

DOD launches probe into Navy suicides

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department inspector general is sending investigators to several Navy installations to evaluate suicide rates, the Pentagon confirmed Thursday.

Site visits are planned for Naval Base Kitsap in Washington, Naval Base San Diego, Naval Station Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, and Naval Air Station Norfolk in Virginia, according to a memo about the review.

It will also look at suicides and suicide attempts on ships at sea. Dates for inspections at each facility have not been announced.

The Pentagon said investigators could visit additional installations as the review moves forward.

The timing and scope of the review will not be released in advance.

The suicide review was mandated in the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, which sets policy and spending priorities for the Pentagon.

The Navy has reported an increase in suicides and suicide attempts in recent years, with 71 suicides by active-duty sailors in 2022.

The service reported 65 suicides in 2020 and 59 in 2021. Final statistics for 2023 are not yet available.

Suicide rates differ because of fluctuations in the number of Navy personnel each year.

The rate per 100,000 active-duty sailors was 20.6 in 2022, 17 in 2021 and 19 in 2020, according to the Pentagon's 2022 annual

report on suicide in the military.

A federal study in 2021 found 30,177 active-duty personnel and veterans in all service branches who served in the military died from suicide in the 20 years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

It was more than four times higher than the 7,057 service members killed in combat during the same time.

The review will "determine whether the Department of Navy effectively took actions to prevent and respond to incidents of deaths by suicide, suicide attempts and suicidal ideation among members of the Navy assigned to sea duty or shore duty," according to a Feb. 27 memo from the inspector general's office.

"Additionally, we do not disclose our tactics, techniques or procedures used to perform our evaluations," said Mollie Halperin, a spokeswoman for the Defense Department Office of Inspector General.

Installations visited by investigators must also assign a rear admiral or high-ranking civilian employee to respond to questions.

The Navy's Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and the Defense Health Agency will lead the review. When the review is completed, it will be published on the inspector general's website.

The memo said the review could lead to revisions in how the Navy manages and evaluates its programs.

US general: Africa on verge of falling prey to Russia

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Russia is making aggressive moves in Africa in a bid to dominate regions spanning from NATO's southern doorstep in Libya to resource-rich parts of central Africa, a top U.S. general told Congress.

Russia and China both have long-term plans for Africa but Russia is moving "at an accelerated pace," U.S. Africa Command's Gen. Michael Langley said during the Senate Armed Services Committee testimony Thursday.

"A number of countries are at the tipping point of actually being captured by the Russian Federation," Langley said.

Like China, Russia has made inroads in Africa on multiple

fronts. Langley said Russian operatives have taken advantage of unrest in western Africa, where there have been a series of coups in recent years.

American involvement in places such as Niger and Mali has been curtailed because of government overthrows.

But that also has opened the door to a larger Russian presence.

Langley said Russian security forces, both private contractors and state actors, have upped their presence in the coup-wracked countries, as well as Libya and the Central African Republic.

"They want power projection capabilities," Langley said, adding that gaining access to natural resources, including rare-earth minerals,

are part of the attraction.

"I think at an accelerated pace, the Russian Federation is really trying to take over Central Africa as well as the Sahel," Langley said.

Central and southern African countries in particular have little trust in China and Russia but need infrastructure investments, inexpensive equipment and financial support, which can take the form of predatory loans that leave them vulnerable to domination, Langley said.

"These countries are in a dilemma. They must balance their development needs against risks to national sovereignty," Langley said.

The U.S. offers a different approach, one that is centered on development of civilian and

defense institutions and doesn't hold its partners' natural resources hostage, Langley said.

"Instead of demanding financial and political concessions, we demand accountability on the fundamentals: respect for human rights and the rule of law," Langley said.

While it's unclear which approach will win out, the stakes are high, given global military reliance on minerals such as chromium, cobalt, manganese and tantalum that are vital for various industries.

"If we don't support host nations in securing these resources, the implications for America's defense edge will be grim," Langley said. "These are critical minerals for our adversaries too."

US Marines reinforce embassy in Haiti

Miami Herald

As heavily armed gangs continue to challenge Haiti's weak government and turn the country's capital into a battlefield, the State Department on Sunday flew in U.S. Marines to reinforce its embassy and evacuate non-essential personnel.

The middle-of-the-night operation was conducted via helicopter by the U.S. military at the request of the State Department, the U.S. Southern Command said in a statement.

"This airlift of personnel into and out of the embassy is consistent

with our standard practice for embassy security augmentation worldwide, and no Haitians were on board the military aircraft," the statement said.

The airlift comes amid ongoing gang attacks in multiple locations around metropolitan Port-au-Prince, including Tabarre, where the U.S. embassy is located. Several nearby businesses have been looted and overtaken by armed gangs that today control more than 80% of the capital.

Since last Thursday, armed groups have led a coordinated

attack, demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry, and targeting key Haitian government institutions. After taking control of several police stations, they targeted the main seaport before orchestrating a mass prison break at the two largest prisons. Thousands of inmates were freed by the gangs, including several notorious gang leaders.

