

Blast hits near girl's school in Kabul

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A bomb exploded near a girls' school in a majority Shiite district of west Kabul on Saturday, killing at least 30 people, many of them young pupils between 11 and 15 years old. The Taliban condemned the attack and denied any responsibility.

Ambulances evacuated the wounded as relatives and residents screamed at authorities near the scene of the blast at Syed Al-Shahda school, in the Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood, Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian said. The death toll was expected to rise further.

The bombing, apparently aimed to cause maximum civilian carnage, adds to fears that violence in the war-wrecked country could escalate as the U.S. and NATO end nearly 20 years of military engagement.

Residents in the area said the explosion was deafening. Naser Rahimi told The Associated Press he heard three separate explosions, although there was no official confirmation of multiple blasts. Rahimi also

said he believed that the sheer power of the explosion meant the death toll would almost certainly climb.

Rahimi said the explosion went off as the girls were streaming out of the school at around 4:30 p.m. local time. Authorities were investigating the attack but have yet to confirm any details.

While no one has claimed responsibility for the bombing, the Afghan Islamic State affiliate has targeted the Shiite neighborhood before.

The radical Sunni Muslim group has declared war on Afghanistan's minority Shiite Muslims. Washington blamed ISIS for a vicious attack last year in a maternity hospital in the same area that killed pregnant women and newborn babies.

In Dasht-e-Barchi, angry crowds attacked the ambulances and even beat health workers as they tried to evacuate the wounded, Health Ministry spokesman Ghulam Dastigar Nazari said. He implored residents to cooperate and allow ambulances free access to the site.

Images circulating on social media purportedly showed bloodied school backpacks and books strewn across the street in front of the school, and smoke rising above the neighborhood.

At one nearby hospital, Associated Press journalists saw at least 20 dead bodies lined up in hallways and rooms, with dozens of wounded people and families of victims pressing through the facility.

Outside the Muhammad Ali Jinnah Hospital, dozens of people lined up to donate blood, while family members checked casualty posted lists on the walls.

Both Arian and Nazari said that at least 50 people were also wounded, and that the casualty toll could rise. The attack occurred just as the fasting day came to an end.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, and Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told reporters in a message that only ISIS could be responsible for such a heinous crime.

Navy calls for shipyard changes in pursuit of 355 ships

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The United States must repair and modernize its four public shipyards and advance its shipbuilding and maintenance capabilities to maintain its strategic advantage against a growing Chinese navy, the vice admiral who oversees Navy shipyards told lawmakers Thursday.

"Our ability to deploy combat ready ships and submarines starts in our public and private sector shipyards and ship-repair facilities around the globe," Vice Adm. William Galinis, who leads the Naval Sea Systems Command, told members of the House Armed Services Committee subpanel on readiness during a hearing on ship and submarine maintenance.

Since releasing its Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Plan in 2018, the Navy has been asking to repair and update the nation's four aging shipyards, which would assist in its pursuit of its congressionally mandated

goal of a 355-ship fleet.

The plan calls for dry dock repairs, restoring and moving shipyard facilities, and replacing aging and deteriorating equipment at Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Virginia, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Maine, Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Washington and Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard in Hawaii, according to Naval Sea Systems Command.

Originally built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, "the Navy's public shipyards are not efficiently configured to maintain and modernize nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and submarines," according to the command's website.

The 355-ship goal was made law in the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act to help the Navy maintain its global presence, especially as China becomes increasingly aggressive at sea.

A fleet of 355 ships would about match the current size of the Chinese navy, which the Pentagon estimates to be about 350 ships

compared to the U.S. fleet of 296.

China has "long had much more shipbuilding capacity than we have," Galinis said, which helped the nation surpass the U.S. as the largest navy in the world.

The testimony Thursday came a week after lawmakers in the House and Senate introduced the Supplying Help to Infrastructure in Ports, Yards, and America's Repair Docks Act of 2021, or SHIPYARD Act, which would provide \$21 billion in 20 years to support the Navy's 2018 plan and another \$4 billion to private shipyards that support the Navy's fleet.

Updating the shipyards would benefit the construction of new ships and also help the Navy maintain its ships throughout their service lifetimes, Galinis said.

"Nearly 70% of our fleet at sea today will still be in service in 2030," he said. "Our ability to effectively maintain these ships and submarines is critical to delivering on Navy our nation needs."

Most DOD funds moved to border wall unrecoverable

By **JOHN M. DONNELLY**
CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Most of the nearly \$10 billion that the Trump administration diverted from the armed services to build barriers on the U.S.-Mexico border will never be seen again, Pentagon and congressional officials confirmed Friday.

That includes some of the money diverted from military construction funds and all the money former President Donald Trump had reprogrammed from a variety of other Pentagon initiatives, such as National Guard equipment, a new amphibious assault ship for the Navy, F-35 fighter jets for the Marine Corps, Osprey tilt-rotors for carrying forces to battle and C-130J transport planes.

