

Blinken, Xi vow to 'stabilize' US-China ties

Associated Press

BEIJING — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met on Monday with Chinese President Xi Jinping and said they agreed to “stabilize” badly deteriorated U.S.-China ties, but America’s top diplomat left Beijing with his biggest ask rebuffed: better communications between their militaries.

After meeting Xi, Blinken said China is not ready to resume military-to-military contacts, something the United States has considered crucial to avoid miscalculation and conflict, particularly over Taiwan.

Yet Blinken and Xi pronounced themselves satisfied with progress made during the two days of talks, without pointing to specific areas of agreement beyond a mutual decision to return to a broad agenda for cooperation and competition endorsed last year by Xi and President Joe Biden at a summit

in Bali.

It remained unclear if those understandings can resolve their most important disagreements, many of which have international implications. Still, both men said they were pleased with the outcome of the highest-level U.S. visit to China in five years.

The two sides expressed a willingness to hold more talks, but there was little indication either is prepared to bend from positions on issues including trade, Taiwan, human rights conditions in China and Hong Kong, Chinese military assertiveness in the South China Sea and Russia’s war in Ukraine.

Blinken said later that the U.S. set limited objectives for the trip and achieved them. He told reporters before leaving for a Ukraine reconstruction conference in London that he had raised the issue of military to military communications “repeatedly.”

“It is absolutely vital that we

have these kinds of communications,” he said. “This is something we’re going to keep working on.”

The U.S. has said that, since 2021, China has declined or failed to respond to over a dozen requests from the Department of Defense for top-level dialogues.

According to a transcript of the meeting with Blinken, Xi said he was pleased with the outcome of Blinken’s earlier meetings with top Chinese diplomats and said restarting the Bali agenda was of great importance.

“The Chinese side has made our position clear, and the two sides have agreed to follow through the common understandings President Biden and I had reached in Bali,” Xi said.

That agenda had been thrown into jeopardy in recent months, notably after the U.S. shot down a Chinese surveillance balloon over its airspace in February, and amid escalated military activity

in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. Combined with other disputes over human rights, trade and opiate production, the list of problem areas is daunting.

But Xi suggested the worst could be over.

“The two sides have also made progress and reached agreement on some specific issues,” Xi said without elaborating, according to a transcript of remarks from the State Department. “This is very good.”

In his remarks to Xi during the 35-minute session at the Great Hall of the People, a meeting that was expected but not announced until an hour before it started, Blinken said “the United States and China have an obligation and responsibility to manage our relationship.”

“The United States is committed to doing that,” Blinken said. “It’s in the interest of the United States, in the interests of China and in the interest of the world.”

Russian drones sneak by defenses in western Ukraine

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian air defenses downed 32 of 35 Shahed exploding drones Russia launched early Tuesday, most of them in the Kyiv region, officials said, in a bombardment that exposed gaps in the country’s air protection after almost 16 months of war.

Russian forces mostly targeted the region around the Ukrainian capital in a nighttime drone attack lasting around three hours, officials said, with Ukrainian air defenses shooting down about two dozen.

The attack was part of a wider bombardment of Ukrainian regions that extended as far as the Lviv region in the west of the

country, near Poland. The Shahed drones made it all the way to Lviv because of the inability of air defense assets to cover such a broad area, Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said.

Air defense systems are mostly dedicated to protecting major cities, key infrastructure facilities, including nuclear power plants, and the front line, he said.

“There is a general lack of air defense assets to cover a country like Ukraine with a dome like Israel has,” he said, in a reference to Israel’s Iron Dome aerial defense system.

In the Lviv region, the Russian strike hit a critical infrastructure facility, starting a fire, according to Lviv Gov. Maksym Kozyskyi.

Russia also struck the southern Zaporizhzhia region of Ukraine with ballistic missiles.

Ukraine’s air defenses have been reinforced with sophisticated weapons from its Western allies, increasing the success rate at knocking down incoming drones and missiles. Previously, a winter bombardment by Russia damaged Ukraine’s power supply, though speedy repairs blunted that Kremlin effort.

The latest aerial assaults behind Ukraine’s front line coincided with the early stages of a Ukrainian counteroffensive, as it aims to dislodge the Kremlin’s forces from territory they’ve occupied since a full-scale invasion in February 2022.

The counteroffensive has come up against heavily mined terrain and reinforced defensive fortifications, according to Valerii Zaluzhnyi, the commander in chief of Ukraine’s armed forces.

Russia has also mustered a large number of reserves, he said in a post accompanying a video of him visiting front-line positions with other senior officers.

Heavy battles are taking place in eastern Ukraine, around Bakhmut, Lyman, Avdiivka and Marinka, the Ukrainian armed forces said. Russia shelled 15 cities and villages in the eastern Donetsk region, wounding five civilians, including three in Chasiv Yar near Bakhmut, according to Ukraine’s presidential office.