The gangs have also launched attacks against the international and domestic airports. Heavy gunfire around the airports has led to the suspension of interna-

tional flights into the country. Henry, who is under pressure by the United States and the Caribbean Community to resign, remains outside of the country, unable to return.

In response to the attacks, Haiti recently extended a 72-hour state of emergency and curfew to a month, and deployed members of its fledgling army to assist the Haiti National Police.

To help in the fight against gangs, the U.S. government recently provided the police with additional ammo.

2 National Guardsmen, border agent killed in Texas helo crash ID'd

Associated Press

LA GRULLA, Texas — A National Guard soldier from New York who was seriously injured in the crash of a helicopter flying over the U.S.-Mexico border remained hospitalized Sunday while authorities released the names of the two National Guard soldiers and a Border Patrol agent who were killed.

The three killed Friday in the crash near Rio Grande City were: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Casey Frankoski, 28, and Chief Warrant Officer 2 John Grassia, 30, both with the New York National Guard; and Border Patrol Agent Chris Luna, 49. The cause remains under investigation.

The UH-72 Lakota helicopter was assigned to the federal government's border security mission when it went down, according to a statement released by Joint Task Force North, a military unit that supports Customs and Border Protection.

The injured soldier is from the New York National Guard, according to the National Guard Bureau. The soldier, whose name isn't being released, is the aircraft crew chief. The soldier remained hospitalized, according to a release posted by the New York State Division of Military & Naval Affairs.

Maj. Gen. Ray Shields, the adjutant general of New York, said in the release that they are "shocked and devastated" by the deaths of Frankoski and Grassia, and are "praying for the quick recovery" of the injured crew chief.

U.S. Customs and Border Patrol Commissioner Troy Miller said in a statement that they were "heartbroken" by the death of Luna.

Frankoski and Grassia were assigned to Detachment 2, Company A, 1st Battalion, 244th Aviation Regiment. Luna was assigned to the Border Patrol's Rio Grande City Station.

Government: Rape claim is a worker's comp issue

By ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. government has asked a New Jersey federal court to pause a lawsuit that alleges the Navy's negligence led to a civilian engineer's rape aboard a transport ship so the woman can instead file a claim for a work-related injury with the Labor Department, according to court documents.

The arguments "demonstrate a shocking lack of concern for the circumstances" in which Elsie Dominguez claims she was raped by the captain of the Navy transport ship on which she worked, said Christine Dunn, an attorney representing Dominguez in the lawsuit filed in November.

Dominguez, a 2014 graduate of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, was working as the first assistant engineer aboard the USNS Carson City, an expeditionary fast transport vessel, in December 2021 when she said the ship's captain used a master key code to access her

private room overnight and rape her in her bed.

The Navy failed to care for and protect her when she reported the attack the next morning using the proper reporting procedures, according to the suit.

The Navy also failed to have appropriate security measures in place to prevent the assault from occurring, according to the suit, which does not name the civilian captain. The ship, part of the Navy's Military Sealift Command, lacked oversight of the captain's use of a master key code that gave him complete access to the vessel, as well as working security cameras and complete logs of crew members coming and going from the ship.

The Labor Department manages claims under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act, the federal law that pays medical expenses and compensation benefits to workers for injuries obtained while performing their duties.

Biden, Trump in attack mode on trail in Ga.

Associated Press

ATLANTA — President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump warned of dire consequences for the country if the other wins another term in the White House as the pair held dueling rallies in Georgia on Saturday fresh off strong wins in Super Tuesday contests that positioned them for an all-but-certain rematch this November.

The state was a pivotal 2020 battleground — so close four years ago that Trump finds himself indicted here for his push to “find 11,780 votes” and overturn Biden’s victory — and both parties are preparing for another closely contested race in the state this year.

Biden opened his speech at a rally in Atlanta noting that Trump was across the state with Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, the firebrand lawmaker who has gone from the fringes of her party to the fore. “It can tell you a lot about a person who he keeps company with,” Biden said to applause. Biden noted that Trump had hosted Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán — who has rolled back democracy in his country — at his Florida club the day before.

“When he says he wants to be a dictator, I believe him,” Biden said of Trump. “Our freedoms are literally on the ballot this November.”

Biden hosted the rally at Pullman Yards, a 27-acre arts and entertainment venue in Atlanta that was formerly an industrial site, to

receive the endorsement of Collective PAC, Latino Victory Fund and AAPI Victory Fund, a trio of political groups representing, respectively, Black, Latino, and Asian Americans and Pacific Island voters. The groups were announcing a \$30 million commitment to mobilize voters on Biden’s behalf.

Trump, meanwhile, hammered Biden on the border and blamed him for the death of 22-year-old Georgia nursing student Laken Riley last month. An immigrant from Venezuela who entered the U.S. illegally has been arrested and charged with her murder. He hosted Riley’s family at his rally in Rome, Greene’s hometown.

