

Biden will mark D-Day in France

Associated Press

PARIS — President Joe Biden will mark the 80th anniversary of the D-Day invasion in France this week as he tries to demonstrate steadfast support for European security at a time when some allies fear former President Donald Trump threatens to upend American commitments if he wins another term in the White House.

The trip comes as the deadliest fighting on the continent since World War II continues in Ukraine and allied countries struggle to find ways to turn the tide against Russia, which has recently gained ground on the battlefield. It is also set against deepening cracks between the U.S. and many European allies over how to manage the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

Biden arrived in Paris on Wednesday morning, and he was welcomed by French officials and an honor guard. On

Thursday, he'll visit hallowed ground near the beaches of Normandy, where rows of bone-white headstones mark the graves of U.S. soldiers who died to bring an end to World War II. He'll also speak on Friday at Pointe du Hoc, a spot on the French coast where Army Rangers scaled seaside cliffs to overcome Nazi defenses.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said aboard Air Force One on the way to France that Biden will stress how the men on those cliffs "put the country ahead of themselves" and detail "the dangers of isolationism, and how, if we back dictators and fail to stand up to them, they keep going and ultimately America and the world pays a greater price."

"Eighty years later, we see dictators once again attempting to challenge the order, attempting to march in Europe," Sulli-

van said, "and that freedom-loving nations need to rally to stand against that, as we have."

He said Biden would be meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in France to discuss "how we can continue and deepen our support for Ukraine."

On Saturday, Biden, along with his wife Jill, will be honored by French President Emmanuel Macron with a state visit, including a military parade in Paris and a banquet at the Élysée Palace, as well as business sessions where the leaders are to discuss strengthening their alliance, trade, and security cooperation for the upcoming Olympic games.

The two leaders also are expected to discuss the Middle East. Biden has invested geopolitical capital in brokering a ceasefire to the Israel-Hamas war that would see the release of hostages, even as he has

maintained his staunch support for Israel and resisted European efforts to recognize a Palestinian state or investigate Israel over its handling of the war.

Biden, a Democrat, is scheduled to return to the United States on Sunday, but before he leaves France he's expected to stop at a cemetery where American soldiers who died in World War I are buried. Trump, a Republican, skipped plans to visit the same site during a 2018 trip to France, a decision that the White House blamed on weather at the time.

However, subsequent reporting found that Trump told aides he didn't want to go because he viewed the dead soldiers as "suckers" and "losers." He has denied the comments, which Biden referenced during a fundraiser in Greenwich, Conn., on Monday.

"This guy does not deserve to be president," Biden said.

Franchetti: Navy is focused on adapting to new tech

BY SHANNON RENFROE
Stars and Stripes

MANAMA, Bahrain — The introduction of innovation units in more theaters and a greater emphasis on drones are among the ways the U.S. Navy is adapting to the rapidly changing character of war, the service's top officer said.

The proliferation of unmanned drones in the Red Sea, and their use in conflicts such as the war in Ukraine are evidence that "the nations which adapt quickly to new technology and integrate these capabilities will have the advantage," Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti told Stars and Stripes on

Tuesday during a visit to Naval Support Activity Bahrain.

"If you can integrate artificial intelligence into your decision making, you will have speed of decision," Franchetti said.

She pointed to the recent deployment of an MQ-4C Triton drone detachment to Naval Air Station Sigonella in Sicily and a similar detachment in Guam as examples of the service's work to assimilate drones and other technology into the fleet and drive innovation.

The service also has a fleet of surface drones in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations patrolling Middle Eastern waters. Task Force 59 has tested and operated

unmanned systems in the region since 2021.

The Navy is also experimenting with surface drones in Africa.

"Part of that is we know we're going to need different skills to operate and integrate these unmanned systems, so having a robotics rating and sailors that specialize in that ... is really going to be imperative to us being able to get ahead on those technologies," she said.

Franchetti toured Task Force 59 during her trip to the Middle Eastern nation, which included meetings with sailors, Bahraini naval leaders and Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

Franchetti thanked the prince

for the support of his nation, which began hosting a U.S. naval headquarters in 1948 and was the first to receive major non-NATO ally status in 2002.

"The support that they provide to our sailors and to their families is really pivotal to what we are able to do," Franchetti said during an American Forces Network interview.

On Wednesday, Franchetti and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy James Honea met with sailors in an all-hands call, which was closed to reporters.

The leaders "expressed their appreciation for the sailors' resilience and commitment," Navy officials said.

Sweden at 1st BALTOPS as NATO member

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

An annual NATO military exercise focused this year on amphibious operations and mine countermeasures in the Baltic region begins this week with Sweden participating for the first time as a member of the alliance.

The 53rd iteration of the exercise starts Friday and takes place amid high tensions, as the NATO accession of Sweden and neighboring Finland has left Russia as the only nonmember among the nine countries that border the Baltic Sea.

Baltic Operations 24 will feature amphibious, gunnery, anti-submarine, air defense and mine clearance operations, according to a statement from U.S. 6th Fleet and Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO, or STRIKEFORNATO. Explosive ordnance disposal, unmanned underwater and surface vehicle exercises, and medical response scenarios are also planned.

