

Trump: 'Golden Dome' will move forward

The Washington Post

President Donald Trump announced Tuesday that the government will move forward on construction of a multibillion-dollar "Golden Dome" missile defense system that will use a constellation of satellites and space-based weapons to intercept ballistic attacks on the United States.

For months, Trump has pushed for such a system, citing increasingly sophisticated threats from countries such as Russia, China and North Korea.

"Once fully constructed, the Golden Dome will be capable of intercepting missiles even if they are launched from other sides of the world and even if they are launched from space, and we will have the best system ever built," Trump said in the Oval Office alongside Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who later described the project

as a "game changer."

Trump said Tuesday that his administration had settled on an architecture for the project and claimed that the system could be operational within three years, before the end of his second term. Gen. Michael Guetlein, vice chief of operations for the U.S. Space Force, will oversee the Golden Dome's progress, Trump said.

Trump has already allocated \$25 billion in the federal budget toward the construction of the Golden Dome in the massive budget bill that Republicans in Congress aim to pass in the coming weeks. Earlier this month, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that deploying and operating just the space-based interceptors of the new missile defense system could cost anywhere from \$161 billion to \$542 billion over the next two decades. On Tuesday,

Trump said he estimated the system would cost \$175 billion.

Trump, who created the Space Force during his first term, has long spoken of wanting a Golden Dome, akin to Israel's "Iron Dome" defenses but also with weapons based in space instead of just on land. Shortly after taking office again in January,

"The threat of attack by ballistic, hypersonic, and cruise missiles, and other advanced aerial attacks, remains the most catastrophic threat facing the United States," Trump wrote in the order, noting that official U.S. missile defense policy has not evolved beyond staying ahead of "rogue-nation threats" and "accidental or unauthorized missile launches."

The Golden Dome concept comes as the Pentagon is increasingly concerned about long-range missiles that adver-

saries are building. Last week, the Defense Intelligence Agency released an assessment that said China possesses about 400 intercontinental ballistic missiles, Russia has 350 and North Korea has a handful.

The potential cost and nebulous nature of the defense system have raised concerns about the project having unintended costs. Last week, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, Jack Reed of Rhode Island, said money set aside at the moment is "essentially a slush fund at this point," with no detailed plan designed.

Reed, speaking at a Defense Writers Group briefing, said the most significant part of the Golden Dome system appears to be the detection of threats and communication of them. The "easier part," he said, will be developing weapons to take down incoming threats.

2 SEALs face discipline over racist memes

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Two Navy SEALs based in Virginia are facing disciplinary action for racist conduct, and several of their platoon and team leaders are being disciplined for leadership failures, according to a defense official.

The two enlisted Team 4 members are being punished for developing racist memes targeting a Black sailor in their platoon and circulating them in a group chat with other team members, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details of an ongoing investigation. The memes depicted the sailor as a slave, according to visuals viewed by The Associated Press.

According to the official, the sailor who was targeted reported the incidents this year, but they took place beginning in 2022 and the memes circulated for years. The sailor had been in one of the SEAL Team 4 platoons but had his qualifications and SEAL trident revoked last year. He alleged that his failure to remain a SEAL was due to the racist treatment.

Two officials said that as a result of the investigation, which was conducted by Naval Special Warfare Group 2, the sailor's SEAL qualifications are being reinstated and he will get back pay. The group oversees SEAL Team 4 and the platoons that make up the team, located at Joint Base Little Creek-Fort Story in Hampton Roads, Va.

The probe found that the platoon and SEAL Team 4 leaders did not adequately address the sailor's concerns about racist behavior and that the decision to revoke his qualifications was flawed.

"This was a very shocking case of explicit and repeated racist memes directed at our client in a platoon-wide text thread," said Timothy Parlatore, the sailor's lawyer, referring to the memes shared over a Signal chat. "They modified his face in photos to look like a monkey and portrayed him as a chained slave on a slave ship, among others."

The two enlisted sailors responsible for the memes face non-judicial punishment and punitive letters in their files. Both actions

can be career ending, or can result in demotions or loss of pay. Other actions are still pending.

The platoon and team leaders are also facing administrative actions, including disciplinary letters in their files, that could determine if they continue as SEALs.

In a statement, Naval Special Warfare Command acknowledged the investigation into "serious allegations of unprofessional conduct within one of our commands" and said "accountability actions are ongoing."

It added that "we are dedicated to fostering a climate of dignity and respect, and after conducting a thorough and fair investigation, we will hold anyone found responsible of misconduct accountable."

Truman engaged in 'largest airstrike' ever

By CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The USS Harry S. Truman and its strike group launched the “largest airstrike in the history of the world” from an aircraft carrier during recent operations near Somalia, the Navy’s top admiral said Monday.

About 125,000 pounds of munitions were launched by the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group into the African country, Adm. James Kilby, the acting chief of naval operations, said

while speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations’ Robert B. McKeon Endowed Series on Military Strategy and Leadership.

