

## US proposes power-sharing plan with Taliban

By J.P. LAWRENCE

*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Biden administration has urged Kabul to form a temporary power-sharing government with the Taliban and proposed a multinational peace conference, according to a letter by Secretary of State Antony Blinken published in Afghan media reports.

The letter to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani states that the United States is still considering whether to withdraw its remaining 2,500 troops by May 1 under the terms of a deal struck last year between the Trump administration and the Taliban.

But U.S. diplomats have reached “an initial conclusion” to “accelerate peace talks,” Blinken said in the letter, which was first reported Sunday by Kabul’s Tolo News.

“I am making this clear to you so that you understand the urgency of my tone,” Blinken said in the three-page letter.

The State Department declined to comment on the letter, which an Afghan government official confirmed was delivered to Ghani’s office last week.

A State Department official said in a statement that that “all options remain on the table” regarding the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

Blinken’s letter accompanied a U.S.

peace plan which proposed a cease-fire and the creation of a government that includes the Taliban.

Blinken also proposed that the United Nations convene a meeting of foreign ministers and envoys from the U.S., Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan and India to consider how to support the peace process.

Under the proposal, a temporary government would suspend the existing parliament and abide by the 2004 constitution until it can be revised. A national election would follow to replace the interim government.

“The peace government proposal is a lot more involved and ambitious than anything we have heard about in the past,” said Asfandiyar Mir, an analyst at the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University. “It proposes power-sharing on terms favorable to the Taliban and requires major factions of the republic to fold into one.”

The plan also calls for a 90-day reduction in violence. Afghan negotiators have said that a cease-fire is necessary to convince the Taliban to take peace negotiations seriously.

Both the government in Kabul and the Taliban are likely to object to the ambitious goals laid out by the U.S., said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the

Asia Program at the Wilson Center in Washington.

“The U.S. appears to think it can overcome red lines on both sides,” said Kugelman. “It calls for a new and inclusive government that Ghani has repeatedly rejected.

“And it calls for the Taliban to reduce violence, even though the insurgents say they’ll only talk about lowering violence once U.S. troops have left.”

The letter to Ghani noted that a U.S. military departure by May 1 would lead to “rapid territorial gains” by the Taliban. The U.S. has accused the Taliban of maintaining links with al-Qaida and other actions that have failed to meet the commitments of last year’s peace deal.

“The question is whether it’s meant as a bluff — an effort to scare Ghani into playing ball with the U.S., with the threat of a troop pullout if he doesn’t — or if it’s a genuine acknowledgement that the U.S. hasn’t ruled out honoring that deadline,” Kugelman said.

The next step would be up to Ghani, who strongly opposes the idea of a non-elected interim government.

“If Ghani doubles down and digs in, there could be a fresh political crisis in Kabul, and the U.S. plan could be even harder to pull off,” Kugelman said.

## US, S. Korea reach agreement on defense cost-sharing

By SETH ROBSON

*Stars and Stripes*

The United States and South Korea have agreed on a new cost-sharing agreement for stationing 28,500 U.S. troops on the peninsula, South Korea’s Foreign Ministry announced Monday.

South Korean and U.S. negotiators met in Washington, D.C., from Friday to Sunday and reached a deal that South Korea will sign as soon as possible, the ministry said in a statement.

“In the face-to-face meeting held after a year in the COVID-19 situation, both sides had consultations based on discussions between them in the meantime and reached an agreement in principle,” the statement

said.

The agreement, which would run through 2025, includes a “meaningful increase” in South Korea’s contribution, according to a State Department spokesperson quoted by the Wall Street Journal on Sunday.

South Korea has offset the costs for hosting U.S. troops under a contract called the Special Measures Agreement since 1991. Negotiations over the amount have always been contentious, but they reached a breaking point in 2018 when former President Donald Trump reportedly demanded up to \$5 billion per year, a fivefold increase.

Previous contracts have lasted for five years, but the allies agreed to a retroactive,

one-year stopgap measure for 2019 after failing to meet the end-of-year deadline.

That deal expired on Dec. 31, 2019, eventually prompting U.S. Forces Korea to place more than 4,000 local base workers who provide food and administrative services — nearly half of its workforce — on unpaid leave.

The furlough was lifted in June after South Korea agreed to pay \$200 million for salaries through the end of this year. Another furlough loomed if a deal could not be struck.

The deal follows last month’s agreement to extend Japanese financial support for approximately 54,000 U.S. troops in that country for a year.

# B-52s use flyover as a warning to Iran

*Associated Press*

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A pair of B-52 bombers flew over the Mideast on Sunday, the latest such mission in the region aimed at warning Iran amid tensions between Washington and Tehran.

The flight by the two heavy bombers came as a pro-Iran satellite channel based in Beirut broadcast Iranian military drone footage of an Israeli ship hit by a mysterious explosion only days earlier in the Mideast. While the channel sought to say Iran wasn't involved, Israel has blamed Tehran for what it described as an attack on the vessel.