DODEA extends preschool overseas

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

American 4-year-olds in western Japan will be able to go to school this fall as part of a plan that could eventually extend to 6,100 children across the Department of Defense Education Activity, according to school officials.

M.C. Perry Primary School at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni is the first to offer universal prekindergarten to U.S. military families stationed overseas, DODEA said.

DODEA now is awaiting funding approval to expand its preschool offerings.

President Joe Biden's proposed 2024 budget includes \$66.4 million in universal prekindergarten funds for students in 60 military communities served by DODEA schools worldwide, agency spokesman Will Griffin said in an email earlier this month.

Universal preschool generally sets age as the sole criterion, rather than limiting eligibility to income or other factors. DODEA of-

ficials have said providing all eligible families access to prekindergarten will build a solid foundation for later success in college and careers while supporting military and family readiness.

In a separate proposal, the White House in its 2024 budget wants to fund a federal-state partnership that provides universal, free preschool to all 4-year-olds in the setting of a parent's choice, such as public schools, with child-care providers or through Head Start.

Growing data indicates that preschool may benefit children throughout their school years and beyond.

A study published in May 2021, for example, on the long-term effects of universal preschool in Boston by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that 54% of preschoolers ended up going to college — about eight percentage points higher than their peers who didn't go to preschool.

Researchers said they were intrigued to

see that outcome coupled with no correlation to higher standardized test scores, according to a report on the study on National Public Radio. That combination indicates to researchers that preschool can have behavioral or socio-emotional benefits, such as improving discipline or motivation, they told NPR.

For families, especially those overseas, offering a preschool program could help alleviate chronic on-base child-care shortages, military family advocates have said.

DODEA is using its 2023 budget to pay for prekindergarten for about 95 to 100 students at Iwakuni, where existing classrooms and facilities required minimal changes to meet requirements, Griffin said. Early implementation at Iwakuni allows DODEA to "test and validate procedures and plans" as it develops a wider rollout, Griffin added. If funding is approved, DODEA would strive to add more preschools next school year, Griffin said.

Fast-attack submarine USS Iowa christened

The Day

GROTON, Conn. — With a ceremonial crack of a bottle of sparkling wine, General Dynamics Electric Boat on Saturday celebrated the christening of the Iowa, the newest Virginia-class fast-attack submarine.

Iowa native Christie Vilsack, the ship's sponsor, wielded the bottle of Iowan bubbly, smashing it against the hull of the 377-foot nuclear-powered submarine before an estimated crowd of 3,000 in a cavernous assembly room at Electric Boat's shipyard in Groton.

The Iowa, adorned with patriotic bunting, served as the backdrop for a ceremony that brought together shipbuilders, members of the ship's crew, U.S. Navy personnel and government officials.

Iowa, with an estimated cost

of \$3 billion, is the 24th Virginia-class submarine and constructed as part of the partnership between Electric Boat and Newport News Shipbuilding. The Virginia-class submarine Massachusetts was christened in Newport News, Va., last month.

EB President Kevin Graney said the Iowa is 94% completed, the result of not only cutting-edge tools and technology but dedication and hard work of employees who worked through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under Secretary for the Navy Erik Raven, in remarks Saturday, said the Iowa joins the fleet "at a critical time when our nation will need the most capable, most ready, most agile and most lethal undersea fighting force to strengthen our nation's ability to keep the peace, or restore it, through decisive action."

Asian nations set to plan drills near South China Sea

Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is moving ahead with plans for joint naval exercises in September, the first held by countries in the bloc on their own, at a time when several are responding more strongly to increasing Chinese assertiveness in the area.

The Indonesian military said Tuesday that ASEAN member countries held an initial planning conference for the joint exercises, to be held Sept. 18-25 near a disputed area of the South China Sea, despite skepticism from Cambodia.

China says the vast majority of the South China Sea lies within its "nine-dash line," which it uses to demarcate what it considers its maritime border.

That has brought it into tense

standoffs with the ASEAN nations of Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines, with Chinese fishing boats and military vessels becoming more aggressive in the disputed waters.

Indonesia's military chief, Adm. Yudo Margono, initially said the exercises would take place in an area of the South China Sea which Indonesia renamed the North Natuna Sea.

In a statement Tuesday, however, Indonesia, which holds the rotating chair of ASEAN, said the exercise is now being planned for the waters of South Natuna, just outside the nine-dash line.

ASEAN members Cambodia and Myanmar, which maintain close ties with China, declined to take part in the planning conference, according to the Indonesian military.

Rescuers racing to find missing sub, passengers

Associated Press

Rescuers in a remote area of the Atlantic Ocean raced against time Tuesday to find a missing submersible before the oxygen supply runs out for five people who were on a mission to document the wreckage of the Titanic. Authorities reported the carbon-fiber vessel overdue Sunday night, setting off an international rescue effort in waters about 435 miles south of St. John's, Newfoundland. Aboard were a pilot, renowned British adventurer Hamish Harding, two members of an iconic Pakistani business family and a Titanic expert.