The exercise includes 20 NATO allies, including Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. More than 50 ships and 85 aircraft, and about 9,000 personnel will participate, the Navy said.

The exercise ends June 20.

Although Sweden has taken part in Baltic Operations, or BALTOPS, for more than a decade, its presence as a NATO member bolsters the alliance as it sends “a clear deterrence message,” Vice Adm. Thomas Ishee, commander of U.S. 6th Fleet and STRIKEFORNATO, said in the statement.

The Kremlin’s Baltic fleet is based in Kaliningrad, Russia’s only Baltic Sea port that is ice-free year-round.

Experts have called for NATO to reassess security vulnerabilities in the region, particularly

against potential attacks on undersea infrastructure, as Moscow tries to exert influence in the region and protect sea access to Kaliningrad.

The exercise will also include naval assets from U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, the first time in recent history an asset associated with the Pacific theater has operated in the U.S. Navy Europe area of operations, NATO said in a separate statement.

BALTOPS will be led by U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/6th Fleet and commanded by STRIKEFORNATO, headquartered in Oeiras, Portugal.

Yokosuka security exercises using blanks draw protests

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — U.S. Navy harbor security boats raced through waters near the home of the U.S. 7th Fleet and fired hundreds of blank rounds Wednesday, part of a three-day exercise that drew protests earlier this week.

Short bursts of gunfire were heard throughout the day as the two boats chased each other through Truman Bay, a restricted waterway connected to Tokyo Bay that serves as the base’s main harbor. Similar shots could also be heard Tuesday near the same area.

The exercise, conducted by sailors with the base’s security division, began Tuesday and runs through Thursday, according to the base’s official Facebook page.

All gunfire used “blank simulation rounds,” and safety measures were in place to protect the community and any civilian vessels nearby, the post said.

Base spokesman Justin Keller declined to provide any in-

formation on the exercise, including whether the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force or other Navy vessels participated or what scenario was being drilled.

“As a matter of policy, we do not discuss specific exercise scenarios,” he said.

About two dozen people protested Sunday outside Yokosuka’s main gate, according to a post on X, formerly Twitter, by former Japanese House of Representatives member Kimie Hatano. Some held signs that said “Stop! Blank Firing Training!”

Yokosuka City Council leader Yoko Omura and Nobuaki Hayashi, the Japanese Communist Party district chairman, were at the protest, according to the post.

“Yokosuka Port is a ‘sea for everyone’ where peaceful activities can take place,” Hatano, a Communist Party member, wrote above a photo of the protesters. “Rather than strengthening security, we should ensure safety by removing the base.”

B-1 Lancer holds live-fire exercise over S. Korea

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — A B-1B Lancer bomber made a live-fire demonstration over the South’s airspace for the first time in seven years, the Air Force announced Wednesday.

The Lancer flew alongside two South Korean F-15K Slam Eagles, F-35A Lightning IIs and KF-16s, 7th Air Force said in a news release Wednesday. They were joined by Marine Corps F-35Bs and Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcons.

The Lancer and South Korean aircraft dropped 500-pound joint direct attack munitions, or JDAMs, at simulated targets on Pilsung Range, about 100 miles southeast of Seoul, according to the command.

The drill maintains Seoul and Washington’s deterrence capabilities against Pyongyang and illustrates their willingness to “immediately ... punish any North Korean provocation,” South Korea’s Ministry of National Defense said in a sepa-

rate release Wednesday.

The Lancer flew out of Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, as part of the service’s ongoing bomber task force missions intended to project U.S. airpower across the region. It’s assigned to the 37th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., 7th Air Force said.

The live-fire drill marked the second appearance by U.S. bombers over South Korea so far this year. Two B-52H Stratofortresses were escorted by South Korean and Japanese fighter jets near the South’s Jeju Island on April 2.

Lancers last flew over South Korea on Dec. 20 during training alongside South Korean and Japanese jets east of Jeju.

The show of force, held three days after North Korea fired a solid-fuel Hwasong-18 intercontinental ballistic missile, demonstrated the three nations’ “strong will and capability to jointly respond” to North Korea’s missile threats, the South’s military said.

Panel rejects MDMA as PTSD treatment

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A first-of-a-kind proposal to begin using the mind-altering drug MDMA as a treatment for PTSD was roundly criticized Tuesday — a potentially major setback to psychedelic advocates who hope to win a landmark federal approval and bring the banned drugs into the medical mainstream.

A panel of advisers to the Food and Drug Administration voted 10-1 against the overall benefits of MDMA when used to treat post-traumatic stress dis-

order. They cited flawed study data, questionable research conduct and significant drug risks, including the potential for heart problems, injury and abuse.

“It seems like there are so many problems with the data — each one alone might be OK, but when you pile them on top of each other ... there’s just a lot of questions I would have about how effective the treatment is,” said Dr. Melissa Decker Barone, a psychologist with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The FDA is not required to

follow the group’s advice and is expected to make its final decision by August, but the negative opinion could strengthen agency’s rationale for rejecting the treatment.