Betty McCollum, the Minnesota Democrat who chairs the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, told panel members at the end of a hearing Friday that they are “not going to be getting any money returned” from Defense subcommittee appropriations that were diverted to border projects in fiscal 2019 and 2020.

McCollum did not elaborate at the hearing. She said the panel’s members will soon be receiving a memo from the staff director explaining the situation.

But a House aide and a Pentagon official told CQ Roll Call why so few of the diverted defense dollars are still available.

All told, about \$14 billion was spent on the border barriers through the budgets of the Pentagon and the departments of Home-

land Security and Treasury.

Most of it was not appropriated by Congress but was instead redirected from other programs that had been enacted into law.

Of that \$14 billion, fully \$9.9 billion came from the Pentagon through two funding streams in fiscal 2019 and 2020.

In the first stream, \$3.6 billion was moved from military construction projects at home and abroad, including many in Eastern European countries facing down threats from Russia.

In the second, \$6.3 billion was moved from other defense projects — including several high-profile weapons favored by lawmakers and supported by the brass.

The \$6.3 billion was routed through a Pentagon counterdrug account under a law that allowed money to be moved from that account to other agencies that are deemed to be fighting the drug trade.

Of course, to the extent money has already been spent on border projects, it would not be available anyway. That is the case with most of the projects funded by the counterdrug money, the Pentagon official said. So not much money from that funding stream is likely to be left over for that reason alone.

The second reason the \$6.3 billion is no longer accessible, he and the House aide said, is that the counterdrug funds expired after one year, meaning they have not been available since September to be used for any other purpose.

General: Pandemic helped Air Force retain 200 pilots

By **SARAH CAMMARATA**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Air Force’s chief of staff told House lawmakers on Friday that the service has slightly reduced its deficit in pilots, following initial concern that a reduction in flight training due to the coronavirus pandemic could exacerbate the Air Force’s long-standing pilot shortage.

“We’ve made some progress over the course of the past year, where we shortened the gap by about 200,” Gen. Charles “CQ” Brown said at an Air Force and Space Force budget hearing of the House Appropriations Committee’s subpanel on defense.

The coronavirus pandemic has led some pilots to look to the service for employment. Historically, some pilots have left the military to enjoy benefits that the commercial airline industry offers, such as more stable work hours, better pay and more flight time.

Early last year, the former Air Force chief of staff, Gen. David Goldfein, told lawmakers that the service remained about 2,000 pilots short of the 21,000 that the service believes are needed to meet requirements laid out in the 2018 National Defense Strategy. The strategy puts great-power competitors China and Russia at the forefront of national security concerns over issues such as global terrorism.

Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Texas, pressed service officials on Friday about how the Air Force is addressing the issue that has plagued the service for several years, pointing out the 2,000-pilot deficit last year.

“We got to have something to address that issue of the pilot shortage. We have been talking about it for a long time, and we got to see some sort of change on that,” Cuellar said.

While the pandemic forced airlines temporarily to pause hiring as global travel slowed, Cuellar pointed out that it also hampered pilot training.

That is a “real testament to our airmen, and our operators and our maintainers to maintain the capacity and not slide back due to [the coronavirus]. It’s a combination of production and retention and we’re working both sides of that,” the general said.

Drone hits Iraqi base with US troops

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A drone strike early on Saturday targeted a military base in Iraq that hosts U.S. troops, causing only minor damage and no casualties, Iraq’s military and the U.S.-led coalition said.

The pore-dawn attack damaged a hangar, tweeted coalition spokesman Col. Wayne Marotto. He said the attack was under investigation. An Iraqi military statement also said no losses were reported.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack. The U.S. has blamed Iran-backed militia groups for previous attacks, most of them rocket attacks that have targeted the American presence in Baghdad and military bases across Iraq.

The strike drew the ire of mostly Shiite Iraqi lawmakers and prompted parliament to pass a non-binding resolution to pressure the Iraqi government to oust foreign troops from the country.

Weak job report spurs fight over spending

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden insists an unexpected slowdown in companies' hiring is clear new proof the U.S. needs the multitrillion-dollar federal boost he's pushing. But his sales effort is challenged by critics who say Friday's jobless figures show his earlier aid legislation — successfully rushed through Congress — is actually doing more harm than good.

Biden's promised economic comeback hardly stalled on Friday. But it seemed to sputter a bit with a report that found merely modest April job gains of 266,000 and complicated his new \$4 trillion push for infrastructure, education and children.

The employment report failed to show that the U.S. economy was accelerating so much as stutter-stepping along as the unemployment rate ticked up to 6.1%. Economists had projected roughly one million

added jobs last month, and the modest hiring indicated that the earlier \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package has provided an uneven boost so far.

The figures present Biden with a fresh challenge at a critical moment in his presidency. He is betting that an open embrace of massive government spending will help resolve the nation's public health and financial turmoil — and lift the political prospects for Democrats heading into next year's elections. But the disappointing jobs numbers could also embolden his critics and stiffen the Republican resistance to the infrastructure package Biden is trying to push through Congress.

Addressing the report, Biden sought to ease concerns.