Named the Titan, the submersible had a 96-hour oxygen supply when it put to sea at roughly 6 a.m. Sunday, according to David Concannon, an adviser to OceanGate Expeditions, which oversaw the mission.

That means the oxygen supply could run out Thursday morning.

The submersible had seven backup systems to return to the surface, including sandbags and lead pipes that drop off and an inflatable balloon. One system is designed to work even if everyone aboard is unconscious, Pogue said.

By Tuesday morning, an area totaling

10,000 square miles had been searched, the U.S. Coast Guard tweeted.

The Canadian research icebreaker Polar Prince, which was supporting the Titan, was to continue conducting surface searches with help from a Canadian Boeing P-8 Poseidon reconnaissance aircraft, the Coast Guard said on Twitter. Two U.S. Lockheed C-130 Hercules aircraft also conducted overflights.

Concannon, who said he was supposed to be on the dive but could not go, said officials were also working to get a remotely operated vehicle that can dive to a depth of 3.7 miles to the site as soon as possible.

OceanGate's expeditions to the Titanic wreck site include archaeologists and marine biologists. The company also brings people who pay to come along, known as "mission specialists." They take turns operating sonar equipment and performing other tasks in the submersible.

The Coast Guard said Monday that the Titan carried a pilot and four "mission specialists." However, OceanGate's website suggests that the fifth person may be a so-called "content expert" who guides the paying customers.

Hunter Biden charged, will plead to tax charges only

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden's son Hunter has reached a deal with federal prosecutors on charges he failed to pay federal income tax and illegally possessed a weapon, according to a letter in U.S. District Court in Delaware, and will plead guilty to tax offenses but likely avoid time behind bars.

Hunter Biden will plead guilty to the misdemeanor tax offenses as part of the agreement made public Tuesday. The agreement will spare him prosecution on a charge of illegally possessing a firearm as a drug user if he adheres to conditions set by prosecutors. It is somewhat unusual to resolve a federal criminal case at the same time the charges are filed in court, though it is not totally unheard of.

The deal ends a long-running Justice Department investigation into Biden's second son, who has acknowledged struggling with addiction following the 2015 death of his brother Beau Biden. It also averts a trial that would have generated days or weeks or distracting headlines for a White House that has strenuously sought to keep its distance from the Justice Department.

A person familiar with the investigation said the Justice Department would recommend probation for the tax charges, meaning Hunter Biden will not face time behind bars. But the decision to go along with any deal is up to the judge. The person was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity.

Christopher Clark, a lawyer for Hunter Biden, said in a statement that it was his understanding that the five-year investigation had now been resolved.

"I know Hunter believes it is important to take responsibility for these mistakes he made during a period of turmoil and addiction in his life," Clark said. "He looks forward to continuing his recovery and moving forward."

The news comes as congressional Republicans have pursued their own investigations into nearly every facet of Hunter Biden's business dealings, including examining foreign payments and other aspects of his finances.

At least 6 teens shot following Milwaukee party for Juneteenth

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — At least six teenagers were shot around where Milwaukee's Juneteenth celebration had just wrapped up, according to police and fire officials.

The shooting happened about 4:20 p.m. Monday outside Greater Philadelphia Church of God in Christ, according to witnesses and a Facebook Live video taken by a bystander in the immediate aftermath of the shooting, according to local media outlets.

Milwaukee Police Chief Jeffrey Norman said six teens were shot, including a 17-year-old who may have been a gunman himself and is in custody. Police were still seeking additional suspects who hadn't yet been identified. Police said the victims ranged in age from 14 to 19.

Norman said the shooting may have

stemmed from a fight among a number of girls and young women, but he didn't know what sparked the dispute. The injuries of those wounded varied but did not appear life-threatening, the chief said.

"Milwaukee, what's going on with our children?" Norman wondered aloud at a news conference. He noted that he has taken part in the city's Juneteenth celebrations for eight years without any such bloody aftermath.

"Parents, guardians, elders, we need to engage in ensuring that this violence that our children are bringing these streets ceases. No handgun, no weapons of destruction, should be in the hands of our young ones."

"This is a story that plays out too often, and it's getting really old. Really old," Norman said.

Tropical Storm Bret heads to Eastern Caribbean

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Tropical Storm Bret chugged toward the eastern Caribbean on Tuesday as forecasters warned it could strengthen into a hurricane before approaching a region rushing to prepare itself for an unusually early storm.

Bret had maximum sustained winds of 40 mph and was moving across the Atlantic Ocean at 17 mph.

It is expected to strengthen into a hurricane in coming days but then weaken ahead of its ap-

proach to the Lesser Antilles, according to the National Hurricane Center in Miami.

The storm is expected to pummel some eastern Caribbean islands on Thursday and Friday at near hurricane strength.

"Both the atmospheric and oceanic environment look conducive for strengthening during the next couple of days with low shear and abnormally warm ocean waters," the center said.

Dominica's meteorological service said Tuesday that the storm poses a "high threat" to the

island and warned of landslides, flooding and waves of up to 12 feet.

