

Mercenary revolt challenges Putin's rule

Associated Press

Russian troops deployed to protect the capital withdrew Sunday after mercenary forces beat a retreat. But the short-lived revolt could have long-term consequences for President Vladimir Putin's two-decade hold on power and his war in Ukraine.

Putin's image as a tough leader had already been badly bruised by the Ukraine war, which has dragged on for 16 months and claimed huge numbers of Russian troops. Saturday's march toward Moscow by forces under the command of his one-time protege, Yevgeny Prigozhin, exposed further weaknesses, many analysts said.

It also meant some of the best forces fighting for Russia in Ukraine were pulled from that battlefield: Prigozhin's own Wagner troops and Chechen ones sent to stop them.

After calling for an armed rebellion aimed at ousting Russia's defense minister, Prigozhin and his fighters appeared to seize

control of the Russian military headquarters in Rostov-on-Don that oversee fighting in Ukraine.

They then advanced towards Moscow largely unhindered. Russian media reported that they downed several helicopters and a military communications plane. The Defense Ministry has not commented.

They were halted only by a deal to send Prigozhin to neighboring Belarus, which has supported Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Charges against him of mounting an armed rebellion will be dropped, according to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, and Prigozhin ordered his troops back to their field camps.

The government also said it would not prosecute Wagner fighters who took part, while those who did not join in were offered contracts by the Defense Ministry.

Though Putin had vowed earlier to punish those behind the armed uprising, Peskov

defended the reversal, saying Putin's "highest goal" was "to avoid bloodshed and internal confrontation with unpredictable results."

Commentators on social media over the weekend noted the irony of Prigozhin dodging prosecution for an armed rebellion while many Russians who merely speak out against the war in Ukraine have been handed lengthy prison sentences.

Though the deal ended the immediate crisis, it may have set in motion a longer-term one, analysts said.

"For a dictatorship built on the idea of unchallenged power, this was an extreme humiliation, and it's hard to see the genie of doubt ever being forced back into the bottle," said Phillips O'Brien, a professor of strategic studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. "So, if Prigozhin might have lost in the short term, Putin is likely to be the long-term loser."

Navy offers recruits more bonuses to boost enlistment

BY MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Navy is offering a maximum \$75,000 enlistment bonus to recruits pursuing certain nuclear-related jobs to boost enlistment in the service.

"The Navy's nuclear ratings are among the most important and most demanding in the U.S. military," said Lt. Cmdr. Richard Parker, spokesman for Navy Recruiting Command. "In order to attract the best qualified personnel to operate these systems, we offer competitive incentives that are attractive to those who have the skills to become rated for the Navy's nuclear program."

The bonus, which is an increase to last year's offer of \$50,000, was announced June 15 by the Navy Recruiting Command as part of the Enlistment

Incentives Program. This incentive has been in the works since December 2022, when President Joe Biden signed the fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act.

The Navy barely met its active-duty enlistment goal last year, surpassing its target of 33,400 by 42 people.

Navy officials have predicted a tougher recruiting landscape this year and have taken steps to widen the candidate pool. Some changes include raising the maximum enlistment age from 39 to 41 and accepting lower scores on entrance exams.

The bonus will apply to sailors pursuing one of three rates — electronic technician nuclear, machinist mate nuclear and electrician's mate nuclear. Future nuclear sailors can earn \$25,000 after completing basic

training with the remaining \$50,000 broken up into two installments. A sailor can receive 33% of the \$50,000 after completing Nuclear Power School, which covers the basics of physics and reactor engineering, and 67% after completing the Nuclear Power Training Unit, which provides practical instruction in reactor operation.

However, \$75,000 is not guaranteed for every sailor. Bonuses can be determined by the date a recruit ships out for basic training, when a candidate enters the Delayed Entry Program, and the classification assigned by the recruit's Military Entrance Processing Station.

The Navy has until Sept. 30 to meet its recruitment goal of 37,700 new active-duty sailors. An update on the Navy's recruitment numbers was not

available, Parker said.

Here is a list of some of the other Navy jobs being offered enlistment bonuses, which can be combined with the \$25,000 shipping-out bonus:

- Air rescue swimmer — \$15,000.
- Special warfare boat operator — \$15,000.
- Missile technician — \$5,000.
- Machinist's mate submarines — \$10,000.
- Sub-electronics computer field — \$15,000.
- Cryptologic technician interpretive — \$15,000.
- Information system technician submarines — \$15,000.
- Explosive ordnance — \$15,000.
- Hospital corpsman — \$15,000.
- Cryptologic technician networks — \$5,000.

Senate bill covers ship, abortion policy

By DOUG G. WARE

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Senate Armed Services Committee last week agreed to authorize about \$845 billion for the Pentagon for fiscal 2024 with funding to give troops a pay raise, more weapons to deter China and build a new amphibious ship.

The committee on Thursday passed its version of the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, the annual bill that specifies the Defense Department's budget and expenditures.

The vote was 24-1.

The committee's bill proposes a little more than \$844 billion for the Pentagon and \$42 billion for other defense programs.

