School of Law in Manhattan.

“Students can engage in all kinds of critical or dissenting commentary, whether about the Vietnam War or the student cheerleading team, without losing their free speech rights. And it doesn’t matter where they say it,” Greene said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

3 arrested after fireworks display in store is ignited

MN EAGAN — Police in a Twin Cities suburb arrested a group of juveniles after a fireworks display was set on fire in a grocery store.

The display went up in flames Monday afternoon at the Hy-Vee store in Eagan. Police spokesman Aaron Machtemes said firefighters extinguished the flames and no one was injured. The store had to be closed because it was filled with smoke.

The amount of damage is still being assessed. Police say three juveniles were arrested a half-mile from the store.

Loud bangs could be heard in a video circulating on social media that showed the fireworks display going up in flames.

Dog missing for 2 weeks, retrieved safe from bay

NJ BARNEGAT — A golden retriever who had been missing for two weeks was rescued Tuesday from a bay in New Jersey.

Authorities say that New Jersey State Police troopers Ryan Koehler and Vincent Ferdinandi, of Point Pleasant Station, responded to the report of a dog swimming in Barnegat Bay and brought the 3-year-old named Chunk safely ashore.

Two joggers recognized Chunk from posters and reported seeing him jump into the water near Mantoloking Bridge around 7 a.m., WABC-TV reported.

Jim Mathis was fishing nearby and said Chunk kept backing away from his boat when he tried to get close but swam to shore when he backed away.

“We positioned our boat, got (the) line ready, acted as a

leash,” Koehler said. “Line around dog and guide him up to the docks.”

Chunk’s owner, Marie Zangara, said that he had some matted fur and was covered in ticks, but was otherwise healthy.

Auto shops deal with non-sticky state stickers

RI PROVIDENCE — Auto repair shops in Rhode Island are reporting an odd situation with vehicle inspection stickers: They don’t stick.

The stickers applied to the lower right interior corner of the windshield after a successful safety and emissions test are peeling off, according to The Providence Journal.

The state Department of Revenue, which oversees the Department of Motor Vehicles, confirmed the problem.

“We are aware of the issue with the inspection sticker adhesive and are working with our vendor, Opus Inspection, to replace this product,” agency spokesperson Paul Grimald said in a statement.

Ed Barbosa of Barbosa & Son Auto Repair in East Providence and Daniel Coren of Narragansett Auto in West Warwick said two-sided tape works.

Kite-flyer critically injured when kite hits power lines

WA BREMERTON — A man is in critical condition after getting shocked while flying his kite at a park in Washington state.

Bremerton Battalion Chief Brad Richard said the man was flying a makeshift kite made out of steel cable and a fishing rod around 7 p.m. Sunday at the Evergreen Rotary Park in Bremerton.

The kite drifted into Puget

Sound Energy’s high-energy transmission lines and shocked the man. He suffered severe burns, KPCQ reported.

He was flown to Harborview Medical Center and is in critical condition, Richard said.

42K pounds of purloined pistachios found

CA DELANO — California detectives say they’ve solved the curious caper of the purloined pistachios.

The heist was a nutty one. In a nutshell, an audit by the Touchstone Pistachio Co. in the San Joaquin Valley discovered that 42,000 pounds were missing. The company contacted the Tulare County sheriff’s agricultural crimes unit, the sheriff’s office wrote in a Facebook post.

The trail led to parking lots in Delano, authorities said. Investigators found a tractor-trailer there containing the remaining nuts, which were returned to the Touchstone Pistachio Co. Detectives determined that the pistachios were being transferred from their 2,000-pound sacks into smaller bags for resale, the sheriff’s office said.

A 34-year-old man was arrested.

Man charged with ID theft to buy luxury car

MA BOSTON — A Massachusetts man is suspected of stealing the identities of two people in an attempt to buy an \$83,000 car, federal prosecutors said.

Brandon Brouillard, 27, of Worcester, was indicted on bank fraud and aggravated identity theft charges, according to a statement from the U.S. attorney’s office in Boston.

Brouillard in February used the identity of a New Hampshire

resident to open a bank account, then wired \$108,000 to that account from another person’s account, prosecutors alleged. In April, he used a cashier’s check in the amount of \$83,000 to buy a new Chevrolet Camaro, prosecutors said.

Just days after taking delivery of the vehicle, the dealership learned that the account listed on the bank check provided by Brouillard was frozen. The dealership contacted Brouillard, who promised to wire \$83,000 to pay for the car, prosecutors said.