“What Joe Biden has done on our border is a crime against humanity and the people of this nation for which he will never be forgiven,” Trump said, promising the largest deportation in history. “What a tremendous shame,” he said.

Ahead of his rally, Biden expressed regret for using the term “illegal” during his State of the Union address to describe Riley’s suspected killer, drawing more criticism from Trump’s team.

Trump, who took the stage at the same moment Biden was still speaking at another part of the state, skewered the president for the apology and said, “Are we going crazy?”

“I say he was an illegal alien. He was an illegal immigrant. He was an illegal migrant. And he shouldn’t have been in our coun-

try and he never would have been under the Trump policy,” he said to loud cheers.

Trump also highlighted the very things Biden knocked him for, saying that he “had dinner last night with a great gentleman from Hungary, Viktor Orbán” and praised Greene for yelling at Biden during his State of the Union about Riley, calling her “very brave.”

Trump’s rally opened with a message asking attendees to rise to support the hundreds of people serving jail time for their roles in the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection, when thousands of pro-Trump supporters tried to overturn the 2020 presidential election by halting the counting of Electoral College votes.

The intensity of the rhetoric presaged a grueling eight months of campaigning ahead in the state.

“We’re a true battleground state now,” said U.S. Rep. Nikema Williams, an Atlanta Democrat who is also state party chairwoman.

Once a Republican stronghold, Georgia is now so competitive that neither party can agree on how to describe today’s divide. A “52-48 state,” said Republican Gov. Brian Kemp, whose party controls state government. “We’re not blue, we’re not red,” Williams countered, but “periwinkle,” a claim she supports with Biden’s 2020 win and the two Democratic senators, Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, Georgia sent to Washington.

Biden signs bill to avert shutdown

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden signed into law a \$460 billion package to fund part of the U.S. government until September, finalizing legislation that averts a partial government shutdown.

The package sets spending for about a quarter of agency funding through September, including the departments of Commerce, Justice, Transportation, Energy and Veterans Affairs.

Funding for other parts of the government is set to expire on March 22, creating the next deadline.

The next round of negotiations is expected to include money for the Defense and Homeland Security departments, which has sparked tensions between parties as Republicans demand strict border legislation.

While the funding deadline formally elapsed at midnight Friday, the White House said its budget office had enough leeway to allow continued operation of federal agencies into Saturday.

Time of confusion for Navajo, Hopi as US springs forward

Associated Press

TUBA CITY, Ariz. — Melissa Blackhair was not eager to spring forward Sunday.

“I’m dreading it. I just don’t want to see how much we have to adjust,” Blackhair said while in her home office in Tuba City on the Navajo Nation, the only area in Arizona that follows daylight saving time. With her husband work-

ing during the week in Phoenix, their clocks will vary.

Those who live on the Arizona portion of the Navajo Nation endure mind-bending calculations every March through November. The Navajo Nation, which also stretches into Utah and New Mexico, will reset clocks for one hour later despite being situated between two territories that re-

main on standard time: the rest of Arizona and the neighboring Hopi reservation. It’s made for a unique situation with the Hopi reservation, which is landlocked within the Navajo Nation and goes by standard time year-round. A stretch of U.S. 160 in Tuba City is the de facto border between the reservations and two time zones.

Reva Hoover, longtime man-

ager of the Bashas’ supermarket along U.S. 160 on the Navajo side, expected employees who live on both reservations to arrive late.

“In reality, it probably would be a lot easier for everybody if we all stayed on the same time. But I take it as being unique,” Hoover said. “Where else can you say that? ‘Oh they’re on a different time across the street.’”

1,000 troops will deploy near Gaza

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon will soon deploy about 1,000 American troops to build a temporary seaport just off the coast of war-torn Gaza to provide its inhabitants some 2 million meals per day, a Defense Department spokesman said Friday.

The American troops will deploy a floating pier and a roughly 1,800-foot causeway in the Mediterranean Sea off Gaza's coast, where commercial vessels can dock and offload aid to be transported by smaller vessels and vehicles into Gaza, said Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon's top spokesman.

The operation will use a makeshift dock known as a Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore, or

JLOTS, and include Navy and Army personnel, Ryder said.

None of the American forces will enter Gaza at any time, including to deliver aid or build the temporary pier, he said at the Pentagon.

Ryder said the pier should be operational within about 60 days.

"We're working to set this up as quickly as possible, but we expect that it will take several weeks to plan and execute," he said. "Once operational the actual amount of aid delivered will depend on many variables and will likely scale over time. However, we expect that deliveries via JLOTS could provide more than 2 million meals to the citizens of Gaza per day."

Not all the forces to be used in

the operation had been selected as of Friday, Ryder said. However, the Army's 7th Transportation Brigade based at Joint Base Langley-Eustis in Virginia had already been notified it would be deployed, he said.

President Joe Biden announced Thursday during his State of the Union speech that he ordered the Pentagon to conduct the new aid mission. He also called on Israel to do more to protect civilians and ensure they receive humanitarian aid as the Israelis fight Hamas militants in the Palestinian enclave.