The annual event brings together U.S. military service chiefs to discuss the future of the American defense strategy, military readiness and emerging global challenges.

U.S. Africa Command, which oversees military operations in the region, is launching airstrikes in Somalia at a record-setting pace as the military seeks to counter an influx of Islamic

State group fighters, military figures show.

“[The Houthis] are not China, but they are a threat, and they are hunting our ships,” Kilby said. “Understanding that and not being dismissive about that and being prepared is what we are focused on now.”

Truman left its homeport in Norfolk, Va., on Sept. 23 for a routine deployment to the 6th Fleet. It entered the Middle East on Dec. 14 following the departure of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln.

The aircraft carrier and its strike group were due to return to the United States in the spring, but its deployment was extended in May as part of a U.S. bid to cripple the Houthis by way of daily strikes.

As of Monday, the Truman, as well as the destroyer USS Jason Dunham and the cruiser USS Gettysburg, had left the Red Sea and were in the Mediterranean Sea to participate in a NATO military exercise. The Navy has not said when the carrier strike group will return home.

Army unit installs no-cussing policy after probe

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The initial entry training post’s 43rd Adjutant General Battalion installed a rare swearing ban for its soldiers last month after the completion of a climate and culture investigation initiated to probe complaints of “extreme use of profanity,” Tiffany Wood, a spokeswoman for Fort Leonard Wood, said Tuesday.

The policy bans the use of “profanity, vulgar language [and] rude gestures or remarks” for soldiers while they are on duty, according to an April 17 memorandum that was circulated online via social media. “Vulgar or offensive language” is also barred on clothing and personal items in the battalion’s work areas.

Wood said unit leadership consulted with Army lawyers

and Army Training and Doctrine Command regulations before implementing the policy.

She said, however, that the policy was under review by leadership at Fort Leonard Wood’s Maneuver Support Center of Excellence.

The policy includes a “four strike” system, which applies punitive actions based on how many times a soldier is caught swearing. Soldiers face verbal

counseling the first time, written counseling for a second offense and “removal of favorable actions” — things like pending promotions or awards — for a third violation. A fourth infraction could mean the end of a soldier’s Army career, according to the policy, which states that strike four results in “separation for misconduct based on a pattern of behavior.”

PCS process creates angst among military spouses

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The DOD 2024 active-duty spouse survey, conducted roughly every two years, examined the opinions and attitudes of spouses on a range of issues.

The findings, released Tuesday, showed that one in three spouses would prefer that their family separate from the military. The largest source of dissatisfaction was related to permanent change of station moves.

“The biggest factor related to unhappiness with a PCS is the problem military spouses face in

finding employment after the move,” DOD said in a statement Tuesday. About 49% of military spouses who experienced a PCS move said finding employment proved to be a “large” or “very large” problem, according to the survey. Loss of income and non-reimbursable moving costs were also top concerns.

The National Military Family Association, which analyzed the survey results, said the findings showed “a record-breaking number” of military spouses who favor leaving the military.

“Spousal support has long

been recognized as a leading factor in a service member’s decision to stay or leave military service,” the organization said in a statement. “When families are unhappy, retention suffers, and ultimately, so does readiness on a national level.”

Tim Dill, acting deputy undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, said the DOD is looking at ways to ease the burden that comes with frequent military moves.

“We’re taking a very careful look at when PCS moves are truly needed for the military; and

where a PCS move is not critical for the military, we need to be looking at whether or not that’s a move that even needs to happen because we understand geographic stability is a big factor for the household satisfaction,” Dill said in a statement.

Financial considerations also factored into overall dissatisfaction.

Sixty percent of spouses described their financial situation as comfortable, but that was a 10-percentage point drop from 2019, and lower than nearly all years going back to 2006, the survey said.

Report: Trump's big tax cut bill will add \$3.8T to deficit

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With President Donald Trump's multitrillion-dollar tax breaks package at risk of stalling, House Speaker Mike Johnson and conservative Republican holdouts headed Wednesday to the White House for the last-ditch talks to salvage the "big, beautiful bill."

Johnson, R-La., had hoped to vote as soon as Wednesday on the 1,000-page plus bill after grinding through an all-night committee hearing, a final step in the process. But debate dragged into midday. Democrats, without the votes to stop Trump's package, are using all available tools to press their opposition and capitalize on the GOP disarray.

"We believe it's one big, ugly bill that's going to hurt the American people," said House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York as he and

his team testified before the committee.

"Hurt children, hurt families, hurt veterans, hurt seniors, cut health care, cut nutritional assistance, explode the debt," he said.

Trump had instructed the Republican majority to quit arguing and get it done, putting his own political influence on the line. But the Republican president failed to move many skeptics during his Capitol Hill visit this week and GOP leaders struggled through the night on crafting last-minute deals.

But for every faction of the slim House majority that Johnson appeases, he is losing others. A tentative deal with GOP lawmakers from New York and other high-tax states to boost deductions for local taxes to \$40,000 alarmed the most conservative Republicans, worried it will add to the nation's \$36 tril-

lion debt.