The \$886 billion is in line with President Joe Biden's defense funding request, and is the maximum that defense programs can receive next year under his deal with House Republicans to raise the debt limit.

Amphibious ships

The committee's version of the NDAA would restore almost \$2 billion in funding next year to build a San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship.

The Navy's budget request in March did not include money next year for a new amphibious ship. The Navy is required under the 2023 NDAA to have a minimum of 31 amphibious ships, which are used to deliver Marines, weapons and equipment from the sea.

The Senate bill also blocks the retirement of three of existing amphibious ships and the retirement of a cruiser.

Gen. David Berger, the Marine Corps commandant, has said the Navy needs at least 31 of the ships for optimal readiness, but Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro paused construction of the ships last year to study their impact on the force.

Abortion policy

The committee's bill asks for clarification on the Pentagon's recent policy that covers the cost of a service member traveling to another state, if necessary, to receive reproductive health care, including abortions.

The Defense Department enacted the policy last year after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down its landmark 1973 abortion ruling in *Roe vs. Wade*, which legalized the procedure nationwide. The Defense Department policy is one of many that Biden's administration has enacted to protect reproductive health care. Many Republicans oppose the Pentagon policy and are demanding it be rescinded.

The committee's NDAA "directs a report on the legality, oversight functions and processes" related to the Defense Department policy.

Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., a member of the committee, has been blocking hundreds of military promotions for months in a bid to force the Pentagon to scrap the policy — a fight that he said he won't give

up, though multiple top military leaders have said his actions are compromising national security.

The committee's executive summary does not make clear exactly when the Pentagon report on its policy would be due.

"We need to enshrine a basic statutory protection for women's reproductive freedom," Kaine said during his conference call, noting he has introduced a bipartisan bill in the Senate that seeks to establish basic reproductive protections.

Deterring China, Russia

The committee's bill fully supports the Pentagon's National Defense Strategy, which was issued last fall and identifies China as the top pacing challenge in the world for the U.S. military. One facet of the strategy is the Pacific Deterrence Initiative.

The 2024 budget request from the Pentagon in March included more than \$9 billion for the initiative — the most ever requested and 40% more than the initiative received last year.

The bill also calls for more than \$3 billion to fund the European Deterrence Initiative, which seeks to deter Russian aggression against NATO countries and partners on the Continent, such as Ukraine.

It also would extend the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative through 2027 — a program that has allowed the U.S. to send Ukraine billions of dollars in military equipment, including Abrams tanks.

Senate committee advances Marine commandant pick

By MATTHEW ADAMS

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Gen. Eric Smith moved one step closer to becoming the top officer in the Marine Corps after the Senate Armed Services Committee on Wednesday approved his nomination as the next commandant of the service.

The committee also voted for the nomination of Maj. Gen. Leonard Anderson to be commander of the Marine Forces Reserve and Marine Forces South.

The committee held voice votes on the nominations, and they received no objections.

Both generals now must be confirmed by the full Senate. This remains a challenge as

Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., continues to block the Senate from making standard voice votes to approve military promotions over his objection to a Pentagon policy that provides travel money to troops for reproductive health care, including abortions. The nominees can be confirmed by the Senate one by one in a process that would consume months of the upper chamber's floor time.

During Smith's nomination hearing last week before the Senate Armed Services Committee, the general told senators that Tuberville's blocking of hundreds of military promotions could have an effect on national security.

"It certainly compromises our ability to

be most ready," Smith said. "Our readiness is national security."

Smith, 58, was nominated by President Joe Biden last month to be the 39th commandant of the Marine Corps when Gen. David Berger retires next month. He's been assistant commandant since late 2021. As commandant, Smith would be the service's highest-ranking officer and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin wrote a letter to Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., last month that warned about the ripple effects from Tuberville's block and that the Defense Department expects to send about 650 general and flag officer nominees by the end of the year.

Submersible search cost US nearly \$1M

The Washington Post

The U.S. government's role in searching for the missing submersible Titan has cost about \$934,000 to date, according to a defense budget expert's preliminary estimate and research conducted by The Washington Post.

The relatively modest sum may surprise some critics who have argued that the response to the Titan tragedy, involving an international consortium of ships, aircraft and advanced technology, jeopardized others' lives to hunt for what was widely believed to be a doomed expedition once contact with the craft was lost less than two hours into its two-mile dive to the Titanic.

The full, final figure certainly could surpass this initial tally, said Mark Cancian, a senior adviser with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, who produced the estimate at The Post's request.

U.S. Coast Guard officials have said specialists would continue to remotely survey the scattered debris located several

hundred feet off the Titanic's bow, even though the mission was expected to "demobilize" by midday Friday. And it is unclear if either the U.S. and Canadian militaries will take part in any operation to recover what remains of the Titan, which officials described as having suffered a "catastrophic implosion" that ripped it apart.

It appears, though, that the Canadian government deployed more assets to the search area than the United States did, a function of Canada's proximity to the site and the time required to dispatch vessels. The bulk of U.S. Navy salvage operations in the Atlantic operate out of Virginia, officials have said, putting many ships at impossible distances when operations focused on reaching the Titan before air supplies were exhausted.