The U.N. said the roughly 2.3 million people in Gaza now face near-famine conditions amid the fighting launched in the wake of Hamas militants' surprise

assault on Israelis on Oct. 7. Humanitarian aid has been slow getting into Gaza for reasons including blockades at land crossings and tight controls of aid trucks by Israel, which has accused Hamas of stealing humanitarian goods.

The U.S. in recent days has begun airdropping some humanitarian aid into Gaza via Air Force C-130s.

The U.S. and Jordanian militaries airdropped about 11,500 meals into northern Gaza on Friday, according to U.S. Central Command, which oversees American military operations in the Middle East.

It was not clear Friday how much the new aid operations would cost U.S. taxpayers, Ryder said.

Poland changes its view on NATO troops in Ukraine

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — Poland's foreign minister says the presence of NATO forces in Ukraine "is not unthinkable" and that he appreciates the French president for not ruling out that idea.

Radek Sikorski made the observation during a discussion marking the 25th anniversary of Poland's accession to NATO in the Polish parliament Friday, and the Foreign Ministry tweeted the comments later in English. They reflect a larger European debate over how to help Ukraine as Russia has gained some momentum on the battle-

field and Kyiv is running low on ammunition. The U.S. Congress is withholding aid that Ukraine says it critically needs to hold off the Russians, putting more pressure on Europe to respond to the war that has shattered peace on the Continent.

Last month French President Emmanuel Macron said the possibility of Western troops being sent to Ukraine could not be ruled out, a comment that broke a taboo among allies and prompted an outcry from other leaders. French officials later sought to clarify Macron's remarks and tamp down the backlash, while insisting on the need to

send a clear signal to Russia that it cannot win its war in Ukraine.

The Kremlin has warned that if NATO sends combat troops, a direct conflict between the alliance and Russia would be inevitable. Russian President Vladimir Putin said such a move would risk a global nuclear conflict.

Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk was among those European leaders who initially ruled out sending troops to Ukraine after Macron's remarks, saying: "Poland does not plan to send its troops to the territory of Ukraine."

Gunmen kidnap 300 students in northwest Nigeria

Associated Press

KURIGA, Nigeria — Rashidat Hamza is in despair. All but one of her six children are among the nearly 300 students abducted from their school in Nigeria's northwest, riddled with Islamic extremists and armed gangs.

It has been more than two days after her children — ages 7 to 18 — went to school in the remote town of Kuriga in Kaduna state only to be kidnapped by gunmen. She was still in shock Saturday.

Authorities said at least 100 children aged 12 or younger were among the abductees in the state known for violent killings lawlessness and dangerous roads where people get regularly snatched.

"We don't know what to do, but we believe in God," Hamza told The Associated Press during a visit to the town.

The mass kidnapping in Kuriga was the third in northern Nigeria since last week; a group of gunmen abducted 15 children from a school in another northwestern state, So-

koto, before dawn Saturday, and a few days earlier 200 people, mostly women and children displaced by conflict, were kidnapped in northeastern Borno State.

No group claimed responsibility for any of the recent abductions. But Islamic extremists waging an insurgency in the northeast are suspected of carrying out the kidnapping in Borno.

Locals blame the school abductions on herders who are in conflict with the settled communities.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Bill would apply 'stand your ground' to bears

FL TALLAHASSEE — So long as they don't eat them, stuff them or turn them into hats for the British royal guard, Florida residents will be allowed to kill black bears threatening them on their property with no consequences under a bill sent to Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis on Thursday.

The once-threatened Florida black bear population has increasingly wandered into neighborhoods and private property, especially in more rural areas of north and central Florida. The legislation is similar to the "stand your ground" law that allows people to use deadly force against other people threatening them.

Supporters say Floridians have the right to defend themselves, their families, pets and property against bears coming around looking for food. But opponents fear people will become trigger happy and not take other precautions against bears.

Xcel Energy admits role in igniting large wildfire

TX CANADIAN — The utility provider Xcel Energy said Thursday that its facilities appeared have played a role in igniting a massive wildfire in the Texas Panhandle that grew to the largest blaze in state history.

Texas officials have said they are still investigating the cause of the fire that has burned nearly 1,700 square miles and destroyed hundreds of structures. The Minnesota-based company said in a statement that it disputes claims that "it acted negligently" in maintaining and operating infrastructure.

gently" in maintaining and operating infrastructure.

"Based on currently available information, Xcel Energy acknowledges that its facilities appear to have been involved in an ignition of the Smokehouse Creek fire," the company said in a statement.

White House lifts its COVID-19 testing rule

DC WASHINGTON — The White House recently lifted its COVID-19 testing requirement for those who plan to be in close contact with President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and their spouses, bringing to an end the last coronavirus prevention protocol at the White House.

The White House said the change aligns its policies with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance. The agency recently relaxed its recommendation that those who test positive for COVID-19 isolate for five days. Now, the agency says people can return to work or regular activities if their symptoms are mild and improving and it's been a day since they've had a fever.