It's a make-or-break moment for the president and his party in Congress.

They have invested much of their political capital during the crucial first few months of Trump's return to the White House on this legislation. If the House Republicans fall in line with the president, overcoming unified Democratic objections, the measure would next go to the Senate.

A fresh analysis from the Congressional Budget Office said the tax provisions would increase federal deficits by \$3.8 trillion over the decade, while the changes to Medicaid, food stamps and other services would tally \$1 trillion in reduced spending. The lowest-income households in the U.S. would see their resources drop, while the highest ones would see a boost, the CBO said.

Trump asks court to bar access of DOGE docs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Wednesday asked the Supreme Court to block court orders requiring Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency to turn over documents about its operations to a government watchdog group.

The Justice Department's latest emergency appeal to the high court concerns whether DOGE, which has been central to President Donald Trump's push to remake the government, is a federal agency and would therefore be subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

The administration argues DOGE is merely a presidential advisory body that is exempt from requests for documents under FOIA.

The administration wants the justices to freeze orders that would force DOGE to turn over documents to Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington and have acting DOGE administrator Amy Gleason answer questions under oath within the next three weeks.

CREW sued in February, claiming that DOGE "wields shockingly broad power" with no transparency about its actions.

In March, U.S. District Judge Christopher Cooper found that DOGE's role is likely more than just advisory, noting its claims in helping to shutter USAID and make cut of billions of dollars in government contracts. "Canceling any government contract would seem to require substantial authority — and canceling them on this scale certainly does," Cooper wrote.

DOGE "likely has at least some independent authority to identify and terminate federal employees, federal programs, and federal contracts."

Justice Department to drop 2 police deals

The Washington Post

The Justice Department said Wednesday that it plans to drop police-accountability agreements with Minneapolis and Louisville, Ky., abandoning the Biden administration's attempt to reshape law enforcement in cities where high-profile killings by officers ignited widespread outrage.

Harmeet K. Dhillon, who leads the Justice Department's civil rights division, also said the government would close Biden-era investigations that found multiple other local police departments — including in Phoenix; Memphis, Tenn.; and Oklahoma City, Okla. — violated the Constitution.

Dhillon announced the decision days before the fifth anni-

versary of George Floyd's death at the hands of officers in Minneapolis in 2020, which helped set off worldwide racial justice protests that summer.

She noted that Minneapolis already had a court-enforceable consent decree with the state government and said that Louisville — where the police shooting of Breonna Taylor weeks before Floyd's death also drew national outrage — will hire its own monitor to enact the Biden-era demands.

Abandoning the federal agreements is part of Dhillon's broader push to reshape the civil rights division, discarding a focus on racial discrimination to instead take aim at alleged anti-semitism on college campuses and investigate diversity initia-

tives and other issues opposed by the Trump administration. About half of the division's lawyers have left since Dhillon was sworn in.

During President Joe Biden's administration, the Justice Department championed greater federal scrutiny of police, launching a dozen investigations into local and state agencies, and releasing critical, in-depth reports on the departments in cities including Minneapolis, Louisville, Phoenix and Memphis.

But when Biden left office in January, the department had reached agreements with only two places — Minneapolis and Louisville — on consent decrees that would impose changes on their local police forces.

Putin makes stop at Russia's Kursk region

Associated Press

President Vladimir Putin visited Russia's Kursk region for the first time yesterday since Moscow claimed that it drove Ukrainian forces out of the area last month, the Kremlin said Wednesday.

Putin visited the region bordering Ukraine the previous day, according to the Kremlin.

Ukrainian forces made a surprise incursion into Kursk in August 2024 in one of their biggest battlefield successes in the more than three-year war. The incursion was the first time Russian territory was occupied by an invader since World War II and dealt a humiliating blow

to the Kremlin. Since 2023, Russia has mostly had the advantage on the battlefield, with the exception of Kursk.

Putin has effectively rejected recent U.S. and European proposals for a ceasefire. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Wednesday accused Kyiv's allies of seeking a truce "so that they can calmly arm Ukraine, so that Ukraine can strengthen its defensive positions."

North Korea sent up to 12,000 troops to help the Russian army take back control of Kursk, according to Ukraine, the U.S. and South Korea.

Russia announced on April 26

that its forces had pushed out the Ukrainian army. Kyiv officials denied the claim.

Ukraine says it stopped Russian attacks in Kursk.

The Ukrainian Army General Staff said Wednesday that its forces repelled 13 Russian assaults in Kursk. Its map of military activity showed Ukrainian troops holding a thin line of land hard against the border but still inside Russia.

Putin's unannounced visit appeared to be an effort to show Russia is in control of, even though its full-scale invasion of its neighbor has been slow and costly in terms of casualties and equipment.

Video broadcast by Russian state media showed that Putin visited Kursk Nuclear Power Plant-2, which is still under construction, and met with selected volunteers behind closed doors.