The U.S. military's Central Command said the two B-52s flew over the region accompa-

nied by military aircraft from nations including Israel, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. It marked the fourth such bomber deployment into the Mideast this year and the second under President Joe Biden.

Flight-tracking data showed the two B-52s flew out of Minot Air Base in North Dakota, something Central Command did not mention in its statement on the flights though authorities later published images of flight crew preparing its departure there.

The military did not directly mention Iran in its statement, saying the flight was to "deter aggression and reassure partners and allies of the U.S. military's commitment to security in the region."

Such flights had become common in the last months of former President Donald Trump's administration, however. Trump's 2018 decision to unilaterally withdraw from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers sparked a series of escalating incidents in the region.

Biden has expressed a desire to return to the deal if Iran honors the deal's limits on its nuclear program. Tensions remain high, however, after militias in Iraq — likely backed by Iran — continue to target American interests.

Biden last month launched an airstrike just over the border into Syria in retaliation, joining every American president from Ronald Reagan onward who has ordered a bombardment of countries in the Middle East.

## Okinawa prosecutors charge Marine with assault, interfering with police

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE  
AND HANA KUSUMOTO

*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — An Okinawa-based Marine accused of assaulting a woman in a Naha parking lot and then shoving a responding police officer back in January has been officially charged by prosecutors.

Pfc. Marvin Earl James Jr., 24, a transmission systems operator with 3rd Marine Division at Camp Courtney, was charged Friday with indecent assault and interfering with the public duties of police, an official from the Naha District Public Prosecutors Office told Stars and Stripes by phone Monday. They declined to elaborate further.

No court date has been set, a Naha District Court spokesman said. It's customary in Japan for government officials to speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

James was arrested shortly after the Jan. 31 incident on suspicion of interfering with public duties, police said at the time. He remained at Naha Police station where he was formally arrested again Feb. 11 on suspicion of indecent assault.

Police alleged that James approached a woman walking home on a Naha street, took her into a parking lot and forcibly tried to kiss her at about 5 a.m. Jan. 31, a spokesman

told Stars and Stripes last month.

The woman threatened to call police and James fled, the police spokesman said last month.

A police officer who viewed James as suspicious approached him walking alone an hour later in the Kumoji area of Naha, police said in February. Police said James had been drinking and shoved the officer who attempted to question him.

Neither the officer nor the unidentified woman was injured, according to police.

Police in January said James denied shoving the officer; a report in the Mainichi newspaper last month said he also denied the indecent assault allegation.

If convicted of the interference charge, James faces up to three years in prison, with or without hard labor, or up to \$5,000 in fines, according to the Japanese penal code. A conviction of indecent assault brings six months to 10 years with hard labor.

The Marine Corps is cooperating with local authorities on the case, a Marine Corps Installations Pacific spokesman told Stars and Stripes last month.

"We take every instance of misconduct seriously," 1st Lt. Timothy Hayes wrote in an email Feb. 2.

"These actions undermine the core values of the Marine Corps and are not tolerated on or off duty," he said.

## USFK reports 2 new virus cases

BY JOSEPH DITZLER

*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — The number of one-day coronavirus cases in Japan's capital city fell to 116 on Monday, typically a day in which reported numbers are their lowest, according to public broadcaster NHK.

Japan reported 1,064 new coronavirus infections Sunday, according to the World Health Organization. The nation of 126 million has reported 8,227 pandemic deaths due to complications of COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the coronavirus.

The U.S. military in the Far East reported two new coronavirus cases over the weekend, both in South Korea at Camp Hovey, a post near Seoul that falls within the Yong-san Garrison and Camp Casey command.

Two soldiers there tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday and Friday as part of a surveillance testing program, according to a U.S. Forces Korea press release. Both are in quarantine at Camp Humphreys.

South Korea reported 335 new COVID-19 patients as of Sunday, showing little change in a trend of 300-400 new cases per day since a surge that sent them to 600 per day in mid-February, according to the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency.

Seoul reported 97 new cases and Gyeonggi province reported 128.

# Biden signs voting rights order for 'Bloody Sunday'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A new executive order from President Joe Biden directs federal agencies to take a series of steps to promote voting access, a move that comes as congressional Democrats press for a sweeping voting and elections bill to counter efforts to restrict voting access.

His plan was announced during a recorded address on the 56th commemoration of "Bloody Sunday," the 1965 incident in which some 600 civil rights activists were viciously beaten by state troopers as they tried to march for voting rights in Selma, Ala.

"Every eligible voter should be able to vote and have it counted," Biden said in his remarks to Sunday's Martin and Coretta King Unity Breakfast before signing the order. "If you have the best ideas, you have nothing to hide. Let the people vote."

Biden's order includes several modest provisions. It directs federal agencies to expand access to voter registration and election information, calls on the heads of agencies to come up with plans to give federal employees time off to vote or volunteer as nonpartisan poll workers, and pushes an overhaul of the govern-

ment's Vote.gov website.