MDMA is the first in a series of psychedelics — including LSD and psilocybin — that are expected to come before the FDA for review in the next few years as part of a resurgence of interest into the drugs’ medical potential, which advocates claim could transform the treatment of mental health disorders.

But FDA advisers spent most of Tuesday’s meeting leveling pointed criticisms at the research submitted on MDMA, which is sometimes called ecstasy or molly.

Panelists pointed to flawed studies that could have skewed the results, missing follow-up data on patient outcomes and a lack of diversity among participants. The vast majority of patients were white, with only five Black patients receiving MDMA, raising questions about the generalizability of the results.

Montana’s senator and GOP newcomer to face off in race for Senate control

Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. — Three-term incumbent Democratic Sen. Jon Tester and Republican newcomer Tim Sheehy cruised to victory in Montana’s primary election Tuesday, setting up a contentious November election that could tip the balance of power in the closely divided U.S. Senate.

Sheehy is a former Navy SEAL backed by former President Donald Trump, Gov. Greg Gianforte and the Republican establishment.

Beyond the race’s national implications, it offers Republicans a chance to complete their lock on higher offices in Montana after years of picking off Democratic elected officials in what was once a more politically diverse state.

A loss by Tester, who has survived three close elections even as the national political landscape shifted, would oust the final Democrat still holding high office in Montana.

Montana voters also were selecting candidates for an open U.S. House seat being vacated by far-right conservative Rep.

Matt Rosendale. State Auditor and Insurance Commissioner Troy Downing won the Republican primary, while former state lawmaker and public service commissioner John Driscoll won the Democratic nomination.

Gianforte also easily won his primary as he seeks a second term in the governor’s office.

Trump’s name appeared on the ballot Tuesday for the first time since his conviction on felony crimes, as a handful of states held the last Republican presidential primary contests of 2024.

Sheehy said after his win that he was humbled and honored for all the support in the primary.

“America is at a crossroads and we need a new generation of leaders to save our country,” Sheehy said in a statement that repeated all the GOP talking points for the 2024 elections.

The Tester and Sheehy campaigns already have been pounding each other on the airwaves in an advertising blitz that’s expected to intensify as November approaches.

Kim and Bashaw win NJ primaries for Senate seat

Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. — Democratic Rep. Andy Kim won his party’s nomination for a U.S. Senate seat Tuesday in New Jersey, setting up a general election contest against wealthy hotel operator Curtis Bashaw, who defeated a Trump-backed candidate for the Republican nomination.

Incumbent Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez will also be on the ballot after declaring his intention to run as an independent on Monday in the midst of a federal corruption trial.

The turmoil surrounding the embattled senator has created the possibility of a headache for Democrats in a state where they haven’t lost an election for Senate since 1972.

Kim, a three-term congressman who launched his campaign after charges against Menendez were announced last year, rose to the top in the state’s dominant political party over a relatively short period.

A former Obama administration national security official, he defeated an incumbent Republican in a 2018 House race and won a court ruling this year that toppled a unique-to-

New Jersey system widely viewed as giving political bosses influence on who wins primaries.

“Leadership is not about the volume of one’s voice. It’s about the actions that they take,” Kim said. “People are hungry for a new generation of leadership to step up. They are hungry for a change, in our broken politics.”

Bashaw, a wealthy hotel developer, spent his own money on the campaign to defeat Mendham Borough Mayor Christine Serrano Glassner, who had former President Donald Trump’s endorsement.

Democrats’ tenuous hold on control of the Senate means they can hardly afford a competitive race in a state widely viewed as safe for the party.

It’s unclear how Menendez’s trial will end up and how his candidacy could affect the race. Republicans are eager to exploit his run as a wedge to divide the Democratic vote.

“New Jersey families deserve better than this one-party Democratic monopoly that has represented them for far too long in Washington,” Bashaw said.

Gunman caught after attack at US Embassy in Lebanon

Associated Press

AUKAR, Lebanon — A gunman who attacked the U.S. Embassy near Beirut was shot and captured by Lebanese soldiers after a Wednesday morning shootout that injured an embassy security guard, the military and embassy officials said.

The attack took place as tensions simmered in the tiny Mediterranean country, where months of fighting between Hezbollah militants and Israeli troops has displaced thousands along the border, following years of political deadlock and economic hardship.

Local media reported there was a gunfight involving at least one attacker and lasting almost half an hour.

Joe Abdo, who works at a gas station near the compound said he heard “around 15 to 20 rounds of gunfire” while working that morning. “We ran here to see what’s happening and suddenly, the army blocked us from going up,” he told The Associated Press.

No motive was immediately clear, but Lebanese media have published photos that appear to show a bloodied attacker wearing a black vest with the words “Islamic State”

written in Arabic and the English initials “I” and “S.”

A Lebanese security official and two judicial officials familiar with the case said the gunman appeared to be a lone attacker. They identified him as a resident of the eastern Lebanese border town of Majdal Anjar near Syria. Earlier, the Lebanese military identified the suspect as a Syrian national.

They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not cleared to speak to the press.

The military raided both Majdal Anjar and nearby Suweiri, where they detained relatives of the suspect, but did not find other gunmen or evidence of a possible extremist cell, the officials added.