"We knew this wouldn't be a sprint—it'd be a marathon," he said. The pandemic relief package "was designed to help us over

the course of a year, not 60 days. A year. We never thought that after the first 50 or 60 days everything would be fine. Today, there's more evidence our economy is moving in the right direction. But it's clear we have a long way to go."

Biden's opponents say the legislation actually worsened problems in at least one way, with expanded unemployment benefits that gave the jobless a reason to stay at home instead of seeking work.

The president said the jobs data don't show that. And advocates for his plans argue that the report shows more spending is needed to sustain the economy.

There are also issues of supply shortages — for computer chips, lumber and more — that are holding back growth, a reminder that the world's largest economy seldom bends perfectly to the wishes of lawmakers.

More lockdowns as southern India sees virus rise

Associated Press

BENGALURU, India — Two southern states in India became the latest to declare lockdowns, as coronavirus cases surge at breakneck speed across the country and pressure mounts on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to implement a nationwide shutdown.

At over 300,000, Karnataka's capital of Bengaluru has the highest active caseload of any Indian city. But experts warn the worst is still ahead as India's third-largest city buckles under oxygen shortages, over-run hospitals and crowded crematoriums. In Tamil Nadu state, the lockdown announcement followed a daily record of more than 26,000 cases on Friday.

Infections have swelled in India since February in a disastrous turn blamed on more contagious variants as well as government decisions to allow massive crowds to gather for religious festivals and political rallies.

On Saturday, India reported 401,078 confirmed cases, including a record high of 4,187 deaths. Overall, India has more than 21.8 million confirmed infections and nearly 240,000 deaths.

Experts say even those dramatic tolls are undercounts.

One doctor in Bengaluru said he's had to reject patients "left, right and center" as his hospital struggled to find more oxygen.

"The problem is the demand is so high that we need constant oxygen," said Dr.

Sanjay Gururaj, the medical director at Shanti Hospital and Research Center.

The hospital is sending a truck twice a day to oxygen plants on the outskirts of the city to bring back 12 jumbo oxygen cylinders. "In normal times, this would have lasted over two weeks — now, it lasts just over a day," he added.

The state's oxygen shortages prompted the high court on Wednesday to order the federal government to increase the daily liquid medical oxygen supplied to Karnataka.

The ruling came after 24 virus patients died in a government hospital on Monday. It's unclear how many of them died due to the lack of oxygen, but an investigation is ongoing.

Officials: California bar sold fake vaccination cards

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The owner of a Northern California bar where authorities say made-to-order fake COVID-19 vaccination cards were sold to undercover state agents for \$20 each was arrested in what officials call the first such foiled operation they are aware of nationwide.

The plainclothes agents from California's Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control said they were told at the Old Corner Saloon

in Clements to write their names and birthdates on Post-it notes and then watched as employees cut the cards, filled in identifying information and bogus vaccination dates and laminated the finished products.

"On the back where they put the two dates when you were vaccinated, they used two different color pens to make it look like it was two different times," supervising agent Luke Blehm said Friday. "So they went to some effort to make it look authentic."

Vaccination cards are being used in some places as a pass for people to attend large gatherings.

In California, officials have allowed venue operators to offer easier access to people with proof of vaccination. That includes preferential access to large events such as concerts and sporting events and allowing venues to create vaccinated-only sections where social distancing requirements are not as strict.

Pipeline firm halts business after cyber hit

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A company that operates a major U.S. energy pipeline says it was forced to temporarily halt all pipeline operations following a cybersecurity attack.

In a statement, Colonial Pipeline said the attack took place Friday and also affected some of its information technology systems. The company describes itself as the largest refined products pipeline in the United States and transports roughly 45% of all fuel, including gasoline, diesel fuel and home heating oil, that is consumed on the East Coast.

The Alpharetta, Ga.,-based company said it hired an outside cybersecurity firm to investigate the nature and scope of the attack and has also contacted law enforcement and

federal agencies.

“Colonial Pipeline is taking steps to understand and resolve this issue,” the company said in a late Friday statement. “At this time, our primary focus is the safe and efficient restoration of our service and our efforts to return to normal operation. This process is already underway, and we are working diligently to address this matter and to minimize disruption to our customers and those who rely on Colonial Pipeline.”

The precise nature of the incident was unclear, including who launched the attack and what the motives were.

Mike Chapple, teaching professor of IT, analytics and operations at the University of Notre Dame’s Mendoza College of Business

and a former computer scientist with the National Security Agency, said systems that control pipelines should not be connected to the internet and vulnerable to cyber intrusions.

“The attacks were extremely sophisticated and they were able to defeat some pretty sophisticated security controls, or the right degree of security controls weren’t in place,” Chapple said.

Colonial Pipeline said it transports more than 100 million gallons of fuel daily, through a pipeline system spanning more than 5,500 miles between Texas and New Jersey.

The FBI and the White House’s National Security Council did not immediately return messages seeking comment.

Medics: Hundreds of Palestinians injured in clashes

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — A night of heavy clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound and elsewhere in Jerusalem left more than 200 Palestinians wounded, medics said Saturday, as the city braced for even more violence after weeks of unrest.