Democrats are attempting to solidify support for House Resolution 1, which touches on virtually every aspect of the electoral process. It was approved Wednesday on a near party-line vote, 220-210.

The voting rights bill includes provisions to restrict partisan gerrymandering of congressional districts, strike down hurdles to voting and bring transparency to a murky campaign finance system that allows wealthy donors to anonymously bankroll political causes.

Democrats say the bill will help stifle voter suppression attempts, while Republicans have cast the bill as unwanted federal interference in states' authority to conduct their own elections.

The bill's fate is far from certain in the closely divided Senate. Conservative groups have undertaken a \$5 million campaign to try to persuade moderate Senate Democrats to oppose rule changes needed to pass the measure.

With his executive order, Biden is looking to turn the spotlight on the issue and is using the somber commemoration of Bloody Sunday to make the case that much is at stake.

## At least 20 dead, 600 hurt in blasts in Equatorial Guinea

Associated Press

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso — A series of explosions at a military barracks in Equatorial Guinea killed at least 20 people and wounded more than 600 others Sunday, authorities said.

President Teodoro Obiang Nguema said the explosion at 4 p.m. local time was due to the "negligent handling of dynamite" in the military barracks located in the neighborhood of Mondong Nkuantoma in Bata.

"The impact of the explosion caused damage in almost all the houses and buildings in Bata," the president said in a statement, which was in Spanish.

The defense ministry released a statement late Sunday saying that a fire at a weapons depot in the barracks caused the explosion of high-caliber ammunition. It said the provisional death toll was 20, adding that the cause of the explosions will be fully investigated.

The country's president said the fire may have been due to residents burning the fields surrounding the barracks.

Images on local media seen by The Associated Press show people screaming and crying while running through the streets amid debris and smoke. Roofs of houses were ripped off and wounded people were being carried into a hospital.

Earlier, the Health Ministry had tweeted that 17 people were killed. The ministry made a call for blood donors and volunteer health workers to go to the Regional Hospital de Bata, one of three hospitals treating the wounded.

The ministry said its health workers were treating the injured at the site of the tragedy and in medical facilities, but feared people were still missing under the rubble.

A doctor calling into TVGE, who went by his first name, Florentino, said the situation was a "moment of crisis" and that the hospitals were overcrowded. He said a sports center set up for COVID-19 patients would be used to receive minor cases.

Radio station Radio Macuto said on Twitter that people were being evacuated within four kilometers of the city because the fumes might be harmful.

Following the blast, the Spanish Embassy in Equatorial Guinea recommended on Twitter that "Spanish nationals stay in their homes."

## Jill Biden helps honor 21 women

Associated Press

First lady Jill Biden said nearly two dozen women the State Department is honoring for their courage made an "intentional decision" to persist and demand justice despite their fear.

The 21 women recognized Monday with the department's International Women of Courage Award included seven from Afghanistan who received posthumous honors.

The first lady said that the women's stories make it easy to think of them as "mythical heroes or angels among us" but that they're also humans who want to enjoy life's simple pleasures.

"Some of these women have spent their lives fighting for their cause. Others are just starting out on a journey they didn't ask for," Biden said during the virtual cer-

emony.

"Some were called to service, and some couldn't escape it," Biden said. "They are fighting for their own lives and for their children. They want to right the wrongs of our past, to build a brighter future for everyone. They aren't immune to fear. No one is."

The 14 living awardees are from Belarus, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Iran, Myanmar, Nepal, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Venezuela.

"These women made an extraordinary choice, to persist, to demand justice, to believe that, despite the obstacles and fear they faced, there is a future worth fighting for," Biden said.

International Women's Day was observed on Monday.



# Fully vaccinated don't need masks to gather

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Fully vaccinated Americans can gather with other vaccinated people indoors without wearing a mask or social distancing, according to long-awaited guidance from federal health officials.

The recommendations also say that vaccinated people can come together in the same way with people considered at low-risk for severe disease, such as in the case of vaccinated grandparents visiting healthy children and grandchildren.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced the guidance Monday.

The CDC is continuing to recommend that fully vaccinated people continue to wear well-fitted masks, avoid large gatherings and physically distance themselves from others when out in public. The CDC also advised vaccinated people to get tested if they develop symptoms that could be related to COVID-19.

## Connecticut

HARTFORD — Not all Connecticut businesses are planning to rush back into their offices following Gov. Ned Lamont's decision to lift restrictions on offices.

Many business leaders said they expect a slower reentry now that many office workers have spent nearly a year working remotely.

David Griggs, president and chief executive of the Metro-Hartford Alliance, an economic development group, told the Hartford Courant that he sees more companies opting for a hybrid working life with some time in the office and some time spent working remotely.

Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin told the newspaper he doesn't expect significant change in downtown offices until the summer or fall. Meanwhile, he will focus on creating opportunities for outdoor activity in the warmer months.