The suspect was shot in the stomach and leg before being captured and taken to the military hospital in Beirut, according to the officials.

A U.S. Embassy spokesperson said in a statement that one embassy security guard was injured in the attack.

“With respect to his privacy we cannot say more, but we wish him a full recovery,” said the spokesperson, who spoke on condition of anonymity in accordance with regulations.

Boeing launches astronauts for NASA following years of delays

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Boeing launched astronauts for the first time Wednesday, belatedly joining SpaceX as a second taxi service for NASA.

A pair of NASA test pilots blasted off aboard Boeing’s Starliner capsule for the International Space Station, the first to fly the new spacecraft.

The trip by Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams was expected to take 25 hours, with an arrival Thursday. They will spend just over a week at the orbiting lab before climbing back into Starliner for a remote desert touchdown in the western United States on June 14.

“Let’s get going!” Wilmore called out minutes before liftoff.

Years late because of spacecraft flaws, Starliner’s crew debut comes as the company struggles with unrelated safety issues on its airplane side.

Wilmore and Williams — retired Navy captains and former space station residents — stressed repeatedly before the launch that they had full confidence in Boeing’s ability to get it right with this test flight. Crippled by bad software, Starliner’s initial test flight in 2019 without a crew had to be repeated before NASA would let its astronauts strap in. The 2022 do-over went much better, but parachute problems later cropped up and flammable tape had to be removed from the capsule.

Wednesday’s launch was the third attempt with astronauts since early May, coming after a pair of rocket-related problems, most recently last weekend. A small helium leak in the spacecraft’s propulsion system also caused delays, but managers decided the leak was manageable and not a safety issue.

“I know it’s been a long road to get here,” NASA’s commercial crew program manager Steve Stich said before the weekend delay.

Boeing was hired alongside Elon Musk’s SpaceX a decade ago to ferry NASA’s astronauts to and from the space station. The space agency wanted two competing U.S. companies for the job in the wake of the space shuttles’ retirement, paying \$4.2 billion to Boeing and just over half that to SpaceX, which refashioned the capsule it was using to deliver station supplies.

Israeli nationalists hold march in Palestinian area of Jerusalem

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Thousands of mostly ultranationalist Israelis were taking part in an annual march through a sensitive Palestinian area of Jerusalem on Wednesday, with some stoking already surging wartime tensions by chanting “Death to Arabs.”

Jerusalem, the emotional heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has been mostly calm throughout the Israel-Hamas war. But the annual march, seen as provocative by Palestinians, could ignite broader unrest, as it did three years ago, when it helped set off an 11-day war in Gaza.

Marchers convening outside the Damascus Gate of Jerusalem’s historic Old City, a central gathering place for Palestinians in east Jerusalem, chanted anti-Arab and anti-Islamic slogans, danced and waved Israeli flags as the procession kicked off.

Far-right National Security Minister Ita-

mar Ben-Gvir, who has repeatedly made contentious visits to a sensitive Jerusalem holy site, said the march sent a message to Hamas.

“We are delivering a message from here to Hamas: Jerusalem is ours. Damascus Gate is ours,” he told marchers at the start of the rally. “And with God’s help total victory is ours,” Ben-Gvir said, referring to the war in Gaza, which he has demanded that Israel continue until Hamas is defeated.

Commenting on the march, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said “our people will not rest until the occupation is gone and an independent Palestinian state is established, with Jerusalem as its capital.”

Just before the march began, crowds scuffled with police and threw plastic bottles at a journalist wearing a vest with the word PRESS emblazoned on it. Police said they arrested 18 marchers “on suspicion of violent crimes, assault and threats and disorderly conduct.”

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Bear killed as shooter claims self-defense

CT CANTON — Connecticut police were investigating the killing of a 450-pound, adult male black bear Monday morning and claims by the shooter that it was done in self-defense.

The bear was killed after “reportedly feeding at an unsecured dumpster” in Canton, said Paul Copleman, a spokesman for the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

The shooting comes a year after the General Assembly passed legislation that explicitly allows someone to use deadly force to kill a bear if they reasonably believe it’s inflicting or about to inflict great bodily harm to a person, a pet or is entering an occupied building.

Some state legislators, concerned about the increase in human and bear interactions, had hoped the legislation would have gone further and included a bear hunt and restrictions on people unintentionally feeding the hungry animals.

3 people burned as balloon hits power line

IN LOWELL — A hot air balloon struck power lines before crashing to the ground over the weekend in northwestern Indiana, injuring the pilot and the two passengers, officials said Tuesday.

The balloon hit the power lines Sunday evening in Hebron, Ind., the Federal Aviation Administration said in an email to The Associated Press.

A flash of light can be seen as the balloon rises past power

lines in a video recorded from a vehicle on an adjacent road.

The balloon crashed about 7 p.m. in a field about 13 miles southeast of Hebron, according to the Lowell Fire Department. The injured passengers and pilot were inside the balloon’s basket when rescue personnel arrived.

Canoeists who went over falls found dead

MN ELY — Authorities have found the bodies of two men who went over a waterfall while fishing near the Minnesota-Ontario border last month.