Ukraine's surprise thrust into Kursk and its ability to hold land there was a logistical feat, carried out in secrecy, that countered months of gloomy news from the front about Ukrainian forces being pushed backward by the bigger Russian army. Kyiv's strategy aimed to show that Russia has weaknesses and that the war isn't lost. It also sought to distract Russian forces from their onslaught in the eastern Donetsk region of Ukraine.

Several dozen killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, GAZA—Israeli strikes continued to pound the Gaza Strip Wednesday, despite a surge in international anger at Israel's widening offensive. The attacks killed at least 82 people, including several women and a week-old infant, according to the Gaza Health Ministry and area hospitals.

Israel began allowing dozens of humanitarian trucks into Gaza on Tuesday, but the aid has not yet reached Palestinians in desperate need. Jens Laerke,

the spokesperson for the U.N.'s humanitarian agency, said no trucks were picked up from the Gaza side of Kerem Shalom, the Israeli border crossing with southern Gaza.

U.N. spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric said Tuesday that although the aid had entered Gaza, aid workers were unable to bring it to distribution points, after the Israeli military forced them to reload the supplies onto separate trucks and workers ran out of time.

The Israeli defense body that

oversees humanitarian aid to Gaza said trucks were entering Gaza on Wednesday morning, but it was unclear if that aid would move deeper into Gaza for distribution. The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said its staff had waited several hours to collect aid from the border crossing in order to begin distribution but were unable to do so Tuesday.

A few dozen Israeli activists opposed to Israel's decision to allow aid into Gaza while Hamas still holds hostages at-

tempted to block trucks carrying supplies Wednesday but were kept back by Israeli police.

On Tuesday, the United Kingdom suspended free trade talks with Israel over its intensifying assault, a step that came a day after the U.K., Canada and France promised concrete steps to prompt Israel to halt the war.

Separately, the European Union was reviewing an EU pact governing trade ties with Israel over its conduct of the war in Gaza, according to its foreign policy chief.

South African president, Trump spar over genocide claims

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump used a White House meeting to forcefully confront South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, accusing the country of failing to address Trump's baseless claim of widespread and targeted killing of white farmers.

Trump even dimmed the lights of the Oval Office to play a video of a far-left politician chanting a song that includes

the lyrics "kill the farmer." He also leafed through news articles to underscore his point, saying the country's white farmers have faced "death, death, death, horrible death."

Trump had already cut all U.S. assistance to South Africa and welcomed several dozen white South African farmers to the U.S. as refugees as he pressed the case that a "genocide" is underway in the country.

The U.S. president has launched a series of accusations at South Africa's Black-led government, claiming it is seizing land from white farmers, enforcing anti-white policies and pursuing an anti-American foreign policy.

Experts in South Africa say there is no evidence of whites being targeted, although farmers of all races are victims of violent home invasions in a country that suffers from a very high

crime rate.

Ramaphosa pushed back against Trump's accusation.

The South African leader had sought to use the meeting to set the record straight and salvage his country's currently strained relationship with the United States.

The bilateral relationship is at its lowest point since South Africa enforced its apartheid system of racial segregation, which ended in 1994.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Jet aborts takeoff to avoid runway collision

NY EAST ELMHURST — When a passenger jet roaring down the runway toward takeoff at New York's LaGuardia Airport had to slam on the brakes earlier this month because another plane was still on the runway, passengers were thrown forward in their seats.

Both the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board said Monday that they are investigating the incident in which a Republic Airways jet had to abort takeoff and slam to a stop because a United Airlines plane was still taxiing across the runway. The close call happened despite the airport being equipped with an advanced surface radar system that's designed to help prevent such close calls.

In audio from the tower that ABC obtained from the website www.LiveATC.net, the air traffic controller said to the pilot of the Republic Airways jet: "Sorry, I thought United had cleared well before that."

At the time that controller was directing the Republic Airways jet to takeoff, a ground controller on a different radio frequency was directing the United plane to a new taxiway after it missed the first one it was supposed to use.

Man executed for killing police officer in 2000

IN MICHIGAN CITY — An Indiana man convicted in the fatal shooting of a police officer in 2000 was executed Tuesday by lethal injection in the state's second execution in 15 years.

Benjamin Ritchie, 45, had been on Indiana's death row since 2002, when he was convicted of killing Beech Grove Police Officer Bill Toney during a chase on foot.

Ritchie was executed at the Indiana State Prison in Michigan City, according to Indiana Department of Correction officials. IDOC said in a statement that the process started shortly after midnight and Ritchie was pronounced dead at 12:46 a.m.

Ritchie expressed love, support and peace for his friends and family, according to the statement.

Woman again gets life sentence for fiery killing

MI PAW PAW — A Michigan woman accused of setting her husband on fire then driving a van over his burning body was sentenced to life in prison Monday for murder after failing to convince a jury for the second time that she wasn't responsible.

Since Todd Stermer's death nearly 20 years ago, Linda Stermer, 60, has been imprisoned then released while winning an appeal and getting a new trial. But now she's back in custody with a no-parole sentence.