Jail phone restricted for school shooter's father

MI PONTIAC — A judge restricted the use of a phone and tablet by the father of a Michigan school shooter after he used them to make "threatening statements" from jail, authorities said Friday.

James Crumbley is on trial for involuntary manslaughter in the deaths of four students killed by his son Ethan Crumbley at Oxford High School in 2021. He's being held in the Oakland County jail.

Judge Cheryl Matthews said she would sign an order agreed to by Crumbley's attorney and the prosecutor's office. But she made no mention of threats as the reason. She suggested the matter would be unflattering to Crumbley and urged both sides to simply agree to an order and avoid a public airing.

Judge: Rail firm alone should pay for cleanup

OH EAST PALESTINE — Norfolk Southern alone will be responsible for paying for the cleanup after last year's fiery train derailment in eastern Ohio, a federal judge ruled.

The decision issued Wednesday threw out the Atlanta-based railroad's claim that the companies that made chemicals that spilled and owned tank cars that ruptured should share the cost of the cleanup.

An assortment of chemicals spilled and caught fire after the train derailed in East Palestine, Ohio, on Feb. 3, 2023. Three days later, officials blew open five tank cars filled with vinyl chloride because they feared those cars might explode. Residents still worry about potential health consequences from those chemicals.

Cruise employee accused of hiding camera on ship

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — A Royal Caribbean cruise employee is accused of hiding cameras inside bathrooms of passenger cabins to spy on guests, including underage girls.

Arvin Joseph Mirasol, 34, was arrested last week on federal charges of production and possession of child sexual abuse

material after the Symphony of the Seas arrived in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., according to a probable cause affidavit filed in the U.S. District Court of Florida. He also faces six counts of voyeurism in state court.

A guest staying in a cabin where Mirasol was an attendant found a camera in the bathroom Feb. 25. It was "affixed to the counter underneath the sink," according to the affidavit. She reported it to ship officials, who sent security to the room to investigate.

City council to change locks on perk apartment

LA NEW ORLEANS — The New Orleans City Council voted Thursday to change the locks on a coveted city-owned apartment in its latest dispute with Mayor LaToya Cantrell, whose use of the French Quarter property drew scrutiny and figured in a failed recall effort.

The dispute centers on one of 50 units in the 19th-century building known as the Upper Pontalba. It's steps away from the Mississippi River and, along with St. Louis Cathedral, is among five historic structures bordering the green space known as Jackson Square.

Previous mayors have said they used the apartment for meetings, special events or to house visiting dignitaries. Cantrell came under criticism for her use of the unit after a series of reports by WVUE-TV that used public surveillance video to document her long hours there, including time with her police bodyguard and an overnight stay with guests during the summer Essence Festival.

— From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Ryan, UNC keep Duke, Crazies at bay

Associated Press

DURHAM, N.C. — It took roughly two minutes before North Carolina guard Cormac Ryan caught a pass and buried a corner 3-pointer with no hesitation in front of Duke's rowdy fans.

He followed with another 16 seconds later from the same spot, then turned to face the "Cameron Crazies" and curse at them.

And the graduate transfer from Notre Dame never shut up, either — yapping, screaming, shushing the crowd and shaking his head with his tongue wagging about after making big shot after big shot. He finished with a career-high 31 points as the seventh-ranked Tar Heels secured the program's first Atlantic Coast Conference outright regular-season title since 2017.

It was an output that ranked

among the best by a UNC player in decades in the rivalry, offering a reminder of the veteran's unflappable confidence and competitive zip that could prove critical deeper into March.

"That's just who I am, man," Ryan said of his demonstrative celebrations in Saturday night's 84-79 win against the ninth-ranked Blue Devils. "I can't control it. I love playing in these environments. I love being in front of the fire. I love it."

UNC coach Hubert Davis added Ryan as part of an off-season overhaul after a disappointing flop from preseason No. 1 to missing the NCAA Tournament last year. He wanted the 6-foot-5 guard's veteran presence along with a feisty competitive edge.

The Tar Heels won the first meeting with Duke behind a monster effort from Stanford transfer Harrison Ingram. They

won Round 2 behind the other transfer starter in Ryan, who shot 8-for-12 overall, including 6-for-8 from 3-point range, and 9-for-10 from the foul line.

He ended with the best scoring total by a UNC player against Duke since eventual national player of the year Antawn Jamison had 35 points in a February 1998 win that stood as a 1-vs.-2 national matchup.

It was also the highest-scoring output by a UNC player at Duke's famed Cameron Indoor Stadium since Davis had 35 in a loss in March 1992.

"Cormac, I mean, he's got that dog in him," UNC veteran big man Armando Bacot said, adding that Ryan "brought the fire today."

"To go out there and be that unconscious in a big game like this with so much at stake, it just speaks to how crazy he is," Bacot added.

Ryan certainly looked comfortable even in Cameron's hostile confines, though it makes sense considering it's nothing he hasn't seen before. Even in today's older game with the transfer portal, he's a college-ancient 25 years old who started his college career at Stanford during the 2018-19 season.