Deputies found the remains of Melvin Grams, 40, of Lino Lakes, on Monday in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness of northern Minnesota, the St. Louis County Sheriff’s Department announced. The agency located 41-year-old Cambridge resident Jesse Melvin Haugen’s body on Friday.

The sheriff’s department has said Grams, Haugen and two others were fishing at the top of Curtain Falls between Crooked Lake and Iron Lake on the border last month. The group’s two canoes went over the waterfall after paddlers in one boat tried to help the other canoeists. The two others survived, the Minnesota Star Tribune reported.

Patient found alive after being declared dead

NE OMAHA — A Nebraska funeral home discovered that a 74-year-old hospice patient who was declared dead by her nursing home two hours earlier was actually still alive, so workers

started CPR and she was rushed to a hospital, where she died hours later.

It’s not clear how often this happens, but at least two similar incidents have been reported at funeral homes in New York and Iowa in the past 18 months.

The Nebraska woman was in hospice care at the The Mulberry nursing home in the Lincoln suburb of Waverly before she was declared dead Monday morning, according to the Lancaster County Sheriff’s Office.

Workers at Butherus Maser & Love Funeral Home noticed she was still breathing just before noon immediately after laying her on the embalming table, Chief Deputy Ben Houchin said.

The sheriff’s office is looking into what happened, but Houchin said investigators hadn’t found any initial evidence that laws were broken. He said it’s common for nursing homes not to call the sheriff’s department when someone who has been in hospice care dies.

Man dies 12 days after compassionate release

PA PITTSBURGH — A Pennsylvania man who had been serving life for second-degree murder died over the weekend, 12 days after being granted a medical transfer from prison to a facility that could better treat his condition, including quadriplegia.

Ezra Bozeman, 68, died on Saturday at the UPMC Altoona medical center, Ryan Tarkowski, communications director for the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, confirmed on Tuesday.

He had been jailed for 49 years before an Allegheny County judge granted his request for compassionate release last month.

Bozeman had been on life support. He had a back injury that had been misdiagnosed for several years, according to his lawyer, Dolly Prabhu, and he required extensive medical care after he became paralyzed from the chest down after surgery.

Recreational pot on ballot for third time

SD PIERRE — South Dakota voters will decide again whether to legalize recreational marijuana, an issue with a frustrating history for backers of the ballot initiative in the conservative state.

On Monday, Secretary of State Monae Johnson’s office validated a measure for the November general election ballot. It will be the third time South Dakota voters have weighed in on the question.

In 2020, voters passed a measure which was ultimately struck down in court. In 2022, voters defeated another attempt.

The South Dakota measure would legalize recreational marijuana for people 21 and older. The proposal has possession limits of 2 ounces of marijuana in a form other than concentrated cannabis or cannabis products. The measure also allows cultivation of plants, with restrictions. Measure backers plan to work with the Legislature to implement business licensing, tax and other regulations, if successful.

— From wire reports

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Title could cement Doncic as NBA's best

Associated Press

BOSTON — Luka Doncic didn't stay up all night to watch NBA Finals games as a kid. They usually started at something like 3 a.m. in his native Slovenia. He had school to get to a few hours later. He'd wake up and find out who won.

Make no mistake, though: Doncic was paying attention.

"Every kid who plays basketball dreams about this," Doncic said. "I was one of them."

Dreams become reality for Doncic on Thursday night, when the 25-year-old makes his NBA Finals debut for the Dallas Mavericks as they take on the Boston Celtics in Game 1 of this year's title series. He could become the first player to win a scoring title and a championship in the same season since Shaquille O'Neal in 2000, and a title would surely only add to the argument that Doncic — who leads all players in this postseason in points, rebounds and assists — may be the best player in

the game right now.

"This is going to be the international Finals," said Kyrie Irving, Doncic's backcourt mate in Dallas. "Everybody's going to be watching. Every Finals is international, but the world is watching."

He didn't have to clarify why. Yes, the NBA Finals have long been available in more than 200 countries and territories, broadcast in about 50 different languages and dialects. And it's hardly a new thing for foreign players to star on the NBA's biggest stage; two of the past three NBA Finals MVPs were Greece's Giannis Antetokounmpo for Milwaukee in 2021 and Serbia's Nikola Jokic for Denver last year.

Doncic — who became a father for the first time this season, calling that development "the greatest thing in the world" — is a global corporation by himself, a player who speaks four languages fluently and has an enormous following every-

where. And a championship would only add to his rapidly growing legend.

"Luka is at a spectacular, stratospheric level," Hall of Famer and NBA legend Pau Gasol said at an event in Spain this week. "What he has done ... is within the reach of very few in the history of this sport."

The numbers back up what Gasol is saying.

Doncic is averaging 28.7 points per game in his six regular seasons; only Michael Jordan and Wilt Chamberlain — both at 30.1 — have a higher career average. He's the only player in NBA history to have averages of at least eight assists and eight rebounds per game. He's one of two players with at least 10,000 points, 3,000 rebounds and 3,000 assists through his first 400 career games; Oscar Robertson is the other.