An Arizona resident contacted police and reported an attempted fraudulent wire transfer of \$83,000 from their bank account to pay for the car. The transfer was not approved.

10 stolen bulldogs found in neighboring state

MI TALLMADGE TOWNSHIP — Ten French bulldogs stolen from a breeder in Ohio and worth an estimated total of \$60,000 have been recovered in western Michigan, authorities said.

The dogs taken from Holmes County, Ohio, were found Monday in Tallmadge Township, the Ottawa County sheriff’s office said, after the victim searched online and found what were believed to be the dogs listed for sale.

Sheriff’s officials in Holmes County contacted Ottawa County deputies, who recovered the dogs. They had microchips used for identification implanted beneath their skin and each was valued at about \$6,000, authorities said.

A 41-year-old woman and a 17-year-old girl, both from Tallmadge Township, could be charged.

— From wire reports



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On-field exams for substances unpopular

Associated Press

Kansas City manager Mike Matheny warned opponents that if they act like Philadelphia's Joe Girardi and ask umpires to check Royals pitchers for sticky substances, it would provoke his team.

New York Yankees reliever Zack Britton and Max Scherzer, members of the players' association's executive subcommittee, called on Major League Baseball to end on-field checks by umpires and replace them with monitors who would conduct inspections in clubhouses, dugouts and bullpens.

"If I'm a young kid at the game and I'm asking my dad, 'Well, hey, what's going on? Why they getting checked?' What he's going to say? 'Well, they think everyone's cheating,'" Britton said Wednesday. "I mean, is that what we want the game to be about, like we're assuming you're cheating? I just think it's a bad look."

On-field exams of pitchers started Monday, a week after baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred announced a crackdown on unauthorized grip substances. When umpire Alfonso Marquez approached Scherzer for a third time during Tuesday's game, as requested by Girardi, the three-time Cy Young Award winner tossed his glove and hat to the ground, unbuckled his belt and appeared ready to take off his pants.

"I will say this: If somebody goes hunting for something on one of our guys, I'll guarantee we're going to have every guy on that bench and every other eye we can get on what might be happening. But that's not a

road I want to go down," Matheny said Wednesday at Yankee Stadium. "Let's let the umpires do what they're told to do."

When Oakland reliever Sergio Romo was checked by the umpires after pitching the seventh inning on Tuesday night, the veteran right-hander flung his belt onto the turf and dropped his trousers.

Britton said while the goal of eliminating sticky substances was laudable, the method of enforcement was hurtful.

"I just think the optics of it are so bad for baseball," he said during batting practice, speaking in front of the Yankees dugout. "There's a better way to do it. But it takes more than just me or other players saying it. It takes talking with MLB and sitting down and hashing something out to where we can enforce rules but not in the way that it's being enforced."

Cole also serves on the executive subcommittee, which along with the union staff supervises collective bargaining to replace the labor contract that expires on Dec. 1.

Britton said there have not been talks between the union and MLB in several weeks on foreign substances.

Nationals general manager Mike Rizzo criticized Girardi during an interview on Washington's 106.7 The Fan. The Phillies manager said he became suspicious because Scherzer was touching his hair more than usual on the mound.

Scherzer said he did that because he couldn't grip the ball and needed moisture on his fingers. He also said he got tired of

tasting rosin.

"It's embarrassing for Girardi. It's embarrassing for the Phillies. It's embarrassing for baseball," Rizzo said. "Yes, he was playing games. And, hey, that's his right. Gamesmanship. Had nothing to do with substances. He had no probable cause to ask for it. The umps shouldn't have allowed it. ... He's a con artist. ... He has been doing that for years on TV."

Phillies President Dave Dombrowski defended his manager, who was ejected after he left the dugout when Scherzer stared him down.

"That's not Joe Girardi," he said. "It's totally improper for (Rizzo) to say that. ... Joe Girardi is the farthest from a con man of anybody that I know. He's a very sincere individual. He was within his rights."

Dombrowski added that he called Manfred's office about the issue. MLB has consulted with the umpires and determined Girardi's request was legitimate.

Matheny predicted more tension ahead.

"There's people who rightfully will be very offended by being — I don't if it's being a called a cheater or insinuating — but there's going to be a lot of this, I mean it's going to be awkward," he said.

Britton said the checks would unnecessarily increase tension between players and umpires. He faulted Manfred for not speaking with media on the matter. Manfred did not hold a news conference after the June 3 owners' meeting when MLB first said a crackdown would be upcoming.