## Florida

FORT LAUDERDALE — Colleges around the United States are scaling back spring break or canceling it entirely to discourage partying that could spread the virus and raise infection rates back on campus.

Texas A&M University opted for a three-day weekend instead of a whole week off. The University of Alabama and the University of Wisconsin-Madison also did away with spring break but are giving students a day off later in the semester.

Even some students who have the time to get away aren't in the mood. Michigan Tech's weeklong break began Friday, but Justin Martin, 21, decided to visit family in Michigan instead of making that epic senior-year trip to Florida he once envisioned.

To be sure, many college students looking to blow off steam or escape the cold and snowy North are still going to hit big party spots such as Florida, Mexico, California and Las Vegas to soak up the sun and go bar-hopping at night. Others will go skiing in the mountains or hit other tourist spots. But many others say they will be reluctantly skipping trips this year.

## Massachusetts

WORCESTER — Hundreds of nurses at a Massachusetts hospital walked off the job Monday morning after failing to reach an agreement with management over staffing levels.

Nurses and their supporters gathered outside St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester at dawn holding signs that said "Safe Staffing Now" and "Picketing for our Patients and our Community."

The strike started after negotiations with Dallas-based Tenet Healthcare, which owns the hospital, broke down.

Management in a statement Sunday said they are disap-

pointed in what they called an irresponsible decision to strike during the pandemic, and have enough temporary nurses to ensure patient safety.

## Michigan

DETROIT — People who are homeless were eligible for COVID-19 vaccines in Michigan starting Monday.

Health officials said it's a critical step in curbing the spread of coronavirus.

The news comes as infection rates are dropping and vaccine campaigns are ramping up.

Overall, the state has reported roughly 600,000 cases of COVID-19. More than 15,000 people have died from COVID-19 in Michigan.

## New Mexico

ALBUQUERQUE — New Mexico on Monday expanded eligibility for COVID-19 vaccinations to all school teachers, early childhood educators and other staff with the goal of getting the group its first shots by the end of March.

The state is making the move as part of a directive by the Biden administration to get more schools reopened amid the coronavirus pandemic. Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and state Health Secretary Dr. Tracie Collins said last week that the ability of New Mexico to meet the timeline will depend on the federal government increasing vaccine supplies.

Collins said the state was in discussions with the White House last week about how the directive would affect vaccinations for other groups in the state. Under the plan, the state will start with educators outside of the Albuquerque area this week, and the second week will involve those in the metro area, likely at a mass vaccination site.

## Pennsylvania

HARRISBURG — Four of Pennsylvania's seven most heavily populated counties are

airing their unhappiness over the size of their allotment of coronavirus vaccines, saying Monday that a meeting with Gov. Tom Wolf's top health official did not resolve their concerns.

Leaders of Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties — home to more than 2.5 million people — called a Sunday meeting with acting Secretary of Health Alison Beam "disappointing and frustrating."

They said less-populated counties in Pennsylvania have received disproportionately bigger allotments of the two-shot Pfizer and Moderna vaccines and that their smaller-than-expected allotments have led to long waiting lists, cancellations of second-dose appointments and frustration and anger among residents. They also said the state has been unable to clearly explain how it determined each county's vaccine allotments.

## Wisconsin

MILWAUKEE — Some museums in Milwaukee have opened their doors again as virus cases wane and vaccinations roll out.

The Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee Public Museum and Harley Davidson Museum all opened this past weekend for the first time this year. Discovery World plans to open later this month.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported the museums opened after careful planning and coordination with the city health department.

Milwaukee Public Museum President Ellen Censky said the goal is that once the doors are open, they stay open. That means adopting similar safety protocols. Each museum requires guests to wear masks and has created a one-way path to regulate the flow of foot traffic and keep people physically distanced.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Woman, friend charged with DUI after crash

**TN** NASHVILLE — A woman who drove her car into a ditch in Tennessee had a friend who was trying to help hit her car with his truck before both were charged with DUI.

An affidavit stated Metro Nashville Police officers responded to reports of a car in a ditch. Natasha Nancel told officers that she drove off the road while looking at her phone. Nancel also told officers she had drunk a glass of wine and a martini at a bar. She was charged with DUI after a field sobriety test and a breath test.

Melvil Arnt was also at the scene in a truck. He told officers he was there to help his friend get her car out of the ditch but had struck her car while trying to help. He told officers he had consumed two beers. After a field sobriety test and a breath test, he was also charged with DUI.

### Town officials close to allowing beer at beach

**RI** WESTERLY — Officials in Westerly are looking into making the serving of beer while at the beach permanent.

The town last summer allowed restaurants and bars to serve beer along the beach in Misquamicut as a way to help them make money amid shutdowns and restrictions imposed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

At a town council meeting, Town Manager Mark Rooney and police chief Shawn Lacey were authorized to move ahead

with plans to make the policy permanent, The Sun of Westerly reported.

Lacey said there were few problems last summer, but noted that crowds were smaller than normal because of coronavirus limitations.