Nightly protests broke out at the start of the holy month of Ramadan over police restrictions at a popular gathering place and have reignited in recent days over threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinians from their homes in east Jerusalem, which is claimed by both sides in the decades-old conflict.

It was unclear what set off the violence at

Al-Aqsa, which erupted when Israeli police in riot gear deployed in large numbers as thousands of Muslim worshippers were holding evening prayers at the sprawling hilltop esplanade.

Throughout the night large groups of protesters could be seen hurling rocks as Israeli police fired rubber bullets and stun grenades. At one point, the police entered one of the buildings in the complex, which includes the Al-Aqsa mosque and the iconic golden Dome of the Rock.

The Palestinian Red Crescent emergency service said 88 of the wounded were hospitalized. The Palestinian Health Ministry said 83 people were wounded by rubber-coated bullets, including three who were

shot in the eye, two with serious head injuries and two with broken jaws.

The Israeli police said protesters hurled stones, fireworks and other objects at them, wounding 17 officers, half of whom were hospitalized. “We will respond with a heavy hand to all violent disturbances, riots and attacks on our forces,” it said in a statement late Friday.

The Al-Aqsa mosque compound is the third holiest site in Islam. It is also the holiest site for Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount because it was the location of the biblical temples. It has long been a flashpoint in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and was the epicenter of the 2000 Palestinian intifada, or uprising.

California sees its population decline for the first time

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California’s population fell by more than 182,000 last year, the first yearly loss ever recorded for the nation’s most populous state that halted a growth streak dating to its founding in 1850 on the heels of a gold rush that prompted a flood of people to seek their fortune in the West.

The figures released Friday followed last week’s announcement from the U.S. Census Bureau that California would lose a congressional seat for the first time because it grew more slowly than other states over the past decade. Still, California’s population of just under 39.5 million and soon-to-be 52-member con-

gressional delegation remain by far the largest.

California’s population has surged and slowed in the decades since its founding, with notable increases following World War II and the tech boom of the 1980s and ‘90s that put Silicon Valley on the map.

In recent years, more people have left California for other states than have moved there, a trend Republicans say is a result of the state’s high taxes and progressive politics. The average sale price of a single-family home in California hit a record \$758,990 in March, a 23.9% increase from a year ago.

“The numbers don’t lie. People are leaving our state because it’s not affordable to live

here,” tweeted Kevin Faulconer, the former mayor of San Diego and one of the Republican candidates hoping to unseat Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom in this year’s expected recall election.

But the Newsom administration says California’s population decline is an outlier, blaming it on the coronavirus pandemic that turned everything upside down in 2020.

California has been steadily losing people to other states for years. From 2010 to 2020, about 6.1 million people left for other states and only 4.9 million arrived from other parts of the country, according to an analysis of census data by the Public Policy Institute of California.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Worker finds human foot on freeway

CA SAN BERNARDINO — Authorities are investigating after a human foot was found on a Southern California freeway.

The foot was discovered by a Caltrans employee who was working on the center median of Interstate 210 in San Bernardino, California Highway Patrol Officer Ivan Sandoval said.

The appendage, which was not in a sock or shoe, may have belonged to a woman, and appeared to have been there for several days, he said.

No other human remains or clues were found after an extensive search of the area, the San Bernardino Sun reported.

Missing woman found living in tent at campsite

UT SALT LAKE CITY — A Utah woman who disappeared in November was discovered alive in a tent at a campsite near Provo, Utah County officials said.

The woman, 47, who authorities did not identify, was first reported missing after a U.S. Forest Service employee found her car abandoned in a trail-head parking lot Nov. 25.

According to Utah County Sheriff's Sgt. Spencer Cannon, authorities found her during an aerial search of the area, which they conducted alongside volunteers in hopes of finding evidence she was still alive.

Cannon said the woman had no physical injuries besides being weak and underweight, having reportedly subsisted off of grass, moss and water from a

nearby river for more than five months.

Info sought after gator's eyes, snout found taped

FL ORLANDO — Gatorland is offering a \$1,000 reward for information that leads to the person who taped shut an alligator's eyes and snout, leaving it for dead.

The incident happened when Barbara and Jack Thornton found the bound gator near the Wekiwa River in Seminole County.

They called the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the neighborhood also offered up a \$500 reward for information, WESH reported.

The agency is continuing to investigate. It is a felony to kill, capture or possess an alligator in Florida.

Pizza man paints street to save people dough

MI DETROIT — A Detroit pizzeria owner who was upset over people getting \$150 tickets for unwittingly parking in a handicap zone got a bucket of blue paint and marked the street himself.

There is a single sign along the Library Street curb indicating that parking is reserved for drivers with a handicap tag. But Tony Sacco, co-owner of Mootz Pizzeria and Bar, said it's confusing because parking enforcers consider the street space reserved for as many as four vehicles. He wanted to warn drivers.

Public works director Ron Brundidge apologized for any confusion and acknowledged

that the "signage could have been more clear." He said sign changes would be made.