The complete costs, and who ultimately pays them, are unknown and depend on several factors. The search employed private companies and research vessels carrying remote operated vehicles, including the one that ultimately found the Ti-

tan. It is unclear if the U.S. government will pay those entities, but it is possible if the Defense Department put them under contract, Cancian said.

U.S. officials say they are preparing cost estimates but need time to account for bureaucratic sprawl.

The Coast Guard, part of the Department of Homeland Security, was supported by the Navy and Air Force, which are overseen by the Defense Department.

To pay for missions like flight operations the military taps into "appropriated funds which are already budgeted for," Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder, a Pentagon spokesman, said this week. "So those are hours that already have been paid for."

The estimate Cancian generated is based on total expenditure, he said, including fuel, maintenance and the personnel believed to be involved. He called it a conservative figure, based on what's been publicly disclosed about the assets involved and the amount of time they were likely at work.

While the Titan search operation is funded by money already in the federal budget, the U.S. military will assume some unexpected costs, Cancian said, because personnel and equipment were used in an unforeseen way that can spur, for instance, additional expense or maintenance and parts.

"You're diverting activities from what was planned to do something else," he said.

Mikki Hastings, president of the National Association for Search and Rescue, said the total cost picture is unclear because the operation has not yet ended.

"It is still ongoing, so we will likely not hear any [official] totals for a while," Hastings said.

OceanGate, the company that owned the Titan, will not be responsible for reimbursing the government, said Paul Zukunft, who led the Coast Guard from 2014 to 2018. "It's no different," he said, "than if a private citizen goes out, and his boat sinks. We go out and recover him. We don't stick them with the bill after the fact."

Train carrying asphalt plunges into Yellowstone River

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Mont. — A bridge that crosses the Yellowstone River in Montana collapsed early Saturday, plunging portions of a freight train carrying hazardous materials into the rushing water below.

The train cars were carrying hot asphalt and molten sulfur, Stillwater County Disaster and Emergency Services said. Officials shut down drinking water intakes downstream while they evaluated the danger after the 6 a.m. accident. An Associated Press reporter witnessed a yellow substance coming out of some of the tank cars.

David Stamey, the county's chief of emergency services, said there was no immediate

danger for the crews working at the site, and the hazardous material was being diluted by the swollen river. There were three asphalt cars and four sulfur cars in the river.

The train crew was safe and no injuries were reported, Montana Rail Link spokesman Andy Garland said in a statement. The asphalt and sulfur both solidify quickly when exposed to cooler temperatures, he said.

Railroad crews were at the scene in Stillwater County, near the town of Columbus, about 40 miles west of Billings. The area is in a sparsely populated section of the Yellowstone River Valley, surrounded by ranch and farmland. The river there flows away from Yellowstone

National Park, which is about 110 miles southwest.

"We are committed to addressing any potential impacts to the area as a result of this incident and working to understand the reasons behind the accident," Garland said.

The bridge collapse also took out a fiber-optic cable providing internet service to many customers in the state, the high-speed provider Global Net said.

"This is the major fiber route ... through Montana," a recording on the company's phone line said Saturday. "This is affecting all Global Net customers. Connectivity will either be down or extremely slow."

In neighboring Yellowstone County, officials said they insti-

tuted emergency measures at water treatment plants due to the "potential hazmat spill" and asked residents to conserve water.

The cause of the collapse is under investigation. The river was swollen with recent heavy rains, but it's unclear whether that was a factor.

The Yellowstone saw record flooding in 2022 that caused extensive damage to Yellowstone National Park and adjacent towns in Montana. Robert Bea, a retired engineering professor at the University of California Berkeley who has analyzed the causes of hundreds of major disasters, said repeated years of heavy river flows provided a clue to the possible cause.

In post-Roe era, GOP starts push for limits

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — When the Supreme Court issued its abortion ruling last June overturning *Roe v. Wade*, House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy said “our work is far from done.” He didn’t say what might come next.

A year later later, McCarthy is the speaker, Republicans are in the majority and the blanks are beginning to be filled in.

In a flurry of little-noticed legislative action, GOP lawmakers are pushing abortion policy changes, trying to build on the work of activists whose strategy elevated their fight to the nation’s highest court.

In one government funding bill after another, Republicans are incorporating unrelated policy provisions, known as riders, to restrict women’s reproductive rights. Democrats have said the proposals will never become law.

“This is not just about an attack on women’s health,” Connecticut Rep. Rosa DeLauro, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, said Friday. “I view it as an attempt to derail the entire process of funding the federal government by injecting these riders into the appropriations process.”

Rep. Kay Granger, the Texas

Republican who heads the committee, said during hearings this past week that the riders that were included continue “long-standing pro-life protections that are important to our side of the aisle.”

Using budget bills this way is hardly new, but it points to a broader divide among Republicans about where to go next on abortion after the Supreme Court’s decision cleared the way for state-by-state restrictions on abortion rights.

Republicans for years held stand-alone votes in the House on bills to restrict abortion. Now, some in the party — particularly the nearly 20 Republi-

cans running for reelection in swing districts — are hesitant, if not outright opposed, to roll calls on abortion proposals. They have said such bills will never see the light of day as long as Democrats control the Senate.