Prosecutors say Stermer doused her husband with gasoline and set him on fire in 2007, a day after he learned she was having an affair. Stermer insisted it was an accident, telling insurance investigators that Todd had an oil lamp and candles burning in the house.

She was convicted in 2010. But a federal appeals court in 2020 granted her a new trial, saying her rights were violated when her attorney didn't do enough to counter the arson

theme described by prosecutors.

Mixed verdict for coach who did naked fat tests

RI PROVIDENCE — A jury has found a former Rhode Island high school basketball coach not guilty of second-degree child molestation and second-degree sexual assault after he spent decades asking hundreds of male student-athletes if they were "shy or not shy" before asking them to get naked so he could check their body fat.

Instead, the 12 jurors found Aaron Thomas guilty of a lesser charge, misdemeanor battery, in their verdict handed down Monday.

Throughout the nearly six-week trial, defense attorneys for Thomas argued that the so-called naked fat tests conducted by the North Kingstown High School coach were wrong but not a crime. The defense said Thomas didn't touch the boy athletes for sexual gratification or arousal, a key requirement under the charges he faced.

Prosecutors maintained Thomas created and implemented a program that allowed him to have unfettered access to young naked boys for decades.

Man convicted of fatally stabbing EMS worker

NY NEW YORK — A New York man was convicted Monday of fatally stabbing a longtime emergency services officer in a 2022 unprovoked attack that took place steps away from her station in Queens.

The victim, Lt. Alison Russo-Elling, 61, was ambushed while

heading to a corner store in her uniform to get something to eat. One of the first responders to the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, she was months away from a planned retirement when she died.

Peter Zisopoulos, 37, was convicted on charges of second-degree murder and criminal possession of a weapon. He's scheduled to be sentenced on June 30 and faces 25 years to life in prison, according to prosecutors.

State bans soda, energy drinks from SNAP

NE LINCOLN — Nebraska is the first state to receive a federal waiver to ban the purchase of soda and energy drinks under the benefit program for low-income Americans long known as food stamps.

The move, announced Monday by U.S. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins, would affect about 152,000 people in Nebraska enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which helps families pay for groceries.

"There's absolutely zero reason for taxpayers to be subsidizing purchases of soda and energy drinks," Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen said in a statement. "SNAP is about helping families in need get healthy food into their diets, but there's nothing nutritious about the junk we're removing with today's waiver."

Details of Nebraska's waiver, which takes effect Jan. 1, weren't immediately available. Anti-hunger advocates criticized it, saying it adds costs, boosts administrative burdens and increases stigma for people already facing food insecurity.

— From wire reports

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Tush push ban proposal fails by 2 votes

Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. — A proposed ban on the tush push failed on Wednesday at the NFL owners' meetings, according to a person with knowledge of the decision.

The proposed prohibition of the polarizing short-yardage play failed on a 22-10 vote, which will allow quarterbacks to continue to be aided by teammates when plunging into the line.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because details of the discussions by the owners had not yet been made public.

The Philadelphia Eagles brought former center Jason Kelce, one of the players who fueled the success of the tush push, to the meetings in Minnesota with owner Jeffrey Lurie to provide more clarity around the play.

Also, the Detroit Lions withdrew their proposal to reseed teams for the playoffs — in order of record rather than awarding the first four spots to division winners — before a

vote was taken, according to a person familiar with the situation. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the team's decision had not been announced.

The owners did approve modifications to the kickoff, which was drastically redone before last season. With the goal of increasing the recovery rate of on-side attempts, teams may try them at any point in the game when trailing rather than just in the fourth quarter. Kicking team players, other than the kicker, can now move one yard forward.

After the tush push vote was taken, the Eagles posted a picture on social media of quarterback Jalen Hurts on the verge of a short-yardage attempt against Green Bay with the caption, "Push on." The Packers put their name on the proposal to ban offensive players from pushing, pulling, lifting, grasping or encircling a runner.

Kelce, a seven-time Pro Bowl pick who retired after the 2023

season, said recently that he wasn't as concerned about a ban of the tush push as he was about clearing up misconceptions it poses an injury risk and was partially responsible for his decision to end his career.

"I'll come out of retirement today if you tell me all I've got to do is run 80 tush pushes to play in the NFL," Kelce said on the New Heights podcast with his brother Travis. "I'll do that gladly. It'll be the easiest job in the world."

Jason Kelce declined further comment as he departed the meetings.

Lurie has been leading the defense of the play his team developed with the coinciding arrival of Hurts in 2020. The NFL has no conclusive data supporting a connection between the tush push and an increased risk of injury, as Lurie noted at the previous league meetings in Florida.

The tush push not only assigns a player to push the backside of the quarterback for extra power behind a tight nine-man line, but sometimes involves a

blocker on the end pivoting to try to pull the ball carrier past the marker.

Health is only half of this debate, however. Entertainment is the other.

While the Eagles have nearly perfected the play for fourth-and-1 or 1-yard line situations with well-chosen personnel and well-rehearsed precision, it looks more like rugby than football with the evolution of a traditional quarterback sneak into an all-out scrum.