The paint, meanwhile, was power-washed away by a city crew.

Workers dig through landfill for wedding ring

NJ EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP — Four Atlantic County Utilities Authority employees helped a New Jersey woman find her wedding ring after it was accidentally thrown away.

Ruth Watson's son, 10, thought he was being helpful when he threw a plastic bag out with the trash, NJ Advance Media reported. However, inside that bag was Watson's wedding ring, wallet, and some other items.

She called the Atlantic County Utilities Authority and explained what the bag looked like and all that was inside.

Landfill supervisor Jovani Quiles, along with three workers spent an hour-and-a-half searching the landfill until they found the bag.

City unveils wood-carved statue of Colonel Sanders

KY CORBIN — A southeast Kentucky city has unveiled a statue honoring one of its most famous figures — Colonel Sanders.

The image of the iconic businessman, the founder and symbol of the fast food chain Kentucky Fried Chicken, will stand outside Corbin's tourism office. The pine statue, which stands beside three carved chickens, was chiseled with a chainsaw over more than 40 hours by art-

ist duo Jerry and Kim Eaton, WKYT-TV reported.

Sanders had roots in Corbin, opening up Harland Sanders Café in 1940 and developing what would go on to be the secret KFC recipe at the roadside restaurant, according to Kentucky's tourism agency.

Official: Lightning strike kills 15 cows

AL TUSKEGEE — Fifteen cows were killed when lightning struck a family farm in Alabama as severe weather moved through the area, according to an emergency management director.

The cattle were struck at a farm in Macon County, news outlets quoted Emergency Management Agency Director Frank Lee as saying.

Lee said his office forwarded a report on the incident to the National Weather Service in Birmingham.

10 arrested in 5-county drug-trafficking scheme

NH CONCORD — Ten people have been arrested following a monthslong, multi-agency drug trafficking investigation in five counties, the New Hampshire attorney general's office said.

The investigation resulted in the seizure of about 6 pounds of fentanyl and 11 firearms. It covered the counties of Coos, Carroll, Belknap, Merrimack and Rockingham.

The men and women arrested lived in northern New Hampshire and Lawrence, Mass. Two people also were arrested on outstanding warrants.

— From The Associated Press



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Reds' Miley throws 4th no-no of season

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Wade Miley's 4-year-old son, Jeb, convinced him to put a temporary tattoo of the Hulk on his right forearm for his start against the Indians.

He might need to get some permanent ink.

"I got no muscles at all," Miley said, smiling. "Maybe this gave me some strength."

Miley pitched like a superhero.

The Cincinnati left-hander tossed baseball's second no-hitter in three days — and fourth already this season — leading the Reds to a 3-0 win Friday night over the Cleveland Indians, who were no-hit for the sec-

ond time in a month.

Miley (4-2) relied on breaking pitches and his experience of 11-plus major league seasons to baffle the Indians and throw Cincinnati's 17th no-hitter and first since Homer Bailey in 2013.

"It's so far-fetched," the 34-year-old said. "I'm speechless. It still hasn't sunk in."

The easy-going Miley said he shook off an 83-minute rain delay to start the game by "goofing off" in the clubhouse and then followed Baltimore's John Means, who no-hit Seattle on Wednesday, to continue an early run of pitching gems in 2021 — quickly becoming the Year of the No-No.

Miley's joined the '21 no-hitter club that was started by San Diego's Joe Musgrove, who threw the first in Padres' history on April 9. Five days later, Chicago White Sox left-hander Carlos Rodón blanked the Indians, just missing a perfect game when he hit a batter in the ninth inning.

Arizona's Madison Bumgarner pitched a seven-inning no-hitter against Atlanta on April 25, but that one isn't recognized as official because it didn't go nine innings.

This is the earliest in a calendar year there have been four no-hitters since 1917, when the fourth was thrown on May 5 and the fifth on May 6. It's no won-

der, with hitters entering Friday batting a record-low .233 this season.

Miley was in control from the start. He coasted through five innings and carried a perfect game into the sixth, when he began to realize history could be made.

One of the team's most popular players, Miley said the zeros on the scoreboard quickly made him an outcast in Cincinnati's dugout.

"All my buddies left me," he said with a laugh. "I don't like that. I don't like thinking about pitching. I want to talk about something else, talk about fishing, talk about hitting. There was nobody to talk to."

Lindor leads Mets' rally after dustup in dugout

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Francisco Lindor blamed his apparent dugout dustup with Jeff McNeil on a runaway rodent. One saw a rat, he claimed, and the other a raccoon.

The story stunk like a skunk, but either way, the night ended in a New York Mets victory.

Lindor gathered himself and hit a tying, two-run homer in the seventh inning, setting up the Mets' extra-innings rally to beat the Arizona Diamondbacks 5-4 Friday night. New York walked off with a victory when designated runner Pete Alonso scored on pinch-hitter Patrick Mazeika's fielder's choice.