The broad effort by Republicans to include what critics often deride as “poison pills” in the appropriations process steps up the confrontation with Senate Democrats and the White House come September over spending bills, potentially heightening the odds of a government shutdown with the Oct. 1 start of the new budget year.

Trump: US government has ‘vital role’ opposing abortion

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former President Donald Trump said the federal government should play a “vital role” opposing abortion, but again failed to provide specifics on what national restrictions he would support if elected to the White House again.

Trump’s remarks to a group of influential evangelicals Saturday on the anniversary of the Supreme Court overturning the national right to an abortion stood in contrast to that of his former vice president and 2024 rival Mike Pence.

Pence, speaking at the same conference a day earlier, challenged every GOP presidential candidate to support the passage of a national ban on abortions at least as early as 15 weeks of pregnancy.

Trump, the GOP front-runner, has been reluctant to endorse a national ban and has suggested restrictions should be left to the states. He has even suggested that pushing for increased abortion restrictions would be a political liability for Republicans, despite his three

Supreme Court nominees making up the majority of justices who voted to overturn *Roe v. Wade* last year.

Trump, in his speech before the Faith & Freedom Coalition’s annual conference, continued to offer a muddled answer. He said he believes “the greatest progress is now being made in the states, where everyone wanted to be.”

“One of the reasons they wanted *Roe v. Wade* terminated,” he said, “is to bring it back into the states where a lot of people feel strongly the greatest progress for pro-life is now being made.”

But the former president also added, “There of course remains a vital role for the federal government in protecting unborn life.”

Trump said he supports three exceptions to abortion restrictions in cases involving rape and incest or when the life of a mother is in danger.

He took full credit for his role in the overturning of the landmark ruling and said he was “proud to be the most pro-life president in American history.”

‘Rage giving’ prompted by end of *Roe* has dropped off

Associated Press

The “rage giving” did not last. Abortion access groups who received a windfall of donations following the Supreme Court’s overturning of *Roe v. Wade* one year ago say those emergency grants have ended and individual and foundation giving has dropped off.

After the *Dobbs* decision, some major funders of abortion access have also ended or shifted funding from organizations working in states where abortion is now banned, said Naa Amisah-Hammond, senior director of grantmaking with Groundswell Fund, which funds grassroots groups organizing for reproductive justice.

Women’s health and foster care nonprofits, who expected increased demand in areas where access to abortion has been eliminated or restricted, say they also haven’t seen increased support.

Holly Calvasina said her experience as director of development at the reproductive health clinic CHOICES in Memphis, Tenn., might pro-

vide an explanation. Like many working in the reproductive rights sector, Calvasina said she tried to prepare for the increase in need, even before a draft of the Supreme Court decision was leaked in May last year. While some funders saw the writing on the wall and stepped up support, others wanted to wait and see.

“I think (that) really speaks to kind of a fundamental issue with philanthropy and responding to an emergent crisis,” Calvasina said. “Philanthropy moves really slowly and human rights crises unfold quickly.”

Organizations in states where abortion has been banned or limited have needed to pivot, said Marsha Jones, executive director of The Afiya Center, based in Dallas. Her organization used donations received after the *Dobbs* decision to expand its birthing center, but she said funders are less interested in supporting maternal health than they were in supporting advocacy and practical support for abortions.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Dozens of concertgoers hurt by hail near Denver

CO DENVER — A brief but fierce storm pummeled concertgoers with golf ball-sized hail as they scrambled for cover at the famed Red Rocks Amphitheater near Denver, injuring dozens and forcing the cancellation of the show's headliner, former One Direction member Louis Tomlinson.

As many as 90 people were treated for injuries from Wednesday night's storm at the outdoor venue in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and seven people were taken to a hospital, West Fire Rescue said.

Some were hurt by hail and others had broken bones, bruises and cuts while seeking shelter, but no injuries were life threatening, fire rescue spokesperson Ronda Scholting said.

Baseball team draws ire of anti-bacon crusaders

GA MACON — A doctors' group that promotes plant-based eating and animal rights is makin' a fuss over the Macon Bacon baseball team.

The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine has sent a letter urging the Georgia summer collegiate team to change its name, WMAZ-TV reported. The group has also sponsored a billboard imploring Macon fans to "keep bacon off your plate."

"Macon Bacon's glorification of bacon, a processed meat that raises the risk of colorectal cancer and other diseases, sends the wrong message to fans," Anna Herby, the group's nutrition

education program manager, wrote to the team's president.

The Macon Bacon had its first season with the Coastal Plains League in 2018 after the name was chosen in a vote by fans. The team's mascot, Kevin, won over "Footloose" actor Kevin Bacon, who once wore a Macon Bacon hat in an Instagram post.

And it's not just a name. The ballpark concession menu includes bacon-wrapped bacon, steak-cut bacon, bacon-loaded cheese fries and bacon chips.

1 worker dies in blast at ammunition factory

IL EAST ALTON — An explosion at an Illinois ammunition factory killed one employee, authorities said.

"We were driving through there and heard a big boom, pushed the van a little bit," said Dustin Courtouise, who lives in East Alton, the site of Winchester ammunition.