### Protester shoots self outside abortion clinic

**NC** RALEIGH — An anti-abortion protester faces a criminal charge after accidentally shooting himself in the leg outside a North Carolina abortion clinic.

Raleigh police say the shooting occurred outside A Woman's Choice of Raleigh. Police said the man fired his weapon accidentally, and he was taken to the hospital for treatment of non-life threatening injuries.

He was charged with possession of a firearm at a protest. Police did not release his name.

### Man drove wrong way on highway, struck trooper

**CT** SOUTHTON — Connecticut state police arrested a Utah man after they said he drove the wrong way on a highway, led police on a chase and intentionally struck a trooper, who was not seriously injured.

Michael Newman, 35, of Salt Lake City, was charged with assaulting a police officer, driving under the influence, reckless driving and other crimes.

Troopers said they found Newman's car being driven in circles on the highway.

When Trooper First Class James Grimes tried to remove Newman from the car, Newman drove off and dragged Grimes,

state police said. Troopers immediately boxed in Newman, who fled again and struck Grimes, troopers said.

### Man accused of filming women while they slept

**IA** AMES — Police arrested a man in connection to a series of incidents in Ames in which college women reported awakening to see a man watching them in their beds.

Trenton Williams, 29, of Ames was charged with robbery, burglary, stalking, harassment, trespassing, assault with intent to commit sexual abuse, among other counts, the Des Moines Register reported.

The women were living in the Campustown apartments.

### Satellite images show kelp forest almost gone

**CA** SAN FRANCISCO — An analysis of satellite imagery found that the kelp forest that only eight years ago formed a leafy canopy along the Northern California coast has almost disappeared.

In looking at satellite images of the Sonoma and Mendocino coast going back to 1985, researchers from the University of California, Santa Cruz found the kelp forest declined by an average of 95% since 2013. Their study shows the destruction was related to an explosion in the population of purple sea urchin, which eats it, and two warm water events that lasted from 2014 to 2016, the San Francisco Chronicle reported.

Around that period, a wasting disease struck the sunflower sea star population, a predator of the purple urchin, allowing

the spiky invertebrate with a huge appetite for kelp to take over.

### Students donate \$5.4K to restock food pantry

**MI** MARQUETTE — The food pantry for students at Northern Michigan University has been restocked, thanks to \$5,400 from about 130 students who donated unused dining dollars.

The pantry provides free food to students.

NMU's Dining Services was able to use its purchasing power to get good prices on the food, said dining director Paul Schoonveld.

### Man attacks girlfriend, sets fires over check

**SC** SPARTANBURG — A South Carolina man was in custody for allegedly twice attacking his girlfriend and setting several fires because he was angry his \$600 stimulus check was taken by the federal government to pay back child support.

Spartanburg County Sheriff Chuck Wright said Ray Michael Bradford Jr., 36, of Spartanburg was charged with attempted murder, three counts of arson and malicious destruction of property.

Wright said Bradford's victim was treated at Spartanburg Medical Center for multiple injuries to her face, head, neck and body.

After the assault, deputies say Bradford allegedly set several fires, one to their home and to at least two vehicles.

— From The Associated Press

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# Ali, Frazier and the Fight of the Century

Associated Press

The money was huge — a cool \$2.5 million apiece — and so was the stage for Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier. Their first fight at Madison Square Garden was so epic it was billed as the Fight of the Century, and 50 years later it reigns undefeated.

Frazier was the unbeaten heavyweight champion, a short cannonball of a fighter with a left hook that could knock out an elephant. Ali was, well, Ali even if Frazier insisted on calling him (Cassius) Clay as he fought his way back into condition after being banned from boxing for more than three years for refusing the Vietnam draft.

The stars and the star-struck came in their finest to watch on a Monday night in Manhattan. It was March 8, 1971, and those crowding their way into the Garden were attired in the fashion of the day, which included full length fur coats, velvet pants and peacock feathered hats — and that was just the men. There were also plenty of

fashionably attired women in miniskirts or long flowing gowns, with enough skin and hair on both sexes to make the crowd watching as good as the fight.

At ringside, Frank Sinatra had a camera in his hand, chronicling the scene for Life magazine. There were Kennedys in the building, along with celebrities of the day like Diana Ross and Woody Allen. The moonwalkers from Apollo 14 were on hand, too, still bearded from their trip to space.

“Anybody who was anybody was there,” said Gene Kilroy, who was Ali’s longtime business manager. “If you weren’t there, you weren’t anybody.”

Frazier was a relentless puncher filled with rage toward a fighter who couldn’t help but belittle him. Ali was a bit rusty in just his third fight into a comeback, but he was already The Greatest — and his fans couldn’t imagine him losing for the first time in his career, to Frazier or anyone else.

Before the fight they traded taunts and insults that went beyond the usual fight promotion, a match that Ali won easily as usual. Ali had no shortage of things to say about his rival, who he said was so ugly “his face should be donated to the bureau of wildlife.”