Meanwhile, the hurricane center urged people in the Lesser Antilles, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to closely monitor the storm and have their hurricane plans in place.

"Given the larger than usual uncertainty in the track forecast, it is too early to specify the location and magnitude of where these hazards could occur," the center said.

Vertical shear and drier air are

expected to later weaken Bret as it swirls through the central Caribbean region, potentially taking aim at southern Haiti as a tropical storm.

The storm formed Monday — an early and aggressive start to the Atlantic hurricane season that began on June 1. It would be only the second hurricane to form in the tropical Atlantic in June in nearly a century, according to meteorologist Philip Klotzbach at Colorado State University. The previous hurricane was Trinidad, which formed in 1933.

High court denies vets seeking disability for A-bomb accident

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected an appeal on behalf of some U.S. veterans who want disability benefits because they were exposed to radiation while responding to a Cold War-era hydrogen bomb accident in Spain.

The justices not did comment in turning away an appeal from Victor Skaar, an Air Force veteran in his mid-80s.

Skaar, of Nixa, Mo., filed class-action claims seeking benefits for him and others who have said they became ill from exposure to radiation during the recovery and cleanup of the undetonated bombs at the accident site in Palomares, a village in southern Spain, in 1966.

A federal appeals court rejected the class-action claims. The Supreme Court's action leaves that ruling in place.

The Justice Department, arguing against high-court review, noted that Congress last year enacted legislation that expands eligibility for benefits for many Palomares veterans. But the department also acknowledged that Skaar is not covered by the legislation.

Skaar's lawyers told the Supreme Court that he suffers from leukopenia, described as a condition that can be caused by exposure to radiation. Skaar has also had skin cancer, now in remission, the lawyers wrote in a court filing.

He was among 1,400 U.S. service mem-

bers who were sent to Palomares to help clean up what has been called the worst radiation accident in U.S. history.

On Jan. 17, 1966, a U.S. B-52 bomber and a refueling plane crashed into each other during a refueling operation in the skies above Palomares, killing seven of 11 crew members but no one on the ground. At the time, the United States was keeping nuclear-armed warplanes in the air near the border with the Soviet Union.

The midair collision resulted in the release of four U.S. hydrogen bombs. None of the bombs exploded, but the plutonium-filled detonators on two went off, scattering 7 pounds of highly radioactive plutonium 239 across the landscape.

Charitable giving in 2022 down for only third time in 40 years

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Charitable giving in the United States declined in 2022 — only the third time in four decades that donations did not increase year over year — according to the Giving USA report released Tuesday.

Total giving fell 3.4% in 2022 to \$499.3 billion in current dollars, a drop of 10.5% when adjusted for inflation. The decline comes at a time when many nonprofits, especially ones providing services to those in need, have reported an increase in requests for help.

However, Josh Birkholz, chairman of the Giving USA

Foundation, which publishes the report and provides data and insights about donation trends, said the results are actually much better than they could have been considering the tough economic climate of late 2022.

"I go back and forth on whether it's encouraging or discouraging," Birkholz told The Associated Press in an interview. "There was a 20 to 25% decline in the stock market and an 8% inflation rate, but Americans still gave nearly a half trillion dollars."

Those 2022 donations came after two record-setting years

for charitable giving, driven by the unprecedented needs of the COVID-19 pandemic, said Una Osili, associate dean for research and international programs at the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University and the Giving USA report's lead researcher. It's a sign of continued generosity, though there are some areas of concern.

"At the beginning of the 21st century, two-thirds of Americans gave," Osili said. "Today, that is down to under 50% for the first time. So giving has grown, but fewer people are participating."

The downturn in giving has led to issues at Community Help in Park Slope, better known as CHiPS, as it has in many charities across the country. The Brooklyn, N.Y., nonprofit operates a soup kitchen and food pantry, as well as supporting single mothers and their infants.

"We saw inflation rise and, with that, we saw more working class individuals on our lines," said Shanice Brown, CHiPS development director. "Donations declined — and donated food as well — because as the price of things increase, people need more and so they donate less."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Family sues cemetery over missing remains

CA SAN DIEGO — Relatives of a late Black businessman who helped popularize Juneteenth in San Diego are suing a cemetery after his remains were reported missing from the family's burial plot.

Greenwood Memorial Park and Mortuary informed the family that Sidney Cooper's body and casket were not in the plot where he was supposed to have been buried more than two decades ago. Cemetery staff discovered it was empty as they prepared to bury Cooper's wife, Thelma, who died in March.

Staff said they did not know the whereabouts of Cooper's remains, their daughter, Lana Cooper-Jones, told the San Diego Union-Tribune. Greenwood said it was working to rectify the problem.

The lawsuit filed Friday seeks to force the cemetery to find the patriarch's remains and compensate the children for damages. The court filing was aimed to coincide with Saturday's Cooper Family Foundation Juneteenth Freedom Festival at San Diego's Memorial Park.