The factory, which is owned by Olin Corp., is about 20 miles north of St. Louis on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River.

TV stations reported that the explosion Thursday involved a truck.

Adult entertainment group sues over age law

LA BATON ROUGE — Members of the adult entertainment industry have filed a federal lawsuit challenging state laws requiring sexually explicit websites to make users electronically verify that they are at least 18 years old.

The suit filed in federal court in New Orleans challenges laws passed in 2022 and this year that subject such websites to dam-

age lawsuits and state civil penalties as high as \$5,000 a day if they fail to verify users' ages — by requiring the use of state-issued digitized driver's licenses or other methods.

The laws require age verification for users of sites if as much as one-third of their content is deemed harmful to minors.

The suit says the laws could chill free speech because the terms are so vague that providers wouldn't be able to decipher "material harmful to minors."

Lawyers fined after submitting AI-based info

NY NEW YORK — A federal judge imposed \$5,000 fines on two lawyers and a law firm in an instance in which ChatGPT was blamed for their submission of fictitious legal research in an aviation injury claim.

Judge P. Kevin Castel said they acted in bad faith. But he credited their apologies and remedial steps taken in explaining why harsher sanctions were not necessary to ensure they or others won't again let artificial intelligence tools prompt them to produce fake legal history in their arguments.

At a hearing earlier this month, Schwartz said he used the artificial intelligence-powered chatbot to help him find legal precedents supporting a client's case against the Colombian airline Avianca for an injury incurred on a 2019 flight.

FEMA denies request for storm recovery help

GA LAGRANGE — Months after an EF-3 tornado tore through a

Georgia county, officials said a federal agency has denied its request for additional help in the recovery.

"FEMA requires a threshold of \$19 million in damage statewide and we fell short of that," Troup County Emergency Management Agency Director Zac Steele said.

Between 25 and 30 homes were destroyed by the storm that hit the area March 26 and at least 100 more were damaged. Five people in Georgia suffered minor injuries compared with the 25 lives lost in Mississippi and one in Alabama.

'Tiger King' star guilty of wildlife trafficking

VA WINCHESTER — A wild animal trainer featured in the Netflix series "Tiger King" has been convicted of wildlife trafficking, the Virginia attorney general's office announced.

Bhagavan "Doc" Antle was accused of illegally buying endangered lion cubs in Frederick County for display and profit at his South Carolina zoo, Attorney General Jason Miyares said in a news release. A jury convicted Antle of two felony counts each of wildlife trafficking and conspiring to wildlife traffic.

Antle, who owns the Myrtle Beach Safari, appeared in "Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem and Madness," a Netflix documentary miniseries that focused on tiger breeders.

The jury acquitted Antle of five counts of animal cruelty and Judge Alexander Iden dismissed four additional animal cruelty charges, The Winchester Star reported.

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San Antonio turns out for Wembanyama

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — The first dinner that Victor Wembanyama had in his new home city was filled with San Antonio royalty. Gregg Popovich was there, of course. So were Tim Duncan, David Robinson, Manu Ginobili and Sean Elliott.

NBA champions, all of them.

Wembanyama now starts his journey to join their club.

Even as the welcomes for Wemby continued Saturday — one at San Antonio's iconic downtown River Walk, another at the arena — the French teen who has been labeled a generational basketball talent already was thinking about what comes next. He's got a visit to Nike headquarters in Oregon in the next few days, appointments to see some houses in San Antonio that he might be calling home for the next few years and then practices for the NBA Summer League.

"I've got a lot to do," Wembanyama said. "But it's all right. It's OK. It's all going to fit in."

He's excited, and rightly so.

He put on a Spurs uniform on Saturday for the first time and will play in one for the first time sometime in early July in either Sacramento or Las Vegas; San Antonio plays in both of those summer leagues. He offered high-fives to hundreds of Spurs employees who showed up at the arena on Saturday to welcome him, smiling the whole way.

"These are exciting times," Spurs CEO R.C. Buford said.

They come with the biggest expectations. The morning party on the River Walk took place at the spot where the Spurs' championship celebrations usually are centered. And the news conference that followed at the arena came with Wembanyama seated on a stage that just happened to be at the same end of the court as San Antonio's five NBA championship banners.

"To Victor, I wanted to say to you directly, we're excited to grow with you, support you, challenge you, especially Coach Pop — there'll be a lot of challenging days — on your journey

through life and basketball," Spurs general manager Brian Wright said as he sat to Wembanyama's left. "Your talent is obvious, but as we got to know you, the maturity, the approach, the character really showed us how special of a young man you are."

It was part of a whirlwind first 20 hours or so in San Antonio for Wembanyama, who flew in from the NBA Draft on Friday and had dinner with Popovich and some former players that night. Wembanyama said he learned more about the NBA in those two hours than he had learned in the last few years.

"Honestly, that was one of the best dinners of my life," Wembanyama said. "And not because of the food. The food was good. But the people was crazy."