Frazier was a slight 6-5 favorite in a fight that captivated both the nation and the world. Not only were the fighters making money that seemed insane at the time, but the fight itself was expected to bring in anywhere from \$20 million to \$30 million once all the proceeds were tallied.

They fought for 15 rounds, furiously at times, with Frazier moving forward in a crouch throwing big left hooks while Ali shot out fast jabs and right hands to counter him coming in. But Ali’s legs weren’t what they were before his layoff, and he often had to stand his ground and fight when he previously was at his best sticking and moving.

Ali won some early rounds with jabs and right hands that spun Frazier’s head around. His punches were sharp even if he was a half-step slower, and he had no trouble finding the smaller target in front of him. But Frazier kept pressing ahead, and the left hook began landing more regularly, especially in the 11th when Ali was knocked backward with one and took a beating the rest of the round.

Still, Ali had won the 14th round and seemed to be rallying when Frazier suddenly unleashed his best left hook in a night filled with them. Shockingly, Ali was on the canvas. He managed somehow to get up and finish the round and the fight — but his fate that night had been decided.

Frazier would win a unanimous decision mostly because he simply refused to lose.

“Nobody would have beaten Joe Frazier that night,” Kilroy said. “Joe was in the zone.”

## Spartans top Wolverines, give NCAA hopes a boost

Associated Press

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Rocket Watts scored 21 points and Aaron Henry had 18 to lead Michigan State to a 70-64 victory over No. 2 Michigan on Sunday that seems to seal coach Tom Izzo’s 23rd consecutive NCAA Tournament bid.

The Spartans (15-11, 9-11 Big Ten) have won five of their last seven games, beating No. 4 Ohio State, No. 5 Illinois and their second-ranked rivals during the late-season surge.

The Wolverines (19-3, 14-3) closed the regular season getting routed at home by the Fighting Illini, beating Michigan State handily to seal the Big Ten title and losing the rematch three days later.

And, Michigan might have lost more than that.

Senior guard Eli Brooks hurt his left ankle early in the game at the Breslin Center and did not return in what potentially could be a problem going into the Big Ten and NCAA tournaments. Brooks ranks fourth on

the team with eight-plus points per game, averages nearly three assists a game and has started 51 games over two seasons.

**No. 3 Baylor 88, No. 18 Texas Tech 73:** MaCio Teague scored 35 points while matching a school record with 10 three-pointers and the Bears finished undefeated at home for the first time in 73 years.

Big 12 champion Baylor (21-1, 13-1 Big 12) never trailed, but didn’t take control for good until a 16-3 run in the second half when Teague had three threes.

Kyler Edwards had 18 points for Texas Tech (17-9, 9-8), which had won three straight at home.

**No. 5 Iowa 77, No. 25 Wisconsin 73:** Luka Garza scored 21 points and had 16 rebounds as the host Hawkeyes beat the Badgers.

Minutes after the game, Iowa athletic director Gary Barta announced Garza’s jersey No. 55 would be retired after the season, bringing Garza to tears.

It was the 12th double-double of the sea-

son for Garza, who leads the Big Ten in scoring and is third in the nation.

The Hawkeyes (20-7, 14-6) have won seven of eight and will be the third seed in the Big Ten Tournament.

Micah Potter scored 23 points for Wisconsin (16-11, 10-10).

**No. 9 Houston 67, Memphis 64:** Traamon Mark hit a long three-pointer as time expired to lift the host Cougars over Memphis.

After Memphis tied it with 1.7 seconds left, Marcus Sasser threw the ball to mid-court, where Mark picked it up. He dribbled through two defenders and launched a 35-footer off the backboard and in.

DeJon Jarreau had 19 points and eight rebounds for the Cougars (21-3, 14-3 American), who won their fourth straight game.

**No. 15 Texas 76, TCU 64:** Andrew Jones scored 16 points while making all four of his three-pointers, and the Longhorns finished the regular season with a third consecutive road victory



# Larson gets 1st win since his suspension

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Kyle Larson wasn't sure he'd ever race again in NASCAR, and if he could, he didn't know who would hire him.

It was Rick Hendrick who took the chance on a driver many believed was radioactive for sponsors. Larson's use of a racial slur while participating in an online race last April cost him his job, his reputation and his ability to attract the corporations that fund a race team.

Hendrick said he'd pay for the car himself because he was that confident that Larson, reformed after months of self-work, could be redeemed.

On Sunday at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, Larson raced to his first NASCAR victory since he was reinstated from a nearly yearlong suspension. He ran just the first four races last season and was hired by Hendrick Motorsports when NASCAR said the suspension would lift at the start of this

year.

"Thanks Mr. H. for believing in me," Larson radioed to boss Rick Hendrick after crossing the finish line.

He then celebrated his first career win on an intermediate track with smoke-filled burnouts, including one on the backstretch for friends watching from a motorhome on the hillside above the track. Larson said he became emotional as he took the white flag but had composed himself by the time he finished his burnouts.