A day after snapping an 0-for-26 slide with a ninth-inning single in St. Louis, Lindor produced his biggest moment since signing a \$341 million, 10-year deal with the Mets. He tied the game by hitting a 2-2 changeup from left-hander Caleb Smith.

The drive came a half-inning after he and second baseman McNeil combined to misplay a grounder. Moments later, after the inning ended, Mets players rushed into the tunnel adjacent

to their dugout, sensing a commotion.

Lindor acknowledged after the game that he and McNeil were having a disagreement, but he claimed it had nothing to do with baseball.

"It was funny, I told him, I was like, 'I've never seen a New York rat,'" Lindor said, grinning widely. "So we went down sprinting. I wanted to go see a New York rat, and (McNeil) got mad at me and was like 'It's not a rat, it's a racoon.'"

McNeil's story matched Lindor's, and he added the Mets "just like to have fun." As for anyone else:

"They can believe whatever they want," he said.

Giants 5, Padres 4: Austin Slater hit a tiebreaking homer in the seventh inning and host San Francisco beat San Diego.

Athletics 2, Rays 1: Sean Maana's bid to pitch baseball's second no-hitter of the night ended on a leadoff double in the eighth inning by high school teammate Mike Brosseau, then Seth Brown hit a game-ending homer as host Oakland beat Tampa Bay.

Red Sox 6, Orioles 2: Bobby Dalbec snapped an 0-for-27 skid with a single and a three-run homer, powering visiting Boston over Baltimore.

Cardinals 5, Rockies 0: Jack Flaherty (6-0) hit his first career home run in his 117th at-bat and became the major leagues' first six-game winner, allowing three hits in seven innings to lead host St. Louis past Colorado.

Nationals 11, Yankees 4: Washington burst ahead in a six-run eighth inning that included three errors and Josh Harrison's three-run homer in a victory over host New York.

Angels 9, Dodgers 2: David Fletcher drove in three runs on three hits, Shohei Ohtani had two RBI doubles and the Angels snapped their five-game losing streak.

Phillies 12, Braves 2: Odúbel Herrera hit a three-run homer in his team's six-run first inning and visiting Philadelphia set season highs for runs and hits (16) as it won its fifth straight.

Marlins 6, Brewers 1: Isan Díaz hit his first career grand

slam, a third-inning drive off Patrick Weigel, as host Miami beat Milwaukee.

Cubs 3, Pirates 2: Zach Davies (2-2) allowed five hits in seven scoreless innings, and Rex Brothers retired Bryan Reynolds on a bases-loaded flyout for his first save since Sept. 29, 2013 as host Chicago beat Pittsburgh.

Astros 10, Blue Jays 4: Yuli Gurriel homered and tied a career high with four hits while driving in four runs, leading host Houston to a rout of Toronto.

Mariners 5, Rangers 4: Mitch Haniger had a tiebreaking RBI single in the seventh inning and visiting Seattle bounced back from being no-hit in its last game.

Twins 7, Tigers 3: Matt Shoemaker (2-3) pitched five scoreless innings and Kyle Garlick, Jorge Polanco and Max Kepler homered to lift visiting Minnesota over Detroit.

White Sox 3, Royals 0: Carlos Rodón (5-0) struck out eight and allowed five hits in six innings to lead visiting Chicago past Kansas City.

Blazers beat Lakers, secure tiebreaker

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Damian Lillard had 38 points to lead Portland to a 106-101 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Friday night that gave the Trail Blazers the tiebreaker over their Western Conference foe as the regular season winds to a close.

Lillard had five three-pointers for the Blazers, who were back at home after going 5-1 on a six-game trip. They were welcomed back to Portland with fans allowed at the Moda Center for the first time this season.

Anthony Davis had 36 points and 12 rebounds for the Lakers, who were without LeBron James for the third straight game. Los Angeles has lost eight

of its last 10 games.

“It’s tough, man,” Davis said. “It’s a tough loss for us. We wanted to get that one.”

The Lakers and the Blazers were both 37-29 heading into the game but the Lakers held sixth in the Western Conference because the series between the two teams was tied 1-1 and Los Angeles had the tiebreaker with a better record against conference teams.

With the win, Portland moved into sixth, a game up on Los Angeles, and also secured the tiebreaker. Both teams are trying to earn a playoff spot outright — and avoid play-in games — with just five games left in the regular season.

The Blazers knew what was at

stake.

“I think we’ve played in enough important games, we know how to prepare going into those games, how to give ourselves a chance to be successful,” Lillard said.

Los Angeles was coming off a 118-94 loss to the rival Clippers on Thursday. Davis did not play after the first quarter because of back spasms but he started against the Blazers.

But the Lakers remained without four-time league MVP James, who has missed two games while he recovers from a high ankle sprain.

Lakers coach Frank Vogel said all his team can do is try to win the games that are left.

“Wherever we land we’re

confident,” Vogel said. “Obviously we still want to finish in the top six. We still have five games to make up some ground, if that’s possible.”

Boosted by cheering fans, the Blazers went up 34-20 after the opening quarter. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope hit a three-point shot late in the first half to get the Lakers to 55-53 but Portland led 59-55 at the break.