Giants wait out Ohtani, beat Angels in 13th inning

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Shohei Ohtani struck out nine over six innings of one-run ball for the Angels, but the San Francisco Giants rallied for seven runs in the 13th inning of a 9-3 win over Los Angeles on Wednesday.

Padres 5, Dodgers 3: Trent Grisham drew a go-ahead, bases-loaded walk with one out in the eighth, and host San Diego completed its first three-game sweep of Los Angeles in eight seasons.

Yankees 6, Royals 5: Gary Sánchez homered off Greg Holland in the ninth inning, Luke Voit hit a winning single and New York survived another

blown save by Aroldis Chapman.

Nationals 13, Phillies 12: Starlin Castro hit a go-ahead, two-run single off closer Hector Neris in the ninth inning and Washington rallied three times to beat host Philadelphia.

Astros 13, Orioles 0: José Altuve silenced the booing fans at Camden Yards with a two-run homer, José Urquidy (6-3) pitched seven innings of three-hit ball and Houston stretched its winning streak to 10 games by breezing past Baltimore.

Rays 8, Red Sox 2: Austin Meadows, Mike Zunino and Brandon Lowe homered to help host Tampa Bay stop a seven-game losing streak.

Blue Jays 3, Marlins 1: Robbie Ray allowed one run in six innings, and three relievers completed a five-hitter as Toronto earned its fourth victory in a row, beating host Miami to complete a two-game sweep.

Brewers 3, Diamondbacks 2: Brandon Woodruff threw seven dominant innings and also had an RBI single at the plate, leading visiting Milwaukee.

Mets 7, Braves 3: Francisco Lindor homered and drove in three runs, Michael Conforto jolted host his team's stagnant offense in his delayed return from injury and host New York beat Atlanta.

Rangers 5, Athletics 3: Major

league rookie home run leader Adolis García went deep twice for his 19th and 20th, Brock Holt had a tiebreaking RBI single in the seventh inning and host Texas beat Oakland.

White Sox 4, Pirates 3: Yasmani Grandal hit a two-run double and visiting Chicago stopped a five-game losing streak.

Rockies 5, Mariners 2: Trevor Story homered twice, German Márquez took a perfect game into the sixth inning and Colorado beat Seattle for just its sixth road victory this season.

Tigers 6, Cardinals 2: Jonathan Schoop hit a solo homer and a two-run double to help host Detroit beat skidding St. Louis.

Young's 48 points lifts Hawks in Game 1

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Trae Young remains as poised as ever in hostile environments in his first postseason.

Young scored 48 points, Clint Capela converted a go-ahead putback with 29.8 seconds left and the Atlanta Hawks beat the Milwaukee Bucks 116-113 on Wednesday night to open the Eastern Conference finals.

The Hawks improved to 6-2 in road playoff games this year and handed the Bucks their first home loss of the postseason.

"Ever since I was in middle school, when I was going on the road in middle school, I always loved playing on the road," said Young, who was two points off his career high. "I loved playing against an opposing crowd, an opposing team. It feels like you're really with your team, and it's just them in the building. I think that really brings our group together."

Game 2 is Friday night in Milwaukee.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had

34 points, 12 rebounds and nine assists for the Bucks. Jrue Holiday added 33 points and 10 assists.

Milwaukee's Kris Middleton missed a potential tying three-pointer in the closing seconds. Although Middleton scored 15 points, he shot 6-for-23 and missed all nine of his three-point attempts against Atlanta.

"I've just got to be better," Middleton said. "It's as simple as that."

Never before had the Hawks won an Eastern Conference finals game since moving to Atlanta in 1968. The Hawks reached the East finals in 2015, but were swept by Cleveland.

The franchise did win a title in 1958 and reached the league finals in 1957, 1960 and 1961 when it was in St. Louis.

"It's special," Young said. "I wanted to achieve things like this when I was a rookie. Coming in as a rookie, you don't know how hard it is until you've got to actually do it."

John Collins added 23 points and 15 rebounds for Atlanta. Capela had 12 points and 19 rebounds.

Antetokounmpo scored the first six points in a 9-0 run that turned a 98-96 deficit into a 105-98 advantage with 4:18 left. But the Hawks scored the next five points, and the game went back and forth from there.

"It's a matter of us just trying to withstand, hold the fort and try to make plays," Collins said. "And I feel like we did that down at the end."

Middleton missed a pull-up jumper with about 43 seconds left with the Bucks ahead 111-110. Young missed a shot on the other end of the floor, but Capela grabbed his 19th rebound and scored to put Atlanta in front for good.