He arrived having played 145 college games, including one in which he had 28 points with four 3-pointers for the Fighting Irish in a February 2021 win.

That one came here in front of no Cameron Crazies amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This time, everyone was packed into the venerable campus arena to see it — shots, celebrations and all.

Those first two 3s from the right corner set the tone for everything, both for himself and as part of UNC's game-opening 10-2 run on the way to a 15-point margin.

Kentucky knocks off Tennessee, wins fifth straight

Associated Press

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Antonio Reeves and Reed Sheppard each scored 27 points as No. 15 Kentucky spoiled No. 4 Tennessee's late-season run with an 85-81 victory Saturday.

The Wildcats (23-8, 13-5 Southeastern Conference) have now won five in a row and seven of their past eight. The win wrapped up a double-bye in the SEC Tournament. Sheppard came off the bench to hit six 3-pointers in the second half and seven for the game. Justin Edwards scored 16 and Rob Dillingham had 11.

The Volunteers (24-7, 14-4) were led by SEC Player of the Year candidate Dalton Knecht with a career-high 40 points. Zakai Zeigler had 17 points and nine assists. Jonas Aidoo had 11 points, eight rebounds and five blocks.

No. 1 Houston 76, No. 14 Kansas 46: Jamal Sheard had 13 points, six rebounds and eight assists, Damian Dunn added 12 points and the Cougars claimed the Big 12 Conference regular-season title in their first season in the league.

No. 2 UConn 74, Providence 60: Alex

Karaban scored 16 points and Tristen Newton had 12 points, eight rebounds and five assists as the visiting Huskies bounced back after falling behind 15-2 early in the teams' regular-season finale.

Southern California 78, No. 5 Arizona 65: DJ Rodman and Kobe Johnson scored 19 points each and the host Trojans defeated the Wildcats for their first three-game winning streak of the season.

Kansas State 65, No. 6 Iowa State 58: Arthur Kaluma scored 23 points, Cam Carter added 21 and the host Wildcats beat the Cyclones, giving their flickering NCAA Tournament hopes a big boost heading into the Big 12 Tournament.

No. 8 Marquette 86, Xavier 80: Kam Jones scored 30 points and Oso Ighodaro added 24 as the visiting Golden Eagles snapped a two-game losing streak.

No. 10 Creighton 66, Villanova 67: Trey Alexander hit a fadeaway jumper with 0.2 seconds left and finished with 17 points as the visiting Bluejays survived a furious late rally to beat the Wildcats.

Texas Tech 78, No. 11 Baylor 68: Pop Isaacs scored 20 points, including the first

of the his team's four consecutive 3-pointers after the Bears had taken their only lead after halftime, and the host Red Raiders went on to win in their regular-season finale.

No. 13 Auburn 92, Georgia 78: Denver Jones scored a season-high 21 points, making 7 of 9 3-pointers, and the host Tigers closed the regular season with a win.

No. 16 Alabama 92, Arkansas 88 (OT): Mark Sears scored 22 points and Latrell Wrightsell Jr. had 20, including a game-tying 3-pointer with 22 seconds to go to force overtime as the host Crimson Tide rallied past the Razorbacks.

No. 17 South Carolina 93, Mississippi State 89 (OT): B.J. Mack had 25 points and Collin Murray-Boyles scored 19 to lead the visiting Gamecocks.

No. 20 BYU 85, Oklahoma State 71: Fousseyni Traore scored 19 points and Jaxson Robinson added 17 to lead the host Cougars over the Cowboys.

Tulsa 76, No. 24 South Florida 67: Freshman PJ Haggerty scored 26 of his career-high 32 points in the second half and the host Golden Hurricanes stopped the Bulls' 15-game winning streak.

More triple-double records for Doncic

Associated Press

DETROIT — Luka Doncic became the first NBA player to record six consecutive 30-point triple-doubles as the Dallas Mavericks pulled away in the second half and beat the Detroit Pistons 142-124 on Saturday night.

Doncic finished with 39 points, 10 assists and 10 rebounds, eclipsing Russell Westbrook's mark of five straight 30-point triple-doubles. He also extended his own record with a fifth straight 35-point triple-double.

"That just shows what level he's playing on right now," Mavericks coach Jason Kidd said. "He knows he can score the ball, and he's also able to find his teammates and lastly, he's able to rebound the ball."

Kyrie Irving added 21 points for Dallas, which has won two in a row after a three-game losing streak.

Cade Cunningham had 33 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds for the Pistons, who have lost 10 of 12. Simone Fon-

tecchio added a career-high 27 points, but struggled against Doncic after Ausar Thompson left the game with an illness.

The Mavericks led 69-65 at halftime, helped by 21 points from Doncic in the second quarter.

Doncic had 10 more points in the third and Dallas moved out to a 104-88 lead after Michigan star Tim Hardaway Jr. hit three 3-pointers in the final 2:16 of the period — the last, a buzzer-beater.

Celtics 117, Suns 107: Jayson Tatum scored 29 points, Jaylen Brown added 27 and NBA-leading Boston beat host Phoenix.