Lillard had 19 points in the opening quarter alone and the Blazers were 9-for-9 from the free-throw line.

Jusuf Nurkic finished with 10 points and 13 rebounds for Portland, while McCollum added 21 points.

Alex Caruso had a season-high 18 points for the Lakers.

Bogdanovic’s 48 points rally Jazz past Nuggets

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Bojan Bogdanovic scored a career-high 48 points to rally the Utah Jazz past the Denver Nuggets 127-120 on Friday night.

Bogdanovic went 16-for-23 from the field — making a career-high eight three-pointers — to lead the NBA-leading Jazz to their fourth straight victory. He also had eight rebounds.

Jordan Clarkson added 21 points and eight assists. Rudy Gobert had 14 points and nine rebounds, and Georges Niang chipped in 13 points — all in the second half.

Michael Porter, Jr. scored 31 points for Denver. Nikola Jokic added 24 points, 13 assists, and nine rebounds, Paul Millsap had 20 points and Austin Rivers 18.

Utah did not trail over the final 11:22 of the fourth quarter after Niang hit back-to-back shots to give the Jazz a 103-99 lead. Denver scored just one basket over a six-minute stretch and couldn’t quite erase the resulting deficit.

Suns 128, Knicks 105:

Deandre Ayton scored 26 points, a feisty Chris Paul added 17 points and 11 assists and Phoenix beat visiting New York to stay in the hunt for the top record in the NBA.

The Suns stunned the Knicks by taking a 90-88 lead into the fourth quarter after scoring four points in less than a second. Torrey Craig tipped in Devin Booker’s miss with 0.8 seconds left and Cameron Payne stole the in-bounds pass and made a layup.

It was the Suns’ first lead since the first quarter and they never relinquished it, scoring 38 points in the fourth while making 8 of 12 three-pointers.

Julius Randle led New York with 24 points and 11 rebounds. R.J. Barrett had 23 points.

76ers 109, Pelicans 107: Joel Embiid had 37 points and 13 rebounds to the tune of “MVP! MVP!” chants and host Philadelphia beat New Orleans to inch closer toward securing the top spot in the East.

The 76ers won their season-high seventh straight game and have a three-game lead over

Brooklyn and Milwaukee in the Eastern Conference.

Bucks 141, Rockets 133: Brook Lopez had 24 points and Khriston Middleton scored 21 of his 23 in the second half to help host Milwaukee beat short-handed Houston for its fifth consecutive victory.

The Bucks tied Brooklyn for second place in the Eastern Conference standings. The Bucks also have the tiebreaker advantage over Brooklyn because they won two of their three regular-season meetings.

Mavericks 110, Cavaliers 90: Luka Doncic scored 24 points in 23 minutes and Dallas kept the prime spot in a tight race to avoid the Western Conference play-in tournament with a breezy victory over visiting Cleveland.

Dallas guaranteed it would remain in fifth place in the West, a game ahead of either the Los Angeles Lakers or Portland with five games remaining.

Bulls 121, Celtics 99: Zach LaVine and Coby White each scored 25 points and host Chicago overcame a big effort by

Kemba Walker to beat Boston.

Heat 121, Timberwolves 112: Tyler Herro returned after a six-game absence and scored 27 points, Jimmy Butler had 25 and Miami beat visiting Minnesota to move back into the No. 6 spot in the Eastern Conference.

The win, combined with a loss at Chicago by Boston, allowed the Heat to pass the Celtics in the standings. Miami opens a two-game series in Boston on Sunday, the teams battling to avoid having to be part of the play-in tournament that awaits the teams finishing between Nos. 7 and No. 10 in each conference.

Hornets 122, Magic 112: Terry Rozier scored 28 points, LaMelo Ball added 27 points and host Charlotte beat Orlando to inch closer to a spot in the play-in tournament.

Spurs 113, Kings 104: Dejounte Murray scored 10 of his 22 points in the fourth quarter and visiting San Antonio beat Sacramento to end a five-game losing streak and strengthen its hold on the final playoff spot in the West.

Flyers cost Capitals first place in East

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Falling flat after an emotional week, the Washington Capitals cost themselves their easiest path to a division title and showed worrying signs with the playoffs approaching.

The Capitals lost to the Philadelphia Flyers 4-2 Friday night, missing their chance to reclaim first place in the East Division. They trail the Pittsburgh Penguins by two points with two games left on their regular-season schedule.

A victory in their regular-season finale against last-place Buffalo on Saturday and another Washington loss to Philadelphia hours later would clinch

the division for Pittsburgh.

“They’re big points for us that we let get by here, so there can’t be any excuses,” Capitals coach Peter Laviolette said. “We needed to be better. I just thought we were just on our heels too much.”

Long since eliminated from playoff contention, the Flyers nevertheless outplayed the Capitals, who were again without captain Alex Ovechkin and defenseman Justin Schultz because of lower-body injuries and top center Evgeny Kuznetsov, who's on the NHL COVID protocol list. Rookie goaltender Vitek Vanecek allowed three goals on 28 shots in his third consecutive start with Ilya

Samsonov also out for protocol reasons.