"Game's too simple, too easy," Mavericks coach Jason Kidd said late in the regular sea-

son, when asked why voters haven't rewarded Doncic with an MVP award yet. "He makes it look too easy. Unfortunately, that's what happens with some of the greats ... we take for granted their talent."

Doncic wants no part of talk that winning is easy. He may make it look easy — he had a league-best 73-point game this season, 13 different games of scoring at least 40 points in the regular season, and that number could have been even higher considering he scored exactly 39 points on eight other occasions.

Stopping Doncic in these Finals is not an option, Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said. Containing is the goal.

"You've just got to be very aware of what you're willing to live with and what you're willing to take away and when it's time to adjust," Mazzulla said. "There's not one coverage. There's not one player. It's going to take multiple coverages."

Panthers goalie Bobrovsky still going strong at 35

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Sergei Bobrovsky baffles his own teammates at times.

Florida's starting goaltender has his own schedule and regimen — slowing gliding across the entirety of the ice to begin his process of getting ready in the morning, an extremely strict diet and some moves in the weight room that the Panthers have said are all his own.

"Sometimes he walks on a wooden stick, like on a pole," Panthers forward Carter Verhaeghe said, gesturing with his hands to try to describe the contraption without a whole lot of success. "It probably helps his balance, but none of us really get it."

Nobody minds, either. What Bobrovsky is doing is working, especially at this time of year.

There was the spectacular save in Round 1 of the playoffs against Tampa Bay that they're calling The Bobbery, one that will forever be part of Panthers lore. There's the current run of allowing two goals or fewer in 10 of his last 11 games. There even was an

assist on a goal that sparked a comeback victory over the New York Rangers in the Eastern Conference finals. And on Saturday night, he'll be in net for Game 1 of the Stanley Cup Final against the Edmonton Oilers — the second straight year in which Bobrovsky has backstopped a team to a title shot.

"Bob has been Bob for the last 10 years," Panthers forward Vladimir Tarasenko said. "He's unbelievable."

About three months shy of turning 36, Bobrovsky could become the third-oldest goalie in more than 50 years to be the starting netminder for a team that wins the Stanley Cup. Dominik Hasek was 37 years and about 4 months when he led Detroit to the 2002 title; Tim Thomas was 37 years and about 2 months when he led Boston to the 2011 title.

It is a small club of goalies over 35 who have the numbers that Bobrovsky has so far in these playoffs: 12 wins, .908 save percentage, 2.20 goals-against average. The other names on that list over the last 50 years —

Thomas, Hasek, Patrick Roy, Chris Osgood and Martin Brodeur.

All of them have hoisted the Stanley Cup. Bobrovsky hasn't.

"He's the hardest-working guy I've ever seen," Panthers captain Aleksander Barkov said after the East finals, as fellow forward Matthew Tkachuk sat to his right and nodded. "You just know, when a guy works that hard, he's also like super calm. Every single day at practice, he's having fun. Morning skate, he's having fun. Warmups, all that kind of stuff, you see him being in the zone, you just know he's going to be on top of his game. He's been unbelievable."

"He's 35 — it's really hard to believe. He's been amazing and it's fun to watch from this close."

For the Panthers to say that Bobrovsky is the hardest worker is high praise. Very high praise.

Florida prides itself on its work ethic; the Panthers make no effort to hide that training camps under coach Paul Maurice have been designed to push players to their limit.

Paolini, Andreeva earn spots in semis

Associated Press

PARIS — Jasmine Paolini reached the first Grand Slam semifinal of her career by beating No. 4 seed Elena Rybakina 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 at the French Open on Wednesday.

"It's an unbelievable feeling," Paolini said.

The 12th-seeded Paolini, a 28-year-old from Italy, exited in the first or second round in each of her first 16 Grand Slam appearances before making it to the fourth round of the Australian Open in January. Now she's gone two steps further by eliminating the 2022 Wimbledon champion.

With Jannik Sinner into the men's semifinals, it's the first time an Italian woman and Italian man have both appeared in the final four at the same Grand Slam tournament in the same year. It's quite a moment for their country in tennis: On Monday, Sinner will become the first man to be No. 1 in the ATP rankings.

Paolini will meet unseeded

17-year-old Mirra Andreeva on Thursday for a berth in the title match. Andreeva surprised No. 2 seed Aryna Sabalenka 6-7 (5), 6-4, 6-4 to become the youngest Grand Slam semifinalist since Martina Hingis at age 16 in 1997.

"I tried to play brave," Andreeva said. "And I managed to win."

She is also the youngest player to eliminate someone ranked No. 1 or 2 at Roland Garros since Monica Seles — like Hingis, now a member of the International Tennis Hall of Fame — was 16 when she beat Steffi Graf in the 1990 final.

Andreeva is ranked 38th but has yet to win a tour-level title of any sort and is competing in only her fifth Slam tournament.

Sabalenka, meanwhile, is a two-time champion at the Australian Open, including in January, and had won the first 23 Grand Slam sets she played in 2024 until dropping two in a row against Andreeva. Sabalenka

was visited multiple times by a trainer and doctor on Wednesday and often clutched at her midsection, although it was not clear what was wrong.