"It was controversial when the forward pass came out," Lurie said at the last league meetings. "I think aestheticism is very subjective. I've never judged whether a play looks OK."

The fairness and fun of it are sure to be talking points throughout the season, particularly leading up to the Monday night game on Nov. 10 when Green Bay hosts Philadelphia. The score of the Eagles' wildcard round win over the Packers in January was 22-10, coincidentally the same as the vote totals on the proposed ban.

Penske fires three top executives in wake of scandal

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Roger Penske fired top executive Tim Cindric, IndyCar managing director Ron Ruzewski and IndyCar general manager Kyle Moyer on Wednesday in the wake of an Indianapolis 500 cheating scandal.

"Nothing is more important than the integrity of our sport and our race teams," Penske said in a statement. "We have had organizational failures during the last two years, and we had to make necessary changes. I apologize to our fans, our partners and our organization for letting them down."

Penske is owner of the three-car team, IndyCar, Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the Indy

500. He has won the Indy 500 a record 20 times.

Two-time defending Indianapolis 500 winner Josef Newgarden and teammate Will Power were found to have an illegally modified part on their cars ahead of Sunday's final round of qualifications for the 109th running of the Indianapolis 500.

Neither was allowed to qualify and both were dropped to the back of the field Monday and will start 32nd and 33rd. Rival teams have been arguing it is not enough since it's the second cheating scandal in two seasons, and illegal cars potentially bumped Jacob Abel of Dale Coyne Racing from the field.

Cindric and Ruzewski had already been suspended by Indy-

Car for the race and both teams fined \$100,000. It is the second consecutive year they were suspended from "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing."

The trouble for Team Penske began before the fast 12 shoot-out Sunday, when rival team owner Chip Ganassi was among a chorus of competitors who accused it of cheating. They noticed unapproved changes had been made to the rear attenuator, a safety device designed to absorb and reduce the force of impacts, and the assumption was the modifications would have given the two Team Penske cars an aerodynamic advantage in their four-lap qualifying runs.

Further investigation showed

Newgarden's winning car from last year that is displayed in the Indianapolis Motor Speedway museum has the same illegal modification, as did the car Team Penske brought to the White House last month. Rivals claim to have photos indicating the modification has been in place for some time.

What made the outrage even greater is it was just one year ago that Team Penske was caught in a push-to-pass scandal in which Newgarden was found to have access to an additional boost of horsepower when he should not have at the season opener. He was stripped of his win and Penske suspended Cindric for two races, including the Indy 500.

Panthers rout Hurricanes to start East final

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — It didn't matter that the Florida Panthers were playing 48 hours since having to win a Game 7 on the road to reach the Eastern Conference final.

Nor did it matter they were playing in front of a rowdy hostile crowd, against a team that had yet to lose at home and had been lockdown-elite on the penalty kill.

Instead, they methodically jumped on the Carolina Hurricanes, immediately ripped away home-ice advantage and played with an edge befitting their status as reigning Stanley Cup champions in Tuesday night's 5-2 win in Game 1.

"I don't know if it's a statement," said Carter Verhaeghe, who had a power-play goal midway through the first period to put Florida ahead and keep Carolina in chase mode for good. "They're going to come back with their best. We're just trying to go in and play our game every single time."

To listen to Verhaeghe and coach Paul Maurice, it wasn't

the result of some lights-out performance of relentless perfection. There were hiccups in transitioning from series against Tampa Bay and Toronto, teams with different styles that rely on, as Maurice said, being "so dynamic up the middle of the ice" compared to a different rush style with a Hurricanes team that relies on an aggressive forecheck to pressure and control the puck in the offensive zone.

"I think the best growth in our team comes off losses," Maurice said. "I think that's where we learn more. I didn't love our game tonight. But I understood it. Significant style change, so the Game 1 is that first look at what your game looks like in a completely different opponent."

Maybe so, but it was more than good enough.

The Panthers were coming off a 6-1 win Sunday in Game 7 of the second-round series against the Maple Leafs. That set up a rematch of the 2023 East final swept by Florida by four one-game margins, including a four-overtime thriller in that Game 1

that ended on Matthew Tkachuk's winner during the sixth-longest game in NHL history.

The Panthers waited to fly to Carolina on Monday to stick with their usual postgame routine of staying in the road city to rest and recover. Then they went on to take care of this game with far less theatrics need to win that epic '23 opener, this time against a Hurricanes team that was 5-0 at home in the playoffs and had been off since closing out the conference's top-seeded Washington Capitals last Thursday.

"We know what to do and we know the recipe and our identity," said fourth-line forward A.J. Greer, who had a critical second-period goal to restore a two-goal margin.

Verhaeghe started by finding space alone near the edge of the crease on a first-period power play, then backhanded a rising puck past Frederik Andersen and into the upper right corner of the net for quick strike against a Carolina kill that had been the postseason's best by allowing just two goals through 30 at-

tempts in two rounds.