Saturday started with Wembanyama enjoying a bag of the city's famed breakfast tacos — bacon and egg, and bean and cheese, he said — before heading to the Arneson River Theater for the day's first introductory event. Robinson was there, sitting in the front row. So was

San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg, wearing a Wembanyama jersey.

There's someone driving around San Antonio with a Wemby license plate. There's a burger with foie gras on the menu at a local sports bar, as a tribute to Wembanyama. There's a mural of him on the outside of a business directly across the street of another mural featuring Duncan, Ginobili and Tony Parker. There's even a mariachi band that already has a song about Wembanyama.

"The fans have been the best at their job," Wembanyama said. "I can only hope to be at their level."

The Spurs also introduced second-round pick Sidy Cissoko on Saturday — another player from France who has known Wembanyama for about a decade. Cissoko played in Spain before ending up with the G League Ignite, and he already has endeared himself to San Antonio, a city with a strong Latin influence, by taking questions in English, French and Spanish.

Floyd's 17 Ks, Beloso HR in 11th lift LSU in Game 1

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — After being overshadowed all season by the best pitcher in college baseball, Ty Floyd basked in the spotlight Saturday night.

He earned it.

Floyd struck out a career-high 17 for the most in a College World Series game in 51 years and Cade Beloso hit the tie-breaking homer in the top of the 11th inning to lift LSU over Florida 4-3 in Game 1 of the CWS finals.

"We aren't sitting here without Ty Floyd," LSU coach Jay Johnson said. "He's one of the most underappreciated players in college baseball this year."

The Tigers (53-16) had a chance to wrap up their seventh national championship, and

first since 2009, with another win over the Gators (53-16) on Sunday.

Floyd began the season in the bullpen before moving into the No. 2 starter's role behind Paul Skenes, the first college pitcher in 12 years with more than 200 strikeouts and likely to be taken first or second in next month's amateur draft.

"With Paul being so out-of-this-world good, nobody's really paid attention to him, but the pro people are," Johnson said of Floyd. "He's not going to last very long on the draft board. Somebody will be very, very happy with Ty Floyd. I think he'll pitch for a very long time."

The junior right-hander was at his best in the eighth when he struck out the top of the Florida

order. That includes Wyatt Langford, a projected top-five overall draft pick, and national home run co-leader Jac Caglianone.

Floyd started walking to the dugout after finishing off Caglianone, then went back and picked up the ball as a keepsake.

LSU closer Riley Cooper (5-3) took over in the ninth after Floyd struck out the most batters in a CWS game since Arizona State's Ed Bane fanned 17 in a 1-0 win over Oklahoma in 1972.

"With as many people as were here tonight, the adrenaline felt good," Floyd said. "I knew that throwing my fastball at the top of the zone, being able to mix in off-speed pitches

enough to get them off was the biggest thing tonight."

Beloso's blast came after LSU left fielder Josh Pearson made a leaping catch to keep Florida from scoring the winning run in the 10th. Beloso's three-run homer in a 5-2 win over Wake Forest on Wednesday kept the Tigers' season alive, and he came up against Florida closer Brandon Neely (3-2) to lead off the 11th.

Beloso sent Neely's second pitch over the right-field fence, raised his left index finger to the sky as he rounded third and stuck out his tongue as he crossed home plate. Then he beat his chest, pulled on the front of his jersey a couple of times and chest-bumped Floyd on his way into the dugout.

Cards rally, split with Cubs in London

Associated Press

LONDON — Paul Goldschmidt hit a go-ahead RBI single that chased Chicago starter Marcus Stroman in the fourth inning and the St. Louis Cardinals beat the Cubs 7-5 on Sunday to earn a split of their weekend series at London Stadium.

The Cubs missed a chance to get back to .500 after Stroman (9-5) left the game with a blister on his right index finger, and the Cardinals ended a two-game skid after an error-filled first inning handed the Cubs a 4-0 lead.

The Cubs (37-39) won 9-1 in the first game but had their winning streak halted at four games. They haven't been at .500 since May 12, though they've still won 11 of their past 14 games.

Jordan Hicks, who sat out Saturday because of illness, got the final three outs to record his fourth save — all in the past eight days. He struck out two

and gave up a sacrifice fly to Nico Hoerner with one out.

The Cardinals bullpen allowed one run over 6⅓ innings before a crowd of 55,565 with the temperature at 87 degrees at the start.

Jake Woodford (2-2) came in for spot starter Matthew Liberatore in the third and pitched 2⅓ innings.

Comeback

The Cardinals (32-45) erased a 4-0 deficit with timely hitting and a big assist from Cubs first baseman Trey Mancini.

With the bases loaded in the second, Stroman struck out Paul DeJong for the second out. Tommy Edman then grounded to second but Hoerner's underhanded toss to Mancini was dropped by the first baseman when he tried to grab it with his bare hand — allowing Willson Contreras to score to make it 4-1. Stroman smacked his mitt in frustration.

Brendan Donovan hit a two-

run single to right field on a sinker — batters swung at 17 Stroman sinkers and missed just three — scoring Nolan Gorman and Jordan Walker, who beat the throw with a head-first slide to make it 4-3.

An inning later, the Cards pulled even at 4-4 on Walker's single that scored Lars Nootbaar.