The other semifinal will be No. 1 Iga Swiatek against No. 3 Coco Gauff.

Paolini finished with 22 unforced errors, fewer than half of Rybakina's 48. And Paolini accumulated seven breaks against the big-serving Rybakina, who hit 10 aces.

"I (got) a little bit too emotional in the second set," Paolini said. "But then I said to myself: 'OK. It's good. She's a great champion so it can happen. Just fight. Try to keep it there. Try to hit every ball.' And, yeah, it worked."

The first set could not have gone better for Paolini — or worse for Rybakina.

Paolini took the first 15 points she served, and 16 of 17 overall. She grabbed 16 of 32 points Rybakina served.

And while Paolini deserved

credit for playing cleanly and showing zero signs of being overwhelmed by the stage or the moment, Rybakina was way off. By set's end, Rybakina had made 16 unforced errors — 15 more than Paolini.

In the second, Paolini twice went up by a break, including for a 4-3 lead. When she led 40-15 in the next game, Paolini was one point from going up 5-3 and being a game away from by far the biggest victory of her career.

But Rybakina steadied herself, broke there and ran through the last three games to force a third set.

Again, Paolini kept moving in front, then getting reeled back in. She was up a break in the last set at 1-0, then at 2-1, and was a point from going up 3-1. Rybakina would not fade and kept breaking back.

But Paolini broke one last time for a 5-4 edge, then served out the victory and let out a yell when Rybakina sent a backhand long.

Coleman's homer puts Oklahoma in WCWS title series

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Jayda Coleman hit a game-ending homer in the eighth inning to give Oklahoma a 6-5 victory over Florida in the Women's College World Series semifinals Tuesday, moving the Sooners into the championship series with a chance at an unprecedented fourth straight title.

Coleman sent Keagan Rothrock's 154th pitch of the game just past the outstretched glove of left fielder Korbe Otis and over the fence.

"I was going to take my time, really get a pitch that I wanted to see," Coleman said. "I saw middle. I knew I needed to stay through the ball. Going around the bases, I lost it, just started crying."

Coleman thrust her arms above her head as she rounded the bases and was mobbed by teammates at the plate as fans screamed in the stadium just a half-hour drive from the Oklahoma campus in Norman.

"I think one of the better games in College World Series history," Oklahoma coach Patty Gasso said. "A nail-biter. A little bit of everything."

Ella Parker homered and drove in three runs for the second-seeded Sooners (57-7), who will play No. 1 seed Texas (55-8) in the best-of-three championship series starting Wednesday night. Oklahoma has won five of the past seven national titles and seven overall. Texas has never won a national title.

Oklahoma defeated Texas in the championship series in 2022. This year, Texas won the Big 12 regular-season title while Oklahoma won the conference tournament. The rival schools will both leave the Big 12 for the Southeastern Conference next season.

Gasso, who has led the Sooners to seven national titles, said she didn't assume the Sooners would get back to the championship series.

"I don't know that I could tell you that I believed that we would be here again because it's so difficult to get here," she said. "The way we did it was wonderful."

Texas is 3-0 in the World Series this year, with each game being a one-hit shutout.

Oklahoma, meanwhile, lost to Florida 9-3 a day earlier and had to rally from a three-run deficit in Tuesday's elimination game.

Rothrock, a freshman, threw 379 pitches in three days to give the Gators a chance.

"I mean, I don't even have words," Florida center fielder Kendra Falby said. "There's only so much you can ask of a freshman. She's not even a freshman. I don't consider her a freshman, like whatsoever. Keagan came out and did everything and more for us."

Florida led 5-2 on Tuesday when Oklahoma's Cydney Sanders hit a two-run homer to center in the fourth inning. In the sixth, Parker tied it with a two-out RBI single that scored Avery Hodge from second.

Jones, Suwinski lead Pirates over Dodgers

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Rookie Jared Jones pitched six shutout innings and Jack Suwinski homered after being called up from the minor leagues as the Pittsburgh Pirates beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 1-0 on Tuesday night.

Jones (4-5) allowed three hits to the NL West-leading Dodgers while striking out six and walking three. That strong performance came after the 22-year-old right-hander was touched for seven runs in 4⅓ innings in his last start, on Wednesday at Detroit.

It was a thrill for Jones to face the Dodgers because he grew up a fan in La Mirada, Calif.

"I mean, my summers growing up as a kid consisted of going to Dodger Stadium," Jones said. "Going out there, facing them for the first time, throwing up six zeros and giving us a chance to win, that means everything."

Jones threw a career-high 100 pitches.

"That's no easy lineup to go through and that's an understatement," Pirates manager Derek Shelton said. "To go through it the way he did and continue to execute pitches was really impressive to see."

Guardians 8, Royals 5: Shortstop Bobby Witt's Jr.'s throwing error led to host Cleveland scoring three runs on an infield grounder in the seventh inning in its win over Kansas City.

The Guardians trailed 5-0 in the fourth before storming back to win the series opener and push their division lead to five over the Royals.