Conservative leader wants to oust justices

IA DES MOINES — An anti-abortion leader is calling for the resignation or removal of three Iowa Supreme Court justices who voted against reinstating the state's strict ban on most abortions.

Bob Vander Plaats, president and CEO of conservative Christian group The Family Leader, slammed Justices Edward Mansfield and Thomas Water-

man and Chief Justice Susan Christensen, The Des Moines Register reported.

Those three justices refused to take up Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds' call to reinstate a law banning abortions once cardiac activity can be detected, usually around six weeks of pregnancy and before many women know they are pregnant. The law contains exceptions for medical emergencies, rape, incest and fetal abnormality.

Friday's rare 3-3 decision by the Iowa Supreme Court upheld a 2019 district court ruling blocking the law. Currently, abortions are allowed in Iowa up to 20 weeks of pregnancy.

DNA collection delayed over ACLU objections

MA NEWTON — The public collection of DNA samples to help law enforcement solve crimes and identify human remains was postponed Saturday following objections of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan said in a statement that she postponed "DNA Drive Day" because of concerns raised by the local branch of the ACLU, as well as inclement weather.

It was billed as the first such event in Massachusetts in which people could voluntarily submit DNA samples to aid law enforcement investigators. DNA samples provided to genealogy databases have already helped law enforcement solve cold cases and resolve missing person cases.

Ryan said her office will work with the ACLU chapter to resolve any concerns. "We believe

that the community will best be served by further conversation," she said.

Firefighters save worker trapped in water tower

ND BOWBELLS — A maintenance worker has been rescued after getting trapped in a water tower in northern North Dakota.

Bowbells firefighters were called to the water tower around 3:30 p.m. Saturday, Bismarck station KFYY-TV reported Sunday.

First responders said the man was working in the water tower when he got heat exhaustion.

Fire crews and an electric line worker pulled the man from the tower using ropes and pulleys. He was able to climb down from the tower on his own and was evaluated by first responders.

Hovercraft suffers tear, runs aground on beach

NH HAMPTON BEACH — A hovercraft traveling from Cape Cod to Nova Scotia became a beachside attraction when it was deliberately run aground after suffering a 3-foot tear in its skirt.

The private owner of the retired Canadian Coast Guard vessel told officials that it was not safe to operate the damaged craft, so the decision was made to land on Hampton Beach on Saturday. No one was hurt.

The massive craft, an air-cushioned vessel powered by twin fan-like propellers, was a curiosity for passersby as it rested on the beach on a rainy afternoon.

Because of the bad weather,

few people were on the beach, which is usually swarmed by sunbathers during better weather, when the vessel came aground, said Hampton Police Chief Alex Reno. The craft landed near some piping plover nests, but the endangered seabirds were not disturbed by the activity, he said.

By Sunday morning, the vessel had been repaired, and the vessel departed for Portland, Maine. From there, it was to continue to Canada.

28 arrests made after cockfighting ring bust

NV SILVER SPRINGS — More than two dozen suspects have been arrested in rural northern Nevada in connection with an illegal cockfighting ring where sheriff's deputies found 59 dead roosters in a barn in Silver Springs earlier this month, the Lyon County sheriff's office said.

The sheriff said Friday that 28 people are facing felony charges. No names or other details were released regarding the arrests.

A deputy acting on an anonymous tip relayed by Lyon County Animal Services observed roosters fighting in "an open-air barn" and "hand-to-hand waging" on June 3 on the property, the sheriff's office said in an earlier statement.

Authorities found an additional 96 live chickens, two of which were severely hurt and had injuries consistent with bird-fighting, the sheriff's office said. They also found numerous implements commonly used when fighting animals.

— From wire reports

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Streaking Reds aren't waiting to win

Associated Press

Elly De La Cruz's arrival gave fans in Cincinnati a reason to be hopeful about the future.

Then the Reds started looking like they might be contenders — right now.

It helps that they play in MLB's NL Central, where everyone is one great week away from challenging for the division lead. And after nine straight victories, the Reds moved a half-game ahead of Milwaukee and into first place.

Cincinnati swept a three-game series on the road against defending champion Houston over the weekend. Then the Reds rallied to beat Colorado on Monday boosted by the return of Joey Votto, who immediately joined in on the fun.

Votto homered and hit a go-ahead, two-run single in his return to the Reds' lineup after a 10-month absence that followed surgery. Votto put on the Viking helmet and cape. He felt right at home.

"Long time coming," Votto said. "Ever since I've watched them put it on each other, I was thinking about how badly I want that on me because it's tied to a

winning moment, and that's exactly — exactly — what this team's about. This is a different energy than I've experienced in years, maybe in my entire career, the way these guys think about themselves and how hard they play. I wanted to be a part of this. We are all a part of this."

Cincinnati took over the NL Central lead for the first time since early April, moving a half-game ahead of Milwaukee. The Reds are on their longest winning streak since taking 10 in a row from July 19-29, 2012.