Goldschmidt put the “home” team ahead in the fourth on a sharp single off Stroman that scored Edman.

Stroman was then pulled and the team said the NL ERA leader had a blister on his right index finger. The first batter reliever Michael Fulmer faced was Nootbaar, whose sacrifice fly scored Donovan for a 6-4 lead.

An inning later, the Cards made it 7-4 when Gorman's single to left off Fulmer drove in Contreras.

Early gaffes

The Cardinals handed Stro-

man a 4-0 lead before he even took the mound by committing two infield errors in the top of the first inning — not helping Liberatore, who took Jack Flaherty's place.

Hoerner led off and reached on an error by DeJong at short and moved to third by stealing second and advancing on an error by Gorman at second.

Liberatore struck out Christopher Morel looking for the second out.

Dansby Swanson singled to score Hoerner. Ian Happ walked and Mancini then hit a two-run double, crunching a 95 mph pitch off the wall in the left-center gap — it might have sailed out in 2019 when the walls were closer — and came around to make it 4-0 when Miguel Amaya doubled on a hard shot past third baseman Nolan Arenado that originally was ruled an error.

Stroman allowed six runs, three earned, and eight hits.

US earns draw on goal by Vazquez in 88th-minute

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Brandon Vazquez saved the United States from what would have been the Americans' first loss in a CONCACAF Gold Cup opener.

Vazquez's 88th-minute goal gave the No. 13 U.S. a 1-1 draw against 63rd-ranked Jamaica on Saturday night. He had entered the match six minutes earlier, tying him to the U.S. with his first competitive international appearance. Born in Chula Vista, Calif., the 24-year-old forward could have played for Mexico.

“It means everything,” said Vazquez, who was overlooked for last year's World Cup roster. “To be able to score a goal in my cap tie is amazing.”

Damion Lowe put the Reggae Boyz ahead in the 13th minute,

and Matt Turner kept the U.S. close by saving a penalty kick on his 29th birthday. The defending champions came back when Jesús Ferreira's cross hit off defender Dexter Lembikisa to Vazquez, who scored with a right-foot shot from 7 yards for his second goal in four international appearances.

“It's kind of two lost points,” said Jamaica coach Heimir Hallgrímsson, who led Iceland at the 2018 World Cup.

“They are in-season. A young, energetic team,” he said about the U.S. “A lot of our players are coming from a break from their season, so I knew this game would be tricky.”

Before an announced crowd of 36,666 at Solider Field, Lowe scored his third goal in 53 international appearances with a

header from 8 yards following Demarai Gray's free kick. Lowe was played onside when Matt Miazga dropped back on the restart by Gray, an Everton winger who made his Reggae Boyz debut after switching affiliation from England.

Next up for the Americans is a Wednesday match in St. Louis with 139th-ranked St. Kitts and Nevis, which opened Sunday against No. 104 Trinidad and Tobago.

The U.S., which fielded a mostly junior varsity team, had 15 wins in 16 previous Gold Cup openers, the blemish a 1-1 draw against Panama in 2017. The U.S. has 38 wins, five draws and one loss in the group stage — a 2-1 defeat to the Panamanians in 2011.

Turner was the only U.S.

player who was a regular at last year's World Cup and one of just five holdovers from last week's Nations League roster. He dived to his left to parry a 29th-minute penalty kick by Leon Bailey, who put the rebound wide with his weaker right foot.

“He's a player that came to us and wanted to play both tournaments,” U.S. interim coach B.J. Callaghan said. “I always say big players make big plays.”

The penalty was awarded when Aidan Morris knocked down Kevon Lambert following a throw-in.

Jamaica goalkeeper Andre Blake deflected Jordan Morris' open shot in first-half stoppage time with his right arm, then blocked Cristian Roldan's 71st-minute effort with a leg.

Braves stop Reds' winning streak at 12

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Down three runs in the ninth inning, the Cincinnati Reds got one-out solo homers from Jake Fraley and Will Benson off Raisel Iglesias.

Could they extend a winning streak to 13 games for the first time in a century?

Not quite.

Iglesias struck out Matt McLain and Jonathan India, and the Atlanta Braves prevailed 7-6 in an eight-homer slugfest on Saturday to stop the Reds' winning streak at 12 games.

"I wish we won 100 in a row," Spencer Steer said. "We played some really good baseball the last two weeks. We've built a pretty good culture, good bond in that clubhouse and I think we believe that we can play with these heavyweights."

Each team homered four times.

Matt Olson hit the 200th of his big league career and Travis d'Arnaud and Ozzie Albies also went deep off Graham Ashcraft (3-6), who allowed three long balls for the first time in 33 big league starts. Marcell Ozuna homered against Alex Young as the Braves won for the ninth time in 10 games.

McLain and Steer hit two-run homers for the Reds, and Fraley homered for the third straight game.

Iglesias, who pitched for the Reds from 2015-20, started the ninth by striking out TJ Friedl. After the homers, Iglesias got his 11th save in 13 chances.

"I never feel safe here with a lead and I never feel like we're out of it," Braves manager Brian Snitker said. "You never feel good until it's over."