Aaron Ekblad followed four minutes later for the tone-setting 2-0 lead. Then Greer answered Sebastian Aho's off-the-skate score in the final seconds of the first period by finishing a perfect 2-on-1 backhanded feed from Niko Mikkola, before Sam Bennett followed with another power-play score with Brad Marchand screening Andersen in the third.

Eetu Luostarinen added a goal for a 5-1 lead with the outcome long decided, making it five different players finding the net and 11 players tallying at least one point.

Meanwhile, Sergei Bobrovsky finished with 31 saves in his latest Canes-befuddling effort, notably a glove stop on Jack Roslovic's shot from the slot after losing his stick midway through the second.

"They're going to do the same thing we're doing," Carolina captain Jordan Staal said. "You can tell they do very similar stuff and they try to grind you down too. They're here for a reason, they know how to do it well."

SGA scores 31, Thunder top rested T-wolves in Game 1

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 20 of his 31 points in the second half, and the top-seeded Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 114-88 on Tuesday night in Game 1 of the Western Conference finals.

Gilgeous-Alexander made 8 of 14 field goals in the second half after a rough start.

"I didn't particularly change my mindset, honestly," he said, "I just tried to continue to be aggressive, trust my work."

Julius Randle scored 28 points for sixth-seeded Minnesota, but just eight in the second half.

Anthony Edwards, who had been averaging 26.5 points per game in the playoffs, was held to 18 points on 5-for-13 shooting.

"I definitely got to shoot more. I took 13 (expletive) shots, but I'll say probably just get off the ball a little more," Edwards said. "Play without the ball. I think that would be the answer, because playing on the ball, they're just

going to double and sit in the gaps all day. So I've got to go watch some film and take it apart and figure it out."

Edwards said the Thunder packed the paint, and he expects the Timberwolves to take advantage of that tactic going forward. Game 2 is Thursday in Oklahoma City.

"They bank on us not making shots, I guess, because every time I go to the rim it's like four people," Edwards said. "So yeah, I guess they just be clogging the paint. They put like five, four bodies in the paint, make you kick it out. So keep making the right play."

The Thunder were just two days removed from eliminating the Denver Nuggets in Game 7 of the conference semifinals. Minnesota hadn't played in a week.

The T-wolves led 48-44 at halftime as Randle scored 20 points and made 5 of 6 3-pointers. Gilgeous-Alexander was held to 11 points on 2-for-13 shooting before the break.

"For us to play as poorly as we did offensive-

ly in the first half and be down four was a major victory for us at halftime," OKC coach Mark Daigneault said.

The Thunder went on a 10-0 run in the third quarter to take a 66-60 lead. A short time later, Kenrich Williams, a rarely-used sub this postseason, hit a midrange jumper and a 3-pointer on consecutive possessions to put the Thunder up 71-62. Oklahoma City outscored Minnesota 32-18 in the third quarter to take a 76-66 advantage into the fourth.

A spinning dunk by Holmgren in traffic put the Thunder ahead 86-75 and drew a roar from the crowd. Gilgeous-Alexander threw up a prayer as he was being fouled while falling to the floor. The ball rolled in, and he made the free throw to make it 91-77 with seven minutes remaining.

"It's Game 1," Wolves coach Chris Finch said. "They won at home. Congrats to them. They played really well. There's another game in two days."

Muncy's sacrifice fly lifts Dodgers in 10th

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Max Muncy's sacrifice fly to center scored Shohei Ohtani with the winning run in the 10th inning, and the Los Angeles Dodgers beat the Arizona Diamondbacks 4-3 to snap a four-game skid Tuesday night.

Yoshinobu Yamamoto tossed seven innings of one-hit ball, losing his no-hit bid on Ketel Marte's single leading off the seventh. The Japanese right-hander struck out nine on a career-high 110 pitches.

Los Angeles scored three runs in the 10th after Arizona took a 3-1 lead in the top half of the inning on Corbin Carroll's two-run homer off Tanner Scott.

Kiké Hernández started at second and scored on Tommy Edman's double to left off Shelby Miller (3-1).

All three of the Diamondbacks' runs came off Scott. He gave up a tying homer to Gabriel Moreno in the ninth. With Tim Lincecum starting the 10th on second, Corbin blasted a 404-foot shot to center.

Rays 3, Astros 2: Taylor Walls hit a game-ending sacrifice fly and host Tampa Bay rallied to beat Houston.

The Rays trailed 2-0 until Jonathan Aranda's two-run single in the eighth inning tied the score.

Christian Morel then led off the ninth with a walk against Kaleb Ort and advanced to third on pinch-hitter Brandon Lowe's double to left-center. After Josh Lowe popped out, Walls hit a fly ball to drive in Morel to give Tampa Bay its 12th win in 30 games at Steinbrenner Field.

Yankees 5, Rangers 2: Aaron Judge hit a two-run homer, rookie Will Warren struck out a career-high 10 and host New York beat Texas.

Ben Rice also went deep for the Yankees in the opener of a three-game series between the past two American League champions. Anthony Volpe

blooped an RBI double after Rice drove in the first two runs.