"The energy of our team has been building," Reds manager David Bell said. "It doesn't surprise me. It impresses me."

Colorado has lost six in a row and 12 of 15.

Returning 10 months to the day after surgery on his left biceps and rotator cuff, Votto was greeted with a standing ovation when he walked to the plate in the second inning. He took off his helmet and waved to the crowd, then tapped it against his heart before lining out to center.

"The crowd reaction was surprising," Votto said. "Not to underestimate them, but you don't

expect that. I feel the same way toward them. For them to reciprocate means a great deal to me. It was a memorable experience."

He drove a first-pitch, belt-high fastball from Austin Gomber (4-7) about a dozen rows into the right-field seats for a 3-1 lead in the fifth. After circling the bases on his 343rd home run, Votto emerged from the Reds dugout for a curtain call, wearing the celebratory Viking helmet and cape that have followed Cincinnati long balls this season.

"I played a long time and here I'm wearing a helmet and a cape," Votto said. "It's a team thing and it's keeping me young. It was a daunting rehab and you have your doubts. I don't want to be the odd person out. Every day there is someone doing something cool to help the team. If you're not doing something, you don't fit in. I just want to fit in."

Votto had not homered since last Aug. 6 against Milwaukee's Jake McGee.

"He just got himself ready," Bell said. "He has been doing everything to be a part of our

team. It meant a lot to our team. He felt a part of this the whole time but now it feels like it is supposed to. He is going to make us better."

Votto's two-run single to center off Jake Bird put the Reds ahead 5-4 in the sixth. The 39-year-old, coming back from surgery to repair his left biceps and rotator cuff, had not played since last Aug. 16. The 2010 NL MVP went 2-for-3 with three RBIs.

"He's a guy who should be applauded for what he's done in this city," Rockies manager Bud Black said. "He's spent his entire career here, which is special in this day and age. That ovation was cool. Joey's been a great player for a decade-plus. It was great to see the fans of Cincinnati recognize that."

Cincinnati is 11-2 since De La Cruz's big league debut June 6. The 21-year-old shortstop already has six stolen bases to go with his .271 average. Jonathan India, the National League Rookie of the Year in 2021, has reached double figures in both homers and steals, giving the Reds an exciting young infield tandem.

Marlins' Arraez goes 5-for-5, raises average to .400

Associated Press

MIAMI — Luis Arraez went 5-for-5 again to raise his batting average to .400, and Jorge Soler homered as the streaking Miami Marlins routed the Toronto Blue Jays 11-0 on Monday night.

Jon Berti had three hits and Jesús Sánchez doubled twice for the Marlins, who finished with a season-high 19 hits and won their fifth straight. Arraez's fifth single, a line drive to left field with the base loaded, scored two and highlighted a five-run seventh.

Bo Bichette had two hits for the Blue Jays, shut out for the

first time this season.

Giants 7, Padres 4 (10): Mike Yastrzemski splashed a game-ending three-run homer into McCovey Cove in the 10th inning, and host San Francisco rallied past San Diego for its season-best eighth straight victory.

Mets 11, Astros 1: Francisco Lindor homered and drove in five runs, and Max Scherzer pitched eight fantastic innings for his longest outing with New York in the visiting team's victory over skidding Houston.

Rangers 5, White Sox 2: Rookie Josh Jung hit his 15th home run, Jonah Heim had a

late two-run single and visiting Texas beat Chicago, which lost for the seventh time in nine games.

Diamondbacks 9, Brewers 1: Alek Thomas homered during Arizona's six-run first inning against Corbin Burnes, Merrill Kelly continued his road dominance and the Diamondbacks rolled to victory over Milwaukee.

Red Sox 9, Twins 3: Alex Verdugo tripled and drove in four runs, James Paxton pitched 6⅓ effective innings and visiting Boston beat Minnesota for its fifth straight win.

Cubs 8, Pirates 0: Drew

Smyly gave up three hits in five innings, Mike Tauchman hit a two-run single during a brief downpour and visiting Chicago surged past Pittsburgh.

Tigers 6, Royals 4: Kerry Carpenter hit a three-run homer in a five-run seventh inning that lifted host Detroit and sent Kansas City to its 12th loss in 13 games.

Cardinals 8, Nationals 6: Brendan Donovan and Paul Goldschmidt hit back-to-back homers in the fifth inning, and visiting St. Louis rallied from an early deficit to beat Washington.

Lee propels Deacons to CWS win over LSU

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — A few minutes after he made the defensive play of the game, Bennett Lee delivered the hit that put Wake Forest on the inside track to the College World Series finals.

The Demon Deacons came from behind to win a second straight one-run game at Charles Schwab Field, beating LSU 3-2 on Monday night in the game that determined control of their bracket.

Wake Forest is 7-0 in the NCAA Tournament and bidding to become the first No. 1 national seed since 1999 to win the championship.

"Every single guy is having the time of their lives right now," said closer Camden Minacci, who got the last five outs. "Who can beat us? It seems pretty much impossible. So the amount of fun we have is truly incredible."