Cincinnati's winning streak was its longest since April 30 to May 12, 1957. The Reds have not won 13 straight since their final six games in 1918 and their first seven in 1919.

"It was quite a streak," Reds manager David Bell said. "It went on for a while so we didn't

get used to it and that's a good thing. It was a great streak. We all appreciate what we were able to accomplish against good teams and we learned a lot about ourselves and we became a better team. We became stronger. But as appreciative of the streak as we are, everything who we are and what we have in our clubhouse does not go away."

Angels 25, Rockies 1: Mike Trout, Brandon Drury and Matt Thaiss hit homers on consecutive pitches to open a 13-run third inning, and Mickey Moniak capped it with a two-run homer in visiting Los Angeles' record-setting rout of Colorado that ended a three-game skid.

The Angels set franchise marks for runs and hits (28) in a game and tied team records for runs and homers with their huge third inning.

David Fletcher hit a three-run homer to cap an eight-run fourth as the Angels scored 21 runs on 17 hits in the third and fourth innings combined, sending 27 batters to the plate. Fletcher had three hits and five RBIs in his first game since being recalled from Salt Lake City.

Hunter Renfroe and Moniak each had five hits and four RBIs for the Angels. Drury had three hits and four RBIs and Trout had three hits and an RBI. Both were replaced in the fifth.

Dodgers 8, Astros 7: James Outman scored the go-ahead run on a balk by Houston reliever Ryan Stanek in a messy eighth inning and host Los Angeles rallied for its fourth straight win.

Second base umpire Junior Valentine called the balk on Stanek, whose right leg appeared to buckle after he looked in for the pitch.

The Dodgers tied it at 7 in the eighth. Reliever Bryan Abreu (2-2) walked Freddie Freeman, Will Smith and J.D. Martinez to load the bases. Kyle Tucker made a sliding catch in right field on Jason Heyward's sacri-

fice fly that scored Freeman. Smith scored on Outman's ground-rule double after the ball got stuck in the right field wall.

Tigers 3, Twins 2: Zach McKinstry hit a two-run single in a three-run second inning and host Detroit held on to beat Minnesota.

Reese Olson (1-2) picked up his first major league win, allowing one run and four hits with a career-high nine strikeouts and a walk in 5½ innings. Alex Lange got the final four outs for his 12th save in 14 attempts.

The Tigers scored their only runs in the second when Nick Maton singled, Miguel Cabrera drew a one-out walk and Eric Haase followed with an RBI single to make it 1-0. Jake Marisnick's single loaded the bases and McKinstry's flare into shallow center scored Cabrera and Haase.

Giants 7, Diamondbacks 6: Luis Matos hit his first career home run, a go-ahead two-run drive in the sixth inning, and host San Francisco beat NL West-leading Arizona for its 12th win in 13 games.

Joc Pederson and Blake Sabol added two hits each as San Francisco won its second straight against Arizona to pull 1½ games back in the division.

Mets 4, Phillies 2: Max Scherzer struck out eight in six innings and Starling Marte homered to help visiting New York snap a three-game losing streak.

Brandon Nimmo's RBI single off Phillies starter Cristopher Sánchez (0-1) made it 2-0 in the second. The Mets went ahead for good on Pete Alonso's RBI forceout and Tommy Pham's RBI single in the sixth that made it 4-2.

Orioles 6, Mariners 4 (10): Ryan McKenna hit a two-run homer in the bottom of the 10th inning as host Baltimore beat Seattle.

In the 10th, Mike Baumann

(5-0) retired J.P. Crawford on a grounder to the pitcher and then struck out Julio Rodríguez and Ty France. In the bottom half, McKenna hit a drive to right-center off Justin Topa (1-3) for his second homer of the year.

Yankees 1, Rangers 0: Ron Marinaccio retired Marcus Semien on a game-ending pop-up in the ninth inning, Clay Holmes stranded a pair of runners in the eighth and host New York beat Texas after Aaron Judge said he isn't close to returning from an injured right toe.

Billy McKinney hit his fourth homer since he was brought up two weeks ago to replace Judge, who said before the game he has a torn ligament in his toe that causes pain while walking.

Blue Jays 7, Athletics 3: Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and Danny Jansen hit two-run homers, José Berríos pitched six innings to win for the third time in four starts and host Toronto beat Oakland for the ninth time in 11 games at the Rogers Centre.

White Sox 5, Red Sox 4: Elvis Andrus hit a game-ending RBI single in the ninth inning, lifting host Chicago over Boston.

Royals 9, Rays 4: Jordan Lyles ended a 15-game winless streak and visiting Kansas City beat Tampa Bay for their second win in three days against the team with the best record in the majors.

Marlins 4, Pirates 3 (11): Jon Berti drove in the winning run with a single in the 11th inning, leading host Miami past Pittsburgh.

Guardians 4, Brewers 2: Josh Naylor and David Fry had RBI singles in a two-run sixth inning and rookie Tanner Bibee struck out seven as host Cleveland topped Milwaukee.

Nationals 2, Padres 0: Jeimer Candelario and Lane Thomas homered, Josiah Gray pitched into the sixth inning and visiting Washington beat San Diego.