"I didn't know if I'd ever have an opportunity to win a NASCAR race again," said Larson, who again thanked Hendrick for taking "a massive chance on me."

Hendrick was both thrilled and surprised by the victory in Larson's fourth race with his new team. He figured it would take time for Larson to build a relationship with his new crew chief and find a rhythm in the No. 5 Chevrolet. There is no practice because of

pandemic protocols so Larson is learning in real time.

"I didn't really expect it to come this quick because I really thought it would take time to gel," Hendrick said by phone after the race. "He's a champion, really, and I am so lucky to have him."

Bubba Wallace, NASCAR's only Black fulltime driver, was one of the first competitors to congratulate Larson.

"It meant a lot for Bubba to come to victory lane," Larson said. "He's always believed in me. That was special."

Larson is considered one of the top talents in NASCAR but won just six times in six seasons with Chip Ganassi Racing.

Mario Andretti on Twitter called Larson's victory the most entertaining NASCAR race he'd ever watched and praised Larson for driving "the race of his life" and Hendrick — "Ol' Rick knew what he was doing when he hired him."

## Trocheck, Reimer pace Hurricanes past Panthers

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C.— Vincent Trocheck and James Reimer continued to torment their former team, lifting the Carolina Hurricanes to their fifth straight victory with a 4-2 win over the Florida Panthers on Sunday night.

Trocheck, who was traded to Carolina just over a year ago, scored for the fourth time this season against the Panthers. Niino Niederreiter, Sebastian Aho and Warren Foegele also had goals for the Hurricanes, who have won eight of 10 home games (8-1-1) this season.

Reimer, who made 21 saves, came to Carolina less two years in ago in a trade from Florida. He's 3-0-0 since then against the Panthers.

MacKenzie Weegar and Mason Marchment scored for Florida, which had a five-game points streak snapped. Chris Dreidger made 22 saves for the Panthers.

**Islanders 5, Sabres 2:** Anders Lee and Brock Nelson scored 62 seconds apart early in the second period and rookie

Ilya Sorokin made 24 saves as host New York earned its fifth straight win.

The victory was also the Islanders' sixth straight over the Sabres this season.

**Lightning 6, Blackhawks 3:** Yanni Gourde, Ondrej Palat and Victor Hedman each scored a power-play goal in the second period, helping Tampa Bay win at Chicago.

Pat Maroon added his 100th career goal in the third period, giving the Lightning a season-high four goals with the man advantage. Gourde finished with two goals and two assists, and Alex Killorn scored for the third straight game.

Tampa Bay improved to 3-0-1 on its season-long six-game trip and stretched its point streak to a season-high eight games. It took two of three in the series between Central Division contenders.

Mattias Janmark had a goal and an assist for the Blackhawks. Philipp Kurashev and Pius Suter also scored.

**Devils 1, Bruins 0:** Scott Wedgewood made 40 saves,

Kyle Palmieri scored out of a scramble with 4:37 left and New Jersey won at Boston to snap a five-game losing streak.

The Bruins' Tuukka Rask made 24 saves and remained stuck at 299 career victories. Boston has lost four of six games.

**Capitals 3, Flyers 1:** Alex Ovechkin, Dmitry Orlov and Nick Jensen scored to lead Washington to a win at Philadelphia.

T.J. Oshie had two assists and Ilya Samsonov stopped 36 shots for the Capitals, who have won eight of 11. Washington was without forward Tom Wilson, who served the first game of a seven-game suspension for Friday's hit on Boston defenseman Brandon Carlo.

**Penguins 5, Rangers 1:** Sidney Crosby capped host Pittsburgh's three-goal outburst in the first period, and the Penguins cruised to their ninth win in 13 games.

Crosby scored his eighth of the season, Kasperii Kapanen netted his sixth and John Marino his first as Pittsburgh scored

three goals on six shots in the opening period. Evgeni Malkin and Zach Aston-Reese scored in the third period, and Casey DeSmith made 22 saves in his second start since Feb. 11.

**Predators 4, Stars 3 (SO):** Roman Josi scored the final shootout goal on a backhand, helping Nashville win at Dallas after blowing a 3-0 third-period lead.

Josi and Forsberg scored in the shootout as the Predators ended a three-game losing streak. Rookie Eeli Tolvanen had a goal and an assist in regulation, Mikael Granlund and Calle Jarnkrok added goals and Pekka Rinne made 35 saves for Nashville. Filip Forsberg added two assists as the Predators built a 3-0 lead through two periods.

**Senators 4, Flames 3 (SO):** Drake Batherson scored the shootout winner to give Ottawa the road victory.

Connor Brown, Ryan Dzingel and Colin White scored in regulation for the Senators. Matt Murray made 30 saves.

# Team LeBron wins All-Star Game again

Associated Press

ATLANTA — In the midst of a pandemic, this was assured of being an NBA All-Star Game like no other.

The stands were mostly empty. The crowd noise was largely piped in. There were no A-list celebrities sitting courtside. Two players had to sit out after getting haircuts.