Lee, the Deacons' catcher, made a spectacular play in the top of the eighth when he snagged third baseman Brock Wilken's bouncing throw and tagged out Tre' Morgan to keep the game

tied 2-all.

"Brock Wilken made a great play to get to the ball, and Bennett was there with an unbelievable pick and tag under pressure," Deacons coach Tom Walter said. "It was a huge play in this ballgame."

After Danny Corona lashed Thatcher Hurd's breaking pitch down the right-field line for a double in the bottom half, Lee followed with a base hit into left that brought Corona home.

Next up for Wake Forest (54-10) is a Wednesday meeting with the winner of a Tuesday matchup between SEC rivals LSU (49-16) and Tennessee. The Tigers beat Tennessee 6-3 here Saturday. The Deacons would have to lose twice to be denied a spot in the finals.

Tennessee is coming off a win against Stanford, which was knocked out of the CWS. Chase Burns pitched six shutout innings in relief of Chase Dollander and the Volunteers manufactured two runs to break a tie in the seventh on their way to a 6-4 victory.

Tennessee ended a six-game

CWS losing streak dating to 2001, while the Cardinal went 0-2 at the CWS for a second straight year. Burns ran his fastball up to 102 mph while striking out nine and limiting Stanford to two hits.

LSU starter Ty Floyd limited the Deacons to two hits and matched his career high with 10 strikeouts before he lost his command in the sixth inning. He walked the first three batters, prompting coach Jay Johnson to call on Hurd (6-3) to face the national home run co-leader in Wilken.

Wilken sent a ball up the middle for an RBI single, and the tying run came home when Justin Johnson hit into a double play.

The Tigers opened the scoring against Wake Forest starter Josh Hartle in the third. Tommy White singled in a run and scored from second when Morgan tripled on a fly ball left fielder Adam Cecere lost in the sun.

Hartle went six innings and struck out nine, running his season total to a Wake Forest-record 140.

The Deacons turned back the

Tigers in the eighth when things looked dire. LSU had runners on the corners with none out after Morgan doubled down the line and moved over when Hayden Travinski reached on an error.

Wilken backhanded Cade Beloso's grounder down the line, double-pumped and bounced a throw home to Lee, who put the tag on Morgan on a close play that stood up on video review.

"As soon as the ball was hit, I took off," Morgan said. "I knew he would have an awkward throw, so I tried to get a bit over to get in the way, but he made a great play."

Lee said the stage was set during a mound visit when Walter told Lee to let Wilken know to throw home if the ball comes his way.

"And then Beloso hits a little squibber, and that was actually a really good play by Brock," Lee said. "He said the ball was literally still spinning in his glove when he went to throw it. And from my perspective, I've done millions of picks in my life and I just took over."

New Warriors GM committed to keeping Green

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The Golden State Warriors want to keep Draymond Green, yet the team is prepared for him to formally decline his \$27.5 million player option for the final year of his contract next season and become an unrestricted free agent seeking a long-term deal.

The Athletic reported Monday that Green would opt out. Green, who said in April he wants to retire with Golden State, would have to notify the Warriors of his decision by June 30.

"I saw the report, too. Until we get the paperwork and the filing we can't really comment or say much," new general manager Mike Dunleavy Jr. said Monday at his introductory news conference. "I will say it, I think Steve (Kerr) has said it, I'll reiterate, we really want Draymond back. What he means to this organization and this team in terms of trying to win at the highest level, we feel like we have to have him. So that's very important."

Kerr has applauded Green's fiery, emotional play. The season began with Green punching Jordan Poole at practice during training camp, then taking a brief leave of absence from the team.

This spring, Green served a one-game suspension during the Warriors' 114-97 Game 3 victory in the first round of the playoffs that Golden State won in seven games. He vowed afterward not to change.

"Draymond won't be moved by no Draymond rules," he said. "I will continue to play the game how I play the game, operate how I operate, be exactly who I am, because that leads to winning."

In the fourth quarter of the Kings' 114-106 Game 2 win, Green stepped on the chest of Sacramento center Domantas Sabonis after Stephen Curry grabbed a defensive rebound.

In 2016, Green was suspended for a crucial Game 5 loss to LeBron James and the Cavaliers in the NBA Finals after accumulating too many flagrant fouls in the playoffs that season.

The Warriors wound up losing in seven.

Dunleavy and owner Joe Lacob know there's much to do better this summer with the expectations the Warriors will contend for another championship next season.

And, they hope, with Green a part of that core of players along with Curry and Klay Thompson that has won four titles.

"Look, he's been a spectacular player for us. We would not have these championships without his involvement, no question," Lacob said of Green.

"I think everyone understands that in this room. He's meant a lot to this franchise. He's a bit of a controversial player perhaps in some corners around the league, certain things that have happened over the years. He knows that. We know that. But the good overwhelms the bad is what I would say.

"He's meant a lot. I think if he does come back, he will be very important to our success certainly going forward in the next few years."