After Milwaukee's Pat Connaughton shot an air-ball on a three-pointer, Young made two free throws with 17.3 seconds remaining.

"He was wide open," Antetokounmpo said about Con-

naughton's shot. "Make or miss, we live with that. We believe in him."

Antetokounmpo made a pair of free throws with 5.3 seconds left, but Young brought the lead back to three and closed the scoring by sinking two free throws of his own with 4.6 seconds remaining. His focus at the line revealed the veteran savvy the 22-year-old Young has displayed throughout his first career postseason.

Tip-ins

Hawks: Bogdan Bogdanovic started but clearly was at less than full strength as he deals with a sore knee. He scored four points and shot 1-for-6. ... Cam Reddish was available to play for the first time in four months but didn't play.

Bucks: Bobby Portis came off the bench with 4½ minutes left in the first quarter and ended up with 11 points and eight rebounds. Portis hadn't played a single minute in the last three games of the Bucks' second-round series.

Women's 400 hurdles set to sizzle on final weekend

Associated Press

EUGENE, Ore. — Dalilah Muhammad has all the prestigious credentials: Reigning world champion. Defending Olympic gold medalist. World record holder.

Despite that, she doesn't always grab top billing in one of the most competitive races in track and field — the women's 400-meter hurdles.

The reason — Sydney McLaughlin, the 21-year-old phenom who has been on Muhammad's heels for most of the past few seasons and even deserves some of the credit for pushing the champion toward her world-record times.

Act One of their 2021 drama is expected to take place at the U.S. Olympic track and field trials Sunday. The encore could happen in Tokyo at the Olympics.

"We definitely push each other to be at our best," Muhammad said. "That's a lot of pressure, but it also makes us so much better."

Action resumed Thursday at the trials.

There are still many spots up for grabs to Tokyo over the final four days, the last two of which are expected to reach 100 degrees, with a potentially record-setting heatwave descending on the Pacific Northwest. To beat the heat, USA Track and Field moved the start times for Saturday's 20-kilometer racewalks to 7 a.m. — two hours earlier than originally scheduled.

With McLaughlin pushing her to the finish, Muhammad ran the 400 hurdles in 52.16 seconds at the 2019 world championships in Doha. She broke her own world record from two months previous. McLaughlin's second-place time of 52.23 in Doha stands as the third-best time ever.

McLaughlin burst onto the national scene by earning a spot for the 2016 Olympics at age 16. Much was made of her multiple talents — including the ability to juggle while riding a unicycle.

Muhammad, meanwhile, has largely stayed under the radar. She does not consider this a rivalry, per se.

"It's actually unfortunate that it's looked up that way," the 31-year-old Muhammad said. "In reality, I definitely wish nothing but the best for Sydney. I love to see where the event can go."

Despite finishing second in the last major race, McLaughlin might be considered a slight favorite at the trials. Her best time this season (52.83) is nearly 2 seconds better than Muhammad's (54.50). Muhammad is still rounding into form after suffering a hamstring injury earlier this season.

Noah's arc

World champion sprinter Noah Lyles had visions of a 100-200 sprint double. But it didn't work out in the 100, where he finished seventh. He promised no such letdown in his signature event, the 200, with the first round Friday and the final Sunday in the final event of the trials.

"I plan to go into the 200 and dominate," Lyles said. "Point blank."

Beauvillier's OT goal lifts Isles, forces Game 7

Associated Press

UNIONDALE, N.Y. — Trailing by two goals in the second period of an elimination game, the New York Islanders kept their composure. They got one goal before the end of the period, and tied it in the third.

Anthony Beauvillier then stole the puck and scored 1:08 into overtime as the Islanders rallied to beat the Tampa Bay Lightning 3-2 on Wednesday night to force a deciding Game 7 in their Stanley Cup semifinal series.

"We knew we had a lot of time on the clock still," star center Mathew Barzal said. "Just stuck with it and fortunate enough to get two goals and tie it up, and obviously win in overtime."

Jordan Eberle and Scott Mayfield also scored for New York, with Barzal getting assists on both. Semyon Varlamov finished with 22 saves. It was a big response after an 8-0 loss in Tampa, Fla., in Game 5 on Monday night.

"We knew we were going to bounce back," Beauvillier said. "Even going down 2-0, I thought we were still on top of our game. We were having good shifts and we just stuck with it. Obviously a huge character win."