Mets 6, Nationals 3: Pete Alonso hit a 446-foot homer, Harrison Bader launched a two-run shot and visiting New York beat Washington.

David Peterson (1-0) worked efficiently into the seventh inning in his second start this season for the Mets, who have won four of six since a 7-19 stumble.

Rays 9, Marlins 5: Brandon Lowe had a three-run homer, a double and drove in five runs to the lead visiting Tampa Bay to a win over Miami.

Tampa Bay outfielder Randy Arozarena reached base five times — two walks, hit by pitches twice and a single. Ahmed Rosario had three hits, Isaac Paredes had two hits and two RBIs, and Yandy Díaz added a double and single for the Rays, who have won 22 of 25 against the Marlins since the start of 2019.

Orioles 10, Blue Jays 1: Ryan Mountcastle homered twice and drove in five runs, Corbin Burnes (6-2) allowed one run in seven innings for his third straight win and visiting Baltimore routed Toronto.

Orioles rookie infielder Connor Norby homered for his first major league hit, a two-run blast off Nate Pearson in the eighth inning. Gunnar Henderson and Adley

Rutschman reached base three times each and Rutschman drove in a pair for the Orioles, who won for the 10th time in 12 games.

Phillies 2, Brewers 1 (10): Nick Castellanos won the game with an RBI double in the 10th inning after Alec Bohm tied the score with a solo homer in the eighth to lead host Philadelphia past Milwaukee.

After Bryson Stott was intentionally walked, Castellanos lined a double to right off Brewers reliever Joel Payamps (1-2) that scored automatic runner Whit Merrifield. The Phillies mobbed Castellanos at second base as another packed crowd went wild in celebration of the team's 43rd win, tops in the National League and tied with the Yankees for the most in MLB.

Cubs 7, White Sox 6: Ian Happ's second double of the night drove in two runs to put the host Cubs ahead in the eighth inning, and the North Siders came back twice to beat their crosstown rivals at Wrigley Field.

Happ's third hit of the game, lined to the right-field corner off Jordan Leasure, drove in Cody Bellinger and Christopher Morel to erase a one-run White Sox lead and deal them a 12th straight loss.

Reds 4, Rockies 1: Frankie Montas took a no-hitter into the seventh inning, Elly De La Cruz hit a 448-foot homer and visiting Cincinnati beat Colorado.

Angels 4, Padres 2: Zach Neto

had a tiebreaking two-run double in the seventh inning, and host Los Angeles won its first home series of the season with a victory over San Diego.

Mariners 4, Athletics 3: George Kirby (5-5) had nine strikeouts in five innings for his first win in nearly a month, and visiting Seattle beat Oakland.

Braves 8, Red Sox 3: Max Fried (6-2) struck out a career-high 13 batters in seven strong innings, Ozzie Albies hit a tiebreaking three-run homer and visiting Atlanta beat Boston.

Yankees 5, Twins 1: Luis Gil (8-1) pitched six shutout innings of one-hit ball to win his seventh consecutive start, Giancarlo Stanton launched a two-run homer and host New York beat Minnesota for its sixth straight victory.

Tigers 3, Rangers 1: Jack Flaherty (3-4) pitched five shutout innings, running his scoreless innings streak to 11⅓ innings, Zach McKinstry and Riley Greene homered and visiting Detroit beat Texas.

Astros 8, Cardinals 5: Yainer Diaz homered in a second straight game to lead host Houston to a win over St. Louis.

Diamondbacks 8, Giants 5: Kevin Newman and Lourdes Gurriel Jr. each hit two-run doubles and host Arizona stretched its winning streak to four games with a victory over slumping San Francisco.

Ohtani interpreter Mizuhara enters guilty plea

Associated Press

SANTA ANA, Calif. — As an interpreter, Ipei Mizuhara was supposed to bridge the gap between baseball star Shohei Ohtani and his English-speaking teammates and fans as the duo traveled from Southern California to ballparks across the United States.

Instead, Mizuhara exploited the Japanese-English language barrier to isolate Ohtani and profit, in the truest sense, from his proximity to the two-way player's power. On Tuesday, the ex-interpreter pleaded guilty in federal court in Santa Ana, Calif., to bank and tax fraud

for stealing nearly \$17 million from the unsuspecting athlete's Arizona bank account.

He spent the money to cover his growing gambling debts with an illegal bookmaker, plus \$325,000 worth of baseball cards and, to the shock of prosecutors, his own medical bills.

"In fact, after we announced the charges, we only discovered more fraud in this case," said Martin Estrada, U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California. "We discovered Mr. Mizuhara had victimized Mr. Ohtani to the extent that he wouldn't even pay for dental. He stole money from Mr. Ohtani to pay for his

own dental expenses."

The case involved arguably the world's most famous baseball player and the sport's most valuable voice. Despite the international media frenzy, Tuesday's 45-minute proceeding was fairly mundane: Ohtani was known as "Victim A" inside the courtroom and the ex-interpreter only spoke to acknowledge his guilt.

"I worked for Victim A and had access to his bank account and had fallen into major gambling debt," Mizuhara told the judge. "I went ahead and wired money ... with his bank account."