The Celtics came into the game on a rare two-game skid after dropping games to Cleveland and Denver. Boston still hasn't lost three in a row and improved to 49-14 overall.

The Suns — playing without injured All-Star Devin Booker — were led by Kevin Durant's 45 points on 18-for-26 shooting. Bradley Beal added 25 points while Jusuf Nurkic scored 11

and grabbed 11 rebounds.

Spurs 126, Warriors 113: Keldon Johnson had 22 points and 11 rebounds, and a visiting San Antonio team without Victor Wembanyama beat a Golden State team without Stephen Curry.

Jeremy Sochan and Malaki Branham each scored 20 points for San Antonio, which had dropped seven of nine. Julian Champagnie had 17 points and seven rebounds.

Klay Thompson came off the bench to score 27 points for Golden State.

Nuggets 142, Jazz 121: Nikola Jokic played through a bruised right arm that kept him out of shootaround and finished with 26 points, six rebounds and eight assists as host Denver beat short-handed Utah.

Jamal Murray scored 37 points and Michael Porter Jr. added 19 points for Denver.

Keyonte George led Utah with 29 points.

Hornets 110, Nets 99: Miles Bridges had 24 points and 10 rebounds, Brandon Miller added

23 points and host Charlotte delivered another blow to Brooklyn's sagging playoff hopes.

Cam Thomas returned from a six-game absence due to an ankle injury and scored 31 points, but the Nets (25-39) fell 4½ games behind the Atlanta Hawks for the 10th and final play-in spot in the Eastern Conference with their third loss in four games.

Trail Blazers 125, Raptors 118 (OT): Deandre Ayton returned from a right hand sprain and had a season-high 30 points and 19 rebounds to help visiting Portland beat Toronto.

Dalano Banton had 25 points and Anfernee Simons added 23 to help the Blazers snap a three-game losing streak.

Clippers 112, Bulls 102: Paul George scored 22 points, Kawhi Leonard added 19 and host Los Angeles rallied for its third straight victory and fourth win in six games.

DeMar DeRozan had 24 points and 10 assists, but the Bulls had their three-game winning streak snapped.

Shiffrin wins first race after six-week injury layoff

Associated Press

ARE, Sweden — All Mikaela Shiffrin has been really looking for in her first race back after a six-week injury layoff was "good skiing."

What she got, though, was even by the American star's standards "an insane way to return."

Shiffrin made a triumphant comeback to the World Cup Sunday, dominating the season's penultimate slalom for career win 96 and locking up her record-equaling eighth season title in the discipline.

Racing for the first time since hurting her left knee in a downhill crash in Italy, the two-time Olympic champion posted the fastest times in both runs to beat

Croatian prodigy Zrinka Ljutic by a massive 1.24 seconds and third-placed Michelle Gisin of Switzerland by 1.34.

"It feels like we're in a dream right now," Shiffrin said after her sixth slalom win of the season and 59th overall. "There has been so much uncertainty coming into this race. The biggest goal I had was just... good skiing in the final races of the season, so I could sort of prove I have the right pace and the right mentality to close out the season, so next year I start in a better place."

Shiffrin got much more than that. While she just edged out her competitors in the opening leg, she crushed the field in a free-flowing second run.

"This is an insane way to return," she said. "It was so nice to race again today and some nerves and all the emotions that I hoped to feel."

Shiffrin had been out since she sprained the MCL and tibiofibular ligament in her knee in January, while also still recovering from a bone bruise she had sustained at the start of the season.

Verstappen cruises to win at Saudi Arabian GP

Max Verstappen stayed firmly on course for another season of dominance in Formula 1 on Saturday by winning the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix.

Even after just two races, and despite turmoil at Red Bull,

Verstappen seems in near-total control on the track as he aims for a fourth consecutive title this year.

"A fantastic weekend for the whole team and also for myself. I felt really good with the car," Verstappen said.

The Dutch driver won easily ahead of his teammate Sergio Perez. Ferrari's Charles Leclerc was third.

Patriots agree to trade QB Jones to the Jaguars

A person familiar with negotiations says the Jacksonville Jaguars have agreed to acquire New England Patriots quarterback Mac Jones for a sixth-round pick in next month's NFL Draft.

Tuch, Sabres down Oilers in shootout

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Alex Tuch scored the decisive shootout goal and the Buffalo Sabres overcame a two-goal deficit and a disallowed overtime goal in a 3-2 win over the Edmonton Oilers on Saturday.

Jacob Bryson scored the tying goal with 8:21 remaining and Tage Thompson scored 15½ minutes into the first period as Buffalo snapped an 0-2-1 skid. Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen stopped 30 shots through overtime, and two more in the shootout, and sealed the win by getting his stick and blocker out to stop Ryan Nugent-Hopkins on the Oilers' third-and-final shootout attempt.

Ryan McLeod and Warren Foegele had a goal and assist each for Edmonton, which lost its second straight following a five-game winning streak. Stuart Skinner stopped 25 shots through overtime and one of three shootout attempts.