Beauvillier got his stick on the puck to pick off Blake Coleman's pass for Jan Rutta in the right circle, gathered it and quickly beat Andrei Vasilevskiy on the first shot on goal of the extra period. It was Beauvillier's first career playoff overtime goal, and his first score since Game 1 of the second round against Boston.

With this possibly the final game at Nassau Coliseum as the Islanders plan to move into their new home at UBS Arena next season, fans showered the ice with beer cans and bottles in celebration.

"I've never seen anything like that," Barzal said. "A little dangerous, but you don't see that too often, so we embraced it. That's the Islanders faithful — they're

passionate, they get excited, and it was good stuff."

Brayden Point scored for the ninth straight game and Anthony Cirelli had a goal and an assist for the Lightning, who lost play-off scoring leader Nikita Kucherov (27 points) to an apparent injury early in the first period. Vasilevskiy stopped 25 shots.

"We battled hard, we were short from the beginning," Tampa Bay's Steven Stamkos said. "We played a hell of a game to get up 2-0. We knew they were going to push. It's two good teams going at it at the best time of the year. For the most part, I thought we played pretty solid. ... We didn't get the job done tonight, but we get to go back in front of our fans and get the job done there."

Game 7 is Friday night in Tampa.

Trailing 2-1, New York came out strong to start the third, getting the first seven shots of the period. Mayfield tied at 2 with 8:44 left when he got a pass from

Barzal, skated into the right circle and beat Vasilevskiy with a shot that went in off the crossbar.

"We found a way to win, which is huge for us," Beauvillier said. "Everyone's happy and we get to go to Tampa for Game 7."

Vasilevskiy had a nice glove save on Barzal two minutes into the second to preserve Tampa Bay's 1-0 lead.

Elimination

The Islanders improved to 8-2 all-time when facing elimination at home in Game 6 of a postseason series

Scoring swings

Cirelli scored the Lightning's 12th consecutive goal dating to the third period of Game 4 on Saturday night. Tampa Bay scored twice in that period in a 3-2 loss and then won 8-0 in Game 5 on Monday night. New York scored the last three in this one to even the series.

Wild pitch costs Stanford in CWS loss to Vanderbilt

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Enrique Bradfield Jr. enjoyed the view from second base as the biggest play of the season unfolded for Vanderbilt.

Bradfield had just driven in the tying run against Stanford, and what happened next was nearly unimaginable for a Commodores team that had played from behind all game.

Spencer Jones scored from third on Brendan Beck's wild pitch with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning, allowing Vanderbilt to stay alive in the College World Series with a 6-5 victory Wednesday night.

"We've done some crazy things this year, down in the last inning, two outs," Bradfield said. "Nobody's on to start the inning. We get to two outs, we get a baserunner, another base hit follows. So we knew it was always possible."

Possible, yet improbable.

The reigning national champions were down to their last strike before the shocking finish against the Pac-12 pitcher of the year,

who had been dominant since beginning his rare relief appearance in the seventh.

The Commodores (47-16) were uncharacteristically sloppy against the Cardinal (39-17) until the middle innings and pulled with in 5-4 after being down 4-0.

They avoided their shortest stay at the CWS in their five appearances, all since 2011, and will play North Carolina State in the Bracket 1 final. They would have to beat the Wolfpack on Friday and again Saturday to reach the best-of-three championship series a second straight time.

Vandy won the national title in 2019. There was no CWS last year because of the pandemic.

The first five batters that faced Beck (9-3) struck out, and no one reached base until Javier Vaz walked on a 3-2 pitch with two outs in the ninth.

Jones hit a pinch infield single, and Vaz ended up on third on shortstop Adam Crampton's off-target throw to first. Bradfield then singled to right to bring home Vaz and send Jones to third.

On a 1-0 count to Carter Young, Beck threw a curveball that slipped out of his hand, sailed high and glanced off catcher Kody Huff's glove. Huff gave chase, but Jones was able to score easily as the Commodores' dugout emptied for a celebration at home plate.

"One of those classic World Series games," Stanford coach David Esquer said. "Of course, it didn't fall our way. I've been part of a few of them, and some have gone my way. That happens in Omaha sometimes. You get in those late innings and you have a magical ending for one team or the other. No regrets on our side."

The key, Vandy coach Tim Corbin said, was his players' ability to overcome their poor start to put themselves in position to win.

"We just had to tie it up," he said, "so good for the kids. They didn't back down. They've been tough. They've showed a lot of resiliency and played a lot of one-run games — regional, super regional, tonight. So nothing's been easy for the group."