But in the end, it had a familiar feel.

Team LeBron won again.

Knocking down shots from all over the court, LeBron James' powerhouse squad closed the first half with a dominating run to set up a 170-150 romp over Team Durant in the league's 70th midseason showcase Sunday night.

The top vote-getters in each conference have picked the teams the last four years, a duty that James has earned every season.

He's now 4-0, having defeated Stephen Curry's squad in 2018 and teams selected by Milwaukee's two-time reigning MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo the previous two years.

This time, James drafted his two former adversaries and blew away Kevin Durant's team.

"I think he's got a future as a GM," said Damian Lillard, another of James' inspired selections. "He always gets it right."

Antetokounmpo was the game's MVP af-

ter shooting 16-for-16 for 35 points, even making all three of his attempts beyond the three-point stripe. It was the most baskets without a miss in All-Star Game history.

"I'm just having fun," the Greek star said. "Sometimes when you're having fun and not thinking about the outcome, you just let your instincts take over."

Curry chipped in with 28 points, while Lillard had 32.

James spent most of the night admiring his drafting skill from the bench. He played less than 13 minutes, scored just four points, and didn't return to the court in the second half.

Instead, he munched a snack on the bench.

"I know he was managing his minutes tonight," Curry said. "We had a great time, representing him as captain. It was a memorable night for sure."

It sure was for Curry, who won the three-point competition beforehand, then went 8-for-16 from beyond the arc in the game.

Lillard matched him, also making 8-for-16 from three-point range.

This All-Star Game sure was different than the previous 69.

Determined to pull off an exhibition that is huge for TV revenue and the league's worldwide brand, the NBA staged the game in a mostly empty downtown arena.

Despite extensive safety protocols in place, two players didn't even make it to tip-off. Philadelphia stars Joel Embiid and Ben Simmons were ruled out because they got haircuts from a barber who tested positive for COVID-19.

The only good thing for Durant: He didn't have to participate in this shellacking, sitting out the game with an ailing hamstring.

Bradley Beal led Team Durant with 26 points.

On a night highlighting Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Team LeBron swept the first three quarters and cruised to the final target score, earning a total of \$750,000 for its charity, the Thurgood Marshall College Fund.

With scant defense being played, Team LeBron took turns dunking off alley-oop passes. Chris Paul delivered back-to-back lobbs that Lillard and Curry slammed through. Then, it was Paul on the receiving end of a payback pass from Curry.

After showing it could handle shots up close, Team LeBron headed outside in the final seconds of the half.

Lillard pulled up for a three-pointer from the half-court line. Not to be outdone, Curry knocked down one from virtually the same spot.

"It was a lot of fun," Lillard said. "Me and Steph shoot a lot of threes."

## Curry hits final shot for his 2nd three-point title

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Stephen Curry shot his way to another three-point title and Domantas Sabonis made sure the Skills Challenge still belongs to the bigs.

Then Portland's Anfernee Simons sealed his final, winning dunk with a kiss. Well, almost.

Curry, the Golden State Warriors superstar, provided a dramatic preview for his seventh All-Star Game appearance when he sank his final three-pointer to edge Utah's Mike Conley for the title on Sunday night. Curry also won the three-point contest in 2015.

Conley had the lead with 27 points before Curry was the final shooter of the contest. Curry had 26 points before sinking his final shot from the corner for 28 points and the win.

"I could hear the temperature rise a little

bit," Curry said of the reaction from the small crowd allowed in State Farm Arena.

"It was some awesome competition," Curry said. "I'm glad I got it done."

After a runner-up finish to 2020 Skills Challenge winner and fellow big man Bam Adebayo of Miami, Indiana's Sabonis returned to win the title.

The 6-foot-11 Sabonis did not miss a pass or three-point shot in elimination wins over Julius Randle of the New York Knicks and Luka Doncic of Dallas in the test of passing, ball-handling and shooting ability. Doncic fell behind by missing in his first two tests of his passing accuracy.

Sabonis beat Orlando's 7-foot Nikola Vucevic in the matchup of big men for the skills title. Each missed two three-point shots before Sabonis sank his third attempt and then clinched his fist in victory.

"It was fun," Sabonis said. "I wanted to come out and make sure I got it done this

time."

Curry had 31 points in the first round to lead the contest. Also advancing were Jayson Tatum, with 25 points, and Conley, with 28.

Tatum led off the final round with 17 points while making only one shot from the "money ball" rack. Conley nearly duplicated his first-round total and it appeared it might be enough until Curry solidified his reputation as one of the top shooters in NBA history.

Simons showed off his leaping ability and creativity to beat New York's Obi Toppin and Indiana's Cassius Stanley in the two-round dunk contest that started off with Stanley's spectacular slam that received a surprisingly low score.

The 6-foot-3 Simons soared, almost kissing the rim, on a powerful right-handed jam to beat Toppin in the final. Simons puckered his lips as if kissing the rim.