Jonah Heim's two-run homer off Ian Hamilton with two outs in the ninth prevented a shutout. With a runner at third, Luke Weaver retired Josh Smith on a popup for his sixth save.

Blue Jays 3, Padres 0: Anthony Santander and Vladimir Guerrero Jr. homered, Chris Bassitt and three relievers combined on a five-hitter and host Toronto beat San Diego.

The shutout was the Blue Jays' first of the season. The Padres failed to score a run for the third time this season.

San Diego lost its fourth straight, matching its longest losing streak of the season.

Brewers 5, Orioles 2: Logan Henderson (3-0) recorded seven strikeouts in five shutout innings as host Milwaukee handed Baltimore its eighth consecutive loss.

Brice Turang, Sal Frelick and Rhys Hoskins homered to help the Brewers win their third straight. Milwaukee's three homers matched a season high.

The Orioles have gone 0-4 under interim manager Tony Mansolino since the Saturday firing of Brandon Hyde. Mansolino had been a third-base coach on Hyde's staff.

Tigers 5, Cardinals 4: Riley Greene homered and hit the winning RBI double in the ninth to help visiting Detroit beat St. Louis.

Zack McKinstry singled off Kyle Leahy to lead off the ninth and scored on Greene's double to the right-field gap.

Will Vest (4-0) pitched a scoreless eighth inning, and Tommy Kahnle pitched the ninth to earn his sixth save in eight chances.

Phillies 7, Rockies 4: Kyle Schwarber hit his 17th home run and Bryce Harper had three hits including two doubles to back a strong start by Jesús Luzardo as visiting Philadelphia beat Colorado for its

fifth straight win.

Bryson Stott and Brandon Marsh had three hits each in the Phillies' 17-hit attack. Trea Turner, Max Kepler and Alec Bohm each had two hits for Philadelphia.

Luzardo (5-0) allowed one run on two hits in six innings with 10 strikeouts.

White Sox 1, Mariners 0: Adrian Houser pitched six sparkling innings in his first major league start in a year, and host Chicago cooled off Seattle.

Houser allowed two hits and walked three in his first win since May 26 for the New York Mets against San Francisco. The veteran right-hander threw 90 pitches, 56 for strikes.

Chase Meidroth, Joshua Palacios and Lenyn Sosa each had two hits for the last-place White Sox, who had lost five in a row.

Angels 7, Athletics 5: Logan O'Hoppe homered and had a tiebreaking RBI single as visiting Los Angeles beat the Athletics for its fifth straight win.

Kenley Jansen gave up pinch-hitter Seth Brown's RBI single in the bottom of the ninth, but struck out Tyler Soderstrom to get his 10th save and hand the Athletics their seventh straight loss.

Yoán Moncada had a tying three-run homer in the fifth to tie it 4-4 before O'Hoppe's RBI single put the Angels ahead for good.

Cubs 14, Marlins 1: Seiya Suzuki homered, doubled and had four RBIs, Kyle Tucker also went deep and visiting Chicago beat Miami.

In his second game as designated hitter this season, Tucker also had two singles and walked.

Justin Turner singled twice and doubled, while Matt Shaw doubled and singled for the Cubs, who matched a season-high with 21 hits.

Pirates 1, Reds 0: Bailey Falter gave up four hits and had five strikeouts through seven innings and host Pittsburgh ended a four-game losing streak

with a win over Cincinnati.

Falter has surrendered one run in 23⅓ innings over his past four starts, including none in 16⅓ in his past three.

Bryan Reynolds lined an RBI single into right to put the Pirates ahead in the sixth. Oneil Cruz walked and stole second for the second time in his first three plate appearances.

Nationals 5, Braves 3: Rookie Dylan Crews hit a tiebreaking home run in the second inning before leaving the game in the sixth as host Washington beat Atlanta.

Crews hit a solo shot with two out in the second inning off Braves ace Spencer Strider that snapped a 3-all tie.

Crews walked in his second plate appearance in the fifth before being replaced in center field by Nasim Núñez in the top of the sixth. Crews left the game due to a sore left side and lower back. He is expected to get an MRI on Wednesday.

Red Sox 2, Mets 0: Carlos Narváez and Rafael Devers hit homers and six relievers combined to keep New York scoreless after Boston starter Walker Buehler was ejected in the host Red Sox's win over the Mets.

Manager Alex Cora was also ejected when he came out of the dugout in his pitcher's defense and took over a heated argument with umpire Mike Estabrook with one out in the top of the third.

Brennan Bernardino took over for the next 1⅓ innings as Boston improved to 2-0 in the three-game series. Garrett Whitlock got the win as the Red Sox got back to .500 at 25-25. Aroldis Chapman pitched the ninth for his eighth save.

Giants 3, Royals 2: Hayden Birdsong threw five sharp innings in his first start of the season and host San Francisco beat Kansas City.

Birdsong (2-0) allowed one unearned run, five hits and no walks to give the Giants their fourth win in the last five games.