“There were times in the game where we were the better team and there were times where we put out foot off the gas and they had their chances,” said Washington's Daniel Sprong, who scored his sixth goal in his past six games and has 13 this season. “We know playoffs is coming up, and that's not how we want to play.”

Capitals winger T.J. Oshie scored his fourth goal in the past two games since the death of his father, but the Capitals' comeback bid from a 3-1 deficit fell short.

“We didn't capitalize on a

couple chances, and we kind of dug ourselves too big a hole to get out of,” Oshie said. “Those aren't types of games that we want to have at this point in the year.”

Flyers rookie Wade Allison scored twice, and Brian Elliott made 28 saves. Joel Farabee took advantage of a defensive-zone miscue by Washington to open the scoring 1:44 into the game, and Sean Couturier sealed it for Philadelphia with an empty-net goal with 30.1 seconds left.

“I thought our whole group skated well,” Flyers coach Alain Vigneault said. “I liked the energy we brought to the table.”

Dallas tops Tampa bay, keeps playoff hopes alive

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Joe Pavelski had two goals and two assists to help keep the Dallas Stars' post-season hopes alive with a 5-2 victory over the Tampa Bay Lightning on Friday night.

The win moved Dallas within two points of Nashville heading into the final weekend of the regular season. The Stars play Chicago on Sunday and Monday, while the Predators host Carolina, which clinched its first division title since 2006 on Friday with Tampa Bay's loss, on Saturday and Monday.

Roope Hintz added a goal and two assists for Dallas, which ended a five-game winless streak. Joel Kiviranta and Jamie Oleksiak also scored, and Anton Khudobin made 26 saves.

“Obviously, we had to be desperate tonight,” Pavelski said. “We did a lot of good things. Early on, we got pucks behind them, forechecked, we controlled the play that way. It gave us a boost, I think, for sure.”

The Lightning, which had a seven-game point streak (6-0-1) stopped, are locked into a first-

round playoff matchup with in-state rival Florida, with a two-game set Saturday and Monday at BB&T Center to determine the division's Nos. 2 and 3 seeds.

Blake Coleman and Alex Barre-Boulet scored for Tampa Bay. Curtis McElhinney finished with 26 saves.

“We didn't play very well,” Lightning coach Jon Cooper said after Tampa Bay allowed five goals in a game for the first time since April 17. “We didn't execute, we didn't defend well and we didn't play hard in the way we normally do.”

Golden Knights 4, Blues 3 (OT): Jonathan Marchessault scored with 17 seconds left in overtime to lift host Vegas over St. Louis.

Reilly Smith, Alec Martinez, and Nic Roy scored in regulation for Vegas. The Golden Knights also inched closer to winning their third division title in four seasons since joining the NHL in 2017. Robin Lehner stopped 22 shots.

Ryan O'Reilly, David Perron, and Jaden Schwartz scored for St. Louis.

Avalanche 3, Kings 2: Mikko Rantanen scored his 30th goal of the season, Cale Makar had a goal and an assist and visiting Colorado beat Los Angeles.

Tyson Jost also scored, Philipp Grubauer made 15 saves and the Avalanche remained four points behind first-place Vegas in the West Division.

Brendan Lemieux and Gabriel Vilardi scored for Los Angeles. Cal Petersen made 34 saves as the Kings were eliminated from playoff contention.

Wild 4, Ducks 3 (OT): Kirill Kaprizov scored 17 seconds into overtime to lift host Minnesota past Anaheim.

Kaprizov, the rookie sensation with 27 goals this season, snapped a quick shot that was stopped by goalie John Gibson, but drove the net and found the puck on a rebound and easily scored with Gibson unable to recover.

Victor Rask, Nico Sturm and Joel Eriksson Ek also scored for Minnesota, and Kaapo Kahkonen made 22 saves. Max Comtois, Adam Henrique and Derek Grant scored for Anaheim.

Red Wings 5, Blue Jackets

2: Thomas Greiss made 22 saves and visiting Detroit scored three goals in the second period to beat Columbus.

Jakub Vrana had a goal and an assist, and Joe Veleno and Danny DeKeyser also scored in the second period for the Red Wings, who are dueling with the Blue Jackets to stay out of the Central Division basement as they play out the final weekend. Detroit leads Columbus by one point in the standings.

Gavin Bayreuther and Nathan Gerbe scored for the Blue Jackets. They have lost 12 of their last 14.

Coyotes 5, Sharks 2: Phil Kessel scored the go-ahead goal for his 900th career point and Victor Soderstrom scored his first NHL goal to lead visiting Arizona past San Jose.

Conor Garland added a goal and two assists for the Coyotes, who also benefited from an overturned San Jose goal that would have tied it in the third. Michael Bunting and Jan Jenik also scored for Arizona, and Darcy Kuemper had 26 saves.

Erik Karlsson and Timo Meier scored for San Jose.