Oilers captain Connor McDavid had his points and league-best assist streak end at 13 games despite enjoying several set-up and scoring opportunities, including a shot off the post in the final minute of the first period.

Canucks 5, Jets 0: All-Star goalie Thatcher Demko left midway through the

second period after stopping all 12 shots he faced in host Vancouver's victory over Winnipeg.

Golden Knights 5, Red Wings 3: Jonathan Marchessault scored three times, including the go-ahead goal with 2:44 left, to help host Vegas top Detroit and snap a four-game skid.

Panthers 5, Flames 1: Vladimir Tarasenko scored his first two goals with his new team and host Florida won for the 17th time in 20 games.

Bruins 5, Penguins 1: David Pastrnak reached 40 goals for the third consecutive season, and host Boston beat fading Pittsburgh.

Rangers 4, Blues 0: Igor Shesterkin made 26 saves for his 13th career shutout in his 200th career NHL game, Vincent Trocheck and Jimmy Vesey scored first-period goals and host New York won for the ninth time in its last 10 at Madison Square Garden.

Hurricanes 4, Devils 2: Jesperi Kotkaniemi broke a tie with a bad-angle shot early in the third period and Pyotr Kochetkov made 24 saves to lead visiting Carolina over New Jersey.

Stars 4, Kings 1: Radek Faksa and Jason Robertson scored 18 seconds apart in

the second period, Joe Pavelski had a goal and an assist, and visiting Dallas extended its winning streak to a season-high five games with a win over Los Angeles.

Maple Leafs 3, Canadiens 2: John Tavares broke a tie with 6:46 left with his 20th goal of the season and visiting Toronto defeated Montreal.

Predators 2, Blue Jackets 1: Luke Evangelista scored a tie-breaking goal in the third period, Kevin Lankinen made 32 stops and visiting Nashville beat Columbus for its 10th win in 11 games.

Lightning 7, Flyers 0: Defenseman Darren Raddysh had five assists and host Tampa Bay won a game that saw irate Philadelphia coach John Tortorella reluctantly leave the bench after he was ejected in the first period.

Capitals 4, Blackhawks 1: Tom Wilson scored for a second consecutive game, Charlie Lindgren robbed Connor Bedard among his 29 saves, and host Washington beat Chicago to keep pace in the Eastern Conference playoff race.

Sharks 2, Senators 1: Thomas Bordeleau scored two power-play goals, Magnus Chrona made 31 saves for his first NHL win and host San Jose beat Ottawa to snap a nine-game losing streak.

O'Malley keeps belt by controlling Vera at UFC 299

Associated Press

MIAMI — Sean O'Malley emphatically defended his bantamweight belt Saturday night, unanimously outpointing Marlon "Chito" Vera in UFC 299.

In a fight that he controlled from the opening round, O'Malley (18-1) outclassed Vera with his quickness, precision striking and footwork.

The champion threw 344 punches, landing more than 50% of them. He was the more active fighter throughout, hurting Vera (23-9-1) with shots to the body, knees to the face, and countering nearly every one of Vera's connections with one of his own.

It was O'Malley's first defense of his bantamweight title after stopping former champion Aljamain Sterling 51 seconds in-

to the second round at UFC 292 last August.

UFC CEO Dana White called the performance a "clinic" by O'Malley, who is fast becoming one of the biggest stars in the sport. White added that the card was the fourth-highest grossing UFC event ever, with a gate of \$14.14 million.

"He's on his way," White said of O'Malley, who some believe has star power of Conor McGregor. "He's the biggest star ever in bantamweight history. You can say that right now."

Vera handed O'Malley the only defeat of his career nearly four years ago by landing a leg kick that caused O'Malley's right foot to go numb in the first round of UFC 252.

O'Malley has often downplayed that loss — the kick shut

down the peroneal nerve in his lower leg, causing temporary loss of feeling — and vowed to dominate in the rematch.

"That one feels good getting that one back," O'Malley said. "I'm guessing we can all agree that I'm undefeated still."

He added that he wants to fight featherweight champion Ilia Topuria next.

"Dana," he said, "Give me a jet to Spain, baby."

Immediately after the five-round fight, O'Malley sat down on the canvas after Vera hurt him late with a shot to the body — one that could have been much more significant if it was landed earlier in the match.

"I tried to stay toe to toe with him and catch him," said Vera, the Ecuadoran fighter who received a massive amount of

cheers from the fans at Kaseya Center. "At the end of the fifth round I landed a nice body that hurt him, but I ran out of time."

Former interim lightweight champion Dustin Poirier knocked out up-and-comer Benoit Saint Denis with a right hand in the second round of their lightweight match. Saint Denis had hurt Poirier with punches in the early round before the veteran dropped him with a right hook at 2:52 in the second round. The victory moved Poirier into a tie for the fourth-most wins in UFC history with 22.

Jack Della Maddalena stretched his winning streak to 17 with the biggest victory of his career. He stopped Gilbert Burns in the third round of their bout.