FIFA pledge hasn't put an end to incidents

Associated Press

GENEVA — Two international soccer games stopped because of racial abuse between players. A United States-Mexico game cut short amid homophobic chants by fans. An advisor to Brazil player Vinícius Júnior racially harassed by a steward at a stadium in Spain.

All these incidents in the past week are evidence of an “urgent crisis” facing soccer, an anti-discrimination group that works with FIFA and European soccer body UEFA said Tuesday.

The two men's games abandoned Monday — when New Zealand and the Ireland under-21 team refused to continue playing after hearing racial abuse by opponents from Qatar and Kuwait, respectively — followed days after FIFA president Gianni Infantino reset soccer's task to tackle discrimination.

“There is no football if there is racism! So let's stop the games,” Infantino said last Friday after meeting with Vinícius

in Barcelona and enlisting him to work with FIFA and other players.

Vinícius, who is Black, has been the target of sustained racist abuse by fans in Spanish stadiums throughout the season while playing for Real Madrid, with little done by referees or soccer organizers to protect him.

The New Zealand and Ireland soccer federations did not cite Infantino's pledge when they explained Monday why their teams would not continue the exhibition games, both played in Austria.

Still, the message was clear to FIFA's long-time advisors on discrimination at international soccer games, the London-based Fare network.

“Two international matches abandoned due to racial abuse in one evening tells us something about the way in which young players are no longer prepared to tolerate racism on the pitch,” Fare executive director Piara Powar said Tuesday in a statement. “On top of

the behavior of a Spanish steward who racially abused a friend of Vinícius Júnior by wielding a banana at a match in which the Brazilian team took the knee, and the USA vs. Mexico match that last week was stopped twice and cut short by the referee due to homophobia, we can see the urgent crisis football is facing.”

FIFA did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The Zurich-based body has jurisdiction over international friendlies between teams from different continental confederations such as the New Zealand-Qatar and Ireland-Kuwait games.

New Zealand abandoned the game at halftime after accusing Qatari player Yusuf Abdurisag of making a racist comment to defender Michael Boxall, who is of Samoan heritage.

After a melee between the teams in the 40th minute, New Zealand captain Joe Bell complained to referee Manuel Schuttengruber, who shook his head, indicating he would not

take action against the Qatar player.

In a statement, Football New Zealand said it supported the players who refused to play the second half when the referee declined to take action.

“We never want to see a match abandoned, but some issues are bigger than football and it is important to make a stand,” New Zealand Football CEO Andrew Pragnell said in a statement.

Qatar coach Carlos Queiroz said on the television broadcast of the match that both sets of players supported their own teammate.

Last Friday, Infantino committed FIFA to create a task force involving players that aims to “elaborate concrete and efficient measures to end racism in football once and for all.”

“It's a football-related problem and we mustn't look for excuses like: ‘It's society's problem, therefore, it's fine in football.’ In the world of football, we must act in a very forceful way,” he said.

Paris Olympic organizers investigated for corruption

Associated Press

PARIS — French investigators searched the headquarters of Paris Olympic organizers on Tuesday in a probe into suspected corruption, according to the national financial prosecutor's office.

The Paris organizing committee said in a statement that a search was underway at their headquarters in the suburb of Saint-Denis, and that “Paris 2024 is cooperating with the investigators to facilitate their investigations.” It would not comment further.

Paris becomes the third straight Summer Games organizer implicated in investigations led by anti-corruption authorities in the French capital.

Vote-buying allegations

linked to the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics and the Tokyo Games in 2021 previously removed several members of the International Olympic Committee from that organization.

An official with the financial prosecutor's office said Tuesday that the searches are linked to two preliminary investigations related to the Paris Olympics which had not previously been made public. The official was not authorized to be publicly named according to prosecutor's office policy.

According to Le Monde newspaper, raids also took place at the offices of the public body in charge of Olympic infrastructure, and at the headquarters of several companies and consultants linked to the organization

of the games.

Paris organizers declined to comment.

One of the probes was opened in 2017 — the year Paris was picked by the IOC as the 2024 host — into suspected embezzlement of public funds and favoritism, and concerns about an unspecified contract reached by Paris organizers, the prosecutor's office said.

The other was opened in 2022 following an audit by the French Anti-corruption Agency. The prosecutor's office said case targets suspected conflict of interest and favoritism involving several contracts reached by the organizing committee and Solideo, the company in charge of Olympic facilities.

The Paris Olympics are

scheduled for July 26-Aug. 11, 2024.

The raids unfolded at the same time the IOC executive board began a two-day meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland, expecting to praise Paris organizers for their progress.

IOC president Thomas Bach told reporters early Monday the meeting “of course will be about Paris, where we have some good news after the visit of the coordination mission and after my visit to France, to President Macron, and also the organizing committee.”

The IOC said in a statement that it was informed by the organizers that they are cooperating with authorities.

Paris was awarded its Olympics six years ago.